



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Second Session

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2020

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2020

Sixty-third General Assembly

Second Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Brendan Maguire

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

As with the tradition on Budget Day in this House, with the consent of the House we will commence with the motion for Resolution No. 1659, respecting estimates under Orders of the Day. This means that the daily routine will be delayed until after the response to the Budget Speech is adjourned. Question Period will begin one hour after the start of the daily routine.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

[ORDERS OF THE DAY]

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

[GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

[Res. No. 1659, re Estimates - CW on Supply: Referred - notice given Feb. 20/20 - (Hon. Karen Casey)]

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

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the notice of motion given by me on February 20, 2020, and the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, I have the honour, by command, to present a message from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia, relating to the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, which is:

“I hereby transmit Estimates of Sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending March 31, 2021, and in accordance with the Constitution Act of 1867, recommend them, together with the Budget Address by my Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and any resolutions or bills necessary or advisable to approve the Estimates and implement the budget measures to the House of Assembly.

Signed,

Arthur J. LeBlanc
Lieutenant Governor”

Mr. Speaker, at this time I wish to:

(1) table the message from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of the province transmitting the Estimates for the consideration of this House;

(2) table the Estimate Books;

(3) table the Government Business Plan;

(4) table the Crown Corporation Business Plans;

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

(6) deliver my Budget Speech; and

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

THE SPEAKER: The Estimates are tabled.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. KAREN CASEY: I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people.

On behalf of the government, I am pleased to introduce the Nova Scotia Budget 2020-21: Better Together. Today I am sharing what we believe is a message of hope, gratitude and optimism.

When Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States, visited Halifax recently he was asked for his thoughts about Atlantic Canada. His response was that “. . . we need to recognize that strength comes from our creativity, our innovation, our diversity.” We agree. Creativity, innovation and diversity are qualities that exist in our people, in every community and corner of this province. Those qualities have positioned Nova Scotia for success on the world stage. It takes an entire community to achieve change, according to One Nova Scotia.

“Real leadership and new initiative need to come from both the private and public sectors, from key institutions in the voluntary sector, and from citizens through their community organizations.” Today I am extending thanks to all Nova Scotians, to those business leaders, the private sector, and valued community partners for the strong contributions they have made and continue to make.

A new decade begins with renewed confidence and a continued commitment in our growing diversity and our strong and resilient economy. We are presenting our fifth consecutive balanced budget with Budget 2020-21. We are forecasting rising revenues of \$11.6 billion and expenditures of \$11.54 billion with a positive position of \$55 million.

Nova Scotians want to be self-sufficient and to provide for themselves and their families. Government's priority is to create opportunities and pathways so that our success helps make this happen. In Budget 2020-21 we are making significant investments in a variety of programs to make their lives better. These commitments include improvements to:

- Nova Scotia Child Benefit;
- Child, Youth and Family Supports;
- Affordable Housing;
- Accessibility Initiatives;
- Pre-Primary;
- Public Transit;
- Minimum Wage.

We will continue to do better. With our stronger economy and our positive fiscal position, we want to share this economic success. Budget 2020-21 supports Nova Scotians

who may not have been feeling the success of our province. The budget for Community Services alone is increasing by \$54.3 million to more than \$1 billion in support of Nova Scotians who need it the most.

No child should live in poverty. That is why government is expanding the Nova Scotia Child Benefit by adding \$18 million to adjust the low-income threshold to include more families under this benefit. Families with incomes of \$34,000 or below are now eligible. This means almost 50,000 children and about 30,000 families are now included in that Benefit. This is the largest single increase to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit since it was created in 1998.

We also want to improve the monthly income of our most vulnerable. This budget directs an additional \$17.3 million to support the Standard Household Rate under the income assistance program. The new rate began in 2020.

Parents want to provide the best they can for their children. In 2017, our province committed to implementing a free, universal pre-Primary program for all four-year-olds. We want children to have an equal opportunity to participate in quality, play-based learning regardless of their socio-economic circumstances. Early learning provides meaningful and life-long benefits.

In 2016, only 25 per cent of our children could access child care and early learning. That is why our government committed to implementing fully this free, universal pre-primary program. This September, every four-year-old in Nova Scotia will have access to this program. Budget 2020-21 includes an increase of \$17.5 million, for a total investment of \$51.4 million. That makes Nova Scotia a leader in Atlantic Canada in pre-primary education.

Families have told us that transportation would make it easier to access pre-primary, particularly in rural Nova Scotia. Bus service for all eligible pre-primary children begins this September with new funding of \$4 million. Creating this opportunity for young children also means more parents can attend school themselves or return to the workforce and contribute to family income.

We are investing in Child, Youth and Family Supports for new and expanded programs. Community-based resources can be a lifeline for parents and children, and we want to expand on the excellent work of our community partners. We have some of those partners with us today. I would ask them to stand as they are introduced.

We will invest \$1.9 million this year to enhance the essential work of our Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters and our Family Resource Centres. I will ask those from the Boys and Girls Clubs to please stand. We have Hank van Leeuwan, the CEO; and Bethany Moffatt, a board member. They do great work in our community. Thank you very

much. (Applause) We will increase our investment every year for the next three years to guarantee stable program funding of \$7.7 million after that.

We are also providing a \$400,000 increase to Phoenix House. We have with us folks from Phoenix House; and I ask Tim Crooks and Elizabeth Church to stand please. (Applause) This investment in Phoenix House will allow them to grow and shape our programs to reflect the needs of all of our families.

Our government also wants to enhance programs that support adults and children with disabilities by adding \$16.6 million to the Disabilities Support Program. Of this, \$7.4 million will be used to transition residents from larger facilities into community based living. This means 50 Nova Scotians will move into communities next year with increasing numbers and investments in each of the following three years and beyond.

Government will also invest an additional \$2.8 million in the Flex In-Home program to support those with disabilities who live at home with their families. In 2019, there were 1,694 individuals, and this number is likely to grow. All Nova Scotians deserve the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

In recent weeks, government has made important investments to support social enterprises that provide better services to Nova Scotians with diverse abilities. These include facilities in Sydney, North Sydney, New Minas, East Hants, New Glasgow, Truro and Lawrencetown in Annapolis County. This investment will improve facilities, expand programming and provide employment opportunities.

In Sydney, the Horizon Achievement Centre supports adults with diverse abilities in accessing employment training. The Province has invested \$2 million and provided 2.2 hectares of land in the Harbourside Business Park for a new building. Horizon is Cape Breton's largest provider of vocational training and employment development services. This \$6 million is a significant investment in social enterprises across the province.

An accessible Nova Scotia by 2030 is the goal of the Accessibility Directorate. Their work with the disabilities community, with municipalities, with businesses and post-secondary institutions will continue with an increased total budget of \$1.9 million. Businesses can apply to improve accessibility through the ACCESS-Ability program with a continued funding for that program of \$1 million.

Transportation is a cornerstone of the government's Poverty Reduction Blueprint and Nova Scotia's Action Plan for an Aging Population. We are supporting upgrades for the Kings Transit fleet in the Valley, linking Kings, Annapolis and Digby counties. A new service is being introduced in Stellarton and New Glasgow, providing those communities with a fixed-link bus service for the first time in decades. Buses, terminals and shelters are being added in Bridgewater and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality and in five other

communities. We continue to support Income Assistance recipients in Halifax Regional Municipality by providing free bus passes for Halifax Transit.

The quality of life for Nova Scotians greatly depends on access to safe and affordable housing. A substantial investment in affordable housing for Nova Scotians of \$394 million will be supported over the next nine years under the National Housing Strategy. The provincial contribution is \$197 million for this federal-provincial partnership. Close to 3,000 households in need will benefit from this partnership under Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Affordable Housing. Adding to this impact, another 2,500 households in need will benefit from provincial funding of \$70 million over this same three-year period.

Nova Scotia is contributing \$18.7 million in Budget 2020-21 for affordable housing, home repairs, urban Native housing, community housing, rent supplements, and other provincial housing priorities. Rent supplements improve housing security and promote mixed-use, mixed-income communities by making rents affordable for those living in non-profit or co-op housing and in private market units. Housing Nova Scotia will add an additional 560 new rent supplements, and of these 120 will be directed for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Affordable Renters Program will be sustained with an ongoing \$2 million investment. Last year alone, under this program, more than 400 low-income homes in Cape Breton received free energy efficiency upgrades, and those families are now saving an average of \$900 a year.

Addressing homelessness is key to changing lives. Some of our most vulnerable Nova Scotians will be supported by a \$20.5 million investment over five years, starting in 2020-21, for the Integrated Action Plan to Address Homelessness. This is the largest single investment in homelessness prevention made by government. This investment will focus on "Housing First" support: finding permanent, stable and safe homes for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

We will work with community partners, such as Adsum for Women and , on their shelter diversion efforts. We have some folks here from Adsum. I would like to introduce Sheri Lecker, Executive Director; and Meghan Hansford, Housing Support Program Manager. (Applause)

We are investing \$400,000 to keep children out of shelters. We also want to give more low- and modest-income earners an opportunity to own their own home. In 2020-21, we will double the lending capacity under the Down Payment Assistance Program.

In April 2020, Nova Scotia's minimum wage rate increases by \$1 per hour to \$12.55 per hour. This will improve the monthly paycheck for minimum wage workers and their families. This is the largest annual increase in the province's minimum wage in a

decade. It brings Nova Scotia closer to the highest minimum wage rate in the country and is the second highest in Atlantic Canada.

This budget is a reflection of the hard work of Nova Scotians and the value this government places on helping those who need it the most. Access to quality health care is the number one priority for Nova Scotians. We are transforming health care by providing better services today and into the future. The overall investment in the health care sector has grown to \$4.82 billion.

Budget 2020-21 includes \$86.1 million in response to increased demand for services. Our work continues to recruit doctors, and we are seeing success by supporting community groups with their recruitment. We are also encouraged that Statistics Canada shows that Nova Scotia ranks fourth nationally for patient attachment to a primary health care provider.

A new agreement with our doctors is a critical step to strengthening physician recruitment and retention. We are dedicating an additional \$75.3 million for physician services and salaries in Budget 2020-21. Family, emergency and anesthesia doctors will become the highest paid in Atlantic Canada. Other specialties, such as psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology will be among the highest paid in Atlantic Canada.

Dalhousie Medical School will continue developing the next generation of doctors with an additional \$4.7 million this year including:

- \$1.9 million increase for the second cohort of 15 specialty residency placements;
- \$1.5 million increase to add 12 first-year seats at medical school with a focus on rural communities, Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous Peoples, and African Nova Scotians, bringing the total to 16 seats;
- \$1.3 million for the next group of 10 family medicine residents.

A fast-track immigration stream specifically for doctors is helping ongoing recruitment efforts. Family doctors Baldeep and Kiran Bains recently relocated to Nova Scotia from London in the UK. Their decision to move here was influenced by the quality of life and the welcoming community they discovered in Nova Scotia. We have successfully recruited 54 doctors through this new physician immigration stream. Along with other successful recruitment efforts this brings our total to 440 new doctors since 2016.

Nova Scotia also needs more nurses - 70 more students will be able to study at the Dalhousie nursing program in Yarmouth and at Cape Breton University. More students will be able to study and stay here after they graduate. Together these initiatives will help stabilize priority services, such as access to family doctors, maternity care in home communities and mental health services in rural areas.

Collaborative care is working in this province. Health care professionals told us they want to work collaboratively. In 2016 we had only 39 teams. We listened, we worked together. We have strengthened teams and created new ones. Together, today, we have more than 85 collaborative family practice teams supported with an overall investment of \$28.4 million in Budget 2020-21. These teams are found in communities across the province.

Nova Scotians also need access to medications when and where they need them. An additional \$21 million brings our total investment to \$370 million through both the Department of Health and Wellness and Community Services. This supports families, seniors and cancer patients with their much needed medications.

Cancer touches all of us. For some women, ovarian cancer means there is no recovery. The outcomes have not improved in five decades and that needs to change. We have provided \$1 million to Ovarian Cancer Canada to collaborate with Dalhousie University for ovarian cancer research. We have two visitors from Ovarian Cancer Canada. I would like to introduce Emilie Chiasson, who is the Regional Director; and Theresa Marie Underhill, who is a board member. Welcome, and thanks for the work you do. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, we are the first province to support a national campaign to find a cure. (Applause)

The province's 1,300 urban and rural pharmacists are an important part of delivering health care to Nova Scotians. A new agreement is changing their scope of practice. Pharmacists are now able to renew prescriptions for 180 days for many items with the fee publicly funded for all residents with a valid health card.

Budget 2020-21 includes \$3.2 million to implement the Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act, which is expected to take effect during 2020. Every Nova Scotian will be presumed to be a potential donor, unless they opt out. This will give patients waiting for transplants more opportunity by increasing the availability of organs and tissue. This legislation is the first of its kind in North America.

Human trafficking and sexual exploitation is the fastest growing crime in Canada, and it hits close to home. Budget 2020-21 highlights what we can accomplish when we work together, and right now we need to fight this crime. Our government is taking action and has released an approach to fight human trafficking. We know the devastating effects on victims, survivors, their families and entire communities.

Over the next five years, government will invest \$1.4 million annually for more supports and services with a focus to protect Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities. This support will include a team of family and victim support navigators, an additional Crown prosecutor and dedicated police investigators. The focus of our strategy

is protection, prevention, prosecution and partnership. We cannot do this alone. We have to work together to fight this sad reality.

The government is also continuing to support those who have experienced sexual assault through the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program, which expanded during 2019. Funding for mental health and addictions continues to be a priority. We will increase funding to sustain and expand services and supports, bringing the total investment to \$316.5 million.

Children and teenagers who need mental health and addictions support are getting better care faster at the IWK Health Centre. Children and teenagers are also able to access additional mental health resources through SchoolsPlus, which has now expanded to every school community in the province. These additional resources include social workers, community outreach workers, facilitators and mental health clinicians. The Mental Health Crisis Line means mobile support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Callers are connected to supports at home, at work, at school and in the community. I want to acknowledge Dr. Stan Kutcher, an internationally renowned expert and educator in the area of adolescent mental health, for his leadership and guidance.

Our youth are our future and we want them to be healthy. Too many of our young people are smoking and vaping. Research shows this may result in severe lung disease, even death. Recently Dr. Robert Strang, Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer of Health, joined his colleagues across the country in expressing significant concern about the rise of nicotine vaping among Canadian youth. They urged governments to take action with stronger regulations, and we listened.

New efforts will be made to reduce youth smoking and vaping. We will introduce a tax on vaping products starting in September 2020. In addition, all retailers will require a permit to sell vaping products starting in July 2020. As part of our harm reduction strategy, we are also increasing the tax on cigarettes, cigars, and other forms of tobacco.

Our aging population also needs care. Our investments will show that long-term care remains a priority. This budget adds \$5.3 million to enhance long-term care, for a total of \$612.4 million. These new investments will include implementing the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Long-Term Care. They will also be used to convert under-utilized residential care facility beds to long-term care beds in Halifax. This builds on a previous \$15 million investment for upgrades in nursing homes across the province.

This is a budget that reflects the hard work of Nova Scotians to put this province on a solid fiscal foundation. And now, we are in a strong position to lift people up, to make lasting investments, and to support those who need it the most. When we first formed government in 2013, our province and our economy were underperforming. Faced with this situation, our priority was to set a new path for the province. Let us pause for a moment to consider the task before us by comparing then and now.

- The province was borrowing money to pay the bills in 2013, with a \$677 million budget deficit. As mentioned, 2020 brings our fifth consecutive balanced budget.
- Nova Scotia's population was about 940,000 in 2013. In 2019 we made history with close to 977,000 Nova Scotians - the fastest population growth in close to half a century.
- Immigration attracted about 2,500 newcomers in 2013. Nova Scotia welcomed a record setting 7,600 new permanent residents in 2019.
- In 2013, employment declined by 1.1 per cent. Last year we experienced the fastest employment growth in 15 years at a positive 2.2 per cent.
- Unemployment in 2013 was 9.1 per cent. Today we see the lowest unemployment since the 1970s at 7.2 per cent.
- Exports were at \$15 billion in 2013. These rose to \$16.6 billion by 2018.
- In 2013 parents watched their sons and daughters choose to move out of Nova Scotia for opportunities elsewhere. In 2019, our population increased by 3,461 as those from other parts of Canada came to Nova Scotia.

I want to acknowledge the guidance of the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy. The challenge they presented was to build a more diverse population and a stronger economy. The Commission believed that a sustainable economy would provide the foundation needed to move our province forward. This required difficult decisions, solid fiscal management and strong leadership.

Today, we see the results of our commitment to build a better province. The province's population is more diverse than ever. Employers and community are our partners in supporting the highest newcomer retention rate in Atlantic Canada, at 71 per cent. A growing population creates momentum with more workers, more entrepreneurs, more professionals and more consumers. We want to build on this success by increasing our immigration. Our Premier is working with the federal government to increase our allocation, and we are continuing to invest \$100,000 in the Office of Immigration for the extension of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program.

Nova Scotians are proud of our successes, but we can do better together. The strengthening and resilient economy means that Nova Scotia is well positioned for the next decade. I want to thank our business leaders, the private sector and entrepreneurs. They have demonstrated their confidence through their private investment and through their job creation.

Ongoing dialogue with our business community is essential. Many business groups came forward with pre-budget submissions, and we listened. Over the past several years we have heard from the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and others that represent the business community. We have heard a consistent voice in favour of lower corporate taxation. Thus, the corporate tax rate will drop by 2 per cent to 14 per cent to

help businesses to become more competitive, to innovate and to reinvest. This will bring Nova Scotia in line with New Brunswick for the lowest rate in Atlantic Canada.

The backbone of rural Nova Scotia, as well as our urban centres, is the successful small business community. These small businesses employ thousands of Nova Scotians. We want their successes to continue. Budget 2020-21 will reduce the small business tax rate by 0.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent. This brings us to the lowest small business tax rate in Atlantic Canada. This will allow our small business owners to invest more in their own businesses and to continue to employ Nova Scotians across the province. It will also allow our province to be more competitive in attracting new businesses on the national and global stage.

Business competitiveness fosters innovation, investment and growth. Reducing regulatory burden is a priority of our government, and we are leading the country with this initiative. This saves businesses time, and time means money. The Office of Regulatory Affairs has already found \$34 million in savings, and continuing efforts will cut another \$10 million by the end of 2020.

According to Statistics Canada, for the first time in our province, private sector employment grew to 300,000 during 2019. Strong private sector employment growth helped to drive record high employment of almost 469,000 jobs last Spring. Nova Scotians are also experiencing the lowest rate of unemployment since the 1970s.

We acknowledge the potential impact on the lives of workers and the sector of the decision by Northern Pulp to put their mill into hibernation. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: This government believes the forestry sector has a future in this province. We know we are in a time of significant change and transition. That is why we are working in partnership with the forestry sector to move forward. We have created the Forestry Transition Team, with representation from government, industry and post-secondary education, to help lessen the impact on the workers and the sector. We will continue responding to constructive ideas from the sector on programs and services.

Workers who want to develop or transfer their valuable skills will be able to retrain. We believe in investing in Nova Scotians so they can continue to stay here to support themselves and their families. Forestry contractors affected by the closure can apply for short-term repayable financing. The government worked with credit unions on this program which helps contractors with payments on their equipment loans.

Self-employed forestry contractors who are not eligible for Employment Insurance need our support. We are making sure they have access to employment programs through Labour and Advanced Education with \$1.45 million in new provincial funding. Forestry contractors and woodlot owners can now apply for additional silviculture and roadwork.

Replacing imported fossil fuels with a locally sourced, renewable resource will create a new market for lower grade forest fibre and reduce the carbon footprint of public buildings. The team is focusing on how we can get more economic value from our natural resources with new markets, new products and new innovative approaches.

With the establishment of the \$50 million Forestry Transition Trust, we will continue to provide both short-term and long-term support that those in the sector and in the industry need. In an independent review commissioned by the Province, Professor Bill Lahey recognized that ecological forestry protects ecosystems and biodiversity, supports economic growth and keeps the forest healthy and sustainable.

Using the expertise of the sector, we will continue our efforts to maintain and increase the economic value of our forests. This includes new markets, new products and innovative approaches. These are the same approaches that have driven our export successes in other sectors.

Nova Scotia exports of all commodities and services reached a milestone \$16.6 billion in 2018. This represents average growth of more than 5 per cent per year since 2016. On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, I congratulate the province's business community for their global successes. More and more customers around the world are recognizing the high value of our products.

Nova Scotia remains Canada's largest seafood exporter with exports worth \$2.3 billion. Shipments of tires are up to close to \$1.2 billion. Frozen fruit is up to \$138 million; and around the world, people are going wild about our wild blueberries. Government support for businesses to start and grow exports includes international business development education, business navigators, export growth program funding, and support for trade missions, market intelligence and logistics.

After decades of neglect, this government will invest \$1 billion in much needed infrastructure. This is the largest single investment in the history of the province and will better support health care and education in the future. Early in 2020, the Scotiabank Forecast noted public investments in highway twinning and hospitals, as well as shipbuilding and an airport expansion, are helping to support a healthy domestic economy in the coming year.

Modern health care delivery, state-of-the-art schools, safe and efficient highways and waterfront developments will stimulate employment for this generation and serve Nova Scotians for generations to come. The largest health care redevelopment in provincial history is progressing with a \$154 million investment this year. The QEII New Generation project will expand health care services and facilities at many locations:

- A community outpatient clinic at Bayer's Lake;
- Expanded services at Dartmouth General Hospital;

- Improved operating capacity at Hants Community Hospital;
- An outpatient centre at Halifax Infirmary;
- Centres for cancer care at Halifax Infirmary.

The Cape Breton Regional Municipality Health Redevelopment will include:

- Major expansion of Sydney's Cape Breton Regional Hospital to include enhanced cancer care unit;
- Renovations to the Emergency Department in Glace Bay;
- New health centre and long-term care in North Sydney;
- A community-based paramedic program covering the Cape Breton Regional Municipality;
- A community hub for New Waterford that includes a school, health centre and long-term care facility.

Community-based hospitals and medical centres around the province - such as Middleton, Pugwash and Bridgewater - also require upgrades. This important renewal is supported by \$54.3 million in Budget 2020-21. These investments will modernize the delivery of health services for patients and improve workplaces for medical and health care specialists.

We want all motorists to be safe on our highways. That is why we are investing \$85.3 million more to twin the 100-series highways and to repair and maintain roads, highways and bridges. Construction on Highway Nos. 101, 103 and 104 and the Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector are either under way or about to start. We know how important the 104-twinning project between New Glasgow and Antigonish is for all motorists and residents.

We are also committed to the five-year capital plan to build new schools. Students and parents across the province will benefit from about \$266 million to build and renovate 16 schools and the purchase of 30 existing P-3 schools. Major infrastructure investments will revitalize the waterfront districts in both Sydney and Halifax. The new Marconi Campus for the Nova Scotia Community College will offer state-of-the-art facilities for those who wish to begin or retrain for new careers. In Halifax, the Arts District will feature a new home for the Nova Scotia Art Gallery and common public spaces. It will provide access to art, culture, and world-class exhibitions and festivals.

High-speed internet is critical to the social and economic well-being of our communities. More Nova Scotians will soon have access to high-speed internet connections through the Nova Scotia Internet Trust Fund. This was established in 2018 with an investment of \$193 million. Just recently, about \$45 million was committed to five projects, which will leverage funds of about \$56 million in private and other public sector funding.

More than 42,000 homes and businesses will gain access to high speed internet through these community-based projects. Develop Nova Scotia will also be announcing additional projects through a second round of applications. The impact on individuals as well as businesses in rural Nova Scotia will allow them to become more efficient, more effective, and supported by reliable high-speed internet connectivity.

We look toward a bright future with confidence in the next generation of Nova Scotians. Just look at Hope Blooms, where these qualities are alive and well with the youth involved. I'd like to welcome Jessie Jollymore, Executive Director; and Starr Cain, Operations Manager. I would say to all, if you haven't tried it, you better try their salad dressing. (Applause) With our investment of \$300,000, youth will continue to benefit from mentoring, entrepreneurship, and gaining life skills. The province depends on their diversity, their innovation, their resilience, their creativity and their entrepreneurship.

Youth employment in Nova Scotia has risen by 8.1 per cent in 2019 - this rapid jump sets a 42-year record. This is encouraging. This tells us that our youth see a future for themselves here at home and are already actively engaged in our growing economy.

We are also seeing a record number of international students who are choosing to stay in Nova Scotia after graduation. In 2019, 601 international graduates were approved by the provincial immigration program. The retention rate rose to 12.6 per cent in 2018; this represents an historic high for the province. Government and businesses are supporting students to gain valuable on-the-job experience and to add innovation to the workforce.

Dartmouth's MetOcean Telematics is a strong exporter currently expanding from ocean technology into wireless business - part of a worldwide effort to better understand, interpret and connect our planet. Their Iridium satellite positioning has applications for ice melt monitoring, oil platform safety, wildlife monitoring, tsunami forecasting, and search and rescue. The company hires new graduates through Graduate to Opportunity. As a regular co-op employer, they are embracing the new diversity bursary.

They are not alone. More than 640 employers have hired more than 1,200 recent grads for full-time jobs in their chosen careers through this program. Clearly, Nova Scotia's highly motivated, skilled and educated population are a strong asset for businesses working here in our province. University grants will increase by \$3.6 million as part of a Memorandum of Understanding, bringing the total budget to \$443 million in support of post-secondary education for our Nova Scotia students.

The Nova Scotia Loan Forgiveness Program is helping recent Nova Scotian graduates from provincial universities start their working lives with lower debt loads. We will continue this program, and we will add graduates from the Nova Scotia Community College. We also want to provide opportunity to our African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw students. We will be supporting the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University with a \$350 thousand investment.

We are continuing our strong investment in the P-12 education system. We are investing another \$15 million - for a total investment of \$45 million - on recommendations from the Commission on Inclusive Education. Nearly 400 additional teachers, education workers and specialists have enriched our classrooms in the last 19 months. This includes autism specialists, behaviour support specialists, and child and youth practitioners.

Around the world, young people have spoken. They want government to take action on climate change. We have been listening. We have set the most ambitious goals in Canada for cutting emissions - 53 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and net-zero by 2050. Nova Scotia is a national leader in fighting climate change, and we are making strategic investments as we transition to a greener economy.

Environment is planning to spend \$1.6 million for the start up of the Green Fund. Energy and Mines is investing nearly \$125 million over the next three years in programs that reduce emissions and create jobs in the green economy. The Province will spend about \$44 million for the following initiatives in 2020-21:

- A \$3 million provincial investment in the Low Carbon Economy Fund for the residential solar electricity program, energy efficiency rebates, and discounts on efficient products;
- A \$6.5 million provincial investment in green infrastructure projects, such as bike lanes and energy upgrades for Mi'kmaw and public housing;
- A \$10.3 million provincial investment in low-income energy efficiency programs, such as HomeWarming and others;
- And we will invest \$24 million toward the Low Carbon Economy Fund and green infrastructure programs.

Today, more than 200 businesses and 1,400 people work in the energy efficiency industry. We will look to the next generation for leadership on climate action. When Barack Obama spoke in Halifax, he inspired thousands of Nova Scotians and young people in the audience. And we are in turn inspired by their voices, their talents and their leadership.

As a new decade begins Nova Scotia can be optimistic. Budget 2020-21: Better Together reflects the importance of partnerships with the private sector, our municipalities and indeed all Nova Scotians. We have worked hard together to get the province in a position where we can provide investments and support to all of our communities and to all of our citizens.

Our province is in a stronger economic position, and Budget 2020-21 supports programs that matter to Nova Scotians. It also articulates our investments for the future. When we started on this journey, our Premier, Honourable Stephen McNeil, stated that we as a government will stand beside you and support you. We have done that. We have demonstrated that we can be better together. We are better together. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount. (Applause)

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to extend my thanks and the thanks of all of my colleagues for the hard work of the staff in the Department of Finance and Treasury Board, and the work of all of the other departments in preparing the information that we have before us today.

Today, the government unveiled their 2020-21 operating budget, a budget that contains a \$55 million surplus, this on top of a \$33 million surplus for the current fiscal year ending in March. This would have been a good budget four years ago, when these investments could have addressed problems instead of ignoring them. The government has identified and laid out numerous initiatives for the upcoming year, aimed at improving the lives of many Nova Scotians.

Indeed, we would seem to be truly experiencing sunny days. To be precise, for the upcoming year, we will see an increase in federal transfers of \$393 million. Given this, I would certainly hope that we would at the very least have a surplus for this year. Furthermore, since this government first took office in 2013, they have benefited from federal transfers increasing over \$1 billion. The federal government has certainly made their job much easier.

Today the government has laid out additional spending for seniors of \$6 million for Seniors' Pharmacare. Our seniors are our most cherished resource, a group that has earned both our thanks and respect, and now needs our support. But why now? In this current fiscal year just ending, they are projecting a \$33 million surplus. Surely, if this is important - and it is - why could they not have provided these funds for Seniors' Pharmacare last year?

The Province has also announced new nursing positions for the upcoming year at our universities. Our health care system is in dire need of these additional resources and support. Our nurses are a cornerstone of our health care system. Nurses faced with staffing and resource shortages have continued to work tirelessly, providing extraordinary levels of care to Nova Scotians in an environment that is indeed in crisis.

Once again, the question that must be asked is: Why now? Why increase funding by \$692,000 when they had a surplus last year of \$33 million? One would think addressing these shortages could have been done last year. Furthermore, this increase in spending for additional seats will take four years before we will see these much-needed feet on the floors of our hospitals. Nova Scotians will now have to wait an extra year for these much needed professionals.

Besides our nurses, we are still suffering from our doctor shortages. The government has continually stated that they are working on this issue. To this end, for

example, the Cape Breton Health Care Redevelopment plan is modelled on the premise that modern facilities will attract more physicians.

Given the news release of last evening, it would seem that doctors in Cape Breton see issues, aside from facilities, in need of their attention. This speaks to a greater HR issue within our health care system and it needs addressing, regardless of what type of facility they operate in.

For the upcoming year, the government has announced increased spending for mental health of \$550,000 for a total of \$316 million. Mental health services across the province are facing unreasonable wait times. Any increase in funding for mental health is never a bad thing, but consider this: Based on the population of this province, the announced increase translates into an additional 55 cents per Nova Scotian - 55 cents, Mr. Speaker. If I were to take a friend out for a coffee, I would spend four times what the Province is spending on a per-person basis.

To better illustrate, in Cape Breton the critical shortage of mental health and addictions specialists is to blame for the highest wait times for care in the province, averaging almost a year. We saw nothing today to show how these people will get access to the services they so desperately need.

The government has also announced cuts to the corporate taxes, increases to minimum wage, increased funding for low-income Nova Scotians - but what about the middle class? It would seem our middle class is, once again, being left at the altar. Nova Scotians face some of the highest personal tax rates in the nation. Surely a surplus of \$33 million, a surplus of \$55 million, could provide some degree of tax relief for the middle class.

Our provincial employees work and provide valuable services to Nova Scotians, be it in health care, education, transportation, community services; I could go on. In the upcoming year, the Budget Estimates state total staffing levels of 10,436 full-time equivalents; estimates for the current year state the current full-time equivalents are 10,078.9. That translates into 358 unfilled positions. Hiring freezes have served to short-staff many of our most critical departments and have put added pressures and duties on the remaining staff and employees to do the work of 358 missing co-workers. What has been the cost and sacrifice of these shortages on Nova Scotians?

The minister spoke to the pre-Primary program. This is a good program that holds great promise and potential for Nova Scotians and their families. The spending on the pre-Primary program is set to increase \$17.5 million for the upcoming year to \$51.4 million. With the announced expansion of this program, there is an apparent shortage of available classrooms in some elementary schools through the province, so much so that Grade 5 students in these areas will now be transferred to local middle schools.

Our children are our most valuable resource. While it may seem to be a minor impact on our minors, making them grow up just a little bit earlier than needed, that's not needed. Unfortunately, this relocation of the Grade 5 students is another example of a program that has been rushed out the door without proper logistical considerations.

This year we are expecting the Yarmouth to Bar Harbor Ferry to sail. Residents of Yarmouth are surely looking forward to this upcoming year, as are tourist operators throughout the province. For this upcoming year, the government is projecting a ferry subsidy of \$16 million, which is truly an improvement over last year's \$24 million.

This year's subsidy is based on the ferry transporting 55,000 passengers, but in Bay Ferries' first year of operation, operating the Cat in its current iteration, they transported only 39,000 passengers out of Portland. Now that we have a new port of call and a ferry service that has essentially been rebooted as a result, given the historical numbers of the Cat, a 55,000 ridership number seems optimistic at best. Will the \$16 million need to be supplemented?

Mr. Speaker, we have seen here today in this budget that it is too little and too late. With continuing surpluses, why has this government chosen only now to start increasing spending in health, transportation, and education? Why now?

This upcoming year, the province will experience a windfall, an additional \$400 million in federal transfer payments. Equalization formulas are based on overall performance of individual provinces. This province has seen federal equalization transfers increase year after year. This would seem to be an indicator of poor management, not good management, of a province in decline, not growth. If you need further evidence of this fact, merely look at the budget. The government had to increase funding for low-income families' drug support by \$1.6 million. How can this be an indication that Nova Scotians are better off?

To be clear, the McNeil Government will help Nova Scotians only when it needs help from Nova Scotians. This budget and projected surplus, coupled with the previously announced capital budget, speak to a government that is looking for something from Nova Scotians.

The forecast update of February 25th is of additional concern. In the update it stated that there was \$440 million in additional appropriations in 2019-20. If this is truly an election year, what additional appropriations are to be announced over the course of it? We have seen this time and again, most recently in last Summer's by-elections. With the \$55 million surplus, what will these inevitable appropriations be, and where will the government find the funds to cover them?

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn the debate. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on the Budget Address. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We will now move on to the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Community Services, I am pleased to submit the annual report of the committee for the period from January 2019 to June 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 Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1677

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 Margaree Salmon Association has been developing and promoting the recreational salmon fishing industry since 1982; and

Whereas the association members have volunteered at the Margaree Fish Hatchery, fin clipping approximately 200,000 salmon parr and smolt, stocking parr, and collecting salmon brood for the Margaree and Mabou Rivers; and

Whereas the association helped fund and carry out major reconstruction of the sanctuary pool, designed and constructed a barrier-free fishing facility at Lake O'Law, participated in two International Year of the Salmon events at the hatchery, and assisted with the implementation of warm water closure protocol;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House congratulate the Margaree Salmon 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 Communities, Culture and Heritage.

[2:15 p.m.]

RESOLUTION NO. 1678

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

Whereas the 2020 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games are taking place from February 25th to 29th in Thunder Bay; and

Whereas more than 1,200 athletes, coaches and staff will take part in or support eight sports in this qualifying event for Team Canada selection for the 2021 Special Olympics World Winter Games; and

Whereas Team Nova Scotia has 45 athletes competing in seven sports including floor hockey, curling, snowshoeing, speed skating, cross-country skiing, figure skating and five pin bowling;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in acknowledging Team Nova Scotia, wishing them all the best in their competitions in Thunder Bay.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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 Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 1679

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

Whereas a century ago Kin Canada was founded and has since become the nation's largest all-Canadian service club organization with over 6,000 members and more than 400 Kinsmen, Kinette and Kin clubs across Canada; and

Whereas Kin Canada, in their pursuit to better their communities and enhance the well-being of Canadians and the environment, have donated more than \$1 billion to support individuals in need, Canadian causes including cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis and Canadian Blood Services, as well as international disaster relief efforts; and

Whereas Kin Canada has always stood by the values of tolerance, understanding and equality among all people to work together in the spirit of fellowship to serve the communities' greatest needs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Kin Canada on their 100 years of service and thank them for their dedication in improving the lives of people from all walks of lives here and beyond our borders.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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 African Nova Scotian Affairs.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

TONY INCE: I would ask the members of the House to please welcome Mr. Sandy Schembri, who is with Canada Post. (Applause)

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1680

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

Whereas the Canada Post Black History Month stamp pays tribute to the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes; and

Whereas founded in 1895, the Coloured Hockey League was an all-Black hockey league that featured teams from across the Maritime Provinces, teams such as the Truro Sheiks, Africville Seasides, Dartmouth Jubilees, Amherst Royals and the Charlottetown West End Rangers; and

Whereas the dedication, determination and commitment shown by these trailblazers is an example of how sports can unite, strengthen communities and dismantle negative racial biases;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly please join me in acknowledging the Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes and the impact that it made on hockey across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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. 226 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 81 of the Revised Statutes, 1989. The Companies Act. (Hon. Patricia Arab)

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I request permission to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I draw my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery where we're joined today by Megan Longley. Megan is the executive director of the Nova Scotia Legal Aid. I would ask my colleagues to give her a warm welcome to the House. (Applause)

Bill No. 227 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 252 of the Revised Statutes, 1989. The Legal Aid Act. (Hon. Mark Furey)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

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

BARBARA ADAMS: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

BARBARA ADAMS: I would like to draw everyone's attention to the West Gallery. When I call out your names, I'll ask you to stand. I want to introduce the Nova Scotia Healthcare Crisis Facebook group that now has 9,336 members - and as soon as they accept me, it'll be 9,337.

We have founder Leslie Tilley, who is here. We have Kendra Ward, Joan Hawkin, and Janie Andrews. This group of tireless advocates bring awareness to the health care crisis.

I would like to ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in welcoming these health care warriors to our Chamber. (Applause)

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

SENIORS BY THE SEA: 10th ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to recognize the Seniors by the Sea Club on their 10th anniversary. The club, located in Eastern Passage, offers conversations, bus trips, guest speakers, fun activities, and great dining.

Their long-serving president, Peter Gill; Mary Ellen Myers, the vice-president; Dorothy Webber, secretary; Christine Hurley, the treasurer; and Vicie Murphy, the social director, are all part of the success of this Wednesday afternoon group, with approximately 50 seniors who attend. It started ten years ago with the help of Peter Gill and Betty Elwanger. Today the club ranges from 62 to 96 years of age - four faithful members are all in their nineties.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in wishing the Seniors by the Sea Club a happy 10th anniversary and many more successful years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Could I please say a word of introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

GARY BURRILL: We want to welcome this afternoon, in the West Gallery, Tammy Jakeman, who is here visiting for Budget Day. Tammy is a member of the National Political Action Committee of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. I ask everyone to give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

TARE SHOP: BUS. AND COM. PARTNERSHIP - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Today I rise to congratulate a new business community partnership launched in Halifax Needham. The Tare Shop is a package-free bulk store and café which opened its doors in 2018. It has introduced a “1% forward initiative” - 1 per cent of the sales each quarter will be donated to a partnering community organization.

The Tare Shop’s owner, Kate Pepler, was inspired by “1% for the Planet,” a global initiative to encourage business to donate 1 per cent of sales to environmental non-profits. She wanted to do something similar in the north end of Halifax, only her goal is to support organizations working to improve the well-being of residents. Mobile Outreach Street Health or MOSH, a program of the North End Community Health Centre, is The Tare Shop’s first community partner.

MOSH supports homeless, insecurely housed, street involved, and underserved members of the community by offering primary health care directly in the spaces where they are most comfortable. I'm sure they will benefit from that 1 per cent donation of The Tare Shop's quarterly profits.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**GET YOUR HANDS ON LOCAL:
NOVA SCOTIA'S FOOD AND BEVERAGE - THANKS**

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: This weekend I was proud to participate in the launch of the local food and beverage campaign, an initiative of the government and Taste of Nova Scotia.

It was great to greet customers at the Joseph Howe Drive NSLC signature store, and distribute information about the campaign, Get Your Hands on Local, which makes it easier to find Nova Scotian products. I was also glad to give out reusable tote bags to help with our phase-out of single-use plastics. When we choose products harvested, grown, and produced locally, we're supporting communities from one corner of the province to the next.

Thank you to NSLC Manager Robin West, Category Manager Jennifer Katona, Kaitlin Fairn from Barrelling Tide, and Erica Ferguson of Taste Nova Scotia for leading the event. I encourage all Nova Scotians to look for the Get Your Hands on Local logo when they shop.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

SCOTT, BETTY LOU: VOLUN. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to congratulate Betty Lou Scott of Salt Springs as the Municipality of Pictou County's Volunteer of the Year 2020.

Betty Lou is well known for her community work with her church. However, it is her 40 years of dedication to the Salt Springs 4-H Club that sets her apart. As a founding member of the club, she has served in every imaginable capacity, including president, vice-president, and secretary at the local level and as a voting delegate at the provincial level. She has also travelled to the 4-H national leaders conference.

Countless young people have benefited from Betty Lou's example of leadership. She ensured that they experienced public speaking, learned how to run a proper meeting, and understood the value of volunteering and giving back to the community.

Once again, I congratulate Betty Lou on her award and thank her for her service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DEA, RHONDA: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Rhonda Dea of Hatchet Lake on her recent retirement from HRM after serving over 30 years. Rhonda began her career with HRM in the police department in 1989 and then transitioned into the aquatic division. Rhonda was clearly an outstanding professional mentor, colleague, and leader. Her empathy and understanding of equity for all made her an ideal candidate for the position of acting manager of inclusion. Through this role, she continued to grow and expand inclusion services throughout HRM until she retired.

Rhonda was passionate about aquatics, inclusion, and recreation in general and was an extraordinary role model for her team. She was instrumental in developing staff from the beginning of their careers, as well as being the guiding force behind aquatics and inclusion services in HRM. Her long list of accomplishments includes her commitment to water safety and barrier-free access to recreation programs for all.

Rhonda has always been an active volunteer in her community and is always giving back. She served as a board member for the Prospect Road Community Centre and enjoyed calling bingo at the community hall.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the members of the House to join me in thanking Rhonda for the work she has undertaken to promote inclusion and barrier-free access throughout HRM.

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

SKI CAPE SMOKEY: REDEVELOPMENT - BEST WISHES

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, snow has arrived and it's full speed ahead for the new and improved Ski Cape Smokey. Since its purchase by a Czech business group, Ski Cape Smokey resumed hill operations and plans for redevelopment continue, with 34 events and 10 races scheduled in Ingonish over the roughly three-and-a-half-month ski season.

Planning has begun to create a four-season destination at the 160-hectare property. Additional plans include chalets, a microbrewery, a restaurant, and shops.

The ski hill development is spurring interest in new businesses as the community recognizes the potential for growth in Ingonish, North of Smokey, and the rest of Victoria County.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in wishing Ski Cape Smokey and staff great success in the first year of operations and many prosperous years to come for the community of Ingonish and surrounding areas.

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

**HORIZON ACHIEVEMENT CTR.:
PURSUING NEW FACILITY - CONGRATS.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to recognize the staff, the leadership, and all the volunteers involved with Horizon Achievement Centre in Sydney. Horizon Achievement Centre is one of the largest organizations we have on the Island to support adults with diverse abilities looking for skills training for future employment.

It has been a labour of love for the organization as they've raised close to \$1.5 million over the years, with the dream of having a new facility to support the more than one hundred clients they have in Sydney. They were able to secure that money themselves. They received some great news as a result of government funding and are that much closer to the reality of a new building.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to congratulate all of the leadership with Horizon Achievement Centre and the greater community of CBRM that has been helping for years to see them have a new facility.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

BUILDING FUTURES EMPL. SOC.: IMPROVING LIFE SKILLS - CONGRATS.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make special mention of Building Futures Employment Society in Lower Sackville.

Building Futures Employment Society was founded in 1973 by parents who were determined to improve the quality of life of those living with intellectual disabilities who were leaving the school system.

Future Impressions, a print shop, and one of the social enterprises of the society, allows for the opportunity for members of the society to learn valuable life skills while participating in daily operations offered to the public, such as printing, engraving, award and gift services.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the staff and members of the society on their continued success of improving

the life skills of their members, as well as boosting their confidence in the work that they provide to produce professional products.

[2:30 p.m.]

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

CREWE, NORM: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I stand today to pay tribute to an incredible man who recently passed away.

Norm Crewe was a tireless volunteer and a pillar to the Fairview community. Among his many endeavours, Norm volunteered with the Royal Canadian Legion, the Camp Hill Veterans' Memorial Building, the Mission to Seafarers, and St. Mark's Church for years.

As recognition for his accomplishments, the Fairview Legion Branch 142 presented Norm with the Legionnaire of the Year award in January. He had also previously been awarded the Diamond Jubilee Century of Service Honorary Award for Veterans in 2013.

Norm was cherished by many in the community but even more so by his family. My heartfelt condolences go out to Mellie, his loving wife of 72 years, to his daughter, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

SMITH, JIM - PHYSICIAN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Dr. Jim Smith and to acknowledge his service to Dartmouth and to Nova Scotia.

Dr. Smith was a five-time elected MLA who served the constituents of Dartmouth East for 19 years between 1984 and 2003. Prior to that, Dr. Smith had a successful and respected career as a doctor at the Woodlawn Medical Clinic for over 30 years. While beginning in Opposition, Dr. Smith started a new chapter in his political career after the 1993 election, by being appointed a cabinet minister. Dr. Smith served various portfolios, including health, and justice, until his retirement from politics in 2003.

Dr. Jim Smith was an incredible person who dedicated his life to serving the public and always thinking of the next way he could improve the lives of his fellow citizens. On behalf of our community of Dartmouth East, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the family of Dr. Jim Smith.

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

**KING, SHEILA/BUSHELL, JEAN:
CARING FOR BEAVER BANK SENIORS - THANKS**

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize two long-time volunteers from Beaver Bank: Sheila King and Jean Bushell.

Sheila and Jean co-founded a newly formed Beaver Bank Elders Engagement Council. The Ivy Meadows Care Centre houses 51 seniors of varying abilities. Many of them are looking for opportunities to connect with community outside and inside of the centre. There are also members of the greater community who want to socialize, play games such as darts, sing, learn new things, and give back.

Mr. Speaker, it is the goal of this new council to bridge these communities, to improve the lives of the elders living in the centre, and the community by reducing loneliness, boredom, and feelings of isolation.

Mr. Speaker, I request all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking Sheila and Jean for their hard work, efforts, and caring on behalf of Beaver Bank's seniors.

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

AFRICAN HERITAGE MO.: THE TIES THAT BIND - RECOG.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge African Heritage Month, celebrated annually throughout the month of February.

African Heritage Month origins can be traced back to a young Black historian by the name of Carter G. Woodson in 1926, who wanted to recognize the achievements made by African Americans. Woodson's idea has since been turned into African Heritage Month, which was first celebrated in Canada in 1950. The theme of this year's African Heritage Month is "The Ties that Bind: Faith, Family and Community," which signifies the essential traits that are the strength, resilience and unity of the African Nova Scotian community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take an opportunity to bring further awareness to African Heritage Month and thank the African Nova Scotian community for their contributions across this province.

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

POULTON, DOUG: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, you would be hard-pressed to go anywhere in St. Margaret's Bay, Tantallon, or Hammonds Plains and find somebody who didn't know the name Doug Poulton. Unfortunately, our community lost him in late December last year. This is a man who was involved in so many different things, again throughout the St. Margaret's Bay, Tantallon and Hammonds Plains areas. I had the privilege to get to know him during his time assisting in the creation of the Hammonds Plains Business Association.

I just wanted to pay my respects and invite all members to join me in thanking him for his continuous contributions to our community and send his wife, Sandra, our condolences.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

TILLEY, LESLIE: HEALTHCARE CRISIS GRP. - RAISING AWARENESS

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, 18,000 people lost their family doctor in the month of June 2019 in the Annapolis Valley, and Leslie Tilley was one of them. She had already started the Nova Scotia Healthcare Crisis Group Facebook page with only 10 people, then 50, then 500 and now more than 9,000 concerned citizens. The group is non-partisan, grassroots and all volunteer. Their mission is to hold the government accountable and bring awareness to the health care crisis. She wants to be the voice for front-line workers who are in unsafe environments and are getting burned out.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me and thank Leslie Tilley and her other volunteers for their extraordinary efforts to improve health care in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

ST. PAUL'S FAM. RES. INST.: COM. SERV. - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise today and highlight an organization in my community that makes Halifax Atlantic and Spryfield such a great place to live and work.

Today I'd like to speak of the contributions that St. Paul's Family Resource Institute makes to the Spryfield and surrounding communities. Every Tuesday at St. Paul's, the hall is filled with great conversation and food as residents join together for the Soup's On program.

In addition to the free luncheon program, St. Paul's also runs a food bank every Wednesday. St. Paul's is the home of the John Umlah Memorial Community Garden where

much of the fresh produce is used by the food bank. Other services offered by St. Paul's include income tax completion and a children's summer camp.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank St. Paul's Family Resource Institute for the significant contributions they make to the well-being of the residents of Spryfield and surrounding communities. The caring and dedicated staff and volunteers are committed to improving the lives of the people they serve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**OICKLE, COLBY/MOREAU, MIKE:
SPECIAL OLYMPICS - BEST WISHES**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, the Special Olympics Canadian Winter Games are taking place this month in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Although I will be cheering for all Nova Scotian athletes, I would like to recognize two from Liverpool.

Mike Moreau and Colby Oickle are both set to represent Nova Scotia and compete in the snowshoeing event. Coached by Betty Ann Daury, I have full confidence that our athletes will represent our constituency well. Not only are they great athletes, but they are great people.

It is an honour to wish all of our inspiring Special Olympics athletes the best of luck in their upcoming endeavours and I look forward to watching them compete, train hard and have fun.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**HOUSING PRESSURES IN DARTMOUTH N.:
CRITICAL SITUATION - RECOG.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the extent of the housing crisis in HRM and Dartmouth North was brought into further focus when Dartmouth Housing Help announced it would no longer be able to take on new clients to provide housing support. The organization supports people in precarious housing situations and people facing homelessness. Part of the statement they released yesterday read:

“The current housing stock has completely depleted, especially within Dartmouth North. Along with current levels of income, there is no where [sic] to place people within the HRM. Renovictions are happening all over the city and are creating homelessness, moving from deeply affordable/below market value apartments to current market prices, which often exceeds any budget for a person below the poverty line.”

After meeting with MRHA last week, we learned they are able to house people only off the priority access list and that list has a wait-list of a year or more.

Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for the work of Dartmouth Housing Help, and I am infuriated that the work they are doing must stop because of this government's lack of effective action to address the housing crisis.

THE SPEAKER; The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I beg leave to make an introduction, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I'd like people to look at the gallery before me and I'd like to introduce someone whom I've introduced before: my CA, Ruth Wawin, who has come up to attend the reading of the budget today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER; The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**POND, SUSAN JANE - RECIPIENT:
MERITORIOUS SERVICE CROSS - CONGRATS.**

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Please note that I edited this member's statement.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Susan Jane Pond of Kingsburg who received the Meritorious Service Cross (Civil Division) from Governor General Julie Payette on November 12, 2019, in Ottawa. This service award celebrates Canadians who have brought honour to Canada through an exceptional deed or activity. The Civil Division recognizes contribution in fields such as advocacy, health care services and research, and humanitarian efforts.

Susan was honoured with this service declaration for her dedication, professionalism, and innovative thinking, which has bolstered Canada's contribution to NATO. She has been a leader in pioneering the idea of using a trust fund to finance projects like the destruction of landmines and small arms. Susan's efforts have strengthened Canada's commitment to building peace and stability around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and members of this House of Assembly to please join me in congratulating Susan Jane Pond for receiving the Meritorious Service Cross.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

PIERCEY, MINNIE: N. SYDNEY SENIORS CLUB - THANKS

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, on February 9th the North Sydney Seniors and Pensioners Club met to recognize Past President Minnie Piercey. Minnie was president for over 20 years and devoted countless hours of her time, energy, and talents to the club.

This club is well used by its members and the community in general. Minnie and her team regularly organized bi-yearly trips for its members to visit other clubs in Halifax or Newfoundland and Labrador. Card games, dances, teas and dinners are just some of the ongoing events that have taken place and will continue to happen because of Minnie and her efforts with the club.

The North Sydney Seniors and Pensioners Club is a welcoming environment that opens up their hall to the public during elections, volunteer tax season, and for low-income residents for health clinics. I am pleased to extend a heartfelt thank you to Minnie for all she does and continues to do for the seniors of Northside-Westmount.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

ESONWUNE, CHIDI: COM. SERV. - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a constituent who always volunteers his talent to events in Clayton Park West. Chidi Esonwune created Grand Moments Digital Productions, a photography and a videography company, which he started over one year ago. He has volunteered at so many community events and especially at the MLA barbecue last July. His photos are incredible and have made such a difference to our barbecue. People are commending his work. I would like people to look also at the Heritage Day photos that he took for our event last Monday. They are incredible and show off our diverse community so beautifully.

Chidi also volunteers with the Little Learners social club, Matella Event Concepts, and the Network for the Empowerment of Women.

I ask that the members of the Legislature join me in applauding an individual who enriches our community with his many skills and his passion for community involvement. Thank you.

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

**CABOT MIDDLE SCH. BASKETBALL:
GOLD MEDALLISTS - CONGRATS.**

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, the first line in my member's statement does not apply to the Toronto Maple Leafs. (Laughter)

Teams that win are those that work well together. The Cabot Middle School boys team and their coaches showed just that during the recent Sgt. James MacNeil Memorial Tournament at Ocean View Education Centre in Glace Bay this year. The tournament was held on January 31st, honouring an amazing soldier who has made his community and country proud and who was a true hero.

The boys played two games on Friday, January 31st and won both. The gold medal game was a tense game; Cabot was down 12 points at halftime. With encouragement from their coaches, the team played hard, won the game, and came home with gold.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Cabot AA Boys on winning the gold medal game at the 9th Annual Sgt. James MacNeil Basketball Tournament, and to thank coach Corrine MacKinnon and assistant coach Johnny Buchanan for helping teach these young athletics valuable life skills.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**AHEARN, WILL:
PUBLIC SPEAKING, THIRD IN THE WORLD - CONGRATS.**

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, who among us in this House would not have benefited from participating in a public speaking competition earlier in our lives? In the years ahead we may be hearing the name Will Ahearn of Wolfville, Nova Scotia, as a Nova Scotian with exceptional rhetorical skills.

Recently, Will represented Kings-Edgehill School in the After-Dinner Speaking event at the International Independent Schools' Public Speaking Competition in Cambridge, Massachusetts, finishing third among the competitors from around the world. Will spoke to an imaginary group of Prince Charmings, explaining how their courtship ideas were outdated. Will hopes one day to be a lawyer, and judging by his success at this public speaking event, he is well on his way.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating William Ahern for being a great ambassador for his school, for Nova Scotia, and for Canada at this prestigious international competition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

ORGANIZED SPORTS: BUILDING COM. SPIRIT - RECOG.

TORY RUSHTON: Organized sport is such a great thing within our Canadian society, not just here in Nova Scotia but coast to coast. Dedicated volunteers, club memberships, and staff make things go great - and fans, as my colleague, the member for Victoria-The Lakes would announce.

Examples of recognizing these things are Scotiabank Hockey Day in Canada, Curling Day in Canada, things like that, but on Saturday there were new goals set within the sports field, and not just in Nova Scotia but in Canada. The Zamboni drivers actually have something to move forward to and move up the levels of the professional ranks.

I want to give credit to my counterpart here from Sydney-Victoria for showing his face in the Legislature this afternoon.

[2:45 p.m.]

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

PINK SHIRT DAY: ERADICATING BULLYING - RECOG.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reaffirm my commitment to the anti-bullying campaign recognized nationally and internationally, tomorrow, as Pink Shirt Day. Like so many others, I was and continue to be inspired by the act of kindness that took place in Berwick by David Shepherd and Travis Price in 2007. Their actions would inspire a global anti-bullying campaign.

While the province has made advancements in anti-bullying campaigns and programs, the fact remains that one in five children are still bullied. That's close to 30,000 youth in this province alone. It's time to eradicate bullying across Nova Scotia and instill in our youth the importance of looking beyond our differences and beginning to celebrate what unites us.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone to wear a pink shirt tomorrow, and I also call upon the members of this House to commit to abolishing bullying in our schools, workplaces, communities, and in our province. One act of kindness can effect positive change in unimaginable ways.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**GRIMSHAW-SURETTE, HUDSON:
TRACK ATHL. OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Yarmouth's Hudson Grimshaw-Surette of the Dalhousie Tigers has been named the Atlantic University Sport track athlete of the year. Hudson won four gold medals and set a new conference record in the men's 1,000-metre race at the recent AUS Indoor Track and Field Championships in Saint John, New Brunswick.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Yarmouth's Hudson Grimshaw-Surette on being named the AUS track athlete of the year and on his record-setting performance and wish him all the best in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

SACKVILLE ROTARIANS: COM. SERV. - THANKS

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the members of the Rotary Club of Sackville & Area.

Rotarians are heavily involved in a range of projects, making a significant impact on others. To name a few: they support literacy by providing dictionaries to Grade 3 students for their own personal use through the Dictionary Project; they provide funding for school breakfast programs and other outreach organizations. Rotarians are involved in Adopt-A-Highway Nova Scotia and community beautification projects.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that all Members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking all Rotarians across the province for their commitment and contributions to the community by continuing to provide vital resources and assistance wherever there is a need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HCIF: INVESTING IN YOUTH - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, it was my great pleasure to drop into the Halifax North Memorial Public Library last night for the fourth annual celebration and tribute of our community youth event of the Halifax Community Investment Fund society.

Since its inception in 2007 with a \$1 million fund to mitigate hosting waste water treatment plants in the community, the Halifax Community Investment Fund has disbursed some \$600,000 in grants and bursaries. Last night, the board members of the HCIF society - Chair Craig Walkington, Vice-Chair Carl Gannon, Bryan Darrell, Melinda Daye, Marcus James, and Linda Mantley - publicly celebrated youth for their leadership qualities.

I congratulate the commitment and stewardship of this volunteer board and join my voice to theirs in encouraging youth striving for excellence in academics, sports, and community service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West on an introduction.

HON. MARK FUREY: I bring my colleagues' attention to the East Gallery where we're joined today by Mr. Brian Cooper. Brian is a former resident of the Town of

Bridgewater and a good friend. He is presently the president of Kin Canada National. I had the honour earlier to read a Government Notice of Motion, and I joined Brian and some of his Kin colleagues earlier today where we raised the Kin flag in recognition of their 100th birthday. That flag will fly here on the property of Province House to recognize the contributions and commitments of Kin Canada.

I would ask my colleagues to give Brian a warm welcome to the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

S. SHORE HOSP. AUX.: TIRELESS EFFORTS - THANKS

HON. MARK FUREY: I rise today to recognize the outstanding and tireless efforts of the South Shore Regional Hospital Auxiliary. In 2019 alone, this dedicated group of women and men volunteered over 25,000 hours and raised \$390,000. This money will be used to purchase much-needed equipment for the South Shore Regional Hospital. In addition, the auxiliary has also committed \$176,000 for renovations necessary for the Integrated Clerkship Program to proceed on the South Shore with the announcement of five interns in their third year of studies.

I'd like to ask the members of the House of Assembly to please join me in thanking this incredible group of volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the residents of the South Shore and beyond.

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

FAM. LITERACY DAY: CREATIVE PARTICIPATION - RECOG.

BRAD JOHNS: I'd like to rise today to acknowledge Family Literacy Day which was celebrated across the province on January 27th. Since 1999, Family Literacy Day has been celebrated every January 27th across the country in order to raise awareness about how important reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family is.

This year in my constituency, Harry R. Hamilton Elementary and Millwood Elementary celebrated Family Literacy Day by collecting coins for books and bringing in their favourite books to show to their classmates.

I'd like to take the opportunity to raise further awareness of the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family. I thank all those who participated in this year's Family Literacy Day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

MACLEOD, EMA: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to commend Ema MacLeod for everything she does as a young volunteer.

Ema has been volunteering for more than three years with Bedford United Church. She participates in all kinds of activities: helping in the nursery and Sunday school, serving meals, as well as assisting at church events and entertaining the church's children.

Ema has also participated in the teen worship band, the Christmas choir, and she has volunteered as a leader in the children's Go Project Camp and We Day. Through the church, she has also volunteered for Feed Nova Scotia, Soul's Harbour Rescue Mission, and Beacon House Food Bank. Ema's positive energy and attitude are an asset to Bedford United.

She's passionate about social justice and works to make life better in her community. Her positive energy and commitment mean she has been a blessing to the church and sparks joy in the lives she touches. I'd like to thank her for her commitment to serving her church and her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**HARRY FREEMAN AND SONS:
SUPPORTING FIREFIGHTERS - THANKS**

KIM MASLAND: I rise today to acknowledge Harry Freeman & Son Limited for their generosity and continuous support for the Greenfield Fire Department and their community.

During my time as MLA, I have watched Freeman's mill make significant donations to the fire department to help repair hall infrastructure. In November 2019, they donated \$30,000 worth of new bunker gear to outfit new volunteer firefighters. It is fantastic to see this local business continuing to give back to their community and our volunteer firefighters who are the backbone of every rural community.

I'd like to ask this House to join me in thanking Harry Freeman & Son Limited for their generous donations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

**CAMERON, GEO. - SGT.:
RCMP CAREER ADVANCEMENT - CONGRATS.**

HON. GORDON WILSON: I rise today to welcome Sergeant George Cameron to the Digby area and wish him well in his new position as a commanding officer of the Digby detachment.

This move to Digby also marks Sergeant Cameron's return to the Maritimes. Prior to joining the RCMP in 2001, Sergeant Cameron grew up in P.E.I. and spent 16 years in community policing in both Nova Scotia and P.E.I. He returns to Nova Scotia after spending time in the RCMP detachments in High Prairie and Fort McMurray. Since his arrival, he has been welcomed by the members of the community and wants to continue to form relationships with people from the area.

Sergeant Cameron has indicated his main priorities are community involvement and good communications between his detachment and the local community groups. The new commanding officer is fortunate that, in the Digby detachment, this has been a priority for some time. He will continue to build on the efforts of his predecessors and as well form strong relationships with community organizations and groups. That is what we would expect from a Maritimer returning to Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: Just by way of keeping track, this is a reminder to all members that Question Period will start at 3:12 p.m.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**N. SYDNEY LEBANESE HERITAGE GRP.:
COM. CONTRIB. IN C.B. - THANKS**

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, in November, the North Sydney Lebanese Heritage Group hosted its inaugural hafla at the North Sydney Museum. The event was a great success and enjoyed by all in attendance. Attendees were not only provided with a variety of Lebanese cultural activities but also treated to an assortment of incredible cuisine.

The communities of the Northside have a deep and strong Lebanese community who have not only volunteered their time with numerous organizations, but also put their names forward to serve the community on municipal and provincial levels of government. Some of the community's members have also become highly successful business owners who have created employment opportunities in the community.

The Northside is stronger as a result of its diversity and the active participation of all of its residents in the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DART. HS: COMMITMENT TO AFRICAN HERITAGE MO. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: This morning, I was honoured to attend the African Heritage Month assembly at Dartmouth High School.

It was a really great celebration of music and dance with amazing performances by Owen O; Frank, Kikki, and Darien of the Showstoppers, an incredible dance company; and Andrew D and Arianna Willis. All of those performers were supported by the African Nova Scotian Music Association. Irvine Carvery gave a great address outlining some of the particular history of African heritage in Nova Scotia. I talked a little bit about racial profiling and how we must all work to stop it.

I want to congratulate the amazing leadership at Dartmouth High School for their commitment to this event every year. It's a real highlight for February for we in Dartmouth. I want to say thank you for the invitation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

WALKER, KIERAN: ONE TOUGH GOALIE - CONGRATS.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: On Saturday, February 8, 2020, 13-year-old Kieran Walker, who is a goalie, faced a monumental challenge.

His team, the Antigonish Bantam A Bulldogs, were playing in a hockey tournament in Pictou. His team was short on players when they faced the Chebucto Atlantics. For three periods, he took shot after shot after shot. In total, Kieran faced 103 shots in that single game, but he made a tremendous 98 saves. Although his team lost 5-0, Kieran's effort between the pipes made provincial headlines.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Kieran Walker for his spectacular demonstration, determination, and concentration. I ask my fellow members of this House of Assembly to join me in congratulating him on his remarkable performance. Great job, Kieran. Go, Bulldogs, go!

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

TALLAHASSEE COM. SCH. ASSOC.: BINGO FUNDRAISER - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize members of the Tallahassee Community School parent-teacher organization for their outstanding efforts to raise money for new technology for their students.

A bingo fundraiser held at Tallahassee school brought in nearly \$5,000. Lots of hard work and dedication went into planning the event, which made it the huge success that it was. Many local artisans and businesses offered donations to the school for the merchandise bingo event. The event was extremely well attended, and we hope to see this as an annual event.

I ask all members of this Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking all of those who attended as well as those who worked so hard through their volunteer work to give back to their community for this very successful event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

MILLER, CATHERINE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. MARGARET MILLER: When Catherine Miller noticed that some children in her grandchild's school didn't have proper winter attire, Cathy wasted no time stepping out to help those less fortunate.

She began to collect winter boots and snow pants to ensure all children were warm in the Winter. This snowballed into something much larger, and so began the Community Coats Collection Initiative. For the past three winters, Cathy has collected blankets and coats in our area and has redistributed them to families in need. Last year alone, over 400 families were touched by her kindness and had winter jackets to wear and blankets to keep them warm through the winter months. Not surprisingly, Cathy has always endeavoured to give back. Whether volunteering or stepping up and helping others in any way she can to think of to help.

She is a founding member of the Hants East Assisting Refugees Society, better known as the HEART Society, and has been collecting other items such as appliances and furniture for refugee families that come into our area. She feels that giving back to others is very important and is a wonderful role model for her grandchildren, sharing her love for giving back with them. Following her example, Cathy hopes that they too will one day be volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House members to join me in applauding Cathy's efforts to enrich the lives of others and to spread kindness and warmth in our area.

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

[3:00 p.m.]

TAYLOR HEAD PROV. PARK SOC.: TRAIL GUIDE - THANKS

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Friends of Taylor Head Provincial Park Society, and their Wellness Fund Initiative to provide an interpretive trail guide at Taylor Head Provincial Park.

The Friends of Taylor Head Provincial Park Society work with their community health board to receive funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, an important program that supports local groups and organizations to improve their health and that of their communities through activities, events and programs that help promote healthier lifestyles and lead to behaviour changes.

They've created an interpretative trail map of the trails of that area of Taylor Head. A printed version of this map will be available, as well as a downloadable version, to introduce visitors to Taylor Head's human and natural history. The guide contains a map of the walking trail, and the text will be keyed to a number of signage markers along the trail.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Friends of Taylor Head Provincial Park Society for their dedication to their park and for the hard work that they put in to make it exceptional.

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

MCNAMARA, SPENCER: MAKE-A-WISH, FULFILLED - CONGRATS.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise the Children's Wish Foundation and recognize Spencer McNamara's courageous recovery from life-threatening injuries sustained after a very serious car accident in September 2018.

Late in January, Cathy Sutherland, Development Coordinator at Make-A-Wish Canada, presented Spencer with tickets to the 2020 NHL All-Star Weekend in St. Louis, Missouri. In addition to the tickets, he was also presented with details on his flight, accommodations, spending money and other gifts, such as a McCain Deep'n Delicious cake, his favourite - and, admittedly, also mine, Mr. Speaker.

Spencer continues his rehabilitation. Since the accident, he has relearned to walk, talk and eat, as well as use the left side of his body. A member of the Richmond Hurricanes minor hockey team prior to the accident, he remains active with the team as their honorary general manager.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Spencer and wish him well with his continued recovery. I ask the Legislature to join me in sending our best wishes for his full rehabilitation and hope he fully enjoyed the trip of a lifetime provided by the Children's Wish Foundation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ZIBARA, ANTHONY & PAULA: DAUGHTER - BIRTH CONGRATS.

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to congratulate someone who has provided me much support since 2013, as I represent the good people of Halifax Armdale and Nova Scotia. Anthony Zibara wears many hats. He has worked as my constituency assistant and my executive assistant. He's also a musician and DJ, and an active part of our Lebanese community.

Over the Heritage Day weekend, Anthony took on an important and exciting new role, one that he had been preparing at least nine months for. He and his wife Paula welcomed a beautiful baby girl, Gianna Maria, to the world on February 16th. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I'm so happy for Anthony and Paula and their families. Your first child is special and unforgettable, and I want to wish their family much love, happiness and good fortune. They will both be wonderful, supportive parents.

Congratulations to the Zibaras, and welcome to Gianna Maria. I'm looking forward to having her grow up and come to the Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

CARLTON, KELLY: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Kelly Carlton of Hatchet Lake. Kelly recently retired after working for Halifax Regional Centre for Education for 30 years. She served 28 of those years at the Prospect Road Elementary School. Throughout her career, she saw many generations of students going through the doors of the school and in recent years had the pleasure of seeing children whose parents were once students at her school.

Kelly worked hard to keep the school running as a well-oiled machine. She became a familiar and supportive face for so many children and their parents. She also worked hard to ensure the valued institutional memories and traditions of the school are ingrained in the current staff, so they will carry on the unique culture and spirit of the school for future generations. Upon leaving, she told the current principal to "take care of my kids," as their smiles were the aspect of the job she looked forward to each day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Kelly for her successful career and her work to guide and inspire future generations.

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

AYRES, DAVID - GOALIE: HOCKEY SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate David Ayres who was the goalie who played for Carolina this past weekend.

Everybody's aware of the story. It's a great story for Dave, but what was even more magical for me was watching the social media feed from the member for Victoria-The Lakes Saturday night. He started out the night with great excitement for the game, then to anger and finally to congratulatory acceptance for David and his journey getting there.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to recognize David. He's going to Carolina now, as the team invited him down to hang out with his teammates. I congratulate the member for Victoria-The Lakes for realizing that the Toronto Maple Leafs actually lost Saturday night.

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

LIONS CLUBS: TREATMENT ROOM REDESIGN - THANKS

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all Nova Scotia Lions Clubs that rose to the fundraising challenge put out by the Lions District Governor for Nova Scotia, Perry Oliver, prior to his retirement last year.

IWK staff, doctors, and Lions came up with a unique project to redesign a clinic room where outpatients receive treatments such as chemotherapy and IV infusions. Some of the patients stay for 24 hours, and this room will make a difference for thousands of children and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the total cost of the room reconstruction is \$22,000. Three local clubs - the Fall River club, Bedford club, and Sackville club - contributed \$9,000. With 70 clubs across Nova Scotia, the Lions reached their goal in just a few weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I request that all members of the Legislature join me in thanking the Lions for their continued support and service to Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HAND IN HAND: SERVING THOSE IN NEED - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about an amazing organization in Spryfield. I'd like to talk of all the good work that Hand in Hand does in the community.

Hand in Hand is a non-profit thrift shop owned by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Their store on the corner of Herring Cove Road and Drysdale Road is filled with a huge assortment of gently-used items, including household goods, clothing, and furniture.

Not only does Hand in Hand sell items for an extremely reasonable price to their clients, they also provide items free of charge to people in need. My office has reached out to Hand in Hand on several occasions, and they're always willing to supply household items and clothing to people who cannot afford to purchase the items they needed.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Hand in Hand for their dedication and commitment to our community. They're always there to give a helping hand to the residents of Spryfield.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**CHURCHILL, ANGELA/TUNNAH, HEATHER:
KNITTING SUPPORT FOR ALS - THANKS**

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Angela Churchill and Heather Tunnah for their support of the ALS Society of Nova Scotia. Heather is the owner of the Have a Yarn store in Mahone Bay, and Angela is an employee.

At the store, knitters gather on Tuesdays and Sundays to knit and chat. When a friend in this group was diagnosed with ALS, Angela and Heather wanted to offer their support. They decided to knit a Christmas scene entitled Dickensian Christmas Mice and included 14 mice dressed in the style of the Dickens era. They enlisted the help of three other knitters to help them create the scene. Upon completion they sold tickets for a draw. The proceeds were then given to the ALS Society.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly please join me in thanking Heather Tunnah and Angela Churchill for their willingness to support the ongoing research of the disease, ALS.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**BEST, LINDA/ANDERSON, ANN:
CULINARY AMBASSADOR AWARD - CONGRATS.**

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, the Taste of Nova Scotia Culinary Ambassador Award recognizes an individual, group, or organization who personifies Nova Scotia as an international culinary destination. The 2019 Culinary Ambassador Award was presented to Linda Best and Ann Anderson of Wolfville for their work in support of FarmWorks Investment Co-operative.

Linda and Ann travel throughout the province, promoting the value of investing in local agricultural opportunities. They are the driving force behind raising investment money in Nova Scotia to support small agri-food related businesses, including farms, restaurants, and producers in our province. To date, FarmWorks has invested \$2.2 million into 90 local businesses throughout the province.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in recognizing and appreciating Linda and Ann for their passion, dedication, and constant drive to help the local Nova Scotia food industry to flourish.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

VERITAS BOOKSTORE: 25 YRS. OF BUS. - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a beloved book and gift store in my riding that celebrated a very special milestone in 2019. Veritas Catholic Books & Gifts at 30 Farnham Gate Road celebrated its 25th anniversary this past December. A beautiful Mass and a meal were prepared at St. Agnes Church, where past and present volunteers attended. The meal featured African cuisine and decor put together by a long-time volunteer, Toria Aidoo.

Therese Bianchini, wife of the founder of Veritas, the late Luciano Bianchini, cut the anniversary cake along with Hugeina Parmeter, a long-time store manager. It was a special moment for everyone in attendance. The date of the anniversary celebration fell on St. Lucy's Feast, an important religious event in the Catholic faith.

Mr. Speaker, would this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Veritas Catholic Books & Gifts on their success. We wish you blessings in 2020 and beyond.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for those members' statements. Before we move on to Question Period, I'd like to remind all members once again that I'll expect no unsolicited comments from either side of the House. I remind everybody that the use of electronic devices is strictly prohibited.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: MLA DUI ISSUES - PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, over the weekend Nova Scotians learned that the member for Chester-St. Margaret's resigned from the Liberal caucus following a charge of impaired driving, the second charge of this nature in four months.

Following the member's Thanksgiving DUI, when the Premier was asked if he was aware of any of the member's previous issues with drinking and driving, the Premier stated:

Not at all. I don't know of any other situations related to that. I can tell you that the first I heard of it was today or this week when I was called that he was picked up for impaired. We'd be having a very different conversation, quite frankly, if he had not accepted responsibility in seeking treatment. I would have preferred to have known about this a long time ago, so I could have helped him provide the supports required.

My question for the Premier is: Can the Premier confirm today that his office was, in fact, unaware of the concerning drinking-and-driving history of the member for Chester-St. Margaret's prior to the Thanksgiving weekend charge?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that I was not.

TIM HOUSTON: I would like to table an email dated November 6, 2019. This email and its attached memo detailed an alleged DUI involving the member for Chester-St. Margaret's that we believe is the same instance that has led to the more recent criminal charges. The email was sent to the president of the Chester-St. Margaret's Liberal riding association, a director of that same association, and an individual who has been identified as a regional caucus operations officer for the Nova Scotia Liberal caucus office.

Mr. Speaker, on May 6, 2019, at least two prominent Chester-St. Margaret's Liberals and one Liberal caucus office employee were aware of a serious drinking-and-driving allegation against the member. Was the Premier ever made aware of the existence of this email?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I just said in my earlier answer, the first I heard of that was when the member was picked up. I want to tell you that the honourable member, who is no longer a member of our caucus, is sitting as an Independent member who is in

treatment today. It is my hope that he continues with that treatment and continues to get back to good health.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in which a very serious offence occurred where a member of this Legislature was posing a risk to the public. We have an eyewitness to the alleged drinking and driving of November 2018. We have that witness being so concerned over the behaviour they witnessed that they felt it necessary to resign their position on the local Liberal board and notify the Party and caucus of these behaviours.

Mr. Premier, I'd like to ask you: Now that you are aware, should you have known about the existence of this email?

[3:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: I would like to remind the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to direct your questions through the Chair.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: As I said earlier, I became aware when there was a charge laid. As I would say to every member of this House and, indeed, across the province, if they believe an incident has happened in this province that requires the involvement of law enforcement, that is directly whom they should go to.

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

PREM. - GOV'T. BUDGET: CORP. TAX CUT - JUSTIFICATION

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in today's budget the government has laid out a budget - a banquet feast - on the table of corporations in the form of a \$70 million tax cut, while it has cast crumbs before people in the province who can't even get a place to live. The number of affordable housing units that could be constructed with \$70 million is in the hundreds. The number of new units of affordable housing that will be provided by this budget is under 40.

Can the Premier offer his justification for a 12.5 per cent reduction in the corporate tax rate, while so many families will not be receiving the investment that would provide them with a place to live?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am very proud of the work that has been done by all Nova Scotians. Better Together is about ensuring that we recognize the contribution of all Nova Scotians. That's why we continue to make sure that the child tax

benefit has the largest single increase in the province's history; why we continue to make sure that the minimum wage has risen by a dollar, the largest increase in - for a long time.

We will continue to make those investments to ensure that we continue to move all Nova Scotians up as we continue to grow this economy and provide opportunities. That's the reality - that's what Better Together is about. We will continue to make investments in affordable housing, continue to make investments in rent supplements, both with housing stock that we own, with co-op and, as well, with the private sector.

GARY BURRILL: In a budget that lays out this grand \$70 million banquet feast on the table before corporations in the tax cut, one of the crumbs that's cast on the floor for the people of Nova Scotia is the \$3 million the Premier speaks of in rent supplements. I call them crumbs because it would take so many of them to make a housing meal.

In our rental vacancy market, which is lower than Vancouver's or Toronto's, a carload of rent supplements won't accomplish anything because there is no place to rent to start with.

I want to ask the Premier if he will acknowledge this: That the thousands of people who are hungry for a secure, affordable place to live are no better off today than they were before this budget.

THE PREMIER: This budget will have an increase with Community Services in the housing industry for \$100 million. I am surprised that the honourable member is complaining about the fact that we have been investing in the very things he has been talking about. He has asked us to ensure that we lift children out of poverty, and that's what this investment - the Nova Scotia Child Benefit - is about.

He has asked us to deal with the housing. We continue to provide a myriad of options. We had some people in the gallery today doing a tremendous job, partners of ours who are out working to provide affordable housing for mothers and children. We continue to make these investments and I am really surprised.

I can understand why he may be opposed to us working with the private sector to grow good jobs in the economy because philosophically he is opposed to that. But why would he be opposed to the \$100 million investment we are making to the very issues that he is talking about.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, what I am drawing attention to - and what the Premier ought not at all to be surprised that I would draw attention to - is the startling contrast between \$70 million for the corporate sector and under 40 houses for those who need affordable housing.

The crumbs of social spending in this budget, whether they are the poverty reduction crumbs or the housing crumbs relative to this \$70 million, they don't add up to anything near the scope of this tax cut of two percentage points in the corporate tax rate. When business said to the government, we are looking for a tax cut, the Premier came and delivered the tax cut to them.

What I want to ask is: Why doesn't he lend the same kind of an ear to the thousands of people who are looking for a place for their families to live?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I'm not sure where he is going with his question because the reality of it is that we are actually investing more money in those who require our support. Whether it is in housing or children living in poverty, we continue to make those investments. At the same time, we are having record employment opportunities.

We are working with the private sector to be able to provide more job opportunities for our sons and daughters to get their first job opportunity here in Nova Scotia; to provide people with new opportunities in education; to provide them the ability to continue to grow the prospects of finding a different job in our province. We continue to invest in housing, and the myriad of options that are related to housing, whether it is our shelters, whether it's first-time home buyers, whether it's a rent supplement to get people affordable housing with our partners out there on the front line, who are responding to the needs of Nova Scotians, who for whatever reason, find themselves looking for an opportunity for a house.

We're going to continue to do that. I would hope that the honourable member will continue to read this budget and find in it the optimistic view that Nova Scotians see in it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - LIB. MLA: DUI ALLEGATIONS - KNOWLEDGE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has told us here today, as well as the media in recent months, that he had no awareness of the member's issues relating to drinking and driving. We now know that the caucus and the Premier's office were actually made aware of a November 2018 DUI well in advance of the member's Thanksgiving weekend DUI. I ask the Premier if he should have been made aware of the email - you didn't answer that question. I'd like to ask the Premier, is it typical for allegations of this nature against a member of his caucus to be kept from the Premier?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. He knows a lot of details about something that is before the court that has no disclosure to it. It's surprising to me that he has become judge, juror and executioner here on the floor of the Legislature.

The reality of it is we have somebody in treatment for an addiction who is an Independent member of this House. The line of questioning that the honourable member is questioning here, he shouldn't be looking at me. I've been very clear about the position. What he said, what he's saying to every person in this province who has an addiction is: don't come forward, because the Opposition Leader might bring you to the floor of the Legislature.

TIM HOUSTON: There is no question that the member's conduct is before the courts. The Premier's conduct on the Alex Cameron case is also before the courts, but what we're talking about today is the Premier's conduct in this situation. According to the Premier - there's an email here, I've tabled it for the Premier's benefit. I would find it hard to believe the Premier hasn't seen it before. It's dated November 6, 2019. I've already tabled it. It's to the members of the Liberal caucus and riding associations that I've mentioned.

I want to ask the Premier, according to the Premier we have members of his staff concealing from him very serious criminal allegations against a caucus member. That's what the Premier's saying, and this is now the second time in a year where the Premier denies having ever received communications alleging misbehaviour by his MLAs. Members will remember the allegations of former NDP MLAs against the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Premier said he didn't know anything about that either. I'd like to ask the Premier: Has the Premier directed his staff to keep him in the dark where the misbehaviour of his MLAs is concerned?

THE PREMIER: No. The reality of it is I'm grateful for the men and women who choose to serve public office in different ways, whether they serve in my office or the constituency offices across this province, or in riding associations for all Parties. I want to express my appreciation to them for continuing, in some cases putting their own lives on hold, as they try to make their community better and their province better.

Today's budget is a reflection of the men and women who've come to join this elected caucus to move this province forward. At every turn we continue to get push back from the Opposition. I will stand by my reputation and my word, and what I have said on this case. I put a release out, I continue to answer the honourable member's question. It is now before the courts, and my hope is that the member of this House continues to get the treatment for his addiction.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - LIB. MLA: DUI ALLEGATIONS - KNOWLEDGE

TIM HOUSTON: Oh yes, Mr. Speaker, but today we're talking about the Premier's conduct. Five months before the member was charged with his Thanksgiving DUI, the Premier's team received an email notifying them about a November 2018 DUI and the

public safety risk the member posed. Either the Premier chose to do nothing, or his staff concealed it from him.

In this email, the director resigned due to the member's reckless drinking and driving and subsequent hiding of the issue to protect the member and the Premier. In an attachment, the director specifically laid out the circumstances of the member's DUI in November 2018, and the dangerous and reckless behaviour that the director witnessed. Anyone reading this email - anyone reading this email - should have been concerned that a crime may have been committed. This was an issue of significant and immediate concern.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will the Premier agree that allegations of this nature should have been taken seriously and should have been escalated to the Premier's attention if they weren't?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm going by what the member's reading from, that release, an email. If anyone has received that, including him or any other member of this House, and they know any information in it, they should have sent it to the police. They are the law enforcement agency to enforce the laws of the province.

TIM HOUSTON: A director resigns from their role in an association. The director sets out very specific concerns supported by detailed evidence in their resignation. The association goes through the removal process with that director, and no one follows up on this information and the associated risk posed to the public? If so, it appears that the resignation was simply accepted, with the allegations being swept under the rug.

Can the Premier confirm that the resignation of this director was accepted following receipt of the email and that no one looked into it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would have no idea what's happening in riding associations across the province. Individual members have their own riding associations in other parts of the province. Men and women in communities step up to support the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party and the vision of moving this province forward because we're better together.

I'm thrilled that on a day like today, when a budget has been introduced, there are no questions from the honourable member. I think the members on this side of the House should be very proud of the fact that the Progressive Conservative Party is acknowledging the work we're doing.

The reality of it is, what we have here is a member of this House who is in treatment for an addiction. It is my hope that he continues in that way to get healthy and that anything associated with the courts or the law goes to the law enforcement agency and the courts of our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - LIB. MLA: DUI ALLEGATIONS - KNOWLEDGE

TIM HOUSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, we can agree on one thing: the Premier says he has no idea what's happening across this province. I think that's absolutely something we can agree with.

As the Premier of the province, the Premier is claiming not to have known about the member's behaviour and the risk he posed to the public. If the Premier didn't know about it, but the whole infrastructure knew about it - the riding association, caucus office, and the Premier's Office - what does that say about the team around the Premier? Would the dangerous conduct of one of the caucus members be something that the Premier's team feels shouldn't be important enough to bring to the Premier's attention? I find that very strange, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the Premier's team is just trying to bury this issue to protect the Premier. Is that what's happening here, Premier?

THE SPEAKER: Once again, I would like to remind the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to direct his comments and questions through the Chair.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member twisted the words that I said early on. What I said was that I'm not involved in riding associations across the province on a daily basis.

I certainly know what's going on around the province. Unemployment is at an all-time low. Population is at an all-time high. More young people are choosing to live and work in Nova Scotia than ever before.

Today we have a budget with the largest single increase in the child benefit for children living in poverty. We continue to make investments in housing for vulnerable Nova Scotians to ensure they have supports. That's what I know is happening around this province, and so do Nova Scotians. They understand that the commitments that we have made, working with them, are moving this province forward.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, if it's the Premier's position that he had absolutely no idea what was going on with these serious allegations about a member of his own caucus who was continuing to drink and drive and pose a public safety risk - if the Premier had no idea what was going on, that's a serious concern and should be to all members of this Chamber and Nova Scotians.

If the Premier's team was just trying to protect him and bury this issue, how can he continue to have these people going around in high-level positions hiding the actions of Liberal members of his caucus? How can he support that?

THE PREMIER: Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those people who work with me as we continue to deliver good government to the people of the province. There are men and women on this side of the House who have been elected under the Liberal banner. There are also people who work in my office, work in the caucus offices, and work on behalf of all Parties across this province because they want to work in the democratic process, and they want to move the province forward.

I am grateful for those committed Nova Scotians who put their own lives on hold for a period of time to do their public service. I want to continue to assure the honourable member that I will stand with them and work with them to continue to move this province in a positive way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

FIN. & TREASURY BD. - BUDGET LINE: RESTRUCTURING - DETAILS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Today's budget includes a \$140 million increase in the nebulous budget line entitled "Restructuring," a line that has no supplementary detail and about which no questions will be answered.

Mr. Speaker, \$140 million is not a small amount of money, especially when you consider that we have record high emergency room closures, a crises in affordable housing to which we've already referred, and seniors in hospital waiting for nursing home spaces. That is to name just a few issues.

[3:30 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell the people of Nova Scotia what her government plans to do with that \$140 million?

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, the process of having a line in a budget called Restructuring has existed for a long time. All Parties have used that as a line in their budget. Our Party is no different.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, this is a government that claims to be open and transparent and yet they have no trouble with \$140 million being put aside without any explanation of what it's being used for - \$140 million is more than the new funding for child poverty, housing, and long-term care combined.

The \$140 million allocated to Restructuring this year is a record high number - higher than several of the previous years. Can the minister explain why the government expects to spend a record high amount in the nebulous budget line known as Restructuring?

KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, I think referring to the Restructuring as a nebulous line sends a message that when there's a new initiative, when there's a new program, when there's something that has been finalized and ready to go into department so it can be supported and implemented for all Nova Scotians, to me, is not nebulous.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - MLA ALLEGATIONS: NO KNOWLEDGE - EXPLAIN

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I've referred to the email received by the Premier's political staff. This email included many serious allegations about the member's behaviour, including the following quote:

I walked up to the window and saw it was the member slouched over and appearing very incoherent with a bottle of vodka in his lap. Our discussion was cordial at first, but when I pressed him to get out of the vehicle, he told me a number of times, no. His seatbelt was on, so I reached in to try and release it and he pushed me away. He then put the car in drive and drove off, hitting me and running over my right foot for the first time.

My question for the Premier: If the Premier had read this account, would it have not set off alarm bells?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the honourable member if any Nova Scotians experiences that, they should call the police.

TIM HOUSTON: And yet, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's position seems to be that the members of his political team did nothing. That's what the Premier's position seems to be. It defies logic that explosive allegations of alarming behaviour were not brought to the Premier's attention. It defies logic.

Another excerpt from the email:

The caller was quite frantic knowing the danger the member was in and possibly the danger he presented to others. I got back into my car and followed him south on Highway No. 12. He texted me saying, I'm so (expletive) drunk, and it was clear he was extremely drunk. My observations consisted of erratic driving, the smell when

I opened the door, his speech, and his apparent lack of awareness of his situational surroundings.

Mr. Speaker, this is from an email that was provided to the Premier's political staff 15 months ago. How does the Premier feel, knowing this alarming account was kept from him?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again I want to tell the honourable member, the private member is in treatment. It is my hope that he continues to receive that treatment to effect better health. The issues that are before the court will be dealt with by the legal system in our province.

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

PREM.: MLA ISSUES IGNORED - CONFIRM

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, perhaps if someone who had received this email would have acted, the member could have got treatment 15 months ago. That's what we're talking about. On the balance of probabilities, given the connection of the Premier to those who received this email and given the sender was actively removed from the association, the Premier had to have been aware of the allegations surrounding the member's drinking and driving.

At any point, did the Premier or anyone on his team raise the concern with the member prior to the Thanksgiving DUI, or did the Premier and his team choose to ignore the obvious safety concern posed by the member - by a member of his own caucus?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, again, the honourable member is taking a wide berth here. The reality of it is as I said, I did not know. It's kind of hard for me to talk to a member about drinking and driving when I don't know about it.

Let me assure the honourable member, like all members of this caucus, we know all too well quite frankly the impact of impaired driving. We know all too well the consequences of impaired driving, not only on the person who is driving impaired but unfortunately for our own families.

Let me be very clear: no one on this side of the House in any way tried to do anything around someone drinking and driving, hide it from anybody. The reality of it is, when he was picked up by a law enforcement agency, he was charged with impaired driving. If there were other issues that someone else knew about, that the honourable member is referring to, they should have gone to police. That's where those things belong, Mr. Speaker. The law enforcement agencies in this province would be all too willing to ensure they keep our streets safe.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims to have not known about this charge until Friday. The member was served with notice to appear on February 12th - that's a public document, and I can table that. It's hard to imagine that the member wasn't interviewed by law enforcement and provided the opportunity to give a statement in the lead-up to this.

At a very minimum, the member became aware of the charge 11 days before his removal from caucus. That naturally should have been the date when the member alerted the Premier. Similarly, if the member had earlier interactions with the police, that also should have been a natural opportunity to inform the Premier.

Is it the Premier's position that at no point during the investigation and at no point since his political staff received an email 15 months ago, detailing the situation - is it the Premier's position that at no point did anyone inform the Premier or his team of this ongoing situation?

THE PREMIER: The honourable member continues again to have a wide berth. My understanding is that there was no disclosure at this point to the Independent member, private member, of the House. He's making all kinds of accusations on the floor of the House. Guess what? He can because he's on the floor of the House.

The reality of it is, this is before the court system and it will be dealt with. Like all of us, Mr. Speaker, we have to take responsibility for the actions that we have or the allegations that are thrust upon us. This member will do so, and it is my hope that he continues in treatment, continues to deal with the addiction.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - MLA CAUCUS DEPARTURE: FORCED OR NOT

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'll just ask the Premier: Did the member choose to leave caucus, or was he asked to leave?

THE PREMIER: The honourable member, as I said, suggested his leaving caucus, and I accepted that.

TIM HOUSTON: Indeed, the Premier issued a statement on February 23rd, and he indicated that he learned of the charges against the member last week. He's not specific on at what point last week, but he indicates that it was last week, despite the member having known since at least February 12th and despite the Premier's team having known about this for 15 months.

I would like to ask the Premier: Is it regular practice for the Premier's team to keep secret inappropriate behaviours from the Premier that they have known about for at least two weeks for over a year? Is that regular practice in your team, Premier?

THE SPEAKER: Once again, I would like to remind the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to direct your comments through the Chair.

THE PREMIER: Again I want to thank the men and women who have chosen to come to work with us in this journey of moving our economy forward, providing new hope for young people to live and work in this province, providing the children living in poverty with new hope, today, in our budget that was announced. I'm going to continue to work with those who come to work with me every day to focus on improving the lives of Nova Scotians, and we will continue to do that.

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

PREM. - MLA ISSUES: COVERED UP - EXPLAIN

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, would the Premier's team not have felt that the Premier would have done the right thing and gotten the member for Chester-St. Margaret's the help he clearly needed? Instead of getting the member the help he needed, did the Premier's political staff put public safety at risk solely to protect the Premier's power?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member is again stretching every boundary, which he typically does. Nothing the honourable member does now surprises me.

The reality of it is, the men and women who come to work for me have the confidence in this government to continue to make the lives of their families and the people they care about better. That's what this budget was about today, continuing to invest to improve pre-Primary, which every four-year-old in this province, regardless of the socioeconomic circumstance they were born into, will have access to; something they voted against. We continue to make investments to ensure that young people have a future here in our province.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker: in 2013, more young people were leaving than staying. Now we have more young people choosing to live and work here, and some are coming home and others are coming to join them. That's what the men and women who work in our office do every day. They get up in the morning and say, how can I make this place better for the people of this province? Guess what? They're succeeding.

TIM HOUSTON: Perhaps the Premier would be surprised by the behaviour of this caucus. A caucus that removes a member when it's necessary, or removes a candidate when it's necessary, are things that the Premier probably wouldn't understand.

I'd like to ask the Premier: What does it say about the Premier's leadership to have a political staff that does not disclose key information to their Leader - possibly information of a criminal nature?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what does it say about a Leader in this House who has to stand up and pat himself on the back? I would suggest he's probably a bit nervous over there.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PREM.: BUSINESS TAX CUTS INEFFECTIVE - COMMENT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: My question is for the Premier. A 2011 report by economist Jim Stanford reviewed the data on business profits, taxes, and investment in Canada from 1961 through 2010. The analysis showed over 10 years ago that business tax cuts are economically ineffective, and I'll table that. Every one dollar of tax cut generates 10 cents of private investment.

Corporate tax cuts are a bad deal for the province when what Nova Scotia really needs is a green jobs plan to transform our economy. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain why he chose to pass up this \$70-million opportunity to invest in a new green economy and chose instead to throw more money into the status quo?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member must have missed the part of the budget where 70 per cent of the budget in the Department of Energy and Mines is going to green jobs. (Applause)

What the honourable member is missing is that we had the highest corporate tax rate in the country. Our neighbouring province was below. What we've done is reduce it 2 per cent, and not because we're trying to race to have the lowest corporate tax cut in the country. We're trying to make sure that we stay competitive in a region that, quite frankly, we're leading today.

We want to keep that competitive edge to ensure that the men and women who are driving job creation continue to do so. More young people are attached to our workforce today than have been in a very long time. More people are choosing our province to come and live and work. We want those job creators to invest that money back into our system so that we can continue to grow our population and continue to collect taxes to continue to pay for the services that the honourable member and her caucus continually talk about.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, the document I just tabled showed that there is scant to no evidence that corporate tax cuts result in reinvestment. What we saw today is what happens when big companies and old-school governments are in charge.

Our caucus has described many times the incredible economic and environmental opportunities that could exist if the government chose to show real leadership and invested in economic transformation. We know that there have been other failed investments in transformation. According to a recent report prepared for the Ecology Action Centre, Nova Scotia has the opportunity to create over 15,000 green jobs per year in the province if we made serious investments in the green economy.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier table any evidence of the number of jobs that will be created, and the amount of money reinvested, as a result of his \$70-million corporate tax cut?

THE PREMIER: As I'm sure the honourable member knows, there's an opportunity for Estimates. The Minister of Energy and Mines would be more than happy to describe the green jobs that are happening across the province.

I think it's unfortunate that the honourable member would stand in her place and suggest that the investments in the Boys and Girls Club is not a good investment, that the investment in Phoenix is not a good investment, that the support that we're providing Adsum House today is not a good investment. She's suggesting that \$54 million in community services to help the most vulnerable people in our province is not a good investment.

The reality is that this budget reflects the fact that our economy is doing well. We need those job creators to continue to create jobs with economic activity so that more young people will choose to live and work in our province and so more people will choose to come and live and work here. That's a balanced approach to delivering services to the people of this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: LIBERAL CAUCUS - ACTING ON DISCLOSURE OF CONDUCT

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, we have a member who knew for weeks that he had been charged with a criminal offence. The Premier's political staff had known since May - 15 months ago - that there were allegations against the member who had been driving under the influence, and yet we are to believe nobody took any action.

[3:45 p.m.]

Putting your hands on another member isn't enough; allowing personal information to be stolen through the FOIPOP site is not enough; manipulating a judicial appointment, that's not enough; and now facing criminal charges and not telling the Premier, that's not enough. My question for the Premier is: What does it actually take to lose your job in the Liberal caucus?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, you already had to ask the honourable member to stand in his place and retract the issue about manipulating a judicial appointment, but he goes around your authority as the Chair and does it again in this question.

The reality of it is that he is showing insult to the Chair you are sitting in, Mr. Speaker, and to the people of this House, by suggesting something that you proved was wrong.

TIM HOUSTON: It is a bit rich. We have a member of the Premier's caucus who was drunk driving twice. We have a government that is talking about the safety of our highways, and we read in this thing about the member who is drunk driving on Highway No. 103, posing a tremendous public safety risk, and a whole series of Liberal political staffers who looked the other way. We just want to know why. That's what we want to know. Why did they look the other way? Was it to hold onto power for this very thin government? Is that the reason?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if he has any allegations or evidence that a crime has been committed in this province, that he actually go to the RCMP with that information.

I do want to thank the honourable member for raising, notifying, the fact that this is the second majority government in our province. When I look across the country, how grateful I am for the people of the province continuing to show confidence in us. Their hard work and confidence have been paid off today in this budget that reflects that we wanted to acknowledge them for the work they did to help build and grow the economy of this province.

I look forward to the Estimates, as they unfold, so we can continue the momentum and continue to tell Nova Scotians that we are ready to work with them again.

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

PREM. - PUBLIC SAFETY: OBLIGATION - FAILURE ADMIT

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, every day an average of four Canadians are killed and 175 are injured in impairment-related crashes - every single day. Between 1,250 and 1,500 people are killed annually, and more than 63,000 are injured in Canada in impairment-related crashes. Crashes involving alcohol and/or drugs are the leading criminal cause of death in Canada. That's from MADD Canada.

The Premier is entrusted with the safety of the public. That obligation on the Premier is as high as it is on anyone else. Will the Premier just acknowledge that he failed in his duty to protect the public and instead looked the other way in an attempt to excuse a guilty man from justice - and that put Nova Scotians at risk - and has tacitly supported and encouraged . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd like to ask the honourable member that inferring another member of this House is guilty is unparliamentary. I'd like you to retract that, please.

TIM HOUSTON: The member has pled guilty to another case. That's a fact, Mr. Speaker. We can't rewrite facts in here, as much as the Premier might like to. Will the Premier admit . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Would the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition rephrase his question, please.

TIM HOUSTON: Will the Premier admit that he has failed in his duty to protect the public and, instead, tacitly supported and encouraged a behaviour that has killed so many and should never be excused, but denounced, especially by any Leader in this province with integrity?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot to unpack in the honourable member's question. I have been accused of a lot of things; avoiding tough decisions has not been one of them. Going into election campaigns to hold onto power, we continued to do what was right for the people of this province and we'll continue to do, when it makes difficult decisions to move our province forward.

I want to tell the member that, all too well, the members of this caucus know the statistics around drinking and driving. An important person who sits with us every day in this House had the unthinkable thing happen - losing her son to impaired driving. Do you think for one second that I would condone someone's behaviour to do that and to put that on someone else in this province? I may disagree with the honourable member, I may disagree with his position on policy but I'm not going to get into a position where I'm going to challenge his integrity and call him to accuse him of doing something like that.

I know all too well. I sit with her. I sit next to her. I know all too well. I have men and women in my family who put on the uniform every day to protect the streets in this province. That's my reality, and I will stand with them. (Applause)

TIM HOUSTON: Yet, three senior members of the Premier's team knew for 15 months and did nothing. The words sound good, Mr. Speaker, but the actions speak volumes - speak entire volumes. I'm reminded of Margaret Thatcher's comments about being powerful and being a lady is kind of the same thing, if you have to say you are. When I hear the Premier talk about integrity, I'm reminded of Margaret Thatcher's words.

In the case of Alex Cameron, the Premier used the might of the government to squash one individual who was just trying to do his job. Can the Premier confirm that this government used the courts and taxpayer dollars to protect the self interest of the Premier in the case of Alex Cameron's case?

In that case, it was one individual, but in this case, we are talking about every individual who was driving the roads, walking on a sidewalk. This is not one individual. This is the public safety of every Nova Scotian. I can't understand why the Premier's senior team didn't realize the importance of this or tell him.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the lawyer he is referring to worked for the Department of Justice of the Progressive Conservative government, who they gave time to write a book. In that book, if the honourable member would read it, very clearly said that no bureaucrat or politician is going to tell us how to defend a case in court. This means he was actually ignoring the authority of the Executive Counsel to put our position forward on what we were putting forward.

That's exactly what happened in this case, Mr. Speaker. It is not the might of government. It is actually the will of the people that we want in the courtrooms across this province. We want to ensure, quite frankly, that the decisions we make, we have a duty to consult. We believe we've met that obligation. That was our position. The honourable member needs to stand up. Is he standing with that lawyer's position who wrote his book while he was working for the Progressive Conservative government, who quite frankly left him there? Now I'm left to clean up one more mess.

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

PREM.: PROV. WORKPLACE HARASS. POLICY - UPDATE

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, with respect this is a question for the honourable Premier.

According to the Workplace Bullying Institute Workplace Bullying Survey released in 2017, one in five people report they directly experience abuse of conduct at work. It also reports that 29 per cent of victims remain silent about the abuse of conduct.

Mr. Speaker, the Nova Scotia House of Assembly is committed to providing a workplace that is free of harassment. As MLAs, we're responsible not only for establishing anti-bullying policies, but also following these policies. One would hope we are also modelling the legislation that we pass and the policies that we approve.

Given that the Province's Policy on Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace was adopted in 2016, I'd like to ask the honourable Premier when the policy last reviewed and updated and if he could comment on the safeguards that are in place to ensure victims come forward without fear of reprisals.

THE SPEAKER: I have to disallow the question. The premise of the question is on the administration of the policy, which falls under the purview of the Speaker. Does the member have another question?

ALANA PAON: I would advise the honourable Speaker that this is not what I was advised when I asked the question to clarify with Legislative Counsel earlier or with the Clerk. It's concerning to me that I'm being told this now, in the middle of my question. However, I will go ahead, even though you'll probably disallow it.

Sixty-one per cent of bullies are bosses, according to the Workplace Bullying Survey. Our Province's harassment policy states that harassment means any behaviour, act, conduct, or comment which would endanger a person's job, undermine job performance, threaten economic livelihood, or interfere with one's career. Yet the Province continues to reward the role of a whip for each recognized Party with a bonus of \$5,300. It's a position of leadership with considerable clout.

I would ask: How can our government justify that a member can possibly coerce the vote of another member to align with the Party, as opposed to their constituents, not to mention bestow financial compensation to this role paid for by taxpayers?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think I am following the question. I would agree with the honourable member that the members of this House should express the wishes of their constituents. I want to acknowledge that, in the last term, the honourable member for Waverley-Fall River did not agree with the position that his government took, and he had the ability and the authority to express that on behalf of his constituents, which he took full advantage of.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: LIBERAL MLA: DUI ALLEGATIONS - KNOWLEDGE

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, this was a very serious incident and the person who drafted the email did so after a lot of soul-searching, I can imagine. They were following along, they saw this unfolding before their eyes, and the experience was documented - well documented - by the person trying to stop it. I would encourage the members opposite to read the email.

The Party knew about it. The caucus knew about it. The Premier says he didn't, but that he would expect anyone who knew about it to report it.

I would like to ask the Premier: Does he understand why the Liberal Party didn't report it?

THE PREMIER: No.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, does the Premier believe that those Liberal Party members, caucus members, the Premier's staff members, who received this email and knew about it, that they should have reported it?

THE PREMIER: If there is any evidence that something has happened, of course. Everyone has the responsibility to do that, but there needs to be some evidence for someone to be able to do that. That's the reality of what it is. More importantly, quite frankly, if you have evidence, go to the law enforcement agency.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

EECD - PRE-PRIMARY PROG.: TRURO SCHS. - DISRUPTIONS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The PC caucus has always maintained and articulated that we know the educational gains that occur through play-based pre-Primary. That's why we've always maintained proper implementation of that program. On February 18th, the CCRCE sent a note to parents, saying that due to the continued implementation of pre-Primary in Truro, that there would be major impacts to program deliveries at a number of schools. I will table that.

This email clearly shows consultations didn't occur, that decisions have already been made; and now look at how this government operates. Consultations happen after decisions are made, and we know last night that the Liberal candidate didn't even show up to a debate in Truro.

My question to the minister is: Does the minister consider these major disruptions to school operations in Truro acceptable?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, grade reconfiguration is something that has happened throughout the history of this province. School boards have made decisions to accommodate space issues and growing demographics in certain areas. These things happen, and they happened before pre-Primary. They are happening as a result of space issues that we've had in order to implement pre-Primary.

We had to make operational space decisions, and there were only so many. We saved the last and hardest spots to implement pre-Primary for this very year because we knew we would have these challenges. I want the member to think about the recent study on early learning and its impact. It has the greatest impact to improve socio-economic outcomes, including the reduction of poverty and inequality; it increases female labour market participation; and it improves child outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children.

When you consider the profound impacts that this program can have on the lives of the kids, on the families, and on society as a whole, I am sorry, but grade reconfiguration to accommodate space is well worth it.

[4:00 p.m.]

TIM HALMAN: I would like the minister to reflect upon the fact that many of the disruptions to early child learning centres, many of the disruptions to our schools, could have been avoided if a realistic timeline had been implemented in 2017, rather than a political timeline.

My question to the minister is this: Will he admit that the timelines created for pre-Primary didn't emphasize best educational practice but rather emphasized political timelines?

ZACH CHURCHILL: If the member and that Party had their way, 4,600 four-year-olds would not have access to free early learning today. If that Party had their way, there would be 8,000 students who (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order please.

ZACH CHURCHILL: If we had heeded the calls of the Progressive Conservative caucus to not be ambitious with the rollout of pre-Primary, 4,600 four-year-olds and families today would not have access to this program. Indeed, heading into next year, up to 8,000 four-year-olds and families would not have access to this program.

This program has the ability to impact our society in fundamental important ways - the individual students who are in the program and the families, particularly single parents who can get back to the workforce, and when it comes to economic growth and taking people out of poverty. We are proud of this. We're proud to have the ambition we did. We are very pleased we did not listen to the Party opposite.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Now that the Premier is aware of the situation, will he agree to conduct an internal investigation and make the result public?

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for today. I move that the House now rise to meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, February 26, 2020, between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m. Tomorrow, Wednesday, is Opposition day. I will ask the Opposition House Leader to call the business, but I would also like to note that after their agenda, we will move directly into the debate on Budget Estimates.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Tomorrow we will be calling Resolution No. 1661, which is a resolution on Forestry, and also Bill No. 87, the Health Authorities Act.

THE SPEAKER: Just to confirm, it's one bill and one resolution you're calling.

ALLAN MACMASTER: That's correct.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn to meet again tomorrow, February 26th, at 11:00 a.m., adjourning no later than 11:59 p.m.

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

The motion is carried.

The House is now adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, February 26th, at 11:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 4:05 p.m.]