



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
SPEAKER'S RULING:	
Particular use of "misrepresenting" is unparliamentary. (Pt. of order by S. Leblanc [Hansard p. 5199, 20 February 2020]) No point of order.....	5207
PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES	
Veterans Affairs Committee, 2019 Ann. Rpt., R. DiCostanzo	5208
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION	
Res. 1674, Social Enterprise Week: Assisting Those with Diverse Abilities - Recog., The Premier.....	5209
Vote - Affirmative.....	5209
Res. 1675, Pictou Co. Rivers Assoc: Promoting Sport Fishing - Recog., Hon. K. Colwell	5209
Vote - Affirmative.....	5210
Res. 1676, Glen Haven Manor: Supporting Immigration - Recog., Hon. L. Metlege Diab	5210
Vote - Affirmative.....	5211

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

No. 222, Ridesharing Act, T. Houston.....	5211
No. 223, University Foundations Act, Hon. L. Kousoulis.....	5211
No. 224, An Act Respecting Short-term Rental Accommodations, L. Roberts.....	5211
No. 225, Elections Act, Hon. M. Furey.....	5211

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Sampson, Gordon: Preserving N. Sydney's History - Thanks, M. Ryan.....	5211
Wilkie, Terry - Volun. Firefighter: 50 Yrs. of Serv. - Congrats., S. Lohnes-Croft.....	5212
Sharpe, Ryan: Political Potential - Commend, Hon. P. Dunn.....	5212
Code Ninjas: New Bus. - Congrats., R. DiCostanzo.....	5213
Lobster Crawl: S. Shore Festival, 1 st Yr. - Congrats., Colton LeBlanc.....	5213
Walsh, Gary - Dir., Acadia Robotics: Retirement - Congrats., K. Irving.....	5214
Salsman, Murray: Glad Day Cancer Fundraiser - Recog., J. Lohr.....	5214
Muise, Randy: Special Olympian - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill.....	5214
Wong, Bob: 90 th Birthday - Best Wishes, K. MacFarlane.....	5215
Antig. Wellness Collective: Achieving Optimal Health - Congrats., Hon. R. Delorey.....	5215
Smith, Carly/Whynot, Hannah: IWK Bed Campaign Fundraiser - Congrats., K. Masland.....	5216
MacGibbon, Belinda: Serv. to Swim Club - Thanks, Hon. K. Regan.....	5216
689 Handley Page Air Cadet Squadron: Ottawa Trip - Congrats., T. Rushton.....	5217
Hull, Angella: Black Arts and Smarts Night - Commend, Susan Leblanc.....	5217
Firth, Ethan: Athl. Achievements - Congrats., Hon. K. Colwell.....	5218
Fenyvesi Family: Com. Serv. - Thanks, B. Adams.....	5218
Canso Seahawks: Successful Season - Congrats., Hon. L. Hines.....	5219

Red Island Trail: Co-operative Refurbishment - Thanks, K. Bain	5219
Christakos, Leo: Death of - Tribute, Hon. L. Metlege Diab	5220
Rozicki, Ryan: Promoting Mental Health - Congrats., B. Comer	5220
Little, Danny/Johnston, Shannon: Xmas Gift Drive - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	5220
Bingham, Karen: Lymphedema Awareness - Thanks, S. Craig	5221
Lebanese Syrians: Celebrating C.B. Community - Congrats., Hon. D. Mombourquette	5221
Lights for Health Fireworks: Com. Enrichment - Thanks, M. Ryan.....	5222
Archibald, Mya: High Jump, Gold Medallist - Congrats., B. Horne.....	5222
Bate, Katrina - Delegate: Intl. Learning Camp - Congrats., K. MacFarlane.....	5223
Bay Rides Grocery Bus: Connecting Seniors - Congrats., H. MacKay	5223
Oliver, Donald - Senator: Order of Canada - Congrats., K. Masland.....	5224
St. John's Mother/Daughter Choir: Ann. Fundraiser - Thanks, S. Lohnes-Croft.....	5224
MacPhee, Jerico: MMA Career - Congrats., T. Rushton.....	5225
Nwachukwu, Chas. - Photographer: Com. Serv. - Recog., R. DiCostanzo.....	5225
Peters, Chris: Com. Serv. - Recog., B. Adams.....	5226
Robertson, Brenda - Professor: Recreation N.S. Life Membership Award - Congrats., K. Irving.....	5226
Vic. Co. Employees: Service Awards - Congrats., K. Bain	5227
Hurlburt, Wayne: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	5227
Johns, Maria - Daughter: Birthday Wishes, B. Johns.....	5227
Kenley, Marlene: Supporting Bedford Days - Thanks, Hon. K. Regan.....	5228
Myette, Richard: Special Olympian - Congrats., B. Comer	5228
African N.S. Youth Lab: Employment Rpt. - Congrats., L. Roberts.....	5229

Halliday, Mikayla: Duke of Ed. Gold Award - Congrats., Hon. M. Furey	5229
Beacon House: 35 Yrs., Neighbours Helping Neighbours - Thanks, S. Craig	5230
Yukon Heritage Day - Congrats., Hon. R. Delorey	5230
Simmonds, Justin - Cst.: Com. Commitment - Recog., Hon. K. Colwell	5230
Coleman, Gemma/Townsend, Terri Anne: Special Olympians - Best Wishes, Hon. L. Glavine.....	5231
Sea Shore Fire Dept: 50 Yrs. of Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. L. Hines.....	5231
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS	
No. 983, Prem.: Alton Gas Court Case - Expenditure, T. Houston.....	5232
No. 984, Prem. Lobbying Laws - Ethical Conduct, G. Burrill.....	5234
No. 985, Prem. Ingersoll Rpt. - Release, T. Houston.....	5236
No. 986, H&W: MyHealthNS - Online Alternative, K. MacFarlane.....	5236
No. 987, TIR - VG Hosp. Rebuild: Cost Plan - Release, T. Houston.....	5238
No. 988, Prem. Housing Crisis - Solutions, Susan Leblanc	5239
No. 989, L&F: Mill Operators - Assistance, T. Rushton.....	5240
No. 990, L&F - Forest Mgmt. Guide: Consultations - Cancellation, T. Rushton.....	5242
No. 991, Justice - Alex Cameron Case: Active Court Cases - Confirm, T. Houston.....	5243
No. 992, TIR - Yarmouth Ferry: Upcoming Season - Confirm, Colton LeBlanc	5244
No. 993, Prem.: Value of P3 Projects - Comment, C. Chender	5245
No. 994, Prem. - Railway Protests: PM's Response - Comment, T. Houston.....	5246
No. 995, H&W - Cole Hbr.-East. Passage: Funding CHC - Commit, B. Adams.....	5247
No. 996, H&W - Dal Med Placements: Victoria Co. - Consider, K. Bain	5248
No. 997, H&W: C.B. Mental Health Wait Times - Address, B. Comer	5250
No. 998, TIR - Rail Blockades: Propane Shortage - Address, S. Craig	5251
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Tue., Feb. 25 th at 1:00 p.m.....	5252



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2020

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I'll present a Speaker's Ruling on the point of order brought up immediately following Question Period yesterday by the honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SPEAKER'S RULING:

The member raised a point of order after Question Period stating that the Premier, during his answers to her question, characterized her comments or questions as misrepresenting the reality of the housing issue to Nova Scotians and that this was unparliamentary.

Last night I reviewed the Hansard transcript and what was said in the following exchange. The Premier had stated, and I quote:

“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 Premier stated that rent control as a solution to the housing issue misleads. He did not state that the honourable member has misled the House. Accordingly, there is no point of order.

We'll now move on with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I'm pleased to submit the annual report of the committee for the period from January 15, 2019 to June 18, 2019 of the 63rd General Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

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

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: I just want to draw the attention of the House to the gallery opposite where I'm joined by our daughter Colleen, who is no stranger to this House. Colleen has been here as a Page. With Colleen is Olivia Goguen. Olivia is a Grade 4 student here in Halifax. She is a family friend. She has come to visit me a few times at our home in Upper Granville.

She invited me to her school, but her principal decided that I was going to speak to the Grade 3 class and not the Grade 4 class, so her mother gave her permission to miss phys. ed. today so she could come to the House and watch the proceedings. Olivia, on behalf of all members of the House, we want to welcome you here today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1674

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

Whereas we all want to build a province with no limitations, a place where Nova Scotians can learn to live their best lives; and

Whereas a social enterprise typically has two goals: to achieve social, cultural, community, economic, or environmental outcomes and to earn revenue; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's social enterprises are located across the province, which are dedicated to helping those with diverse abilities to use their talents, to develop life skills, and to access employment and training opportunities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize the important contribution of social enterprise this year with a focus on those social enterprises that help people with diverse abilities to celebrate February 23-29, 2020, as Social Enterprise Week in the province of Nova Scotia.

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 Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1675

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

Whereas the Pictou County Rivers Association has made exceptional efforts to conserve and manage Nova Scotia's sport fishery; and

Whereas association members helped collect salmon brood stock from West and East Rivers in Pictou County and delivered the Fish Friends program to 13 schools in Pictou County in 2019; and

Whereas the volunteers work with students to complete habitat restoration work with local contractors, including bank stabilization of the West River at Salt Springs Park and hosting the 12th annual winter fishing derby at Gairloch Lake and the 21st annual children's trout derby at Trenton Park;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House congratulate the Pictou Rivers Association for its exceptional efforts to promote sport fishing in Nova Scotia.

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 Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 1676

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

Whereas immigration is a priority of government, and it's making a positive difference in communities across the province, increasing our population and growing our economy; and

Whereas Glen Haven Manor in New Glasgow uses provincial and federal immigration programs to address its labour needs and recently travelled to Kenya on a recruiting mission and offered jobs to qualified Kenyan refugees to come to Nova Scotia and work as continuing care assistants; and

Whereas Glen Haven Manor has made plans to provide extra support to assist its new employees by securing housing so that when they arrive, they have a home and can settle into their new jobs and community;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Glen Haven Manor for its international recruitment and a welcoming workplace approach that can be a model for other employers across the country to address labour shortages.

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. 222 - Entitled an Act Respecting Ridesharing. (Tim Houston)

Bill No. 223 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1991. The University Foundations Act. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)

Bill No. 224 - Entitled an Act Respecting Short-term Rental Accommodations. (Lisa Roberts)

Bill No. 225 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2011. The Elections Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

SAMPSON, GORDON: PRESERVING N. SYDNEY'S HISTORY - THANKS

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, on December 13th, I had the privilege of attending the North Sydney Seniors & Pensioners Christmas Social. During the event, long-time resident Gordon Sampson was honoured.

Forty years ago, in 1980, the North Sydney Historical Society was created largely through the efforts of Mr. Sampson, a noted community historian. The original home of

the Society was in the lower level of the former Bank of Nova Scotia building on Commercial Street, where visitors could view the many pictures, documents, and information about the history of the former town. The Society has since relocated to a larger location and continues to draw both local residents and tourists alike year-round.

The former town of North Sydney is richer because of the work and efforts of individuals like Gordon who preserve its history for future generations. Each and every community has, or should have, a Gordon, and we should all say thanks for their hard work and efforts.

[9:15 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg

**WILKIE, TERRY - VOLUN. FIREFIGHTER:
50 YRS. OF SERV. - CONGRATS.**

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: As we all know, Mr. Speaker, in small communities our volunteer firefighters give selflessly of their time to allow others to feel safe and supported in emergency situations. I rise today to congratulate Terry Wilkie of Spectacle Lake, who recently reached his 50-year milestone with the Dayspring and District Fire Department.

Terry was presented with a medal and commemorative certificate to honour his years of volunteer service. Mr. Wilkie recently celebrated his 70th birthday. He continues to respond to emergency calls, including fires, medicals, motor vehicle collisions, and many other situations where medical assistance is required.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and members of this House of Assembly please join me in congratulating Mr. Wilkie for 50 years of service with the Dayspring and District Fire Department, and thank him for his contributions to the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre

SHARPE, RYAN: POLITICAL POTENTIAL - COMMEND

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, we need to get more youth involved in politics. They have a powerful voice and want to be engaged. However, they often don't get the opportunity to be involved in the political environment.

Ryan Sharpe, a Saint Francis Xavier university graduate, is presently employed with Sobeys Head Office in Stellarton. He is an intelligent person who possesses a great deal of political knowledge and good judgment. Ryan has been involved in politics for many years. He is currently president of the Pictou Centre PC Association in the Central

Nova Conservative riding. For the past several years, he has volunteered in the capacity of Official Agent for several provincial and federal elections.

Ryan has everything it takes to one day make a great MLA for Pictou Centre - great communication skills, integrity, confidence, and honesty.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CODE NINJAS: NEW BUS. - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a new business in Clayton Park West that is introducing innovative methods in technology for youth.

Code Ninjas had their grand opening on February 1st with a full house. They are a New Age type of business in Clayton Park West that aims to teach children, ages 7 to 14, how to code by building video games. In addition, they are preparing these youth for a highly technological future by building and programming robotics. Their mandate is to provide resources for parents, children, and educators in order to engage productively and to have better understanding of the tech world.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask this House of Assembly to join me in applauding Code Ninjas for teaching new skills and helping shape the tech experts of tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington

LOBSTER CRAWL: S. SHORE FESTIVAL, 1ST YR. - CONGRATS.

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, members of this House know very well the importance of Nova Scotia's lobster industry to our province. The South Shore Tourism Cooperative organized the first Nova Scotia Lobster Crawl Festival in 2018. This unique event entices visitors to the South Shore, and to "shell'ebate" this important industry.

This year's festival runs the entire month of February. From Barrington, the Lobster Capital of Canada, to Peggy's Cove, the various events - Lucy the Lobster making her Groundhog Day prediction to chowder cook-offs, to music events, a craft beer festival, and more - all will promote and celebrate the region's lobster fishing heritage, history, and culture.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the organizers of the Nova Scotia Lobster Crawl Festival for their unique promotion of our lobster industry. I wish them all the best in future festivals.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South

WALSH, GARY - DIR., ACADIA ROBOTICS: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, for some years now, I've had the privilege of attending the Annual Robotic Competition at Acadia University. It is inspiring to see the enthusiasm and delight of young Nova Scotians applying their teamwork skills, creativity, and knowledge to robotics.

The success of the Acadia Robotics Program is due in no small measure to Program Director Gary Walsh. Part teacher, part coach, part director, part volunteer, Gary embodies all the qualities of exceptional leadership and being an exceptional citizen. Gary is retiring after 13 years in youth robotics and seven years as the director of the Acadia Robotics Program.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Gary Walsh on his retirement and for his remarkable contribution to the Acadia Robotics Program - a program that has sparked the interest in computer science and robotics for more than 3,000 of our young citizens.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

SALSMAN, MURRAY: GLAD DAY CANCER FUNDRAISER - RECOG.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, in 2015 Murray Salsman received the award for Excellence in Patient Care from Cancer Care Nova Scotia for establishing the Margaret Salsman Cancer Care Memorial Fund. Mr. Salsman created the fund after his wife Margaret died of cancer in 2004, to help cancer patients and their families through tough financial times. Margaret was an avid gardener and loved gladiolas.

After her death, Salsman decided to plant glad bulbs and hold a "Glad Day" in support of the Cancer Care Patient Navigator Program at Valley Regional Hospital. Since its creation, and with the help of many volunteers, over \$200,000 has been raised to help patients in Kings, Annapolis, and Digby Counties.

Please join me in acknowledging Mr. Salsman's efforts to alleviate the financial strain that is often present during very difficult times.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MUISE, RANDY: SPECIAL OLYMPIAN - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, Yarmouth's Randy Muise will be part of Team Nova Scotia at the upcoming Special Olympics Canada Winter Games being held in Thunder Bay, Ontario, competing in the sport of bowling.

Randy is a friendly face in our community and is well known for his positive attitude and for being a passionate supporter of the Yarmouth Junior A Mariners hockey team. Randy has been an active athlete with Special Olympics for the past 30 years and has previously competed in national games in bocce ball.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating my good friend Randy Muise of Yarmouth on being part of Team Nova Scotia at the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games and in wishing him the best of luck. We're all very proud of you, Randy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

WONG, BOB: 90TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to wish a belated 90th birthday to long-time Pictou resident Mr. Bob Wong. This happy milestone was celebrated on August 5, 2019.

Mr. Wong is well known as an avid golfer who practises several times per week and who won numerous championships and awards. Due to some recent health issues, he has been unable to participate in the sport he loves. However, Mr. Wong refuses to let this get his spirits down. He remains active by doing 25 push-ups every day.

Mr. Bob Wong is an inspiration who all who know him. I wish him a happy belated 90th birthday, with many more years of health and happiness.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**ANTIG. WELLNESS COLLECTIVE:
ACHIEVING OPTIMAL HEALTH - CONGRATS.**

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, a group of independent practitioners have partnered together to open the Antigonish Wellness Collective, a shared space in which they can each see clients to promote health and healing. These six individuals all share the same goal: to provide a variety of services to assist their clients in achieving optimal health.

With services ranging from massage therapy, therapeutic massage, athletic therapy, floating, infertility, and more, the Wellness Collective is a great asset to our community. Carrie Colquitt, Jaime Lowe, Amanda Maginley, Dave Maybee, Karen Perro, and Amy Sedgwick have created a welcoming new space at 325 Main Street for residents of Antigonish.

I ask my fellow members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating them on this new venture and offer our best wishes for future success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**SMITH, CARLY/WHYNOT, HANNAH:
IWK BED CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISER - CONGRATS.**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge two Grade 5 students from Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy in Liverpool.

Carly Smith and Hannah Whynot decided they wanted to give back to their community. Inspired by Queens County resident and IWK client Keifer Huskins, they chose the IWK Foundation's Bed Campaign as their fundraising project. They started their two-week campaign on January 13th, quickly surpassing their initial goal of \$250. In the end, they tallied an impressive \$3,408.03.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me as I congratulate these young ladies on their very successful campaign and thank them for setting a shining example of what it means to give back.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my member's statement, I just would like to make note in the House that today one of our colleagues is celebrating a birthday. I would like to wish a happy birthday to the Minister of Health and Wellness, who is, like, a baby, he's so young. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

MACGIBBON, BELINDA: SERV. TO SWIM CLUB - THANKS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, Belinda MacGibbon has made a significant contribution to life in Bedford. For the Bedford Beavers swim team, Belinda has held a variety of roles, everything from parent volunteer to president - a position she has held for three years.

The president manages all sorts of important tasks: hiring coaches, booking the pool, organizing time trials and team events. I think it says a lot about Belinda that she took the time to get to know every single swimmer by name. She attended every swim meet, and they go to a lot of swim meets.

While Belinda was president, the Beavers hosted the Summer Swimming Provincials in 2018. This was a massive undertaking for the club; 500 swimmers competed over three days, and it took two years of planning. The event went off without a hitch, in large part due to Belinda.

Belinda is also deeply involved in the Guiding movement, and she also served as president of her school advisory committee. Folks with the swim team spoke about the amazing positive energy that she brought to her role.

I would like to thank Belinda MacGibbon for her service to the children of Bedford. She has, indeed, made a difference.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**689 HANDLEY PAGE AIR CADET SQUADRON:
OTTAWA TRIP - CONGRATS.**

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge the 689 Handley Page Air Cadet Squadron who will be going on a citizenship trip to Parliament Hill, the Royal Canadian Mint, the Canadian War Museum, and a hockey game in our nation's capital during March break. This trip was spearheaded by Jean and Frank Occomore and staff at the 689 Handley Page Air Cadet Squadron.

The Handley Page squadron has been around for 36 years. More than 20 cadets have worked hard to raise the funds to cover this trip with bottle drives, two sit-down dinners, and grocery bagging at the local Co-op. They also received generous donations from the Parrsboro Legion, the Ladies Auxiliary, and other organizations within Parrsboro.

Please join me in congratulating the 689 Handley Page Air Cadet Squadron for this accomplishment and wish them all the best of luck on their trip.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HULL, ANGELLA: BLACK ARTS AND SMARTS NIGHT - COMMEND

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Angella Hull, coordinator for the North Dartmouth Culturally Academic Enrichment Program, for her recent event, Black Arts and Smarts Night, held at Cole Harbour District High School on January 31st.

The event, which was tied to the program's Kwanzaa celebrations, included drumming by Ken Fells; the singing of the Black national anthem and Young Gifted and Black; a libation ceremony conducted by Bernadette Hamilton-Reid; and presentations from African Nova Scotian and Black community leaders, including Dr. Mayann Francis, newly-named Assistant Fire Chief Corey Beals, Dr. Marlene Ruck Simmonds for the African Canadian Services branch, and Shawn Grouse for the African Canadian Education Service. The event culminated in a group dinner where people were able to mingle and get to know the work of one another.

The dedication of African Nova Scotian educators to young Black learners is amazing. I would like to commend Angella Hull for her vision and hard work at bringing together an inspiring group of people to cultivate and inspire the younger generation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

FIRTH, ETHAN: ATHL. ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Ethan Firth, a resident of Porter's Lake, who is a 13-year-old student in the Gaetz Brook French Immersion Program. He is a member of the Orenda Canoe Club in Lake Echo and is talented in the kayak, coming third in the 16-year-old category in the National 6 km K1 race held in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In addition to his talents in kayaking, he also plays hockey and was nominated and won the Atlantic Division Top Male Athlete of the Year.

I recognize and congratulate Ethan Firth for achieving these high-level athletic achievements in kayaking and wish him every success in the future.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, before I do my member's statement, I would like to acknowledge another birthday. The member for Kings North is also celebrating his birthday today. (Applause)

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

FENYVESI FAMILY: COM. SERV. - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to recognize the amazing achievements of Sabrina Fenyvesi and her children, Amelia and Gabrielle. All three have volunteered as key members of our Eastern Passage Music for Mental Health fundraising planning committee.

Amelia, who is only eight, recently helped out at the MLA multicultural potluck dinner and stayed until the very end to make sure everything was cleaned up. Sabrina, her mother, is a Dartmouth teacher who recently transcribed into French a Colby Community Church book, written by Anita Gazzola and illustrated by Melissa Conrad, called *As I Walk*.

Sabrina is setting a positive example of community volunteerism for her children, and they have clearly developed a similar generosity of spirit. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Sabrina, Gabrielle, and Amelia Fenyvesi for their volunteer work in our communities.

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

CANSO SEAHAWKS: SUCCESSFUL SEASON - CONGRATS.

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Canso boys basketball team for an amazing season. The Canso boys basketball team, the Seahawks, won both on and off the court this year. They were lucky enough to get kitted out with new jerseys by a friend of the Seahawks' team member, Durhan, and his father, assistant coach John MacLean.

[9:30 a.m.]

Mr. Wolke became a friend of the MacLean family in 2018 while attending Stanfest. Since then, he has provided support to basketball players in Canso, bringing basketballs and nets to Canso youth during his 2019 Stanfest trip. This year, Mr. Wolke made the drive from Cincinnati to watch the Seahawks play in the Guysborough Academy Annual Invitational Basketball Tournament, where the Canso Seahawks took home second place, thanks to the hard work of team members Brady Rhynold, Tyson Greencorn, Noah Keefe, Chad Parker, Brady Delorey, Jack Horne, Logan Doyle, Tullee Erkidjuk-Schnare, Zachary Gloade, Ashton Creamer, Dana Rhynold, and top scorer for the championship game, Durhan MacLean, and player of the game, Kobe Carrigan, as well as their coach, Brandon Dort, and assistant coach, John MacLean. Well done to the Canso Seahawks.

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

RED ISLAND TRAIL: CO-OPERATIVE REFURBISHMENT - THANKS

KEITH BAIN: When a small, rural community is passionate about an issue, they roll up their sleeves and go to work. This is true for the Friends of the Red Island Trail. Fifteen months ago, the Friends of the Red Island Trail began a project to complete much needed repairs to the bridge and benches along the trail. The community and visitors can now enjoy colour-coded trail maps, benches at scenic locations, and an engineered footbridge over the spillway. The Red Island Trail is now truly an all-season trail.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating the Friends of the Red Island Trail, members of the St. Ann's Bay United Church, community volunteers, and local businesses, and to thank their funding partners, the Municipality of Victoria County, the Province of Nova Scotia (Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage), as well as many local businesses and individuals who contributed to this project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

CHRISTAKOS, LEO: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: In December, Halifax unexpectedly lost a pillar of the Greek community with the passing of Armdale resident Leo Christakos. In the days following his death, the outpouring of love and respect for Leo in the pages of Halifax media, within our restaurant scene, and online was enormous. Born to Greek immigrants, Leo began working in his family's restaurants in the 1970s and developed a talent, creativity, and love of craft that would shape his career in our city's culinary landscape.

Leo would go on to own Halifax staples including The Paper Chase Newstand and Café, Brooklyn Warehouse, Ace Burger Company, and Battery Park, all while sharing his journey as a restaurateur with his beloved son and business partner, George. He brought the slow food movement to Halifax, championed small and local producers, and won numerous local culinary awards. Leo wanted his food to delight and impress you, but also to make you think. Please join me in sharing our condolences with his wife, Patricia, children, and community.

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

ROZICKI, RYAN: PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH - CONGRATS.

BRIAN COMER: I rise today to congratulate boxer Ryan Rozicki of Sydney Forks, who extended his professional record of 12-0 when he recently defeated the Czech Republic's Vladimir Reznicek.

Rozicki's known for his knock-out punches in the ring and exceptional dedication to the sport of boxing. However, I would like to shed some light on what he does outside of the ring. Ryan has been very forthcoming about his lack of good decision making in his younger days that led to being placed on probation. He has attributed his rough past to his battle with mental health. With support from his family and friends, he has turned his life around and channelled his energy into the sport he loves.

Ryan opened a new gym and now spends his time outside of the ring helping those with similar struggles to choose a better path in life. I stand here today to once again congratulate Ryan Rozicki, not only on his current boxing record, but on his continued commitment to helping those struggling with mental health.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**LITTLE, DANNY/JOHNSTON, SHANNON:
XMAS GIFT DRIVE - THANKS**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today to recognize Danny Little and Shannon Johnston, owners of Coastal Designs and residents of Terence Bay. Danny and Shannon

have an abundance of generosity and Christmas spirit. For the past several years, this hard-working couple have shared their kind-heartedness by filling an actual dump truck full of toys for the Salvation Army to distribute as Christmas gifts to less fortunate and vulnerable children throughout our region.

For weeks leading up to Christmas holiday, Danny and Shannon organize a grassroots campaign within their community by reaching out to friends, neighbours, and work associates to request toys and cash donations. They spend hours of their own time providing information to the community, picking up items that cannot be delivered, shopping for gifts purchased with cash donations, and collecting, storing, and managing all of the items. Prior to delivery day, they arrange for a clean dump truck to come and load up thousands of toys for distribution through the Salvation Army.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in recognizing and thanking Danny and Shannon for generous spirit to ensure all children in our region experience the joy and magic of Christmas.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

BINGHAM, KAREN: LYMPHEDEMA AWARENESS - THANKS

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Karen Bingham of Sackville. Karen Bingham was born with lymphedema, which is a flaw in the lymphatic system whereby fluids build and cause a swelling. Karen is in constant pain because of the acute swelling in her legs and feet which makes walking very difficult.

Karen has not let this slow her down. As the president of the Lymphedema Association of Nova Scotia, she is hoping to raise awareness of those suffering from this disease, to share their experiences and to be a support to each other.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Karen for her efforts to talk about this disease which, in turn, will help others suffering from lymphedema know that they are not alone.

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

LEBANESE SYRIANS: CELEBRATING C.B. COMMUNITY - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend there was a great event that took place in Sydney, celebrating the rich history and culture of our community members of Lebanese and Syrian descent. We had a number of events that took place in Sydney over the weekend. We started with a church service led by Father Albert Maroun and Father Jake Andrea; followed then with a hockey game of 40 hockey players of Lebanese and Syrian descent - some former NHLers, some former Olympians; and

wound up with a party at the local Cedars Club, the hall that was built over 105 years ago by the families of Lebanese and Syrian descent.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to congratulate the organizing committee: Art Risk, Kevin Morrison, Blair Joseph, Becky Chisholm, and Gary Andrea for the work they did to ensure that the weekend was a success.

To all the families of Lebanese and Syrian descent at home, congratulations. I am so happy that you could get together with all the families. Thank you for your contributions in the past and your continued contributions in the CBRM.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

LIGHTS FOR HEALTH FIREWORKS: COM. ENRICHMENT - THANKS

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, this past December I was pleased to attend the Northside Harbourview Hospital Foundation's 20th annual Lights for Health fireworks. This annual event has become a holiday season institution on the Northside, with patients and members of the surrounding community in attendance to enjoy the turning on of the Christmas lights in front of the Northside General Hospital and the accompanying fireworks display.

Hot chocolate was enjoyed by all afterwards, along with a visit from Santa for the very young spectators, as well as Christmas carols in the cafeteria.

The foundation continues to provide a great service to the community through its work and efforts to provide both hospitals with much-needed medical equipment, services, programs which benefit the entire community and area.

It is a real pleasure to thank and congratulate the organizers of the Lights for Health fireworks for another great event.

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

ARCHIBALD, MYA: HIGH JUMP, GOLD MEDALLIST - CONGRATS.

BILL HORNE: Today I rise to recognize that the 2019 national high jump gold medal at the Canadian Legion Track and Field Championships went to Mya Archibald, who is currently a Grade 10 student at Lockview High School.

Mya battled throughout the competition with twice sailing over the bar on her last attempt to be able to move on to the next step. Mya finished the competition clearing a jump of 1.61 metres and outjumping her competitor for the gold medal, thereby achieving a new personal best and becoming a national champion.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Mya on her tremendous achievement, which was the result of much hard work and training, and wishing her the best of luck for future track and field competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

BATE, KATRINA - DELEGATE: INTL. LEARNING CAMP - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to congratulate Pictou Academy student Ms. Katrina Bate, who was chosen to participate in the 2020 Nova Scotia Campeche International Learning Camp and Service Learning Project.

There are only 21 students chosen to participate from Nova Scotia, and Katrina is only one of three students chosen from Chignecto Central Regional Centre for Education. Students are chosen based on the leadership skills they display in their schools and communities.

Katrina will travel to Campeche, Mexico, in March. She will be matched with a Mexican student, attend school, and experience the language and culture. This trip is fully funded. However, the students raise money to leave in Campeche to assist Mexican students with education and health needs.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I congratulate Katrina and wish her all the best in safety and education travels.

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

BAY RIDES GROCERY BUS: CONNECTING SENIORS - CONGRATS.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the St. Margaret's Bay Seniors Association and the rural transit service, Bay Rides, on their very successful Grocery Bus service for seniors. Started in 2016, the service is now running at capacity and has a substantial waiting list.

Last Summer, I had the very distinct pleasure of joining the participants as a volunteer assistant on one of the Bay Rides' grocery runs. Each seat on the bus was full, and the shoppers were enthusiastically looking forward to their special outing.

Many seniors either do not have a vehicle or do not drive, so getting groceries and other routine shopping tasks accomplished can be difficult. The grocery run also relieves seniors from feeling unnecessarily dependent upon friends and relatives. Keeping seniors connected with each other and offering them community support helps keep them healthy and connected.

I invite the members of this House to join me congratulating Bay Rides and the St. Margaret's Bay Seniors Association on their very successful Grocery Bus service for seniors.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member Queens-Shelburne.

OLIVER, DONALD - SENATOR: ORDER OF CANADA - CONGRATS.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Senator Donald Oliver on his recent appointment to the Order of Canada. In Queens County, he is known as “the good senator” - a man of compassion, humility, and tenacity. This appointment recognizes his untiring efforts as a senator, educator, and civic-minded community member who promotes inclusion and diversity in Canada.

Senator Oliver is a tireless advocate for the African Nova Scotian community and was named Speaker Pro Tempore of the Senate in 2010. Of note, during Black History Month in February 2008, he introduced a motion to recognize the contributions of African Canadians; and February is Black History Month. This motion was adopted on March 4, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating this truly great Nova Scotian and Canadian on this well-deserved recognition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**ST. JOHN'S MOTHER/DAUGHTER CHOIR:
ANN. FUNDRAISER - THANKS**

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the St. John's Lutheran Mother & Daughter Choir of Mahone Bay for their ongoing commitment to raise funds to support the local food bank.

This group of approximately 33 mothers and daughters present an annual concert in Mahone Bay in the month of December. This year was the 15th concert the group has performed. The musical selections are diverse and are chosen to appeal to a wide audience. The musical director of the Mother & Daughter Choir is Leslee Barry. Leslee views this annual concert as a gift to the food bank, funded by the generosity and goodwill of others.

The audience, the singers, and the many instrumentalists involved, willingly support Leslee in her tireless effort as she coordinates this event. All proceeds collected from admissions to the concert are donated to the Mahone Bay Area Food Bank.

I would ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing the ongoing support of St. John's Lutheran Mother & Daughter Choir and that it provides good funds for the Mahone Bay Area Food Bank.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

MACPHEE, JERICO: MMA CAREER - CONGRATS.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jerico MacPhee who hails from Springhill - a community that is very proud of his accomplishments. Jerico hit the pro ranks of the MMA with a bang when he knocked out his opponent in just 28 seconds at his debut on February 8th at the Rath Eastlink Community Centre in Truro.

Jerico MacPhee has trained at the Tristar Gym in Montreal for the past three years. The gym is home to UFC legend Georges St-Pierre. Jerico believes that it is crucial to be mentally prepared for a fight, that doubt is a fighter's worst enemy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Jerico MacPhee on his outstanding achievements and wish him the best of luck as his MMA fighting career continues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

NWACHUKWU, CHAS. - PHOTOGRAPHER: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a young immigrant and entrepreneur whom I have had the chance to get to know in the past year. Charles Nwachukwu arrived in Halifax from Nigeria in February 2018. He works at the IWK in the Contract Procurement department as a strategic sourcing coordinator. He loves his job, but his real passion is photography. He and his partner, Chidi Esonwune, own Grand Moment Digital Productions.

As an employee of the IWK, he is involved in the annual IWK telethon. Charles also volunteers his photography skills at Saint Benedict's Church. He is involved with the children's group Little Learners Social Club, photographing some of their events.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members of the Legislature to please join me in applauding an individual who enriches his community with his generous spirit.

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

[9:45 a.m.]

PETERS, CHRIS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the amazing achievements of Mr. Chris Peters of Eastern Passage.

Chris is involved in so many activities in the Passage area, it's hard to keep track. Chris serves on the Eastern Passage and Area Business Association Board of Directors and remains an active member. He is also the fearless announcer at our Maritime Race Weekend. We also celebrate his efforts to fundraise with the Wine and Booze Survivor for Soccer in support of the East Coast Varsity soccer team and their trip to Spain.

Chris is also a successful realtor with Royal LePage Atlantic, and he recently received a President's Gold Award. Chris is now the president-elect with the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing Chris for his outstanding contributions to our community and to his profession.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**ROBERTSON, BRENDA - PROFESSOR: RECREATION N.S. LIFE
MEMBERSHIP AWARD - CONGRATS.**

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, the Honorary Life Membership Award of Recreation Nova Scotia recognizes individuals who have made significant, outstanding, and consistent contributions to recreation in Nova Scotia. Recently, Dr. Brenda Robertson of Gaspereau was the first woman to receive this prestigious award. Dr. Robertson has dedicated her life to recreation in Nova Scotia as a vocation, a career, through her volunteerism, and now in retirement. It's an impressive legacy.

Dr. Robertson has long been an advocate around the importance of recreational opportunities in our communities. She has contributed to provincial and national recreation policies and authored numerous publications on this topic as well. When we consider what makes our communities thrive, we are fortunate that individuals like Dr. Robertson have steadfastly shed light on the importance of recreation.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Dr. Brenda Robertson for receiving Recreation Nova Scotia's highest award and for her lifetime of work and commitment to recreation.

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

VIC. CO. EMPLOYEES: SERVICE AWARDS - CONGRATS.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, employee recognition is a way to let staff know their contributions are recognized and appreciated. A healthy work environment is crucial for the success of any organization or business. Victoria County is proof of that.

On January 7th, Bruce Morrison took the opportunity to publicly recognize 10 employees for their dedication and hard work. Awards were presented to Heather MacLean for 40 years, Zina MacNeil and Cathi MacKenzie for 20 years, Wilma Best for 10 years, Greg Daisley for 10 years, Tony Maclean for 10 years, Billy Pierrard for 10 years, Kelly Brett for 10 years, Jocelyn Bethune for 5 years, and Leanne MacEachen for 5 years.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating all award recipients and thank them for their years of service and dedication to the Municipality of the County of Victoria and for the support to all residents that they serve.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Yarmouth.

HURLBURT, WAYNE: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: After 42 years, Yarmouth County's Wayne Hurlburt has retired as a school bus driver. Wayne was a beloved and familiar face in the morning and after school for students and their families of Carleton Consolidated Elementary School and Maple Grove Education Centre.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Wayne Hurlburt for safely transporting several generations of students for over four decades and in wishing him a happy, healthy, and well-deserved retirement. Wayne, it's time to start working on our business plan together.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville Beaver Bank.

JOHNS, MARIA - DAUGHTER: BIRTHDAY WISHES

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I want to rise today and recognize a birthday of somebody very special to me. My youngest daughter, Maria, turns 12 today, and this is the first time in the House that I've been able to recognize that. I have had the opportunity to recognize my older daughter's birthday, not my youngest. Since it is today, I figure I had better do it so that I won't get in trouble.

I'd like all the members of the House to join me in wishing my youngest daughter, Maria, a happy birthday. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

KENLEY, MARLENE: SUPPORTING BEDFORD DAYS - THANKS

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to thank Marlene Kenley of Resto Restaurant in Bedford for all her volunteer work over many years.

Marlene has volunteered her services, as well as the services of her restaurant, to the committee organizing Bedford Days for the past seven years. In particular, she's provided support to Rouge et Blanc, one of the most ambitious events during Bedford Days. This past year, more than 600 people attended Rouge et Blanc at Sunnyside Mall.

The folks who organize Bedford Days note that Marlene is super friendly, that she accommodates all the requests from the Bedford Days committee, and that she frequently goes out of her way to help.

I'd like to echo the Bedford Days committee and the Bedford Volunteer Awards committee by thanking Marlene for her outstanding support of our community's annual celebration. She plays a big role in its success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice on an introduction.

HON. MARK FUREY: I draw my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery, where we're joined today by Mr. Richard Temporale, the chief electoral officer for the province of Nova Scotia. We've had the opportunity to work together and this morning had the privilege to present amendments to the Elections Act.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Temporale and his team at Elections Nova Scotia for their persistence and hard work in bringing us to where we are today. (Applause)

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

MYETTE, RICHARD: SPECIAL OLYMPIAN - CONGRATS.

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Richard Myette, a resident of Breton Ability Centre in Sydney River. Richard will be participating in the national Special Olympics this February in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Richard will be representing Nova Scotia as a member of the floor hockey team. He is the oldest player, at 70 years of age, and said he has been playing floor hockey for more than 20 years. He usually plays forward. Floor hockey isn't Richard's only sport; he also enjoys soccer and skating and is also well known as being a nature enthusiast.

I stand today to congratulate Richard Myette on his dedication to this sport and for representing this province in the Special Olympics.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

AFRICAN N.S. YOUTH LAB: EMPLOYMENT RPT. - CONGRATS.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of all members to the very informative and interesting report of the African Nova Scotian Youth Employment Lab, which over the last year explored the barriers to employment for African Nova Scotians aged 18 to 35.

The African Nova Scotian Youth Employment Lab has been a project of Common Good Solutions and the O.N.E. North End Community Economic Development Society with support from the Province. From interviews and group conversations, the project team found that barriers include lack of child care, discrimination based on last name or address, lack of support from colleagues or supervisors, and self-doubt encouraged by racist stereotypes.

Throughout the project, the lab modelled how we can address these barriers, for example, by engaging with employers and by gathering and sharing employment opportunities with all participants. I look forward to watching the next phase roll out.

I thank and appreciate the project team of Josh Creighton, Rachel Derrah, Jalana Lewis, Robert Nichols, LaMeia Reddick, and Rodney Small.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**HALLIDAY, MIKAYLA: DUKE OF ED.
GOLD AWARD - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, Mikayla Halliday of East Clifford received the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award on December 2nd from the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, at the Halifax Central Library.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a global program with the goal of challenging, empowering, and recognizing young people. Mikayla continues to work with Girl Guides of Canada as a leader within the Halifax South district. This year marks her 18th year in Guiding. She says that the Duke of Edinburgh's award program has taught her so many things about herself and what she is capable of. She is certain that she will never stop volunteering or marvelling at the world around her.

Congratulations and best of luck to Mikayla Halliday, who will be graduating this year from NSCAD University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**BEACON HOUSE: 35 YRS.,
NEIGHBOURS HELPING NEIGHBOURS - THANKS**

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the staff and the more than 100 dedicated volunteers at Beacon House in Lower Sackville.

Beacon House is a collaboration of local churches guided by a volunteer board of directors and is a member agency of Feed Nova Scotia. Beacon House has been providing food, clothing, and programs to those in need in our community since 1985. Neighbours Helping Neighbours is their motto and is lived in the way they treat clients with respect each and every day while providing for their basic needs.

I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking the staff and volunteers at Beacon House as they continue to serve those facing financial hardships in the communities of Lower Sackville, Bedford, Fall River, and Hammonds Plains.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

YUKON HERITAGE DAY - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I'd just like to take a moment to acknowledge Yukon Heritage Day today. In acknowledging this particular day for the territory of Yukon, I'd like to also acknowledge the Premier of the Yukon: Antigonish, Nova Scotia native Sandy Silver. I wish Premier Silver and all of the residents of the Yukon the very best on today, Yukon Heritage Day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

SIMMONDS, JUSTIN - CST.: COM. COMMITMENT - RECOG.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize RCMP Constable Justin Simmonds, who is the first African Nova Scotian born in North Preston to work in the community as a policeman. He learned the value of hard work from his grandfather. His grandmother taught him karma, that what you put out in the world, be it good or bad, you get back.

He is a regular presence at local community centres and schools, trying to engage with children in a positive way to effect change. Constable Simmonds organized a basketball game between the RCMP and community players, which was held on Heritage Day, February 17th, at the North Preston Community Centre.

I recognize and congratulate Constable Justin Simmonds for serving as a positive role model and for his ongoing commitment to the children of the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**COLEMAN, GEMMA/TOWNSEND, TERRI ANNE:
SPECIAL OLYMPIANS - BEST WISHES**

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I rise today to recognize two outstanding Special Olympians and their coaches who will represent Nova Scotia at the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Thunder Bay, February 24th to March 1st.

Gemma Coleman is a long-time bowler with Kings Special Olympics, but this will be her first time participating in the nationals. Terri Anne Townsend joined Special Olympics with Annapolis County in 2015 and is also making her first appearance at the nationals. Local bowler Pat Nixon is the head coach for the Nova Scotia bowling team and is assisted by Linda Woodbury from Halifax.

I would ask all members of the House to both congratulate and wish the team every success. They truly represent the motto of the Special Olympics: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: May I have permission to make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TIM HOUSTON: In the gallery today we have a familiar face to many people. I'd like to welcome Sarah. She's off on maternity leave, the best times of her life, for sure. She's here with us today. She has brought along for the journey the province's newest Tory, two-month-old Thomas. Thank you for joining us today. (Applause)

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

SEA SHORE FIRE DEPT: 50 YRS. OF COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. LLOYD HINES: I rise today in recognition of the 50th anniversary of service for the Port Bickerton fire department. The Sea Shore Fire Department of Port Bickerton is dedicated to providing the best service possible to the community of Port Bickerton and surrounding areas. Its members put in many hours of training and volunteer time to ensure that they're able to protect and serve the community.

Members of the Sea Shore Fire Department have a long history of service, with some, such as Keith Horton, being original members and passing on their support and hard work to this generation's dedicated volunteer firefighters. The fire department is an

important and integral part of the community, providing a focal point and feeling of safety for Port Bickerton.

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

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those members' statements. We will get ready for the commencement of Question Period. I'll take this opportunity to remind everybody that we will have no unsolicited comments during Question Period, please, and the use of electronic devices is prohibited.

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: ALTON GAS COURT CASE - EXPENDITURE

TIM HOUSTON: I am going to return to the Alex Cameron case. There is a single line from an email to Mr. Cameron from Deputy Minister Bernie Miller that caught my eye in the court documents. The email reads, "If the court considers it necessary to assess this aspect, the position raised in the brief may be advanced . . ." I can table that email.

This is an email that Mr. Miller sent to Mr. Cameron, following his discussion or in conjunction with his discussion with a very tall man. This appears to be clear instruction on November 14th, before the case proceeded, that Mr. Cameron should use the "conquered peoples" argument, if it is deemed needed.

Despite this clear instruction, the government chose to characterize Mr. Cameron as a rogue agent.

My question for the Premier is: Why did the Premier spend time, a significant amount of taxpayers' money using Bay Street lawyers, when it was clear that a senior advisor to the Premier had approved the argument in question?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The reality is that Mr. Miller has a sworn affidavit in the court and he made a release yesterday. I had no involvement in the preparation of Alex Cameron's brief; at no time did I see or approve its contents.

I was contacted by Mr. Cameron on the evening of Friday, November 11th - which was a holiday - at home. By that point his argument had been developed. The brief had been filed in June, well in advance of hearing from him on November 14th, which means that Mr. Cameron filed his own brief in June.

I was asked to confirm the instructions on Monday, November 14th, before he went into court. I provided him with instructions in writing that I feel he did not follow, as established in the attached affidavit. I'll table that document that was put out yesterday.

TIM HOUSTON: The brief was filed, I believe on August 2nd. It was on the desk of the deputy minister, probably the Premier's radar, for months before this was advanced.

The arguments raised in the brief were the discussion of many meetings; there was some conflict and some discussion as to whether the argument should be used. It was well known. That is why Mr. Cameron sought clear instructions. He received those clear instructions in the form of an email from Mr. Miller, before the case proceeded, that said that if the court considers it necessary to assess this aspect, the position raised in the brief - the very brief the Premier is speaking about - was used.

These emails are copied to the deputy minister, to the Premier, to the Deputy Minister of Planning and Priorities, the CEO of Aboriginal Affairs, the Executive Director of Legal Affairs, the Executive Director of Aboriginal Affairs. This is the cream of the cream, in terms of elected officials. You can't get any higher approval than that, so when the emails . . .

THE SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

TIM HOUSTON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. If an email approves an action and has these people attached to the process, why is there any question as to whether Mr. Cameron was following instructions or not?

THE PREMIER: As well, in Mr. Miller's affidavit in line 32 states: "The Premier stated immediately and strongly that he did not see what argument could be made about the duty to consult. He stated that the Province recognized a duty to consult, and that the only thing that Mr. Cameron should argue in Court was that the Province recognized the duty to consult and had met that duty through extensive consultations."

Also, the Premier noted that the deadline had been extended in consultation with First Nations because we believe we have a duty to consult. The argument in court was we've met that obligation; Mr. Cameron chose to argue something very different than what I stated.

TIM HOUSTON: And yet before the court case proceeded on Monday, November 14th, at 8:20 a.m., Mr. Miller sent an email to Mr. Cameron that says, and I'll read it again,

for the benefit of the Premier - this is Mr. Miller's email which he drafted after speaking with a very tall man: "If the court considers it necessary to assess this aspect, the position raised in the brief may be advanced . . ."

Mr. Speaker, this is a very unfortunate situation. On the one hand we have a very tall man with endless taxpayer money hiring Bay Street lawyers for thousands of dollars an hour; on the other hand, we have a single Nova Scotian. A little person trying to defend their reputation. Three courts have determined that the single Nova Scotian, reaching into their own pocket trying to finance this, against the might of the government trying to hide what happened is a very, very unfortunate situation.

I'd like to ask the Premier . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to remind everybody that this will be the one and only warning for both sides, that we'll have no unsolicited comments. If I can identify who the comments are coming from, you are going to be politely asked to excuse yourself.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, with the question, please.

TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the single Nova Scotians reached into their own pockets to fund this.

I would like to ask the Premier: How much taxpayer money did the Premier invest in Bay Street lawyers to pretend that what actually happened didn't happen?

THE PREMIER: I will attempt to get that number for him, but the reality of it is that he stops reading. What it actually says is that the lawyer who made the brief in June, if the court recognizes what is in that brief, he must identify to the court that the Province understands, recognizes the duty to consult. The Crown has met that obligation. That was our argument.

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

PREM. LOBBYING LAWS - ETHICAL CONDUCT

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, last year the Premier met with Jean Charest to discuss the priorities of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada. Mr. Charest is registered as a lobbyist with the aerospace industry in Ottawa but not in Nova Scotia - although, in fact, that is required under Nova Scotia law.

When asked about this by the media, the Premier said that it was not his job to determine whether or not those he meets are following the lobbying laws of Nova Scotia.

I want to ask the Premier: If it's not his job to insist on a high level of ethical conduct in the government, then who in the world's job is it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. If someone is a registered lobbyist, it is up to that individual to register with the lobbyists here in the province of Nova Scotia.

GARY BURRILL: The Premier's response was also reflected in a response he gave to a reporter asking about this same subject when he said, I don't ask people who come for meetings whether they are registered or not. This response sounds an awful lot to me like I don't care. It appears to a lot of people that the Premier thinks that he's above these rules - but as Premier he is not above the rules. I want to ask the Premier to clarify his understanding of whether or not the lobbying laws do, in fact, apply to him.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not a lobbyist. The law is very straightforward that if you're a lobbyist, you register - the individual does. I want to tell the honourable member that I've met with many former premiers and prime ministers at various times over the last six years and before. I will continue to meet with anyone who has had the privilege to hold elected office in this country and lead a province or a national Party.

Former Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, has been very supportive of this province when it comes to continuing to work with the United States. Mr. Chrétien is very helpful when it comes to Asia when we work with him. Former premiers all across this country communicated with me at different times and talked to me about different things. I will continue to work with them because all of them, to a person, want to see the federation do well. They want to see it strong and they reach out and support individual provinces when they can.

GARY BURRILL: The Premier is, in fact, providing evidence of the extent to which this is not an isolated incident. In the case of Jean Chrétien lobbying the Premier over a port development, the Premier not only overlooked the lack of his lobbyist registration, he even denied that he was being lobbied at all.

Part of the responsibility of a premier, as we see it, is to be exemplary in honouring all the laws of the province, including the lobbying laws.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he intend to honour the lobbying laws, to honour the lobbying laws of Nova Scotia in the future?

THE PREMIER: As always, I communicate to all Nova Scotians that the laws are there for all of us to follow. Anyone who is a lobbyist should register.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. INGERSOLL RPT. - RELEASE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, when the media got wind of what the Premier's agents and the Premier had instructed Mr. Cameron to present in court, there was a public outcry. The result of that public outcry, the government - the then-Minister of Justice, I believe - commissioned Dan Ingersoll to do a report, which was a review of the handling of the file. The report was delivered to the government, but it was not shared with Mr. Cameron and I can't find it anywhere in the Province's response.

I'm wondering what might be in that report and why it hasn't been shared. My question for the Premier: Will he release the Ingersoll report?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this situation will be back before the courts. There's a document that government will do, and at the end that will be released as required in the court case or following that court case, when it's been to its final conclusion.

TIM HOUSTON: It's an interesting change in language from the Premier. Yesterday he said it's before the courts. Now he's saying it will be before the courts.

I believe there is a high probability, given the Premier's actions on this, that it will be before the courts as well, but it is not now.

I'm curious. When things are generally above board, you don't use code names like "very tall men," and you release reports. I wonder what's in this report and why the government won't share it. Gee, I really wonder.

The report was not included in the initial disclosures of the Province, and I believe it's relevant to this case. I would like to ask the Premier again why he won't release the Ingersoll report. I suspect that it shows what the other court documents and three courts have already found. He should just come clean and release it to Nova Scotians.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we will see this to its conclusion.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W: MYHEALTHNS - ONLINE ALTERNATIVE

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The discontinuation of the MyHealthNS portal has been an expensive endeavour and there appears to be no tool plan that can replace it. The shutdown process has been a burden to both patients and doctors, with 38,000 Nova Scotians now unable to use it. In a system that desperately needs to innovate, this is definitely a step backward for electronic records in Nova Scotia.

My question for the minister is: What are the current plans for implementing another online service and how will Nova Scotians learn about it?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the question. As the members may recall, Nova Scotia was the very first province or jurisdiction in the country to roll out a patient portal solution several years ago.

The circumstances that have led to this point and the wrap-up of the service at the end of March are well documented publicly. What we realized as we were looking to move forward was that there are number of new technology platforms out there, including new functionality in electronic medical records, that have been recently updated over the last 18 to 24 months in primary practices across the province. We were part of investing to make that happen successfully.

It is incumbent and prudent on us as a government and as a province to evaluate this new technology along with the other platforms that are out there to make sure we make the right decisions going forward. That is exactly what we are doing.

KARLA MACFARLANE: So many years ago they said this was the right solution, and it had a price tag of \$13 million along with it. Now we have 38,000 people who can't use the system. The government and the company responsible have been very silent on this contract and why it was not renewed.

It's concerning that there seems to be no analysis on the failure of this system, or at least not one that has been made public. Now the Province wants us to go down the same road with One Person One Record, which people have indicated is going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars, maybe even up to a billion dollars.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why should we believe that One Person One Record will succeed where MyHealthNS has failed?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I didn't indicate that the service had failed. I indicated that the vendor had left the province. They didn't renew the contract with the Province.

Again, why was the situation a number of years ago, when it was implemented, saying it was the solution? Because at that time it was the solution. It was innovative - the first implementation across the country.

What this highlights is the rapid advance of technology within the health care sector. Why should the members and the people of Nova Scotia have confidence in our ability to move forward successfully with IT projects? Because over the last 18 to 24 months we supported the upgrade of nearly every electronic medical record system in

primary health care offices throughout the province. That went extremely well and brought new, modern technology into doctors' offices throughout this province.

[10:15 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIR - VG HOSP. REBUILD: COST PLAN - RELEASE

TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. We all witnessed the Summer Street parkade debacle - secret plans, secret meetings, confidentiality agreements and, in the end, a plan that was reversed because this government didn't do its homework to begin with. Now we're supposed to trust them, just trust them with a \$2 billion rebuild of the VG, the same department that brought you *Bluenose II* and the ferry - just trust them.

I'd like to ask the minister: Will the minister release the full, costed plan, including the architectural specs, so that Nova Scotians can see how their money will be spent on this up-to-\$2 billion rebuild?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I want to just say how proud I am to be part of a government that is taking the opportunity to improve the major core health facilities for Nova Scotia and indeed for all of Atlantic Canada. It is an incredible undertaking. It is going to be a real milestone in the history of our province in terms of re-establishing our health care facility.

I would refer the member to our website, where the complete plan for development exists. He is free to look at it at that point.

TIM HOUSTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is from the least-transparent government in history, the one that won't bring you the Ingersoll report or the Fitch report or the Deloitte report - so many closed-door meetings on so many issues. Yet we are to just trust that they'll get this one right.

We just heard about a \$13 million mistake on the other system and it goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal: Will the minister release the Deloitte report so that we can see how this government intends to spend the taxpayer money. Hopefully it's a little more effective than the Premier's Bay Street lawyers who have been an untold cost to taxpayers. Will he release the Deloitte report?

LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, again I would say the expansion of the Halifax Infirmary and the addition of 1.5 million square feet into that facility, almost doubling the

size of the facility, is an amazing gift to Nova Scotia and indeed to Atlantic Canada. It is the largest health care investment in the history of this province.

I would also just point out that the *Bluenose II* remark - it actually started with the PC Party. That is who started that renovation there.

AN HON. MEMBER: You fixed it.

LLOYD HINES: That's right, we did fix it. The issue of parking is well under way. We have a great relationship with HRM. We are seeking solutions and we are determined that we will bring in this facility on time and on budget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

PREM. HOUSING CRISIS - SOLUTIONS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. More and more, this Liberal Government's solution for people and families on the brink of homelessness is to move them into hotels. Hotel costs of ESIA clients by the Department of Community Services has increased every year since 2013-14. Often the reason that people are not in permanent, stable housing is because their ESIA rates are too low to pay skyrocketing rents.

We have a failing rent supplement strategy. Short-term rentals are removing housing units from the market and a provincial vacancy rate of 1.4 per cent means there is virtually nothing available, let alone options that are affordable. This week we learned that the stopgap solution of housing people in hotels is failing.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that this expensive and absurd solution is the result of a perfect storm of his failed policies, inadequate income assistance rates, and an unchecked housing crisis?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we have the single largest increase in income assistance in the province's history. That was after four years when the New Democratic Party didn't do anything.

Let's be clear about this. That doesn't mean the situation is one that should be taken lightly. The reality of it is there is a myriad of housing options and at times the department needs to house people in hotels. This particular hotel has decided it is no longer going to do that.

The minister and her department are working diligently with not only this family but with partners across this region to provide options when it comes to affordable housing for families and children.

SUSAN LEBLANC: It's easy to have a single, largest income assistance rate hike when you freeze rates for the years preceding that rate hike. The fact is that that rate hike, the standard household rate, is not going to help people on income assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight to the members of this House what it means for the families and children who are put in this situation. Single mothers have no way to prepare their lunches for their children headed to school or to cook supper for them when they come home. Constant change and upheaval for the families means trauma for the children and a total lack of ability to plan for the future and manage a household. Put yourselves in that situation for a moment. All of this could be avoided by real increases to ESIA rates and a substantial action on the housing crisis.

Mr. Speaker, what will it take for the Premier to take meaningful action so that Nova Scotian families can be in a safe, stable, and affordable home and not be shuffled from hotel to hotel?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. In her preamble, she spoke about rates being frozen. She was very right. The New Democratic Party spent like there was no tomorrow, but they forgot the most vulnerable people in our province.

Imagine this. We had a \$650 million hole in one year - in one year - and what did they do for people on income assistance, those looking for housing? Nothing.

What we're doing is putting forward a comprehensive plan to be able to deal with the options. This is a very serious issue. I said yesterday that we're unhappy with the rate of child poverty in this province. We need to continue to do better. We need to continue to work with community organizations across this province to address that issue.

The same issue comes around affordable housing. This part of our province - the entire province has grown, but in particular, we have a housing issue here, one that will cause all of us to work together to be able to provide an option, whether it's the municipality or whether it's the private sector. And yes, Mr. Speaker, we as a government have a role to play in that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

L&F: MILL OPERATORS - ASSISTANCE

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, on March 5th there was a tender put out for six public heating facilities throughout the province that would take in low-grade fibre from our woodlots and our mills. Each wood heating facility would be constructed exteriorly to also, in the future, heat buildings further down the road.

The expected annual quantity of this low-grade wood fibre would be anywhere from 300 to 2,000 tons per building. Last year's mill-accessible wood fibre tonnage to one mill in Northern Pulp was about 1 million tons.

My question to the minister: Can the minister explain what his department is doing to assist immediately mill operators in the province who are now sitting on tons of wood chips?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, we know it's a difficult and challenging time for the sector overall. This is one part of the solution for helping diversify markets for the low-value product, both from sawmills and also from our private woodlot owners.

This is an initiative that actually came from the Lahey report, so we're starting to implement that recommendation with six sites, with an expectation that we can review how that is going. We're going to look at other sites across the province, but it's just one part of the solution. We also have to look at potential export growth and other domestic opportunities we have in the province.

It is one initiative. As the member would see, the transition team is working very hard on a number of initiatives across the province.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, since January these mills have been sitting on tons and tons of wood and have not yet found full markets for all of their supply. Chips have been receiving a good market value, up until December 20th. This sector has been trying to stay afloat until the roads close, which we understand are closing earlier than normal this year.

When will the minister unveil his plan to Nova Scotians who produce wood fuel chips and a future in this province?

IAIN RANKIN: As I said, the transition team is working on a number of initiatives. We've upped our silviculture funds across the western and central regions to stock up some of the work that Northern Pulp was doing. That's helping keep the capacity in the supply chain while we continue to help businesses that are looking for markets. We understand that some existing domestic markets have increased their uptake of those chips. We're working with the woodlot owners at the transition table and in the department to look at all opportunities, exhausting all opportunities to help that sector diversify where they're sending the chips, rather than what it was before, focusing on one end use.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

L&F - FOREST MGMT. GUIDE: CONSULTATIONS - CANCELLATION

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to stay with the Minister of Lands and Forestry. Last November, after sending out invitations to targeted stakeholders, consultations on the new Forest Management Guide were cancelled. It was not until yesterday that notices were given back out to stakeholders that the consultation process will proceed again, three full months after cancelling and two months after the minister's own self-imposed deadline of having the new guideline out in December 2019.

My question for the minister is: What is the definition of "public consultation," and why have we not seen one this year?

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to update the House on where the Forest Management Guide is. There was no self-imposed deadline. We had an estimated timeline that it would take one year when we responded to the report back in December 2018. We do have that draft guide complete, so we are at the 13.5 month area, pretty well on target.

We have our next round of consultations with that target group next week. We've also shared that guide with our advisory committee that I met with this week. It is in the hands of NGOs, industry players, and academia. Our Mi'kmaw partners are reviewing that guide; they'll send feedback. The next stage is full public consultation, and that will be online once we have that feedback.

TORY RUSHTON: The reason I ask is, last sitting, on October 30th, we asked the same question and we heard the deadline and the guides would be out at the end of December 2019. We've yet to see that. Also, in part with that, last Spring the department spent thousands of dollars on a report produced by Davidson Greenwood Communications, entitled *Strategy for Improving Openness, Transparency, Collaboration and Accountability at the Department of Lands and Forestry*. On no less than nine occasions did the word "consultations" come up.

Stakeholders are looking for stakeholder-engaged consultations - a more robust public consultation process, all responses from the stakeholders - and I'll table that document. When will the minister start implementing the recommendations of this report, requisite of improving openness, transparency, collaboration, and accountability in his department?

IAIN RANKIN: As I said, we have already met with our advisory committee, which is a recommendation from that very report the member references. We've also made a hire within the department that actually has somebody who is engaged in the stakeholders' relations as their sole purpose. They continue to do work with all of our partners, that includes industry, but also includes the Mi'kmaq, NGOs, and a number of different stakeholders that we work with.

We had a great meeting and there is going to be future meetings every quarter with that specific group, but consultations are already under way on the Forest Management Guide. Yesterday's announcement was starting consultations with the document for high production forestry. Virtually every project team that's working hard with our external experts have consultation as part of their mandate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

JUSTICE - ALEX CAMERON CASE: ACTIVE COURT CASES - CONFIRM

TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Minister of Justice. Yesterday the Premier made a statement a few times when refusing to answer questions. He refused to answer questions on the basis of a matter being before the courts. Today he's saying something a little bit different, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice: Is the minister aware of any outstanding proceedings before the court between Alex Cameron and this government or the Premier? Can the Minister of Justice produce any statement of claim for any active court case?

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I can advise that notice of intended action has been served. We anticipate further litigation. The matter is presently in those circumstances before the court.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court case was dismissed yesterday, and all the documents in conjunction with that case were made available. They're all public record now. The minister is saying that there might be an action before the courts. It might be intended; it might happen before the courts.

If the Minister of Justice is comfortable with this line of responses to questions on the floor of the House, that the government will refuse to answer questions on the basis that something could come before the courts at a future date - is that an appropriate response to a question for the Legislature?

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. It's important to recognize what that means. When notice of intended action has been served, that means there is litigation forthcoming. It would be appropriate in whatever circumstance anyone finds themselves - government or otherwise - to protect the information relevant to those discussion and those subsequent court proceedings. The fact that notice of intended action has been served keeps this matter within the court realm, and we will see that play out into the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

TIR - YARMOUTH FERRY: UPCOMING SEASON - CONFIRM

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, last year the province spent \$20 million on a ferry between Maine and Nova Scotia. Also last year, not a single commercial crossing occurred. Not a single passenger travelled between Maine and our province on that ferry. Again \$20 million went out and not a single tourist came into our province by that ferry. Despite promises of this government for at least a partial service, Nova Scotians received nothing in 2019 for \$20 million.

[10:30 a.m.]

My question for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is: Is the Bar Harbour terminal complete, and when will the season open for the ferry?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to draw the members' attention to a press release issued shortly by Bay Ferries announcing the beginning of the sale of tickets for the 2020 season for the Nova Scotia to Maine ferry.

The impact of this service to all of Nova Scotia, particularly southwestern Nova Scotia and in particular to the member's area, is very profound. We can see that from the analysis of the work that has been done by our tourism department.

COLTON LEBLANC: For the benefit of the House, I'll table a CBC article from early this morning that does in fact state that the season will start by June 26th.

This government has tried to paint our Party as being against this ferry service. I can hear some chirping from the members opposite but guess what? I wonder if they're trying to paint us with the same paint brush that's supposed to be used to paint the walls in Bar Harbour.

On this side of the aisle, we value the importance of the ferry; I hear day in and day out from my constituents. What my constituents in southwestern Nova Scotia deserve is reliability and certainty from this government, Mr. Speaker. There was very little confidence in their handling of the file last year.

My question for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal: What assurances can the minister provide to Nova Scotians that in fact the ferry will sail this year?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what all Nova Scotians deserve is their elected members to stand with them not against them. That Party has been against this service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PREM.: VALUE OF P3 PROJECTS - COMMENT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

I don't need to remind this House about what we have learned from using the P3 model to build highways and schools in this province: that the flawed approach has cost Nova Scotian taxpayers more in the long run; that transparency and how the projects are awarded and managed is virtually non-existent; and that we have a very poor track record in ensuring that developers are held accountable to those contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the requirement to spend \$166 million to buy back the P3 schools this year but I want to ask the Premier: Will he admit that this was a bad deal?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. All those communities that have schools that have been operating now for the last 30 years would consider it was a good investment by the people of Nova Scotia.

The honourable member, when they had the opportunity of being in government, chose to do a P3 model but in the convention centre while our hospital was leaking down in the South End of Halifax, ignoring the very fact that our health care infrastructure hadn't been invested in.

We're making the appropriate investments in our health care infrastructure not only here, Cape Breton Island, and across the province. We'll continue to do that and use all kinds of options that make sense to deliver those projects on time when Nova Scotians need them.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, this seems like an opportune moment to remind the government that they've had seven years to make the changes that we're asking them about. References to previous governments, I would say, are fairly erroneous at this moment.

When we question the rampant secrecy and mystery around the multitude of P3 projects from this government like hospitals, parkades, roads - things we need but which, given their timelines, things for which we need to be collaborative, creative, and forward thinking - we are told to trust the government. Just trust us.

Mr. Speaker, I can list a number of reasons that the public would be nervous to hear "just trust us" from this government, especially in health care. ER closures, family doctor wait-lists, NSHA amalgamation, not to mention the Yarmouth Ferry debacle, and that's just a few.

Doesn't the Premier agree that we need more transparency, more scrutiny, more public conversation around government spending, not less?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board tabling her budget and have the debate on the spending as we do every year.

We haven't been sitting by for the last seven years. We're making substantial investments in health care infrastructure. The honourable member was in Dartmouth when we opened the investment we made in the Dartmouth General. We invited her to the opening and she came in.

The community was thrilled with government. It stood up and said: Finally, finally a government that has put out a long-term strategy and solution around our health care infrastructure, that deals with the entire province. No matter how much people are opposed to those investments on the floor of this House, this Party will stand with Nova Scotians and continue to ensure we invest in the appropriate health care structure that meets the needs of the next 50 and 60 years, and not be stuck in the past.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - RAILWAY PROTESTS: PM'S RESPONSE - COMMENT

TIM HOUSTON: My question is for the Premier. We're now into the third week of protests blocking the national railway system. Hundreds of Nova Scotians have been laid off. Others are feeling the effects and are concerned about the effects of these protests on propane supplies across the province. They're rationing inventory.

In fact, we now hear from a company in Digby, Royal Propane, which has less than a week's worth of propane remaining and 3,000 customers who rely on them. It's February, and the North Atlantic winds are getting pretty bitter.

Many Nova Scotians have stated that they're not happy with the Prime Minister's handling of this file. Is the Premier satisfied that the Prime Minister is acting in the best interests of Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: As I have said many times, no one should have the ability to stop the economic future of this country. There are a number of people at blockades across this country. We know some activity that's happening in British Columbia. There has been a court injunction to have one prevented, stopped in Ontario. It's up to the law enforcement agency in that province to execute that court order.

We believe - I believe - it is incumbent on all of us to send a very strong message that the economic future of this province and the prosperity of this country should not be held up by a certain number of individuals who choose to protest.

TIM HOUSTON: The question was: Is the Premier satisfied with the Prime Minister's efforts? I think I take that he's not satisfied, but he can clarify that when he comes back.

It's -16°C this morning on the walk here, and I'm just wondering how many Nova Scotians have turned down their thermostat in order to preserve what little propane they have left. Royal Propane has 14 employees who may be laid off this weekend if trains don't start moving. Even if the blockades are gone today, I don't know if propane would get here in time to keep people from running out. We know that the Atlantic containers are diverting cargo for the Port of Halifax and looking at other options.

I would like to ask the Premier: Does the Province have a plan in place to help people heat their homes if the supply of propane runs out?

THE PREMIER: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. You are right. This has had a huge impact on many parts of our economy, not only in propane, in fuel - as we've seen one ship line now is going into the U.S., and others talking about that very thing. We've had impact when it comes to the chemicals that are required for water treatment facilities across our largest municipalities.

We made it very clear to the national government that the economy of this country needs to move forward. The blockade that is happening in Ontario needs to come down. It's our view that is an execution order in the province of Ontario. We believe that the law enforcement agencies in the province of Ontario should execute that order to allow them to move the goods and services across this country.

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

H&W - COLE HBR.-EAST. PASSAGE: FUNDING CHC - COMMIT

BARBARA ADAMS: As everybody knows, because I've said it in the Legislature every chance I get, I represent Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, the only constituency in Nova Scotia without a single family doctor. On October 29, 2019, I tabled a petition on behalf of 1,249 constituents, calling on this government to commit to funding a community collaborative health centre.

Can the Minister of Health and Wellness tell me if he's finally going to recognize the urgent need in my community for a family doctor, and commit to my constituents in the 2020 budget that will be released next week that there will be an announcement for a collaborative health centre for my community?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for the question. I think it's great to see the member recognize the value of the important initiatives that we focused on over the last number of years, including the building of new collaborative practices and the

expansion of others throughout the province. Recognizing, from the Party opposite, finally, that the investments that we are making are important in delivering stronger primary health care.

It'd be great for them to recognize the success that initiatives like this have had in attaching more Nova Scotians to family practice providers, which we see in the data that shows clearly that 20 per cent fewer Nova Scotians are looking for a family practice today than they were about a year ago.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I think I need hearing aids because I didn't hear any answer to the question, and it wasn't relevant in any way to what I asked. So I am going to redirect the question to the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

My constituency has had eight suicides in less than seven months, three of which affected my constituency assistant. We have no mental health services in my community. We don't have any community services in my community. I want to ask the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage why my community which - no longer trusting this government to bring a family doctor - applied for the \$10,000 grant to help us recruit a family physician and we got turned down on that grant. Even my community can't get help from the government in order to get a family doctor.

Can the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage tell me why my community - the only one without a family doctor - got turned down for a grant for us to help ourselves get us a family doctor?

HON. LEO GLAVINE: I thank the member for the question. It is a program at CCH that has helped a number of communities across the province. In fact, we'll have further announcements in the next couple of weeks.

There are obviously criteria that have to be met. If the member would see me after Question Period today, I'll put her in touch with one of our staff who will help with her next application.

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

H&W - DAL MED PLACEMENTS: VICTORIA CO. - CONSIDER

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. This past Tuesday, the minister announced that five medical students from Dalhousie will spend their third year getting hands-on training on the South Shore of the province. I applaud the minister for that. I hope it helps with some of the doctor shortages on the South Shore.

There are other areas of the province that could use these services as well. Two of those are in the rural area of Victoria County: the Victoria County Memorial Hospital in Baddeck, and Buchanan Memorial Hospital in Neils Harbour.

My question for the minister is: In his conversations with Dal on these placements, are there any plans to offer the opportunity for these students to have their training in either of these hospitals?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member opposite for again recognizing the progress we've been making and the valuable programs we've been investing in. Things like the IMG Clerkship Program, which is the program he referenced, places third-year medical students in rural communities, communities outside of the Halifax centre, for their entire third year of studies.

I am pleased to let the member know that, in fact, the IMG Clerkship Program started last year in Cape Breton where we launched that program; the announcement this past week was the expansion of that to the South Shore. We look forward to continued development there, getting the feedback and looking at further opportunities for expansion going forward.

Mr. Speaker, at this point in time those are the seats that we have available for those third-year students going into the next year.

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the minister may say that the program was launched in Cape Breton last September, but still these two areas weren't even considered as part of the plan. Baddeck and North of Smokey have so much to offer those graduates who are considering not only their occupation but a healthy and active lifestyle, for both them and their family, that exists for 12 months of the year.

My question is a simple one. Will the government commit that these two hospitals will be included in any further offerings to Dal students in the next round of third-year students?

RANDY DELOREY: Again, I thank the member for his interest and support of the IMG Clerkship Program that we launched. As I said, this provides that opportunity for third-year medical students at Dalhousie to complete their entire third year of practical study in the same community, giving them the full scope of services and getting to establish relationships, not with just the broad community but with the patients they would be working with.

I am very pleased that the member supports this initiative. I certainly appreciate the interest of his communities but I'm sure the member opposite can recognize that in fact every member of this Legislature would love to have this program expanded to their

communities. I commit, Mr. Speaker, to doing a proper consideration of all communities and we'll prioritize as best we can to expand the program.

Again, for the next year we've got these five seats that are going to the South Shore region.

[10:45 a.m.]

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

H&W: C.B. MENTAL HEALTH WAIT TIMES - ADDRESS

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, as noted in the recent Health Committee meeting, wait times in industrial Cape Breton for mental health remain the highest in the province at 285 days. That's nine and a half months with no treatment for someone desperately in need.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is the government's plan to address this critical gap in Cape Breton?

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank the member for this very important question. We've had conversations on this floor about mental health and addictions frequently. We continue to invest about \$300 million toward mental health and addiction services throughout the province. We continue to invest and target supports, particularly toward youth-based initiatives.

The work we've been doing - particularly in the member's region in Cape Breton - to support the hard-working, dedicated mental health professionals is trying to connect them with supports and specialists outside of Cape Breton through virtual technology and other means, to try to support the expanded services and keep up with the demand of that community.

BRIAN COMER: I've had multiple front-line health care workers who work in mental health and addictions reach out to me. I'm just wondering, will the minister come to Cape Breton to meet with me and all the other Cape Breton MLAs to sit down with front-line workers and develop an effective plan moving forward?

RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, there is extensive work ongoing within the Cape Breton region doing just that: sitting down and connecting with front-line health care workers to design that plan moving forward for that region.

That is the core essence of the work that been ongoing over the last year and a half with the Cape Breton redevelopment project. That sees a significant amount of work about how to re-establish and invest in infrastructure to support the program delivery, not just in

mental health and addiction services but in health care throughout that entire region. There's been lots of consultation on the front line. That has been driving the path that we've been on with the Cape Breton redevelopment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

TIR - RAIL BLOCKADES: PROPANE SHORTAGE - ADDRESS

STEVE CRAIG: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. The rail blockades are having real effects on real Nova Scotians. Lower Sackville builder Ramar wrote me yesterday stating that a propane supplier that he has ran out of propane yesterday and his business is at a standstill. I will table that letter. This will push back closing dates, drive up costs, and inconvenience dozens of new homeowners and builders.

My question for the minister is: What actions has your department taken to secure propane for small business owners like this builder and for people who heat their homes with propane?

HON. LLOYD HINES: Thank you for the question. We are acutely aware of the difficult circumstances that have been created by the blockades. I believe the position of this government has been laid out very recently.

I am very happy to report that our superb EMO response process has been alerted and are on standby. They are investigating opportunities that they can help in as this situation continues, if it is not resolved.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sentiment that this is potentially reaching emergency proportions.

When CN had a planned strike, they had contingency plans to get stock rolling within ten days. This is totally unplanned. It will be longer. If the blockades continue, 80 homes built by this builder - one builder - will be affected.

Shortages of materials will drive up prices and eat into the profits of many small businesses in a city and a province where vacancy rates are effectively almost zero. We had examples of that earlier today.

My question to the minister is: Have you contacted your federal counterpart to take urgent action to stop blockades before there is lasting damage to our economy?

LLOYD HINES: I thank the member opposite for enumerating the obvious impacts of an interruption in the distribution transportation system . . .

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

KEITH IRVING: That concludes government business for today, Mr. Speaker. I move that the House now rise to meet again on Tuesday, February 25th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Business will include the presentation by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board of the 2020 budget followed by daily routine, Question Period, and time permitting, Second Reading of Bill Nos. 220, 221, 223, and 225.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to rise again on Tuesday, February 25th from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 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 Tuesday, February 25 at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 10:51 a.m.]