



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Third Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2021

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2021

Sixty-third General Assembly

Third Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Keith Bain, Susan Leblanc

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. As is the tradition with Budget Day in this House, with the consent of the House we will commence with the motion for Resolution No. 229, respecting the 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 and 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. 229, re Estimates: CWH on Supply - Referred - Notice given March 23/21 - (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)]

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

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the notice of motion given by me on March 23, 2021, 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, 2022, which is:

“I hereby transmit Estimates of Sums required for the Public Service of the province, for the year ending March 31, 2022, and in accordance with the Constitution Act of 1867, recommend them, together with the Budget Address of 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 Estimate resolutions;
- (5) deliver my Budget Speech; and
- (6) move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, being Supply to be granted to Her Majesty be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The Estimates are tabled.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

A FAIR AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE: PATH TO BALANCE

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by acknowledging that we are on Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people.

It is a privilege to deliver *Budget 2021-22*.

Mr. Speaker, today is a special day, March 25th is the 200th anniversary of Greek independence. It's special for all Greeks across the country, and for the first Greek descendant Finance and Treasury Board Minister as well. (Applause)

This is a historic budget for Nova Scotians, one developed against the backdrop of a global pandemic - but one that looks to the future with confidence and optimism as we lay the foundation for our recovery from this virus. Our budget reflects the priorities of Nova Scotians: sound fiscal management, a strong economy where businesses can grow, a resilient and responsive health care system focused on addressing the challenges of long-term care, public health, mental health, and a fair and respectful province that is clean and vibrant.

I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that this budget clearly lays out the path to balance. In four years, Nova Scotia's books will be balanced - the result of strong fiscal management and prudent spending which will allow us to invest in what is important to Nova Scotians. This has allowed us to deliver a budget that includes no tax increases, no increases in fees, as well as no new taxes and no new fees. We are striving to keep life affordable for all Nova Scotians and their families.

As always, our government strives to improve the lives of all of us and defines progress through economic growth as well as new metrics, such as well-being and quality of life. Mr. Speaker, the province's next chapter is being written right now and it tells the story of a modern Nova Scotia on the path to balance.

Nova Scotia had a very strong fiscal position when the pandemic arrived on our shores. Good fiscal management over the past seven years led to four balanced budgets, and we were on track for a fifth before COVID-19 arrived. This budget strengthens that foundation for an economic recovery despite the pandemic, which has had a profound impact on Nova Scotia, Canada, and the world. Governments everywhere are facing significant deficits, but Nova Scotia's strong fiscal position has meant our deficit relative to our GDP is one of the smallest in the country.

Budget 2021-22 is projecting a deficit of \$584.9 million, with revenue estimates of \$11.8 billion and expenses, and after consolidation adjustments, of \$12.4 billion. This is not a structural deficit. It is shorter-term and caused by COVID-19, allowing us to anticipate that our economic situation, revenues, and expenditures will return us to the strong economic position we had pre-COVID-19.

Government is forecasting a deficit of \$705 million for the end of 2020-21 fiscal year. This was due to the softening revenues and increased government spending to make sure Nova Scotians were protected from this insidious virus. It is also not the largest deficit in our province's history. In 2013-14, we were facing a deficit of \$675 million, and our government eliminated it three years later.

This should give all of us great comfort and confidence that we will return to the strong economic position we were in pre-COVID-19. Our government is confident in our future, and that's why our budget contains Capital investments of more than a billion dollars. Nova Scotians deserve credit for taking care of one another. Our province came together as a community during the pandemic. That is why we have weathered the past year better than most. Now, we are seeing the results of our sacrifices.

Nova Scotia is leading the way in Canada in job recovery, gaining jobs back that were lost during the pandemic. Our population still continues to grow, attracting new residents from other provinces and other countries. As of January 1, 2021, we reached 979,449 residents, the highest population on record. (Applause)

All credit rating agencies have confirmed that our outlook is stable. In February, Moody's credit rating agency cited strong management practices and policies as the reason for the continued positive outlook. It also noted that Nova Scotia is expected to perform better than many other Canadian provinces with the fiscal impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Budget 2021-22 makes thoughtful and strategic investments that will continue to keep our house in order.

Highlights of the budget include:

- \$1 billion in capital funding for infrastructure and innovation;
- more than \$1 billion for continuing care through improvements to long-term care and home care, a \$119.6 million, or 13 per cent increase from last year;
- \$336.5 million for mental health services - a \$19.2 million increase from last year;
- \$26 million through the green fund to take action on the environment and climate change;
- \$100 more per month for each adult who receives Income Assistance - \$35.2 million in additional funds;
- \$24.2 million to protect Nova Scotians from COVID-19 with vaccines that will get us back to our pre-pandemic lifestyle;
- \$12.2 million for more physicians; and
- \$5.7 million to increase Public Health resources.

AN ECONOMY WHERE BUSINESS CAN GROW

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia is expected to emerge from this pandemic faster than our provincial peers and stronger than before. The key to economic recovery starts with containing the COVID-19 pandemic. That means creating the conditions to allow easing of public health measures, rebuilding public confidence, and continuing to support Nova Scotians and businesses.

Our recovery has already started. Employment has increased to 465,200, which is just 1,800 below pre-pandemic levels, according to the most recent numbers from Statistics Canada. Employment among women is now above pre-pandemic levels. All positive news, but we still have a lot more work to do.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the business sector, and as a government we work hard to give them the best chance of success. Our government will focus on creating an economy where businesses can grow and hire. The refocused Department of Inclusive Economic Growth will continue our ongoing strong partnership with the business community. We will soon be launching our Economic Growth Council, which will advise government on how to create a stronger ecosystem to start and grow a business in our province.

Nova Scotia can become a start-up capital of Canada. Our post-secondary institutions and quality of life are clear advantages, but we can do more to create a place where start-ups grow and create good jobs of the future. That's why we recently announced almost \$17 million for Nova Scotia's universities to expand and enhance their computer science programs.

Budget 2021-22 includes a \$723,000 increase for Unama'ki Pathways in Technology (PTECH) program, an integrated partnership for Mi'kmaq students with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and developing workplace skills. The digital future is here, and digital skills are essential to creating the jobs of today.

That future also includes small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy. Our government recognizes the profound impact of the pandemic on restaurants and other small businesses in the service sector. Earlier this month we announced a new \$7 million Small Business Real Property Tax Rebate to provide about 3,300 qualified businesses a one-time partial rebate on their property taxes.

We know that our wineries, breweries, distilleries, and restaurants are achieving international standards of excellence and recognition. Over the next five years we will invest \$5.4 million for a new five-year Nova Scotia Quality Wine Strategy. We are also investing \$1.2 million annually to support the hospitality industry by expanding the 10 per cent Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation discount to include canned and bottled beer, cider and ready-to-drink products.

Tourism has been hit hard, too. To help this, we announced a \$7.3 million program to support Nova Scotia's hotel, motel, and inn operators throughout the province as the COVID-19 Response Council fund.

There is more.

The Tourism Digital Assistance Program is helping tourism operators to adapt to digital technologies. We will continue to support this \$1 million dollar program that helps businesses better meet consumer expectations. Tourism Nova Scotia is also offering online education and training for businesses about the digital economy, including a website bootcamp and digital content marketing.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for businesses to have a strong online presence and to ensure they have online sales and booking capabilities. The pandemic also highlighted stresses and strains in other sectors - and opportunities. Nova Scotia Business Inc. will be focused on attracting more people to rural communities through remote working opportunities and attracting businesses to fill lease vacancies to help reduce commercial vacancies.

Our province's universities prepare a skilled and well-educated workforce that Nova Scotia employers need. They attract international students who are increasingly choosing to stay in Nova Scotia. Universities are the engines for research and development, and *Budget 2021-22* includes a \$3.7 million increase to the university operating grant as part of the multi-year agreement. In 2013-14, the university operating grant funding was \$283 million. The total operating grant for 2021-22 is \$372 million, representing an increase of 31 per cent in support over this time.

Immigrants create jobs and help fuel our economy. Our newly-renamed Office of Immigration and Population Growth recognizes the importance immigration plays in the success of our economic recovery and the vibrancy of our communities. Since we were first elected, immigration to Nova Scotia has tripled. Immigration numbers skyrocketed pre-pandemic. At the same time, our economic growth accelerated, employment strengthened rapidly, and our unemployment dropped to the lowest rate in almost 50 years.

Regulations cost businesses time and money, and decrease competitiveness. That's why reducing red tape will continue to be a priority for our government. We know an improved regulatory climate is key for growth, and the toll of the pandemic on businesses means the need has never been more urgent. The Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness has already found \$50 million in net annual savings for business since 2017. We have increased the target for this year by another \$10 million.

Our commitment is creating a strong economy where businesses can grow. Strong financial management enables us to make investments to improve the lives of Nova Scotians.

MODERNIZING HEALTH CARE

Modernizing health care is a focus of this government. We are increasing health care spending in key areas such as mental health and addictions, long-term care, and public health, plus direct support for those most in need as they face cost of living increases.

The year 2020 delivered an unexpected health crisis across the world that required immediate attention. We devoted \$617.3 million in 2020 in resources and support to fighting the COVID-19 virus. Our government is dedicating \$24.2 million to distribute vaccines across the province to ensure Nova Scotians are protected as quickly as possible. Our goal is for all adults to receive their first dose by the end of June - contingent on the federal government delivering the vaccine supply.

We are also ensuring that our front-line health care workers - the heroes throughout this pandemic - are protected. Our government is spending \$64.2 million on personal protective equipment.

As we focus on the pandemic, we have not taken our eyes off other aspects of our health care system. Good public health is good for people, good for consumer confidence, good for business, and good for the economy, and we have seen the invaluable contributions of a strong public health system. We are adding \$5.7 million to Public Health as we continue to face this pandemic. Over the next four years, this investment will increase to \$14 million.

Public Health is more than being ready for pandemics. This investment will be used at the Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health Authority for new positions, communicable disease prevention and control, healthy communities, and population health surveillance.

Additional funding will also be provided to the Nova Scotia Health Authority as part of the \$76.1 million increase to its operating budget to expand capacity, including beds, across the province. We are also increasing support for the IWK by \$7.6 million.

MENTAL HEALTH

The pandemic has also raised additional challenges for Nova Scotians facing mental health struggles and addictions, and we are responding on many fronts with clarity and purpose.

Our government is investing \$336.5 million in mental health, an increase of \$20 million, which represents the largest expenditure in this area in the province's history - an increase of over 5 per cent from last year. The bulk of our commitment - \$43 million on the addictions and \$134 million on mental health services and programs - will be administered by the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

As we recently announced, we are establishing the Office of Mental Health and Addictions, which reports to the Minister of Health and Wellness and is focused on a proactive approach to dealing with mental health and addictions. We are providing \$1.5 million to start up this office in the first year and intend to employ 15 full-time staff including addiction counsellors, psychologists, and other mental health experts who will improve and lead the Province's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

Improved access to addictions services that meet the needs of Nova Scotians is in high demand. We are creating regional HUBS to improve access to addiction services and *Budget 2021-22* provides the first \$1.3 million investment, which will be followed by increasing investments until 2024.

We are funding a new, easily accessible service without the need for referrals. Single session therapy focuses on addressing an immediate issue the same day with trained staff. We will be investing \$5 million for this initiative this year. The goal is to help people access mental health and addiction services and to identify the best available solution in the person's moment of need.

Virtual care can also improve access to safe, timely, and appropriate care by professionals in publicly-funded health services. Recognizing the effectiveness of virtual care in the mental health space, we are providing \$5.9 million for an e-Mental Health and Addictions action plan to develop a coordinated, integrated, and efficient service with our partners, Nova Scotia Health Authority and IWK.

VIRTUAL HEALTH

The pandemic accelerated efforts to innovate in the delivery of health care. Through virtual platforms and even the old-fashioned telephone, many Nova Scotians were able to keep in regular contact with their doctors. Our government will ensure that Nova Scotians continue to receive easy access to their physicians through virtual care.

Through a bilateral agreement with the federal government, we are adding \$2.8 million to expand the use of virtual tools and digital approaches to providing health care. We are making virtual care investments in three key areas: the mental health and addictions website, online appointment booking for services such as diagnostic imaging, and a strategy to further develop virtual care.

We are also making investments in training more doctors by providing \$12.2 million to Dalhousie University Medical School for a number of initiatives. For example, we are continuing funding 16 seats at the medical school that were added last year, and have increased the funding by \$1.2 million for a total of \$2.7 million. The seats focus on rural communities, Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous Peoples, and African Nova Scotians.

We have increased funding by nearly \$300,000 for a total of \$2.7 million, for the next cohort of 10 family medicine residents. As well, we have increased by \$2 million to a total of \$6.8 million for the third cohort of 15 specialty residency placements. Investments have also been made to ensure more Nova Scotians can get the hip and knee replacements they need more quickly, with a \$1.9 million increase for orthopedic surgeries.

Finally, Nova Scotia is leading the way through the Human Organ Tissue Donation Act. With an increase of \$1.9 million, we can improve and save more lives by ensuring more people who need organs and tissue donations get them.

LONG-TERM CARE: A HISTORIC INVESTMENT

We are committed to doing better for our seniors in long-term care facilities and in our communities. For the first time in the province's history, government has had a single-year billion-dollar investment in continuing care.

Budget 2021-22 includes \$12.3 million in new investments to continue to implement recommendations from the Expert Panel on Long-Term Care. The quality and availability of long-term care will improve due to a multi-year commitment to long-term care infrastructure renewal. Our government is allocating \$34.5 million over four years to replace or renovate seven nursing homes, adding more than 230 beds across the province by 2025.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

Mr. Speaker, a cleaner economy creates jobs, supports a healthy environment, and benefits all Nova Scotians. That is why government is investing more than \$80 million in new and continued climate change and green economy initiatives this year. Funding in Energy and Mines, Municipal Affairs, and the renamed Department of Environment and Climate Change recognizes the importance of climate change to government policy and decision making.

Climate change is the challenge of our generation, and our government has already begun to take decisive action to address this issue. Energy efficiency programs are good for the economy, the environment, and our cost of living. Upgrading and retrofitting homes to make them more efficient also helps alleviate energy poverty by lowering people's bills.

Last year, we announced several initiatives that will be funded from the Green Fund. These include:

- incentives for energy efficiency upgrades for affordable housing;
- rebates to homeowners installing solar panels;
- incentives for energy efficiency upgrades for small businesses and not-for-profits;

- funding for the Clean Leadership program to allow 175 youth interns to work on climate change projects across the province; and
- rebates for clean, reliable, new, and used electric vehicles, including e-bikes.

This year we will spend approximately \$26 million through the Green Fund to address climate change with an added equity and anti-racism lens. As we complete our new climate plan, we will be nimble in capitalizing on strategic opportunities throughout the year.

We know the highest returns for our citizens and for our environment are on efficiency upgrades. Our government will continue to support efficiency programs, increasing conservation measures and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We are also working with municipalities to leverage federal infrastructure funding for the electrification of our public transit.

We are committed to a higher-value development of our natural resources as we innovate and grow our exports. Food is the single biggest industry in Nova Scotia, and that's why we supported its growth with a \$5 million investment to extend growing seasons, increase food security, and help the industry reduce its carbon footprint. This year, we are also creating a five-year Aquaculture Expansion Strategy with a \$1.5 million investment which has been allocated for the first year of the program.

The Forestry Innovation Transition Trust is a \$50 million fund that supports the Nova Scotia forestry sector. Five projects have been announced to date, totalling more than \$4.1 million, which means the forestry sector can continue to transition toward a more diverse and sustainable future.

One hundred and five young Nova Scotians, including young people from our First Nations communities, will get important career experience this Summer under a renewed agreement with the Clean Foundation.

Nova Scotia offers beautiful landscapes, coastlines, and ecosystems. Now more than ever, Nova Scotians appreciate our protected and wilderness areas, and we want future generations to have the chance to enjoy them as well. We will be investing in protected areas land purchases this year by leveraging the Canada Nature Fund with a \$986,000 investment in the Capital Plan.

As we look ahead, we want to hear from people across the province. This year, we will be consulting with Nova Scotians about our Climate Change Action Plan and our sustainable development goals. This will inform our plan to guide the future investments.

A CONNECTED, AFFORDABLE, AND INCLUSIVE NOVA SCOTIA

Poverty is a complex issue, one that is frequently intergenerational and systemic, with roots including trauma, racism, or issues relating to mental health or addiction. We need to do more for those who need it the most now. That is why our government is making the single largest additional investment in Income Assistance in our province's history.

We are increasing the Standard Household Rate by \$100 per month for adults who receive Income Assistance, with a \$35.2 million investment. This new investment means that 75 per cent of recipients will see an increase of between 12 and 20 per cent. This represents people with the deepest need on Income Assistance.

At the same time, we are removing a requirement for Employment Support Services and Income Assistance recipients to apply for federal CPP retirement benefits at age 60. This means seniors will have more choices about when to access the federal benefit.

A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

A more fair and inclusive society is our government's commitment to Nova Scotians. For too many Nova Scotians, systemic racism is a lived reality. Our government is placing a priority on doing its part - and we have established a new Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives.

The legacy of systemic racism relating to land ownership in historic African Nova Scotian communities persists. Recently, we announced \$3 million for a compensation fund to accelerate efforts under the Land Titles Initiative. The goal is to remove barriers and make it easier for residents of East Preston, North Preston, Cherry Brook/Lake Loon, Lincolnville, and Sunnyville to achieve title to their land. This year's \$2.4 million investment will move us closer to that goal.

The province is partnering with the federal government to consult with the community on an African Nova Scotian justice plan, recognizing the overrepresentation of African Nova Scotians in the justice system and issues of systemic racism in policing.

Violence against women is another systemic issue in our society. That is why we are investing an additional \$2.3 million for therapy supports for survivors of sexual assault. Nova Scotia pledged to become accessible by 2030. This goal requires collaboration with persons with disabilities, municipalities, businesses, post-secondary institutions, and many other groups. We are increasing support for the Accessibility Directorate by \$320,000, for a total of \$2.2 million this year, to continue these life-changing efforts.

Budget 2021-22 includes \$46.7 million for support programs for adults and children with disabilities, including more funding to help move residents living in facilities into

community-based settings and funding to enable them to live at home with their families if they choose.

For our younger Nova Scotians, this year, government will invest \$1 billion in public education for P-12 and pre-Primary to provide students and educators with more support they need for success. Since coming to government in 2013, the education budget has been increased from \$1.1 billion to \$1.6 billion, a 44 per cent increase in eight years. We are investing in our youth, an investment that will provide a return for decades.

We have made many strides in early child care and education. Nova Scotia's families now have access to universal full-day pre-Primary for four-year-olds with a \$53.4 million total investment this year. Reading Recovery, a one-on-one program, is available to elementary school students. SchoolsPlus has expanded to every school community in the province. It serves children, youth, and families, especially those who need additional supports and services.

Students are now able to access additional mental health resources. We will strengthen online learning opportunities and ensure students have continued access to mental health supports. We also need a more inclusive education system for all students. We are providing \$15 million to the Commission on Inclusive Education, which brings the total up to \$60 million dollars.

Access to adequate housing is essential to quality of life. With our federal partners, we are investing \$513 million over the next 10 years. In recent months, we have announced investments totalling almost \$10 million to support the creation of more than 150 new affordable housing units. The Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission is listening to the community about the current state of affordable housing. We look forward to receiving the report and acting on its recommendations.

Access to reliable, high-speed internet service across the province gives Nova Scotians more options in choosing where to live and work. That is why we continue to make progress to expand internet through Develop Nova Scotia and \$193 million has been invested in the Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust. Two years ago, 70 per cent of Nova Scotia's homes and businesses had access to high-speed internet. Today that number is 80 per cent. The target is 94 per cent by the end of this year. (Applause)

INFRASTRUCTURE

For the second consecutive year, we are investing more than \$1 billion in capital projects - and these investments are key to our economic recovery. The province's capital plan will stimulate economic opportunity and provide much-needed infrastructure for years to come, from one end of the province to the other.

Budget 2021-22 provides \$178.2 million toward the largest health care redevelopment in the province's history. Development continues on the QEII New Generation project and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality Health Care Redevelopment. We are also providing \$95.5 million for construction, repair, and renewal of hospitals and medical facilities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, students of all ages require safe and modern learning environments, so we are investing \$217.2 million to build and renovate schools and to purchase four P-3 schools this year. We are also enhancing schools' outdoor learning spaces. We are rebuilding the Nova Scotia Community College Marconi Campus, a project that is actively under construction. The community will benefit from the skilled workforce and a revitalized Sydney waterfront.

Our roads, highways, and bridges support commerce, tourism, and community life. *Budget 2021-22* invests \$467 million in this infrastructure and twinning 100-series highways to improve safety, including Highway 101, Highway 103, the Highway 107 Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector, and significantly, the Sutherlands River to Antigonish section of Highway 104 - a major transportation link for goods to and from Cape Breton and Newfoundland and Labrador.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, this is our path to prosperity and balance. This budget shows us the way. Amidst a global pandemic, Nova Scotians have worked hard to ensure the foundations of our economy and society remain strong. These actions are what have allowed us to make these important investments.

This budget not only speaks to our economic recovery but to the well-being of Nova Scotians. It speaks to a clean and vibrant province, and one that is fair. When we all have an opportunity to succeed, we all benefit. It speaks to our steadfast commitment to win against COVID-19.

So far, because of the sacrifices, we have the upper hand, and the strategic investments outlined here only strengthen our position and our will to win. *Budget 2021-22* makes important and historic investments that advance our vision for a better Nova Scotia. I am so optimistic. I am so proud of this province. The future is bright, and I am excited to share this new beginning, this next chapter, with Nova Scotians.

Thank you to everyone who had input in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MURRAY RYAN: Before I begin, I want to take a moment to thank all of the staff of the various government departments for all their hard work in preparing this budget for

2020-2021. With the challenges of some working in their offices and some working remotely, the coordination required this year was, I would think, quite daunting. When you place new leadership on top of this, having to work with a new Premier and a new Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, the work of these staff members and the time that they put in - I'm sure there were many late nights.

[1:45 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today in the Legislature to reply to the budget. A few short hours ago, I had the opportunity to begin to review this material, and an overriding theme seemed to be developing. I saw a lot of use of terms and words such as "new," "more," "largest," and "most."

What I didn't see mentioned were the people. Nova Scotians. It sounded more like a sales pitch. It is our fellow Nova Scotians who we represent that we're here for, to work to improve their lives and to make a difference.

I will speak again, tomorrow, at length on this budget, when I've had more opportunity to review it in more detail, but alas, I don't believe that there's more detail to be had. We all watched the tragic impact of COVID-19 at Northwood last Spring, how some residents shared rooms and how the virus ravaged the facility. Residents were moved out to hotels. The Department of Health and Wellness scrambled to bring the situation under control.

This budget talks of new long-term care beds, of adding 236 beds over the next five years. It's actually adding 236 beds in five years. Currently, we have over 1,500 fellow Nova Scotians and their families waiting for these long-term care beds. When these beds are ready in five years' time, I can't help but wonder how many more Nova Scotians will be waiting for long-term care beds. We are talking about people again, and that's where the conversation needs to be focused.

The department speaks of historical averages, but current estimates say that in 20 years' time, we will need 20,000 additional long-term care beds. At the government's current rate of 236 beds in five years, by the time 20 years rolls around, we will only have 1,000 new beds.

The Premier has spoken of this new Office of Mental Health and Addictions many times, how this new position demonstrates the importance placed on mental health in our province. The minister in his speech says that they are spending \$20 million more on mental health in this upcoming year. Where I come from, when I speak about additional spending on a department, I compare what I spent this year versus what I'm going to spend next year. I don't compare what I was planning on spending last year versus what I'm planning on spending next year. To that end, the government is not spending \$20 million more this

year. They are spending \$8 million more than they spent in the forecast for this closing 2021 year.

What will we have to show for this \$8 million? An Office of Mental Health and Addictions with a staff of 15, and a commitment on planning to develop a plan for a single-session therapy. The issue with mental health has always been resources, not plans.

Our plan focuses on the people today, providing access through universal mental health. We don't need more new programs. We need more funding to support the existing programs and services so that those in need can get their access now.

The creation of a department of mental health, as we have proposed in our platform, is all about the people, not the policy. A separate department does not have to compete for resources - compete within the larger Department of Health and Wellness to be heard. The government says this would stigmatize people. Well, this is about the people. Those in need are seeking mental health, and their primary motivation is getting help.

Sixty thousand Nova Scotians currently lack a family physician. How many families are impacted by this? We hear the soundbites: "recruiting," "encouraging," "more," "new," "most," how new seats have been added to the Dalhousie Medical School. It will be several years before these doctors will commence practising. How many family doctors will be retiring over that period? How many Nova Scotians will be without a family doctor by that time, and how many of these seats, these students at Dalhousie, will actually remain in Nova Scotia?

The government states that they're currently recruiting 90 foreign doctors. One would only surmise that these doctors are being courted elsewhere as well. How long will this process take? After all, it's about the people of our fair province.

In closing, this budget is about soundbites, talking points. It's not about the people. It's about policies, programs and processes. "New," "more," "largest," and "most," all sound fine, but what about the people?

I now move to adjourn debate.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on the Budget Address.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We'll now proceed with our daily routine. Question Period will begin one hour from now, at 2:50 p.m.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

THE SPEAKER: As Speaker of the House of Assembly and pursuant to Section 163 of the Elections Act, I am pleased to table the following reports from Elections Nova Scotia:

the Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, 2019-2020;

the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Proceedings of By-elections in 2019: Sackville-Cobequid, June 18; Argyle-Barrington, Northside-Westmount and Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, September 3rd; the Statement of Votes, Financial Information and Statistics;

the Election Readiness Update, the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, January 7, 2021, and

the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Proceedings of the By-elections in Cape Breton Centre, and Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, March 10, 2020; Statement of Votes; Financial Information and Statistics.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 254

HON. IAIN RANKIN (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas March 25th is Greek Independence Day, which commemorates the start of the War of Independence, also known as the Greek Revolution, against the Ottoman Empire in 1821; and

Whereas the Greek War of Independence officially ended in 1832, with Greece being recognized as an independent state, and today this accomplishment is celebrated with parades, local customs, and festive activities by Greek communities around the world; and

Whereas Nova Scotia is so fortunate to be home to more than 100 ethnicities, cultures and traditions, including a long-standing and vibrant Greek community with rich histories and stories contributed to our share society;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in acknowledging March 25, 2021, as Greek Independence Day in the province of Nova Scotia.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 255

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

Whereas the International Baccalaureate Program is one of the world's most respected pre-university diploma programs open to Grade 11 and 12 students across our province; and

Whereas students in the IB Program must complete two language and literature courses, one in the house language of the school and the other in a language chosen by the student; and

Whereas Emma Smith, a student at Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School, and her IB coordinator, Lindsay MacInnis, and a number of school staff and education partners worked tirelessly for two years to have the organization approve Gaelic as a language option so Emma could fulfil her IB language requirement in Gaelic;

Therefore be it resolved that all the members of the Legislature congratulate Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School for being the first in the world to offer a Gaelic school-supported, self-taught literature course as a part of the International Baccalaureate (IB)

program, and Emma Smith for her amazing achievement as the first in the world to enroll in the course requiring her to learn to read, write, and speak Gaelic at an academic level.

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.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

RESOLUTION NO. 256

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's multi-use trails provide opportunity for recreation and exploration of nature in all corners of the province; and

Whereas keeping our trails clear and ready for use takes the work of many trail associations and groups across the province; and

Whereas community groups, like the Kings County Trail Society, the Guysborough County Trails Association, and the Ceilidh Coastal Trail Association - just to name a few - work year-round to ensure the maintenance of the province's multi-use trails;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the many trail associations in their communities who are working hard to ensure our trails can be enjoyed.

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.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

RESOLUTION NO. 257

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

Whereas in these challenging times, many Nova Scotians are rediscovering the joy of spending time in nature; and

Whereas organizations like the Nova Scotia Nature Trust work with private landowners to complement the work of government to protect more of our land and waterways for Nova Scotians to hike, paddle, and explore; and

Whereas we are close to reaching our goal of 13 per cent land protection, with more to come;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House acknowledge the importance of wilderness areas and nature reserves for the protection of our unique habitats, species, and traditions, and thank the Nova Scotia Nature Trust for their important contribution to the protection of Nova Scotia lands.

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.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

RESOLUTION NO. 258

HON. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Silver Donald Cameron, a celebrated Nova Scotia author, passed away on June 1, 2020, at the age of 82; and

Whereas Silver Donald wrote 50 non-fiction books - including *Sailing Away from Winter*, *Dragon Lady*, *The Living Beach*, and *Blood in the Water* - and whose books focused on social justice, nature, politics, education, community development, and the environment; and

Whereas Silver Donald was also a journalist, environmentalist, university teacher, playwright, and documentary filmmaker who was the recipient of the Order of Canada and the Order of Nova Scotia, and was appointed as Cape Breton University's first Farley Mowat Chair in Environment in 2019;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House of Assembly join me in acknowledging the extraordinary life of Silver Donald Cameron and his contributions to literature across Nova Scotia and Canada.

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.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 259

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

Attendu que le 19 mars, six personnes de la Nouvelle-Écosse sont les premières à recevoir le Prix d'excellence du lieutenant-gouverneur pour l'Acadie et la francophonie de la Nouvelle-Écosse; et

Attendu que le Prix, créé en août 2020 par Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur de la Nouvelle-Écosse Arthur J. LeBlanc, reconnaît les personnes qui ont joué un rôle pour préserver, promouvoir, et célébrer notre histoire acadienne; et

Attendu que les lauréats de ce prix sont des individus qui ont fait des contributions sociales, économiques, et culturelles importantes et ont eu un impact au sein de la communauté francophone et dans l'ensemble de la Nouvelle-Écosse;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour féliciter les premiers lauréats de ce Prix prestigieux: Jude Avery, Larrys River; Louis E. Deveau, Dartmouth; Rebecca A. Lancaster, Halifax; Sally Ross, Tantallon; Adrien Comeau, Saulnierville; et Mbathio Thiam, Coxheath.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

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

Whereas it was announced on March 19th that six Nova Scotians are the first recipients of the Lieutenant Governor's Award of Excellence for l'Acadie and Francophonie of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the award, created in August 2020 by Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, recognizes people who have played a role in preserving, promoting, and celebrating our important Acadian history; and

Whereas the recipients of this award are individuals who have made important social, economic, or cultural contributions in the francophone community;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the first recipients of this prestigious award: Jude Avery, Larry's River; Louis E. Deveau, Dartmouth; Rebecca A. Lancaster, Halifax; Sally Ross, Tantallon; Adrien Comeau, Saulnierville; and Mbathio Thiam, Coxheath.

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 SPEAKER: That concludes Government Notices of Motion. We will now recess for 15 minutes for our mandated COVID-19 protocol.

[2:03 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:18 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll now move on to the order of business, Introduction of Bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2011. The Elections Act. (Alana Paon)

Bill No. 62 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 26 of the Acts of 2019. The Sustainable Development Goals Act, and Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1994-95. The Environment Act. (Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 63 - Entitled an Act to Redress Environmental Racism. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 64 - Entitled an Act to Support Local Action on Climate Change. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 65 - Entitled an Act Respecting Parks and Protected Areas. The Owls Head Act. (Lisa Roberts)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

SOBEY, DONALD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today to pay tribute to Donald Sobey, a loving and committed husband, father, and grandfather and a passionate global advocate for Nova Scotia and, of course, his beloved Pictou County. Donald Sobey died yesterday. He was 86 years old.

A successful businessman, he led a remarkable life, generously sharing it through his philanthropy. His deep belief in the power of university or college education to transform individuals and communities was inspired by his father, Frank Sobey, who never received a post-secondary education. This was the driving force behind his support for providing scholarships at institutions across Canada, ensuring access to a post-secondary education for many young Atlantic Canadians.

His love of the arts was ignited by a visit to Mount Allison University as a high school student, where he was mesmerized by the murals of Alex Colville. As Chair of the Sobey Art Foundation, he ensured the Crombie Collection and its works by Canadian masters and the Group of Seven were accessible to young and old alike. He created the Sobey Art Award, which has promoted the careers of more than 300 emerging contemporary Canadian artists.

Donald Sobey always considered Pictou County his home. He loved the shoreline and swimming in the Northumberland Strait and enjoying the beach on Sinclairs Island. We have lost a true son of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

SOBEY, DONALD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

TIM HOUSTON: If I may ask for a moment of silence after my member's statement as well. On behalf of my family, Carol, Paget and Zachary, Art and Vern and my extended family, I want to express my sincere condolences to Beth and the Sobey family.

Donald was known by many as a true business visionary and an inspiration to so many business people. He was certainly known for his unwavering support of Nova Scotia and Pictou County and his love of the arts. He was known for many things, but for me and my family, he was just known as an extremely kind person and a wonderful neighbour.

He will be missed tremendously by us and by the community. Nova Scotia is certainly a lesser place today with the passing of Donald. My sincere condolences to the entire Sobey family network.

I'd like to ask for a moment of silence from the House, please.

THE SPEAKER: I'd like to ask that all members please rise as we observe a moment of silence for Donald Sobey.

[2:24 p.m. The House observed a moment of silence.]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MINZLOFF, HANNAH: EMERG. GLUTEN-FREE PANTRY - THANKS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize Hannah Minzloff. When COVID-19 hit Nova Scotia, we were shuttered in our homes and workplaces closed. Many Nova Scotians walk a thin financial line between paycheques. One of the first places that resources are cut from a household budget is the grocery bill.

Consider also the ever-rising food prices and desertification of access to grocery stores, especially in parts of my constituency, Dartmouth South. The scenario created a real challenge for members of the community with specialty diets that require higher-cost food items. Hannah Minzloff stepped in with the Emergency Gluten-Free Pantry for people with celiac disease and gluten allergies, and my colleague for Dartmouth North stepped in with help in accommodating these items in their shared kitchen.

It was one of the earliest and most successful independent local food box providers. Because of her determination, Hannah was able to provide 320 individuals with gluten-free food boxes over the course of nine months during the pandemic, and for that we thank her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

VALLEY'S BFF FOOD TRUCK: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, it is said that necessity is the mother of invention, or at least of taking chances. This might describe 2020 for Thomas and Darren Carter of White Rock, father and son.

Faced with losing their jobs as a result of the global pandemic, they transformed one of their vacant snowmobile trailers into a new business venture: Valley BFF food truck in New Minas, serving up delicious smash burgers and more.

Using their sales and service expertise from previous jobs and a combination of Canadian emergency response assistance, personal savings, and a loan, they renovated their trailer and opened their food truck on Commercial Street in New Minas, specializing in food made with ingredients sourced locally.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Thomas and Darren Carter, two of the Valley's newest COVID-19 entrepreneurs, and wishing them every success in their new business.

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

**CDN. FORCES SOLDIERS, HELICOPTER TRAGEDY:
DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the six fallen soldiers aboard the CH-148 Cyclone helicopter known as *Stalker 22*. On Thursday, April 30th, the Canadian Armed Forces released the names of the brave Canadian Forces members from HMCS *Fredericton* who were on the helicopter when it went down off the coast of Greece. Captain Brenden Ian MacDonald, Captain Kevin Hagen, Captain Maxime Miron-Morin, Sub-Lt. Matthew Pyke, Master Cpt. Matthew Cousins, and Sub-Lt. Abbigail Cowbrough will be forever missed but never forgotten.

Under the category of Women of Courage, Sub-Lt. Abbigail Cowbrough was recently awarded Top 100 Most Powerful Women in Canada through WXN.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in remembering, thanking, and commemorating our lost heroes for their courage and service to this country.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MSI COVERAGE: AVAILABLE BASED ON RESIDENCY - ADVOCATE

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, today I am advocating for a family: the father working with two different employers in Halifax on a work permit, the mother with a student visa, in the very late stages of her pregnancy. Because of a technicality, plus COVID-19-related delays in their arrival in Nova Scotia, they are not covered by MSI. I hope that with my advocacy we will get them covered before their baby, currently breech, needs to be delivered.

In November, another mother got emergency medical coverage through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada when she was already in labour. She had been a resident of Nova Scotia since at least 2016, but she fell in a gap between a work permit and a student permit.

It should be residency, not immigration status, that triggers MSI coverage. Temporary foreign workers working in fish plants and on farms should have MSI coverage, and so should asylum seekers and their children, whether they are Canadian citizens or not.

I implore the members opposite - particularly the new Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness, to make this change - which we will propose through legislation that I will introduce tomorrow.

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

**CHESTER MUNICIPAL COUNCIL:
NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS - CONGRATS.**

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome four new municipal councillors who were elected in the last municipal elections, each of whom have responsibilities within the provincial constituency of beautiful Chester-St. Margaret's.

In the Municipality of the District of Chester, Andre Veinotte is the new Councillor for District 1, which includes the Western Aspotogan Peninsula, East River, Otter Point, and part of East Chester.

In the Halifax Regional Municipality, Pamela Lovelace is the new councillor for District 13, which includes Tantallon and down our Route 33 to the iconic Peggy's Cove.

[2:30 p.m.]

I would also like to welcome Patty Cuttell, the new councillor for District 11, which includes West and East Dover, McGraths Cove, and Bayside.

Finally, I want to welcome Chasidy Veinotte, the new councillor for District 10 in the Municipality of Lunenburg which includes civil responsibility for the Tancook Islands.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating and welcoming the new municipal councillors in the constituency of Chester-St. Margaret's.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

LAWEN, JADEN: COM. FUNDRAISING - THANKS

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: We were all devastated to learn of the August 4th explosion in Beirut. Many here in Halifax and across the world rallied when they heard the news to help support the Lebanese people.

One such individual in Armdale was Jaden Lawen, an inspiring teenager and Sacred Heart student to launch the Halifax to Beirut with love campaign just days after the tragedy. Having spent many summers in Beirut and with many friends and family there, he felt he had to do something.

With advice and support from his mother Veronica and a neighbour, he launched his campaign using social media to encourage people to donate to the Lebanese Red Cross. In the first 48 hours, Jaden's campaign passed its initial \$20,000 goal. He has helped raise over \$100,000 for the cause. Though Jaden has never been involved with fundraising on this scale before, he has already made a massive difference.

I invite all members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking Jaden and all those who donated to this cause.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**CALDWELL, LUCY/CALDWELL, DAISY - BOXERS:
COMBATTING STEREOTYPES - CONGRATS.**

KARLA MACFARLANE: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize two young women from Pictou West: Lucy and Daisy Caldwell. Lucy, age 16, and Daisy, 14, had their first boxing card on March 13th.

The daughters of James Caldwell and Dana Baillie, the sisters took up boxing a little over a year ago just for fun and to be active. As their skills improved and their confidence grew, along with some encouragement from their coach, the girls decided to compete.

With boxing typically seen as a male-dominated sport, I applaud both Lucy and Daisy for combating the stereotype and setting a great example for other young girls who want to take up boxing.

I wish them the best of luck in their future competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

**COMBINED CHRISTMAS GIVING COM.:
GENEROSITY AND HARD WORK - CONGRATS.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Today, I want to thank the Combined Christmas Giving Committee. For 25 years, this dedicated group of community minded individuals have been dedicated to bringing Christmas joy to families in the New Waterford and surrounding areas.

The Combined Christmas Giving Committee has helped children and families make beautiful holiday memories, and I want to thank this amazing group of volunteers for their dedication, hard work, compassion, and generosity, and continuing that tradition during the pandemic.

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

**CHISHOLM, KAY:
40 YRS. WITH THE MARATHON OF HOPE - CONGRATS.**

HON. LLOYD HINES: I rise today to honour the hard-working efforts of a charitable woman from Havendale, Kay Chisholm, who marks 40 years of running in the Marathon of Hope inspired by Canadian legend Terry Fox.

Working as a public health nurse, Kay has encountered the subject of cancer both professionally and in her personal life, inspiring her to participate in the run and raise money for the Terry Fox Foundation. Over the past number of years, Kay has been in the top 25 fundraisers in Nova Scotia and even received a call by the Terry Fox Foundation, thanking her for her contributions to the cause.

While Kay was planning on celebrating her 40th anniversary of the run in Terry Fox's hometown of Port Coquitlam, BC, COVID-19 had other plans. Instead, she opted to do a 10-kilometre walk in her own home community of Havendale in September.

Kay Chisholm has been a staple in our community for cancer research fundraising, a disease that touches every single one of us. Kay is an inspiration to us all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**ST. PATRICK:
PLANTING A STRONG FAITH - LÀ FHÈILL PÀDRAIG SONA DHUIBH**

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to deliver this statement in Gaelic after the English version.

On March 17th, Nova Scotians celebrated St. Patrick's Day. It celebrates the arrival of Christianity among the Gaels in Ireland, and, thereafter, into Gaelic Scotland.

St. Patrick lived in the 5th century. He was kidnapped from Roman Britain and taken as a slave to Ireland for six years. He returned home, became a priest, but went back to Ireland to bring Christianity to the Gaels.

How powerful - to forgive those who captured and made him a slave, and to dedicate his life to bringing the faith that remains strong amidst the Gaels 1,600 years later. Happy belated St. Patrick's Day.

Air an t-seachdamh là deug dhen Mhàrt, chùm muinntir Albainn Nuaidh Là Fhèill Pàdraig. Tha an là seo a' cumail cuimhne air teachd na Crìosdaidheachd gu Gàidheil Èirinn agus gu Gàidhealtachd Albainn na dheidh sin.

Bha an Naomh Pàdraig beò anns a' choigeamh linn. Chaidh a ghoid air falbh bho Bhreatann nan Ròmanach agus a thoirt mar thràill gu Èirinn fad sia bliadhna. Thill e dhachaigh, thug e mach a bhith na shagart, ach chaidh e air ais gu Èirinn chum Crìosdaidheachd a thoirt chun nan Gàidheal.

Abair sgeul! Maitheanas a thoirt dhaibhsan a rinn trail dheth agus a bheatha chur seachad an sàs ann an creideamh a tha fhathast làidir ameasg nan Gàidheal, mìle is sia ceud bliadhna na dheidh sin.

An dòchas gun robh Là Fheill Pàdraig sona agaibh!

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LOVE: CONVERSATIONS FOR CHANGE - INSPIRING

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage my MLA colleagues, constituents, and all Nova Scotians to tune in to a video podcast series started by Leave Out Violence (LOVE) and hosted by Shawntay Rose Dann. Shawntay Rose is an alumni of LOVE's programs for youth, and still very much a part of the LOVE family.

LOVE works with about 300 youth each year in Nova Scotia, providing them with mentoring, a sense of belonging, and leadership training, and 24/7 access to adults who know and care about them.

In January, I was honoured to be the first guest invited to a conversation for change. Shawntay Rose, with her questions and her responses, made me laugh, cry, and think. Last month, she spoke with Marvin Okello, Diversity and Inclusion officer for the Halifax Wanderers, about soccer, racism, Black Lives Matter, George Floyd, and how to be an ally. These conversations are available on LOVE's website, and tonight's will be streamed on LOVE's Facebook page.

May we all be inspired to have conversations for change, including here in this Chamber or virtually.

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

MACDONALD, CHARLES: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I give this statement to recognize and remember a great community leader whom we lost in Cape Breton in the recent days.

Charles MacDonald was a former professor - started his career at Xavier College, teaching theology, and then moved on to be a CBU professor. He was a mentor to many of us growing up, teaching us about social justice, social entrepreneurship, and how to contribute to your community.

He actually, at one point, bought a farm, and he became a founding member of the Cape Breton Farmers' Market. He was one of the most sincere, kindest men you would ever meet. I want to pass along - on behalf of the community - my condolences to his wife and to his family. Charles was a great man, and he will be missed.

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

ELDERDOG CANADA/CAPE BRETON: COM. SERV. - THANKS

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the volunteers and organization of ElderDog Canada. ElderDog Canada is a national charity dedicated to our aging people and aging dogs by assisting and supporting in the care and well-being of canine companions.

The services that this charity provides include assisting seniors with exercising their dog, delivering dog food, light tasks associated with animal hygiene and grooming, temporary care during hospitalization, as well as adoption of senior dogs who need to find a new home due to illness, death, or relocation of their human companion. There are no fees for their services, and all their services are provided by screened volunteers.

ElderDog is also dedicated to supporting and conducting research, as well as educating our population about the role animal companions play in relation to the health and well-being of our seniors. The bond between a senior and their comfort dog is strong and cherished. It is a bond that should never be broken by policy. It is a bond that should be protected.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon all members of the House to acknowledge the hard work of ElderDog Canada, and our local Cape Breton chapter of ElderDog by volunteer Heather Kerr. I would also encourage anyone looking for a new companion to consider an aging dog in need of a loving home, as my fiancé and I did in January of 2020, when we adopted our little eight-year-old loyal, loving, and cherished fuzzy companion named Monkey.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

N. SYDNEY FOOD BANK: COM. SERV. - THANKS

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the North Sydney Community Food Bank, which has operated in the former CN railroad station for the past 20 years. Lawrence Shebib, coordinator of the food bank, has worked tirelessly over the

last year to move ahead relocating to a much larger site at the former Seton Elementary School.

With the help of several community groups, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, the provincial government, and a lot of long hours, Lawrence and his team were able to realize their goal. On January 23rd, the food bank moved into their new facilities at Seton Elementary School. Volunteers were geared up for the move and spent the day moving boxes and supplies from the old location to the new, larger, and more modernized location, and as one of those volunteers, I can testify that it was a long day and they had a lot of food products to move.

Our hats are off to Lawrence and all the volunteers for their unwavering dedication to the North Sydney Community Food Bank and the people that it serves.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

DOMINION HAWKS CLUB: COM. SERV. - THANKS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, today I wish to recognize the Dominion Community Hawks Club, which has served the community for over 32 years. They have donated money and time to various groups, organizations, and community events. Recently, the Dominion Community Hawks Club took the pain of losing two members and turned it into a beautiful and kind tribute to Junior Nearing and Chris Musial by donating \$1,000 to the Glace Bay Food Bank Society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Dominion Community Hawks Club for being active community members and for helping individuals who are food insecure.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

HAWKLEY, BOB: CERTIFIED THERAPY DOGS - THANKS

HON. KAREN CASEY: Mr. Speaker, Bob Hawkley from East Mountain, Colchester North, is the proud owner of two golden labs, Willow and Daisy. Both are certified with St. John Ambulance as therapy dogs.

When Hawkley would take Willow to the Halifax Stanfield International Airport, she would [inaudible] people who needed her attention. It was a very calming effect on those suffering from stress. She retired at age 13 and has passed the job on to Daisy, age three.

Hawkley and Daisy made regular visits to the airport and walked around visiting with people and reducing stress with travellers, staff, and airline crews. When flights were diverted or there were extra-long delays, the airport often requested these dogs. Hawkley

said it is one of the most rewarding jobs anyone could have when he sees the positive results of his dogs' visits.

My thanks to Hawkley, Willow, and Daisy for their unconditional contribution in bettering the mental health of so many, and look forward to a return to normal at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport so Hawkley and Daisy can resume their important role of providing support for those who benefit from Daisy's calming effect.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**CHEVERIE, SEAN - PHARMACIST:
CUMB. N. HEALTH CARE HEROES - THANKS**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize one of Cumberland North's Health Care Heroes, pharmacist and business owner Sean Cheverie.

Sean Cheverie is president and owner-pharmacist at the Amherst Pharmasave. It was built starting from the ground up in 2001. This business has grown exponentially over the years, providing service 365 days a year to our area. Like every sector that has been tremendously affected by this COVID-19 pandemic, the staff at the Amherst Pharmasave found innovative solutions to keep serving their patients.

Ensuring that customers have adequate access to prescribed medications as a frontline health care resource for the public during the pandemic was invaluable. Sean, his fellow pharmacists, and staff have been real leaders. They are also involved in administering the COVID-19 vaccine to our community.

Today I ask all members to join me in thanking Sean for his leadership as one of Cumberland North's Health Care Heroes.

[2:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MALETTE, MICHELLE: INVISIBLE CHAMPION - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: I rise today to honour Michelle Malette, a resident of Dartmouth North, who is a dedicated advocate for housing for all. Michelle is currently the executive director of Out of the Cold shelter, a community-based Winter shelter and an invaluable piece of the shelter system in HRM.

When COVID-19 hit last year, Michelle - not yet the ED, but a volunteer - helped to transition Out of the Cold from a community centre gym to a hotel. For this work, and

her former work with women, trans folks, and their families at Adsum House, Michelle was recognized as an Invisible Champion by the Bhayana Family Foundation.

As her nominator for the award wrote, “Michelle sees the resilience and dignity in everyone she works with, so she is able to help those individuals get housing and live their best lives.”

Michelle is also an amazing mother and friend, an active member of the city’s queer and trans community, and a member of Solidarity Halifax.

I ask the members of this House to join me in expressing thanks to Michelle for her fierce and uncompromising advocacy for housing as a human right and for some of our community’s most vulnerable people.

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

**MERRICK, TARA:
ATHLETIC/SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.**

HON. BEN JESSOME: I’d like to recognize Tara Merrick, a high-honours student athlete at Charles P. Allen High School from Highland Park in Hammonds Plains.

Ms. Merrick started playing volleyball in middle school and has risen to the challenge throughout her career. She became a highly-sought-after recruit and has recently signed to play for the UNB Reds, where she’ll be studying sciences in pursuit of a career in pharmacy.

During the 2019-20 high school volleyball season, Tara helped lead CPA to an undefeated regular season, winning the metro league and Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation provincial championships.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing Ms. Tara Merrick for her hard work, passion, and drive - academically, in volleyball, and in our community - and wish her success in all of her future endeavours.

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

GASLIGHT CAFÉ: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate entrepreneurs Bryden Mombourquette and his partner, Nathan Park, on their successfully owned and run coffee shop located in my constituency on the outskirts of Sydney.

The Gaslight Café, which was started in Louisbourg, moved closer to Sydney as the tourism season began to wind down in the fishing village. The business appears to be thriving, even through the trials and tribulations of the current pandemic. The coffeehouse has tremendous charm and amazing home-baked goods. They keep a large map of Louisbourg on their back wall to offer a bit of history on a town that supported them with their original start.

I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the owners of this café and wish them much success.

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

MATTHEWS, JOHN: SMB TREASURE CHEST - RECOG.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work done by the late Mr. John Matthews for the communities of Chester-St. Margaret's.

John was one of the founding members who introduced the Bay Treasure Chest seven years ago. As the Treasure Chest grew in popularity, John built the iconic treasure box design which is now placed in locations throughout the community. The Bay Treasure Chest has raised thousands of dollars to support community activities throughout St. Margarets Bay.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing John Matthews' legacy with the St. Margarets Bay Treasure Chest.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**GREENOUGH, SARA - RECIPIENT:
GEN. WALSH COMM. SWORD - CONGRATS.**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Cadet Chief Warrant Officer Sara Lynn Greenough of the 2688 Bridgewater Kinsmen Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps as Canada's most outstanding army cadet and recipient of the 2020 General Walsh Commemorative Sword.

Sara is the first Nova Scotian army cadet to be selected to receive this prestigious award. It's the highest national award for any army cadet. Last June, Sara, aged 17, was awarded the President's Trophy of the Army Cadet League of Canada as the Outstanding Army Cadet in Nova Scotia for 2019-20. She is also decorated with the Royal Canadian Legion Medal of Excellence, the Lord Strathcona Medal, and the Army Cadet Service Medal.

In addition to being a cadet, Sara is a full International Baccalaureate diploma candidate who tutors IB students for free; a national lifeguard; a talented athlete, singer, and musician; a distinguished markswoman; and a member of her school's band and environmental club.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Cadet Greenough on her many accomplishments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

GLEN HAVEN MANOR - STAFF: COMPASSION AND SKILL - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, without an investment in long-term care and without recognizing the significant systemic changes that need to be made, elderly people and their care providers have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I wish to bring to all members' attention the dedication of long-term care employees and other staff members at the Glen Haven Manor in New Glasgow, for the staff's contribution of time, energy, skills, passion, and commitment has made an immeasurable difference with care for their residents. This is a valuable group of unsung heroes who go about their daily work without fanfare. If there was ever a time when employees have gone the extra distance to get the job done, just look back over the last 12 months to recognize the compassion, caring, and commitment of these frontline workers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in extending heartfelt thanks to the compassionate and skilled staff at Glen Haven Manor.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

ROBERTS, PETE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize an outstanding Clayton Park West constituent who will help anyone in need. Pete Roberts has lived in Nova Scotia his entire life and in Clayton Park West for the past 20 years. Pete's career has allowed him to be a safety advocate through his many volunteer achievements. He served as a firefighter for many years before working at Kent building supplies and now, in his retirement, as a local crossing guard.

Peter has contributed to organizations including the Halifax North West Trails Association, where he serves as a trail monitor and member of the board of directors. Additionally, Pete has served as a Scouts Canada leader for over 25 years, as the District Service Commissioner. Most notably, Pete is a St. John Ambulance first-aider. During all types of weather, he is always willing to drive residents to any appointment to ensure they get there in a timely and safe manner.

Mr. Speaker, I am so thankful for Pete's contributions to our community. It is volunteers like Pete who ensure that Clayton Park West is a safe, happy, environment for all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MACKAY, BOB: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Bob MacKay, a teacher from Dartmouth East. Mr. MacKay just recently retired. He started his teaching career in 1993 and for many years he taught elementary school.

In 2005, Bob MacKay transferred to the social studies department at Prince Andrew High School, where he taught global geography, economics, and sociology.

I had the honour of working with Mr. MacKay for several years, and I heard amazing stories about the great learning experiences that were taking place in his classrooms. He was well known for starting every class with "So, what's on the radar?" This was done to encourage his students to follow the news, to follow current events, and to encourage critical thinking.

I know Mr. MacKay will be sorely missed by the Prince Andrew High School community and I wish him all the best in his well-deserved retirement. I'd like to thank him for his many years of service to the youth of Nova Scotia.

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

COM. BUSINESSES AND H&W: SERV. TO TESTING CLINIC - THANKS

BILL HORNE: In response to an identified case of COVID-19 at a Beaver Bank elementary school, Public Health sent their mobile units to Beaver Bank for community-based testing.

As Public Health was setting up the community centre, local businesses - Fall River's Sobeys and Beaver Bank's Tim Hortons - stepped up and supplied them with water, snacks, and coffee for the weekend. Despite the snowstorm on Saturday, the clinic was well attended.

My wife and I took our turn to be tested and met and thanked the hard-working Public Health staff keeping our communities safe.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the Department of Health and Wellness, their wonderful staff and our caring community businesses, who knew we are all in this together.

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

HILDEN FIRE BRIGADE: NEW FIRE HALL - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: With COVID-19 preventing customary gatherings during the past year, community organizations have had to find other means of fundraising.

As a result, online raffles have gained popularity and become successful. One organization turning to this form of fundraising is the Nova Scotia Firefighters. As a result, a Colchester County community is anticipating a new fire hall by 2025.

The Hilden Fire Brigade currently operates from a 50-year-old 5,000 square foot facility. High costs to bring the building up to code make erecting a new structure, twice the size of the current one, more practical. The new site, about a kilometre north of the current one, has the added advantage of potable water, and a community centre will be included in the construction.

Congratulations to the Hilden Fire Brigade on its plans to bring this improvement to its community.

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

WOODWORTH, SALARA: SAVING THE EARTH - THANKS

BRAD JOHNS: I rise today to acknowledge Salara Woodworth, a nine-year-old girl from Beaver Bank, who's been cleaning up her community.

Salara and her father Jonathan collected approximately 150 tires along a 9-kilometre stretch of road in Beaver Bank, including parts of the Beaver Bank Road and Highway 354, and all the way up to East Uniacke.

Jonathan drove down the road with his trailer while Salara watched out the window, looking to see if she could spot tires and then jump out and pick them up. Her reason she gave was that she wanted to help to "save the Earth."

Mr. Speaker I would like to take this opportunity to thank Salara and her father Jonathan for their hard work collecting tires and helping to protect the environment in Sackville, Beaver Bank, and Mount Uniacke.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

VANTASSELL, BONNIE: CASEY HUMANITARIAN AWARD - THANKS

HON. GORDON WILSON: Since 2011, the Town of Digby annually presents the Joe Casey Humanitarian Award to one of the citizens who has made a significant contribution to improving our community. Last Summer this award was presented to a retired nurse and social worker, Bonnie VanTassell.

Bonnie moved to Digby to raise her family and work at the local hospital. She also joined local groups that focused on family and helping her neighbours, including Girl Guides Auxiliary and the Red Cross.

When she saw a need, she was proactive to finding a solution and co-founded such organizations as the Digby Food Bank and the Digby Well Women's Clinic. In these and others, she took volunteer roles also.

She was also a director of the Southwest Health Authority and the Digby and Area Medical Committee, and the Digby Community Hospital Board, and that is not even close to the complete list. Bonnie says that each of these experiences led to the next and enhanced her life. Fortunately for us, her choice to volunteer also enhanced the lives of her neighbours.

I want to thank her for her efforts in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

CARL'S STORE: COM. FUNDRAISING - THANKS

COLTON LEBLANC: The last three months have brought heartbreaking tragedies impacting many in my constituency and surrounding communities. Local ground search and rescue teams were quick to respond.

Wanting to give back to this invaluable organization, a locally owned business, Carl's Store, located in Tusket and Wedgeport, started a fundraiser to support Yarmouth County Ground Search and Rescue. In just over one week, more than \$9,500 was raised from customers and more than \$12,270 from businesses, for a grand total of \$21,775.90.

I rise today to proudly recognize Carl's Store who continues to support the needs of our communities. I would ask all members of this Legislature to join me in thanking Carl's Store for its continued community support, as well as the individuals and businesses that made this fundraiser a great success through their donations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

[3:00 p.m.]

BOYS/GIRLS CLUB, YARMOUTH: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: For more than 100 years, the Boys and Girls Clubs in Canada have been helping young people to discover, develop, and achieve their best potential as they grow to become Canada's future adults, citizens, and leaders.

In their work with children, youth, families, and communities, all Boys and Girls Clubs are guided by the following core values: belonging, respect, encouragement, support, working together, and speaking out. These core values are the standard by which all Boys and Girls Club services are measured.

Please join me in thanking the Boys and Girls Club of Yarmouth for providing an essential community service for our children and young people, and for providing such great service and support and an incredible environment of care and learning for my two girls in particular.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

WALSH, FRED: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, Fred Walsh of Berwick passed away on February 17, 2021. Fred was a recipient of the Order of Canada and many other awards. His remarkable life impacted my family's life in a number of ways.

In 1958, Fred's father Waldo met my parents on Pier 21 and brought them to work on Fred's farm in Berwick. They worked and lived on the Walsh farm for two years and enjoyed a lasting friendship with Fred and Mary. That friendship extended to me in 1997 when, at Fred's encouragement, I applied for the Nuffield scholarship. Joining Fred as a Nuffield scholar changed my life.

I wish to express my gratitude to Mary and the Walsh family for the good life that he lived. Thank you, Fred. I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in acknowledging Fred Walsh.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

BAILEY, RACHEL: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I rise today to recognize Rachel Bailey, former Mayor of the Town of Lunenburg.

When she was elected in 2012, Rachel became the first female to serve as Mayor of the Town of Lunenburg. She was then re-elected in 2016 for a second term. Prior to becoming mayor, she also served four years as a town councillor. She retired from public service after choosing not to reoffer for the 2020 municipal elections.

One of the many highlights while mayor was the redevelopment of the Lunenburg Academy as a community culture centre. Rachel has been an outstanding advocate and contributor to her community.

I wish to thank her for her years of dedicated service as the Chief Magistrate for the Town of Lunenburg. I ask that all members of this Legislature join me in recognizing Rachel Bailey in wishing her the very best in her future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**ROYAL CDN. LEGION - RECIPIENTS:
PALM LEAF AWARD - CONGRATS.**

KIM MASLAND: Last year in September, Royal Canadian Legion Mersey Branch 38 members Murray Crouse and Larry and Joan Weagle were honoured with the prestigious Palm Leaf Award.

The Palm Leaf Award is the highest award that can be granted to ordinary, associate, or affiliate voting members. The award is given to individuals whose activities exceed the standard expected of a member. It acknowledges contributions of personal sacrifice, time, or professional expertise that they have brought, and great credit to the branch and community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the House please join me in congratulating Murray, Larry, and Joan on this remarkable achievement and thank them for their contributions and commitment to the Royal Canadian Legion Mersey Branch 38.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

LEE, PRISCILLA: MUSICAL ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would like to congratulate Bedford resident Priscilla Lee on becoming the youngest musician to win an apprenticeship with Symphony Nova Scotia. Priscilla is in her fourth year of study toward a Bachelor of Music, majoring in cello performance at Dalhousie. She won the apprenticeship last April, when she was just 18.

Priscilla grew up listening to her older siblings' daily music practice - she's one of seven children. She began piano lessons at age 5 and cello lessons at age 10. She finished

high school in two years. Priscilla currently studies cello with Shimon Walt and piano with Peter Allen. Somehow, in her spare time she also plays badminton and skis.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Priscilla Lee on her stellar musical achievements thus far.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

MOFFATT, LIAM: WORLD SNOWBOARD CHAMPIONSHIPS - RECOG.

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Truro athlete Liam Moffatt. Liam recently competed in the men's cross at the World Snowboard Championships in Sweden. He placed 8th, which lands him 37th in the World Cup rankings.

Liam has been on the slopes since he learned to walk. At the age of seven, he fell in love with snowboarding. Since then, he has been to three Junior World Championships, started at over ten World Cups, and won the 2018-19 NorAm title.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the dedication and the hard work of this local young athlete, and wish him great success as he takes on the world.

THE SPEAKER: The time allotted for Statements by Members has expired. The House will now recess for its 15-minute COVID-19 break.

The House will resume at 3:20 p.m.

[3:05 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:20 p.m. The House reconvened.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: LONG-TERM CARE BEDS - ANNOUNCEMENT

TIM HOUSTON: In the lead-up to today's budget, the Premier had indicated that there would be a focus on long-term care, and rightly so. We have a wait-list for long-term care of 1,500 people in this province right now. Today we saw an announcement of 236 long-term care beds that had already been announced. These beds aren't coming this year. They're realistically years away, Mr. Speaker.

My first question for the Premier is: Would the Premier confirm that the long-term care beds announced in today's budget are really just the same beds that Premier McNeil announced on January 29th?

THE SPEAKER: I remind the honourable member not to mention other members by proper name.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: That was an announcement that I think was a very important start to the rebuild of facilities across the province that the member for Annapolis announced previous to me. They're important investments at those seven facilities. We're going to continue to go over the list of areas that have aged buildings because successive governments of all Party stripes did not invest enough in that infrastructure. When we came into government, we inherited significant infrastructure deficits and fiscal deficits. We're beginning to rebuild. This budget speaks to very significant investment in long-term care, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue to invest in areas where Nova Scotians need help.

TIM HOUSTON: It is true that successive governments have neglected to make investments in long-term care, the successive governments, of course, being two Liberal governments and an NDP government. The last time there was any meaningful investment in long-term care, you have to go way back to the last PC government, in 2006, when there was meaningful investment.

Now today's version of the PC Party is doing the research to see what's needed. We did a lot of research. We released an entire plan around dignity for seniors. With that research, we estimated that the province needs somewhere between 2,500 to 3,500 beds - 2,500 beds, Mr. Speaker, versus 236 re-announced today.

I would like to ask the Premier: Is 236 beds enough?

THE PREMIER: That investment is an important investment in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. We do need support for our long-term care sector. The long-term care sector, together with home care, has now eclipsed \$1 billion. We have significantly invested in the sector. We have actually increased the capital budget from \$2 million to \$10 million. That's five times the amount on an annual basis that will be put into ensuring that we have the right renovations and facilities. At times, we will need to rebuild those long-term care facilities.

TIM HOUSTON: The question was: Is 236 beds enough or not enough? We didn't get an answer to the question, so I think we know that the Premier recognizes that it's not enough.

The long-term care changes we make today take years to come on stream. It's basically a five-year lead time to get beds into service. We know that long-term care has been neglected and failed, really, by successive governments, as the Premier mentioned. This budget tries to make the investments of today sound transformational. They're really not. It's reannouncements, and it's overblown rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. The pandemic has shown that there are serious problems that need serious solutions.

Will the Premier acknowledge that this budget is a poor attempt to fix the problem we have in long-term care?

THE PREMIER: During the leadership campaign, I said that long-term care would be a focus for me immediately when I came into office, and it is, Mr. Speaker. We are addressing every single recommendation from the long-term expert panel. An injection of over \$20 million is going into that to ensure that we have more allied health professionals in the facilities, more primary care access in facilities. We have increased the capital spending on an annual basis to make the right renovations happen in the facilities that need it. We will be investing continuously in facilities that are over 50 years old, that need more attention, that have a lack of infection control. We will need to invest, and we are investing in this budget.

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

PREM.: LONG-TERM CARE HOMES - SHARED ROOMS

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I will ignore the gratuitous and false mischaracterization of the NDP's record in long-term care by the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party in order to continue this important line of questioning of the Premier.

On this day of documents, I would like to table a different document. This is a report nine months ago from the Nursing Homes of Nova Scotia Association, where they wrote about shared bedrooms in long-term care that "this makes it difficult to maintain resident dignity" and infection prevention.

Mr. Speaker, today in our province there are 2,940 people in shared rooms, but the total number of new beds in this budget is just 236.

Does the Premier understand that there are hundreds of people who are looking for greater dignity and better infection control in long-term care in our province who find the number 236 to be very disappointing?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we are making investments across the board in long-term care and in home care so that Nova Scotians can have that opportunity to stay at home when they can, but those 236 beds are needed in HRM. That adds to the 122 beds that are

going into communities like New Waterford and Eskasoni and others in Cape Breton. There are beds going in other areas, like Clare and the Meteghan area.

We're going to continue to invest in long-term care. It's a priority across the country, quite frankly. There are conditions that have been exposed and illuminated through this pandemic in every single province, and this province is standing up and making investments.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, a respected nursing home administrator I know speaks about some of the shared-room accommodations in the facility she looks after. She says that when a place becomes available and the family of a perspective resident comes in advance to view that place, on more than one occasion she has watched that family weeping as they've gone back down the hall.

There are 3,000 people living in shared rooms in long-term care in our province and this budget provides for opening just somewhere in the range of less than a tenth of them.

Does the Premier not think that the Government of Nova Scotia can do better than providing less than one-tenth of the housing needs of the waiting long-term care population of our province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, for decades our system has been set up to deal with acute care and there hasn't been enough investment to deal with chronic care, previous to our government.

We inherited this issue. We started looking at investments right away. In every single budget we've invested in home care increases, and in this budget we're eclipsing \$1 billion. An over-\$100 million increase is going into home care, in long-term care, so that seniors are treated with dignity across the province. That's an increase in operating, that's an increase in capital, and we're going to continue to make those important investments.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, there were very many wonderful words about long-term care two weeks ago in the Throne Speech. There were many wonderful words about long-term care delivered in the Budget Speech this afternoon.

The Premier has offered a number of more wonderful words in response to my first two questions, but we need more than wonderful words. What has actually been delivered is 236 beds over several years, and not one of them have ground broken on them in the current calendar year. In comparison to the thousands of people who are looking for single-room accommodation and looking to get into long-term care at all, it is mighty small potatoes.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes we're not looking for wonderful words on the menu. We're looking for a real meal on the plate.

Will the Premier acknowledge that when it comes to new facility construction for long-term care in this budget, his government has failed to deliver?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we continue to look at record amounts of infrastructure builds across the province. We're redeveloping the QEII redevelopment, over a \$1 billion investment in Halifax, and in Cape Breton we've now announced seven different rebuilds for long-term care, with more on the way.

We need to continue to look at the areas that need that investment the most. We have an analysis now under way, looking at capital retrofits where needed, but it is not acceptable conditions in some of these aged facilities. That's why we're taking action today.

[3:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - EMERG. RMS.: DISPLACEMENT - DETAILS

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, the tragedy at Northwood was a terrible wakeup call for this province. Even the cursory review of the situation that the government did revealed very clearly that the long-term care sector has been starved for support and that more resources are needed to allow seniors to live safely and with dignity.

We all know the issues in our EHS system. Of course, the minister famously issued a directive to get patients out of emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker. This budget allocated \$8.6 million for long-term care infrastructure. The Premier just referred to that five times in a wonderful sound bite as some big, glorious investment, but it is not.

My question for the Premier is: With all the issues in our emergency rooms and our long-term care system as they are now, where will the emergency departments move these patients that your minister is directing them to get out of the emergency room when there is no place for them to go because you won't invest in long-term care?

THE SPEAKER: Just a reminder to the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition to direct your questions through the Chair.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the tendency to look at one line item out of the entirety, but the reality is we have made significant investments in long-term

care across the board - it actually amounts to a 16-per-cent increase in long-term care in this budget. We have increased the allocation for our capital as the member referenced. We have also increased by \$2.5 million dealing with infection control in buildings. We put over \$20 million to address the recommendations in the long-term care expert panel, and we are going to listen to the experts and make sure that we are targeting our precious public dollars to those who need it in long-term care centres across the province.

TIM HOUSTON: The problem with governing by sound bites is that sometimes you have to hope that people don't look a little deeper. Unfortunately for the Premier, we are looking a little deeper. Sound bites don't solve problems. They only might get you out of a jam at the podium when you are being asked questions. We actually are interested in solutions to the problems. This government can hang out words like a \$1 billion price tag like it is all new money. It is not. It is just a nifty way to package that there is a very little bit of new money in the grand scheme of things.

The money that is allocated for long-term care is in many ways just to clean up some of the problems that were identified through the COVID-19 thing.

I would like to ask the Premier: Will the Premier acknowledge that this budget really does not address the real problems that we have in long-term care?

THE PREMIER: What I trust is the experts who have been working very hard on recommendations and asking for specific funds to go to areas where we can make the most impact in facilities across the province. I am proud of the investments, I am proud of our record to continue to manage this province on a strong fiscal path - one of the few provinces that is able to get back to balance while making these important investments for our seniors. I just went over some of those important investments.

It's not just sound bites, these are allied health professionals, more of them in centres, more access to primary care for our seniors in these centres, dealing with issues in the centres across the province, making the required renovations and, in some cases, rebuilding those centres.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: MENTAL HEALTH SPENDING - ADEQUACY

TIM HOUSTON: Re-announcing previous announcements - 236 beds when the need is 10 times as great, it is a sound bite. Last year, the PC Party developed and announced a plan for universal mental health care. It is a very real, very actionable plan that would bring mental health services to the people who need it.

The sound-bite government is touting a \$20 million increase in mental health spending. It is not; when you look at the actual numbers, it is only \$8 million. The investment in mental health care in this budget amounts to about a 3 per cent increase.

My question for the Premier is: In the midst of the greatest mental health stressor in anyone's lifetime, is the 3 per cent increase in mental health spending really the best we can do?

THE PREMIER: Our government has done well to bring our wait times down to the national average, but we needed to continue to do more. The pandemic has had an impact on Nova Scotians across the province, mental health and addictions are on the rise. That is why we are going to invest in this budget in a number of areas that we need to make sure that we are there for Nova Scotians, whether it is withdrawal programs in hubs across the province or other programs that Nova Scotians need access to. I am very proud of those investments.

TIM HOUSTON: The issue in this province is access. That is the issue and that is why we are such strong advocates of universal mental health, because it can mobilize the resources of the province, mobilize those people who are qualified to help Nova Scotians, and get help right away - mobilized resources to get access right away.

There is nothing in this budget that provides more access right away. There are some plans to get more access down the road, but there is really nothing in this budget that is immediate access, nothing I can take to Nova Scotians and say that tomorrow your life is better because of what this budget did.

Does the Premier agree that there is nothing in this budget that really solves the problems today?

THE PREMIER: COVID-19 has exposed weaknesses in our society, there is no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker. When I came into office, I went in to looking at a new Office of Mental Health and Addictions, but we are not waiting until that office gets fully set up. We are looking and we are taking action in areas where we need to ensure that Nova Scotians do have immediate access to mental health.

There are helplines that Nova Scotians can call, but we want to make sure we are going further in providing single session therapy clinics across the province so those Nova Scotians can get that early intervention access on the same day, and walk-ins.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - COVID-19 CASES: N.B. BORDER - CONCERN

TIM HOUSTON: Except that is not ready right now; it will be ready at some point in the future, when people have needs today. Speaking of today, we are just hearing right now that New Brunswick has announced 30 new COVID-19 cases. This is 60 total cases since the Premier stepped out ahead of his Atlantic Canadian colleagues and opened the border with New Brunswick. These case counts are actually similar to those that led to a border shutdown previously, around Thanksgiving.

I would like to ask the Premier: Does the rise in the case count give the Premier concerns about his decision to jump out in front of his colleagues?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, New Brunswick is still in the yellow zone. When they start to, if they do, go up to the orange zone, which hopefully they won't, Dr. Strang will provide that advice to see if it is in our interest to close down the border, but right now I have not received that advice.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, just within the last couple of weeks we have seen the Premier walk back his school site selection decision; we have seen the Premier walk back accepting the AstraZeneca vaccines; we have seen the Premier walk back when police would receive vaccines; and we have seen the Premier famously walk back his second attempt at Bill No. 4. Now we have seen that possibly the Premier has moved too fast and just jumped out in front to grab some headlines from his colleagues in the region.

I would like to ask the Premier: Does the Premier regret moving without the co-operation of his colleagues, and is the relationship with his colleagues so damaged that he can't walk it back anymore?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the situation at the New Brunswick border is the exact same as it was in the P.E.I. border. The caseloads that are in our Maritime bubble in our Atlantic region right now are all very similar. I will continue to listen to Public Health, I will continue to listen to Dr. Strang, and I stand by those decisions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PREM. - BUDGET 2021-22: CHILD CARE INVEST. - EXPLAIN

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Today we have heard from the government on the subject of investment, but in a time when women are leaving the workforce in huge numbers, when the early childhood education sector is teetering, and when we know the importance of that education to parents, to children, and to our economy, the gaping hole in this budget is the failure to invest a single new dollar into affordable, accessible child care.

We know that per dollar, investing in child care creates more jobs than any other industry. Given the need and the clear economic benefit, I would like to ask the Premier: Will the Premier explain why this budget fails to make any meaningful investment in child care?

THE PREMIER: We continue to invest substantial funding in the child care sector and, as I said in the Throne Speech, it is a priority for us to have that conversation with the federal government to see where they are going. I believe it is irresponsible to look at investments that may not be the most effective way to leverage a universal health care program.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, there are other provinces that have done it and we can do it too.

Given the recent closure announcement from a regulated daycare in Dartmouth after more than 25 years, we know the child care sector in Nova Scotia is not on solid ground. Between February 2020 and February 2021, 2,000 women in Nova Scotia left the labour force. The Premier says we are on the path to economic recovery but that is only true for some of us. The fact is that compared to men, women in Nova Scotia were more than twice as likely to have left a job in 2020 for personal or family reasons. These women and families are not impressed by conversations with the federal government that have been happening for over a quarter of a century with no results.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier: Will the Premier go further than just acknowledging the difficulties faced by women in the recovery and commit to finally implementing a universal, accessible child care system in this mandate?

THE PREMIER: As I said, I've prioritized having those discussions, and I already have with several MPs. I do believe that we should be working toward a universal child care benefit to Nova Scotians, as Quebec has in the past. I want to leverage that opportunity with the federal priorities.

We were one of two provinces to actually invest in child care over the pandemic, to ensure that that sector was stabilized. We're going to continue to ensure that we have a strong economic recovery, and I'm happy to see that women now are back to the employment levels that they were before the pandemic hit.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W: INTL. PHYSICIANS - IMM. LAWYERS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness why doctor recruiters in this province do not automatically provide contacts for immigration lawyers to international candidates.

We have a wait-list of over 60,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor, and we should be doing everything possible that we can to attract new doctors to come to Nova Scotia. Yet yesterday, the Minister of Health and Wellness said, and I quote - and this is being tabled in the Chamber right now - “We hope we can do that without the use of lawyers.”

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Does he stand by his comments that international physicians considering moving to Nova Scotia should do without engaging an immigration lawyer?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I fully do stand by that because the Department of Immigration & Population Growth staff here in Nova Scotia actually work with doctors directly to assist them through the federal immigration process. I want to commend our Minister of Immigration & Population Growth and the staff there for doing really important work being a point of contact for those doctors and helping them work through a very complicated process. That has resulted in close to 100 international doctors who have come into Nova Scotia through that program.

We have made a new immigration stream and we have dedicated staff who help those doctors get through that process in an expedited way, and we’ve seen more doctors here as a result.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday about the couple that had difficulty and wanted to move here - I’d like to quote the minister again, though, because yesterday he stated - and this is being tabled in the Chamber as well - that “the federal immigration process is quite complicated.” Well, we all know this. This is something that I agree with, with the minister, but it is all the more reason why we should be providing physicians considering relocating to Nova Scotia with all the necessary information that they need.

I appreciate the crucial role that recruiters play in attracting doctors, but to my knowledge, they are not trained as lawyers, and it makes it quite difficult for them to adequately guide someone through our quite complicated immigration system. Mr. Speaker, it would cost nothing for our physician recruiters to provide this information like Newfoundland and Labrador does, and it might even help to make us more competitive.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Why does this Liberal Government continue to make it so difficult for international physicians to come to Nova Scotia?

ZACH CHURCHILL: That’s not true. We’ve actually made it much more easy to come to Nova Scotia. We’ve reduced red tape associated with practising here. We’ve changed the accreditation process to make it easier for internationally-trained doctors to get here. We’ve established a physician immigration stream which has been very successful

in getting more doctors here, and we have dedicated staff in the Department of Immigration & Population Growth who assist physicians directly to help them through the immigration process. We've demonstrated success in all of these areas and it has resulted in around 90 to 100 new doctors who are internationally trained being here.

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

H&W - LONG-TERM CARE: SINGLE RMS. - PLAN

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, 53 people died at Northwood after the pleas of the nursing staff and other staff were ignored. In fact, while asking for help, Northwood was told that they were fearmongering and were offered little assistance by this government in the years leading up to the pandemic, as well as during the outbreak.

A huge driving force behind the destruction of the outbreak was the seniors being crammed into two- or three-person rooms. We are pinning our hopes on vaccines, and yet Dr. Strang told us two weeks ago that only 48 of the 133 long-term care facility residents had received their first vaccines. We can't allow this to happen.

[3:45 p.m.]

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness, since we did not hear about it in the budget, is: What is this government's plan to move all seniors who wish to have a single room out of a shared room and how many new beds will that require?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and for asking this important question. All of our hearts were broken as a result of the outbreak in Northwood that did lead to 53 people losing their lives. That did result in two reports that were conducted. We have acted on those reports to increase our infection prevention processes and protocols in all of our long-term care facilities. That has included not having more than two people per room.

There are still people in Nova Scotia who do want to share a room, for social reasons, with people, so not every resident does want to be in a single room.

We have invested significant dollars to - I'm out of time, sorry.

BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the sympathy but I didn't hear the answer, so I'll move on to another question.

This government has never shown any interest in long-term care. During the previous eight years in power they have not invested in long-term care the way they are saying and, in fact, cut the budget repeatedly. We are now seeing the consequences of their inaction and those budget cuts.

There is conclusive, publicly available and government data to show what the current state of Nova Scotia's long-term care is. There is an immediate requirement for somewhere between 1,400 to 2,600 new beds in this province. We've committed to building them now, beds that, because they don't exist, are leaving our seniors in hospital beds or being moved into a hotel while they are waiting for long-term care.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What is the minister's timeline to fill Nova Scotia's immediate need - between 1,400 and 2,000 beds - because they can't wait until 2025 to be moved into a private room?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we have invested every single year in our long-term care system. We have reduced the risk of infection spreading in our system as well. That has been a significant investment. We have invested in the capital needs of our long-term care system. We're investing in building more facilities and retrofitting or replacing facilities and we're also investing more in the other supports that are available to people in there, including allied health workers and more access to primary care physicians.

In this budget we're increasing wages for our staff that work in our long-term care facilities. We have been a government and we'll continue to be one that prioritizes key areas and we'll continue to make improvements in our long-term care system here in Nova Scotia.

H&W: NORTHWOOD REVIEW COMM. - ANSWERS

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier and the minister just said that they were proud of their record in long-term care, but I think they can't be talking to the same people I know when I was working in those long-term care facilities during the pandemic, nor must they have read very carefully their own long-term care expert panel's report because they would not be proud of the current record.

Mr. Speaker, in Question Period on March 10th, just over a year ago, we asked the question: "What contingency plans are in place to ensure health care facilities are staffed appropriately if health care workers themselves contract COVID-19?" The minister answered, "We follow those clinical guidelines and the advice of Public Health officials to be prepared both for the general public and for our health care workers on the front line," leaving the clear impression that staffing levels in long-term care were adequate then, even under the strain of a pandemic.

My question for the minister is: Who is right - the Northwood Quality-Improvement Review Committee that said that these long-term care facilities were understaffed and underfunded, or the minister who said that everything was fine?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we have implemented the majority of the recommendations that came from the reviews around Northwood. We continue to focus

on the staffing needs of our system. We work with Labour and Advanced Education to create training opportunities and recruitment opportunities for CCAs and other professionals that we need to run that long-term care facility.

In this budget, for the first time in our province's history, our investment in long-term care is over a billion dollars. That represents a \$100 million increase over last year's budget alone. Furthermore, this is also increasing the quality of service in these long-term care facilities by increasing access to primary care and allied health providers as well.

BARBARA ADAMS: I am going to suggest that the minister review the Health Committee's video. When I asked Vicki Elliott-Lopez why the government had not updated the long-term care expert panel report on how well they had fulfilled the guideline recommendations, she said that they were distracted by COVID-19. There is no evidence that they have implemented the majority of the recommendations from the expert panel - and I can tell you that they haven't.

Our case numbers, thankfully, remain low because Nova Scotians have done the work. What we are upset about is that the government has not done its work. Six months ago, the Northwood Quality-Improvement Review report recommended that the government develop a robust human resources plan.

In fact, the Homes for Special Care Act says that the government must prescribe staffing requirements and qualifications in the regulations. There are no regulation staffing requirements that meet the issues of long-term care. Our Party has committed to . . .

THE SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

BARBARA ADAMS: The question for the minister: We know that this government did not come up with a long-term care strategy as promised, so can the minister state for the record when Nova Scotians will at least see a human resources strategy for long-term care?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I want to thank the public servants who, during this difficult last year, put in an incredible number of hours and helped protect Nova Scotians, particularly those on our long-term care team who made sure that we were prepared for a Wave 2 and kept COVID-19 out of long-term care facilities.

This is the second time that that member has used the personal name of somebody in the department - someone who works very hard and who is very committed - and I think it is very shameful when the Party opposite attacks our public servants, who have been putting in the hard work and doing the heavy lifting to protect Nova Scotians and implement key plans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly considering that that Party hid under a rock for the last year while other people did all the work for them.

I would hope that that member at some point will apologize to the public servants she has attacked in this way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PREM: AFFORDABLE HOUSING - ACTION

LISA ROBERTS: My question is for the Premier. Today there are over 5,000 people on the wait-list for public housing and yet this budget commits to building just 150 new units of affordable housing in the next three years. At this rate, it will be a century before we build enough units to meet the need we have today.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier is: Will he please explain to this House what his government is doing to ensure that people can get keys to an affordable home in their lifetime?

THE PREMIER: The member knows that we have a housing commission put together with very capable people who are putting together recommendations that we intend on acting on. What is in the budget, and what is in there is not the totality of the situation of how we address housing stock in the province.

It is primarily a supply issue. We are going to need to work together with municipalities to allow for planning issues to make sure that they are resolved so that we can encourage more development that has targeted focus on affordable housing. We are going to have to work with non-profits to incentivize building as well, so we have non-market-oriented units for those organizations.

There is a lot more work to do, Mr. Speaker. This budget is just part of that.

LISA ROBERTS: Walking or biking in my constituency, I am confronted by opportunities that this government has missed out on. The former sites of Bloomfield and St. Patrick's-Alexandra could have met new mixed-income and affordable housing in Halifax. Instead, those public assets were lost to the private sector.

With vision, the province could also purchase existing units when apartment buildings come on the market; instead, the government continues to use rent supplements which just puts more public money in the hands of private landlords.

Given that the government says we have a supply issue, can the Premier explain why this government is so opposed to investing in new non-market housing?

THE PREMIER: I continue to speak with experts, and I am really looking forward to those recommendations. I would like to be able to be in a position so that we can provide

provincial guarantees for non-profits that have proper board governance and liquidity to invest in those types of units.

We do provide rent supplements for thousands of families across the province. There are other tools, as well. We invest in public housing, we invest in Tawaak Housing Association for First Nations. We need to do more though, and we're committed to doing so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

H&W: CANCER TESTING DELAYS - COMMENT

TIM HALMAN: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In response to questions about delays in cancer testing due to the COVID shutdown, the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness indicated the following at the meeting on September 8, 2020:

“In the time frame over which people can develop that cancer, the wait of a few months may not be as significant as it sounds. It's a diagnosis that needs to be made and that diagnosis has to be made in a timely fashion to get on with treatment, but the disease has probably existed a great deal longer than three months.”

This is the province's top health official, suggesting that as indicated, some cancer testing is delayed. This is a suggestion that could cause Nova Scotians not to get checked during the pandemic, because it's more complicated to actually go to the doctor. Here we have a deputy minister suggesting that testing can wait.

My question is this: Does he stand by the comments of his deputy and support delays in testing for serious illness?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: As we prepared for the pandemic, not knowing what Wave 1 and Wave 2 would bring, there were some impacts to our health care system. Emergency and urgent procedures were not impacted. Elective surgeries were, and non-urgent screening was as well.

I am happy to say, however, because we have done so well in every single wave of this pandemic, that our cancer screening operations are back up and operational. The 95 per cent of our elective surgeries that were delayed have either been rebooked or happened already. We have gotten back to a much greater state of normalcy in our health care system.

TIM HALMAN: It was my hope that the minister would embrace this opportunity to correct this misinformation, so I'll give another opportunity.

On February 10, 2021, while appearing before the Public Accounts Committee, the same deputy minister stated: “The situation at Northwood was certainly not as dramatic as was seen on the news and reported by many other provinces and jurisdictions across the country.” That will get tabled.

Hence, here once again, we have the province’s top health official downplaying a serious concern in our health care system, one that I know all of us are aware that cost the lives of 53 Nova Scotians. My question is: Does the minister stand by his deputy in these comments?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Again, I’m not sure why the Party opposite targets our public servants in this way. They are not publicly elected officials. They serve the elected wing of government, and they serve us and Nova Scotians very well. That has been demonstrated every single day during this pandemic over the last year in particular.

I would encourage the members opposite to please stop this line of attack on our public servants because they are the backbone of what our response has been over the last year. I personally want to thank them for their great work, and I want them to know that they have the confidence of the government and, I believe, of the public.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

H&W: ROSEWAY MANOR REPLACEMENT - COMMIT

KIM MASLAND: Earlier this month, my colleague from Argyle-Barrington and I wrote to the Minister of Health and Wellness to ask him about the status of the replacement facility for Roseway Manor. I understand he may be extremely busy with his new portfolio, maybe too busy to respond, but I would like to remind him that in 2014, his colleague from Kings West - then the Minister of Health and Wellness - committed to begin planning for a replacement facility in 2015.

Seven years have passed since this commitment, and yet there is no mention of funding for Roseway Manor replacement in the government plan for investment in long-term care facilities. The residents of Roseway Manor have waited long enough. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Will he honour the commitment made by his colleague and finally fund replacement of this facility?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we have established a strategic infrastructure branch here at the department that is reviewing all the greatest infrastructure pressures that we have in our system, and I will ask them for an update. I have not been briefed on this particular issue, but I will get an update on it.

[4:00 p.m.]

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely shocked that the member, now the Minister of Health and Wellness, has not been briefed on what is happening at Roseway Manor. That facility needs serious - actually, it needs to be replaced.

I have visited Roseway Manor many times since the member for Kings West committed to a replacement facility. The staff there do everything they possibly can and they provide excellent care for the residents, but the building is failing them. Uneven floors make it difficult for residents to even navigate the hallways. Buckets are catching water from leaking pipes in rooms and hallways. A single washroom in rooms is being shared by four residents of different genders. Can you imagine?

My question for the minister is: Would the minister be satisfied with these conditions if the residents were his own constituents?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Health and Wellness, it is not my own constituents alone that I worry about. I worry and have a duty to serve everybody's constituents in this province. That is the role that we play when we serve in these seats on the government side and that's a duty that we take very seriously.

We have invested significantly in our long-term care infrastructure. We've made announcements to replace and rebuild new facilities. We have made investments in infrastructure and infection prevention measures. There will be more of these announcements to come.

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

H&W - SHOREHAM VILLAGE LONG-TERM CARE: SEWER BREAK - PLANS

HUGH MACKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today, through you, is for the honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

Yesterday a significant sewer break occurred at Shoreham Village long-term care facility in Chester. My question to the minister is: Can the minister please provide an update on the situation? What are the plans to accommodate the residents until the situation is resolved?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The situation at Shoreham - there was a sewage backup there. Residents were moved immediately to other locations within the facility that were not impacted by that situation.

Remediation efforts began immediately and they should be completed by next week, is what I am being told. Hopefully the situation at Shoreham gets fully resolved by next week.

HUGH MACKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for that answer. Following through that - a second question then, supplementary to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Residents of Chester and surrounding areas were delighted to hear that the government intends to undertake sorely-needed renovations at Shoreham Village. Given this latest example of critical infrastructure failure - that being the aforementioned sewer break - my question to the minister is: Can the minister provide a schedule for undertaking the renovations?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I believe the strategic infrastructure branch is currently assessing the situation at Shoreham and will be providing recommendations on what needs to happen in the future there.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could speak on a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: After QP.

H&W - LONG-TERM CARE: WAIT TIMES - MAKE PUBLIC

BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 233 patients are waiting to get into long-term care from hospital. We know that only because the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness reported that to us during the Standing Committee on Health.

With the wait times for home care waiting from home reported online, we know exactly how many are waiting. The Fitch report highlighted that there are not enough beds in our hospitals and therefore we have too many people waiting from hospital for long-term care beds, but it's difficult to find that information. The information is obviously being tracked because the deputy minister was able to report it to us.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: This information is not publicly available, so in the interest of transparency, will the minister commit today to having this information publicly reported alongside the wait times for those waiting from home for long-term care?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: According to the member, that information was publicly reported by the deputy minister. We'll stand behind the deputy's reporting of that there.

In terms of dealing with patient flow issues in our hospitals, that is a priority for us. We have directed the Health Authority to look at that issue right now.

It's not just an issue of offloading. It is also an issue of patient flow within our hospitals and getting folks to our long-term care facilities is a part of that. That is a priority right now that we have directed the Health Authority to look at. We'll be working with them to find expedited solutions as quickly as possible.

BARBARA ADAMS: No, what I was referring to is the fact that it's not publicly available. We had to wait a year and a half to get long-term care as a topic in the Health Committee for the deputy minister to answer that question. What we are looking for is for it to be publicly reported online, on the wait-list online. I'll move on.

We need more information, and more information can come from the interRAI data system, which has been delayed even more since COVID-19 arrived in Nova Scotia. I'll table that document. This interRAI system was announced to be en route in 2018 - three years ago. According to the deputy minister in January at the Health Committee meeting, we are just now obtaining the licence for this system.

We have listened to front-line stakeholders, because I worked there for six months with them. They are still waiting for this. We're committed to increasing the hours of care per resident per day in our plan. That's evidence-based.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: How much longer will the level of care in long-term care be neglected until the interRAI system can be up and running? How long will this information take before it's shared publicly?

ZACH CHURCHILL: We are investing heavily in our long-term care facilities. We have increased that funding by \$100 million in this budget alone. We are now over \$1 billion. We're investing in infrastructure. We're investing in infection-prevention measures. We're investing in our staff. We're investing in access to primary care opportunities for our residents in our long-term care facilities. To suggest that this isn't a priority area, I think, is not accurate at all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W - PICTOU CO.: DIALYSIS TREATMENT - WAIT-LIST NUMBERS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Last Friday, my colleague for Pictou Centre asked questions regarding the state of the dialysis unit in Pictou. Four chairs are absolutely not enough for Pictou County, which is why I have asked the previous Ministers of Health and Wellness to work with us in Pictou since I was elected. Our constituents deserve so much better than four chairs.

COVID-19 has placed additional strains on everyone's flexibility, and as my colleague mentioned on Friday, this means some people are having to travel three days a week and sit in a chair for approximately five hours. Some need accommodation and meals because they stay over, and some need to have family members take time off work to travel with them.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Can he tell us how many residents of Pictou County are currently on the wait-list for dialysis treatment? If not, when can we expect this information?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Expanding our dialysis services has been a priority. We have invested and expanded those services. The focus has been on areas that did not have close proximity to accessing dialysis. Those were Bridgewater, Glace Bay, Kentville, and Digby. Those were the most recent ones that were announced. We have also expanded the home options for dialysis.

I know that that's not dealing with all of the pressures on the dialysis system right away. We do have to make these investments and these decisions while balancing the other needs in the health care system, but we have made some progress in this area.

KARLA MACFARLANE: The minister is correct. There has been progress made, just funny that it's all in Liberal constituencies. I was happy, though, when he did mention last week that he agreed to look into the issue last Friday. Again, I fear history will just repeat itself.

Since 2013, I have asked to have the dialysis unit increased from four chairs to at least ten. Seven years later, almost eight, the ball really has not moved . . .

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

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: On a point of order, during Question Period, the Minister of Health and Wellness referred to a member from this House as "hiding under a rock." I'm sure that if the member opposite was to refer to the Premier as "hiding under a rock," it would be deemed unparliamentary. In the case of the member, that member actually spent six months working in a long-term care facility during the pandemic, so it was completely out of order. On the one hand, I would ask the Minister of Health and Wellness to issue an apology to that member.

Also twice during Question Period, the same minister, the Minister of Health and Wellness, tried to intimidate members from asking tough questions about health care. I understand that he does not want to answer questions because the Liberal record on health

care is so poor. That doesn't mean the questions can't be asked. The minister should not be trying to intimidate members from asking questions.

Our caucus certainly appreciates the work of our civil servants. What we don't appreciate and what we can't agree with is the Liberal record on health care. We cannot agree with the sound-bite methods with which this government is trying to govern the province.

It's not in order for any member of this House, let alone a minister, to misrepresent the intentions of another member. Mr. Speaker, I ask that you instruct the minister to stop using these types of intimidation tactics. Maybe he can agree to do that while he issues his apology to the member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: I would like the opportunity to respond with respect to that point of order. The member in particular (who was asking the first set of questions) in a debate two years ago with respect to legislation around principals in an education bill, referred to our members, our caucus, as spousal abusers (Interruption) - the member who spoke online, who was asking the question, not the Leader of the Official Opposition. You can check the record, Mr. Speaker. That member is very aware of those comments.

It's a bit rich that we're going to talk about a minister who is responding and defending the public sector in the legitimate response to questions, where two members of the Tory caucus literally referenced two bureaucrats and asked if we have confidence. I believe it's well within the realm of reasonableness and fairness that a minister defend two important members of the Department of Health and Wellness.

Again, we don't set the tone. We follow the tone. When we have to defend ourselves and defend the government bureaucrats who make this place run, we're certainly going to take that opportunity to do so.

THE SPEAKER: I'll ask the honourable Minister of Health and Wellness to retract the statement of living under a rock and apologize. Hopefully that will put that to rest.

As far as the second point on the point of order, I'll have to review the questions and come back to the House on that one.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I will retract that statement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy House Leader for the Official Opposition.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I was just listening to the honourable Government House Leader make some remarks. I'm wondering if it's possible to have a clarification because my recollection is different in regard to what was just stated here.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage two years ago did not call the Liberals spousal abusers. I believe she made a connection between two things, but did not directly say that any member in this House was a spousal abuser.

I'm wondering if there's an opportunity to have that clarified. Perhaps the Clerk can go back through the record and see the context of that. I don't want to miscommunicate that somebody said something in the House that they didn't say.

THE SPEAKER: What I'll do is, I'll provide advice to both the Government House Leader and the Deputy House Leader for the Official Opposition that you can take your time and go back and review the record and then come back with some clarifications, if that's fair.

We're now going to take our mandated 15-minute COVID-19 break. The House will resume at 4:30.

[4:15 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:30 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order please.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 28.

Bill No. 28 - Land Titles Initiative Acceleration Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 28, the Land Titles Initiative Acceleration Act, be now read a second time.

This legislation will help right an historic wrong. For hundreds of years many residents in African Nova Scotian communities have been living on land, passed down by their ancestors, without clear legal title. For generations these Nova Scotia families have faced barriers obtaining clear title to their homes. Without legal certainty of ownership, many residents in these communities have been unable to exercise any of the benefits of land ownership that the rest of us take for granted, such as obtaining a mortgage, dividing or selling their land, accessing housing grants, or building equity in their homes.

The absence of clear title to land, because of historical disparities and systemic racism, continues to be a significant barrier to economic prosperity in these and other historic African Nova Scotia communities, Mr. Speaker. This is just unacceptable.

The legislation that we are debating today also represents another important step towards rebuilding trust. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 28 will help accelerate the removal of more barriers to land ownership in five of Nova Scotia's historic African Nova Scotian communities.

Mr. Speaker, in 2017 the government launched the Land Titles Initiative as a pilot to address this long-standing example of systemic racism. The initiative assists residents in the communities of North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook/Lake Loon, Lincolnville and Sunnyville secure title to their land. Under the initiative all legal and surveyor fees are covered at no cost to the applicant.

So far, we have been successful in clearing about 200 parcels in these five communities, from more than 520 applications received. Although this represents progress it is not good enough. We must do more to improve and speed up the process, Mr. Speaker. We know there are still more than about 600 residential parcels in these communities that have been identified as requiring clear title.

The changes we are proposing in this bill will help remove more barriers. They will help us process claims much more quickly. This legislation will address costly and time-consuming municipal subdivision issues and other complex issues related to title that include overlapping and conflicting claims. Applicants who face barriers will have more help made available to support them through the process.

We have learned a lot through our work with residents in these communities over the past two years. What we have learned has informed the legislation that we have before us. The key changes to the Land Titles Clarification Act will recognize in law the land titles initiative and its scope, will expand the role of commissioners, providing them with the authority to provide alternative dispute resolution as part of the claims process. This will help avoid claims getting bogged down in the courts or being abandoned by claimants with

limited means because of the cost. It will provide an exemption from seeking subdivision approval for Land Titles Clarification Act Certificates of Title under the Municipal Government Act and the HRM Charter, because that can pose a barrier because of the cost and red tape. This will help save time and money to the often lengthy legal process to resolve land title claims.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments also formally establish a new \$3 million compensation fund to support mediated and arbitrated resolutions to claims that involve parties with competing interests. This investment will help resolve those competing claims and help speed up the process.

The actions we will be taking through this legislation will significantly expedite this initiative, continue to build trust, create positive and lasting change, and address an historic injustice. This bill reflects the work of multiple departments united in the common goal of addressing an historic wrong.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the work of our staff and colleagues at the Departments of Municipal Affairs; Lands and Forestry; Justice; Communities, Culture and Heritage; and the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives. They partnered on this legislation. As I take my seat, I look forward to hearing the comments from my colleagues.

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

BRAD JOHNS: It's an honour to be able to speak in favour of this legislation today. I would like to start by saying that the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative caucus has supported the Land Titles Initiative since its very beginning, having met with Angela Simmonds a few years back; and we support the legislation as it's before us today.

Members of the Progressive Conservative caucus do recognize that this bill is a continuation of a process that began in 2017 and is helping to address the long-standing issues dating back to the 18th century when Black settlers were not provided legal title to Crown-gifted lands. The same issue certainly did not occur with their white counterparts.

This means that many African Nova Scotian families are still fighting today to get clear title to lands that were settled over 100 years ago. I'm glad to see that of the more than 850 eligible lands, 527 residents have made application to the Nova Scotia government under this program so far, and of those, 194 have been resolved and received clear title. I think that those numbers do indicate that the previous recent efforts seem to be assisting Nova Scotian families in the five historic Black communities of East Preston, West Preston, Cherry Brook/Loon Lake, Lincolnville, and Summerville.

However, I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not remind the minister that there are still many other African Nova Scotian communities across this province which have not yet benefited from this initiative. I personally know at least two families in the

communities of Lucasville and Middle Sackville who face the exact same issues, so I certainly hope that this opportunity will be expanded to other areas of the province.

We're also glad to see that Judges Corrine Sparks and Valerie Miller have been appointed to act as commissioners, who will help to adjudicate any disputes that may arise. Having this process should help streamline the process, especially where negotiations and mediations are required.

We understand that not having clear title causes many residents undue hardship where they're not able to access mortgages, pass land on to children and other family members, or in many cases, even do minor upgrades to their residences.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the PC caucus does support this legislation, and we'll be speaking in favour of it as it goes forward as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak in support of this bill. We in the NDP caucus have been pushing for an expansion of this program for some time now. We know that progress has been very slow for families, as the minister mentioned, hundreds of years in some cases. We certainly hope that this signals increased attention and an increased pace of resolution.

I would be remiss if I didn't point out that it was this very government, in fact, that was in court taking a position on adverse possession recently, which made it incredibly difficult for these families to move forward at a quicker pace. I am glad that the Premier, no longer minister, has changed his thinking about this and is moving forward in a substantive way.

I think it's also important to note, though, that when this department had to address titles on 28,000 properties in Cape Breton - in Richmond and Inverness Counties - no one had to apply. The government just went and cleared it up and quickly. The government had made the error in not providing title 100 years earlier. They acknowledged their error, and they fixed it. We hope that the government will take that same approach with the same speed for North Preston, East Preston, Lincolnville, Sunnyville, and the other African Nova Scotian communities that my colleague mentioned.

Finally, I want to applaud the hiring of Angela Simmonds. It was her early work in the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society when this pilot was launched in 2017 that really laid the foundation for this project and for this legislation. We're very pleased to see her in the newly created role of executive director, as well as the honourable judges who are joining her as commissioners.

We do still have questions, questions that I hope will be addressed as this bill moves forward and in the Law Amendments committee process. We'd like to know what standards have been set for speed. Again, how quickly will these land title issues be resolved? What capacity has been established within government to accelerate these applications? This is something we will, in addition to debate on this bill, try to understand through the Committee of the Whole on Supply as we move into Estimates.

How will communities be involved to ensure that any lingering barriers are identified and removed? As the minister acknowledged, this is a piece of dismantling the structural racism on which many pieces of our legislation and governance of our province are built, so we need to be aware of anything that we are missing in this process. How will progress be evaluated, and by whom?

I'm hopeful the government will be able to address some of these concerns in the course of this debate and moving forward. I very much look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendments committee meeting.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: It's with great pleasure I rise to talk about this very important bill for the communities I represent. There are actually six communities being represented here. People count Lake Loon and Cherry Brook as one community, but they're not. They're two separate and distinct communities.

I represent Lake Loon, Cherry Brook, East Preston, and North Preston. There are a lot of titles and a lot of people living in these communities who simply do not have titles for their property, and it's very unfortunate. Most of them have lived in these properties for hundreds of years - not just the last few years, but hundreds of years.

Typically in the community, they were not afforded the opportunity for a proper education. Most people in this Chamber wouldn't realize that in 1977, the communities of North Preston, East Preston, Lake Loon, and Cherry Brook took the Department of Education to task for not allowing their children to go to school.

This is part of the problem that's been there. They haven't had the opportunity to understand how you would register your property, what you had to do to register your property. Thank goodness the education now is in place and things are starting to change in the community - so much stronger community. I've been working on the problems even for housing grants for seniors who desperately need to stay in their home. The homes are in such bad repair they can't afford to fix them, and they can't get a grant because they don't have a title to their home. That is a crime. That is an absolute crime. There's no other way to put it.

I want to thank my colleagues. In 2017, we first started to rectify this problem. There have been all kinds of delays, all kinds of problems getting these things done, and it's not moving near as fast as it needs to move. This is an injustice that was done to the community many years ago, and it continued under every government, including the Progressive Conservative government and the NDP government. It's finally being taken to task.

There is still a lot of mistrust in the community about this process - a lot of mistrust. I'm pleased to see that we've got some great people working on mediation and the titles themselves. I've helped more than a couple of families try to get clear title. It was such an onerous operation, so expensive, that they really couldn't do it. I'm pleased to see that those costs will be covered.

When we originally announced this in 2017, there was a lot of mistrust, and unfortunately the mistrust is still there. People are getting different stories from different places. I'm glad that the Minister of Justice and the Premier have decided to really take the next steps and take that mistrust away.

There is nothing like owning your own home, and anybody who's been living in their home for generation after generation, many generations in the same home - why don't they ever clarify it? It's that simple. They didn't understand how they had to register it. They didn't understand how they had to do these things because nobody told them. Nobody helped them. There was a lot of talk for many, many years and nothing happened. Finally it is happening.

Finally, we can get clear titles for the people who properly own the land and own their homes. For generations, if they had a son or a daughter who needed a home, they just said, well, build it next door to my home. That was a great thing to do. It was traditionally what we all did, and that was a part of all our histories. They didn't have the ability or the knowledge to subdivide their property and put it in their names. Now, probably some of these places, maybe a hundred years ago or more, there are no titles to them, and they have lived there that whole time.

I am so pleased to see that this is moving forward. It was a problem to get some of the titles agreed upon by the residents. Even so, before we even started this, I talked to all the residents to get property line agreements - just to get agreements in place before we had this program, hoping that one day we would have a program. When we did get in power, we put the program in place.

We have to dismiss or get rid of the mistrust we have in the community and make sure that the people truly understand what is going on here, that this property is their property. We are trying to get them clear title, to be there for their children and grandchildren so they can enjoy it themselves.

Again, I want to thank the government for doing this on behalf of the communities that I represent. It means a lot to the residents and to a lot of people who didn't have the financial wherewithal to do this. Now it makes it possible for them to get proper titles. I hope that we can wrap these titles up in an orderly manner, in a lot faster manner than what was happening, and with a lot less difficulty.

There were a lot of complaints from people who had no opposition to the property lines - even they had problems. In one case - and I won't say who it is, of course - the lawyer quit partway through the process, and they have not assigned him a new lawyer. He worked on it for about a year - well, almost two years, I guess. So that's the kind of thing that has been happening to the community, and that leads to even more mistrust.

These things have to be done and they must be done properly. We have to go to the community and talk to them about it properly. It needs to be in their kitchens, individually talk to people. That's what needs to be done, not in big public meetings, because you don't accomplish anything there. Talk to people and get them to understand.

There was a lot of great work done, by a couple of students a few years ago before we started this process, which was really, really well done. We need to continue that work, and I know we will. I want to thank everybody for it, and I am going to speak on this bill again on third reading.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak in favour of this bill and to see this process moving forward.

I just want to say, before I begin my prepared notes, that I am especially pleased that this bill has been put forward by a number of different government departments, which hopefully signals and signifies this government's commitment to tearing down the silos of departments and having departments work together on issues that are important to Nova Scotians. This bill was essentially sponsored by the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage; the Office of African Nova Scotian Affairs; the Department of Lands and Forestry; and the Department of Justice - and it is really great to see.

The situation with land titles in historically Black communities in Nova Scotia is one of the clearest examples of systemic racism in our province's history. I am glad that this bill will address some of the barriers to access, but I am sorry that they were not dealt with years ago - hundreds of years ago, or even four years ago, or three years ago. Systemic, structural, anti-Black racism means that African Nova Scotians face challenges to accessing employment, education, justice, housing, health care, and other social services.

Property ownership and inheritance is a significant side of power and privilege in our society, but Black Nova Scotians in many parts of the province may not be able to sell

or bequeath or mortgage their land for historical reasons that have to do with racism. The land titles process has been excruciatingly slow for too many people and there are still families and communities that won't be helped under this legislation.

Our caucus office has tried but has not been able to get evaluation information from the department as to how quickly the land titles process is moving or whether the government has set and met benchmarks for the program. Listening to the Minister of Justice's comments, I would suggest that the government does recognize that the process has been too slow and there's so much more to do, but we were endeavouring to find out about benchmarks. I'm not sure whether the fact that we couldn't get the information is because the information simply does not exist or whether this government is not willing to share it.

Mr. Speaker, the Land Titles Initiative has been a striking example of structural racism and how it operates in insidious ways. Despite the apparently good and public intentions of the former Premier and minister, who is now the current Premier, applicants have met with hurdle after hurdle. There was even a case, as my colleague for Dartmouth South referenced, at the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia that struck down an arbitrary criterion that the department was applying to applications in their lengthy deliberations. All the while, the former minister - the current Premier - claimed to be looking for ways to be removing barriers and streamlining processes. I hope it is true that this bill will enable progress on this front.

Again, particularly encouraging is the appointment of Angela Simmonds as the executive director of the program. She has been a tireless champion for Black families in this realm and many others. I believe that the intention is very good with this bill and I am glad that these changes are coming forward.

I look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendments committee. May I just say, before I close, that the Law Amendments committee is another example of a place we need to make sure people have access to - especially, in this case, people from the African Nova Scotian communities who may want to contribute to the Law Amendments committee.

May I just put it out there that we should make sure that stakeholders in the African Nova Scotian community are made aware that a Law Amendments committee meeting is happening on this bill - I believe it is Monday, but whenever it is happening - and make sure that information is broadly communicated out to the far reaches of the province so we can have as much participation in the very important Law Amendments committee process as possible.

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

ALANA PAON: It is my pleasure to rise and speak today on Bill No. 28, the Land Titles Initiative Acceleration Act. The word “acceleration” actually just jumps out at me, considering that it has taken this long to get to this point where members of our African Nova Scotian communities have been put in this state of limbo with regard to titles to the land they have lived upon for many generations.

Mr. Speaker, I heard a member of this House stand up a few moments ago and basically mention that members of the African Nova Scotian community were not able to get clear titles on their lands back in the 1800s when their white counterparts - I think that's what was used, or white settlers - were able to do so.

I would like to point out to the member that not all white settlers were treated equally at that time either. We have a longstanding, unfortunate history in this province of people being treated as second-class citizens and not having the same access to resources, privileges, and the same rules as perhaps those who would have been given them under certain colonial rule.

I'd like to read for the House, and I will provide a copy of an excerpt taken from the Cape Breton Crown Land Papers. It says: Paon, Eulalie - Eulalie Paon - petitioner to Ainsley, 1818. Petitioner is the wife of the late Vincent Paon. She was born at the Fortress of Louisbourg and has lived 50 years at Arichat, 22 as a widow, the mother of seven children, all of whom live on the Island. She has lived for 30 years on a lot at Arichat between the courthouse and the shore on which the first improvements were made by her father, Charles Poirier, 50 years ago. The land was then taken by the government as a site for the courthouse but was not used for this purpose. Let us remember, this is 1818. She requests a title.

In 1819, Isaac Paon, her son, petitioned for his mother, Eulalie, stating that Donald Campbell is trying to get the lot for which the petitioner holds a licence of occupation. A licence of occupation. This is not clear title to land.

Again, I would like to remind this Assembly that as much as it pains me to see how long it has taken for members of African Nova Scotian - it's just astounding to me how backwards so many things are in this province and how long it takes us to arrive to do something that is just and good and the right thing to do.

I think about how extraordinary it must have been for people to have obviously come here in the first place to settle land. I think on the fact that I believe it was either yesterday or today - I apologize, I would have to check my notes - that was the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. From 1501 to 1830, four Africans for every one European crossed the Atlantic.

We all know where most if not all of those Africans ended up. They certainly didn't end up being given land titles. They were sold into slavery. Many people from our African

Nova Scotian communities in Nova Scotia are descendants of these men, these women, these children, who had to cross the Atlantic in horrible circumstances to be sold into slavery so far away from anything that they had known.

I would like to put out there again, and remind the member who spoke earlier that perhaps if he would like to double check on our own legislative website, there is a great deal of information available on the history of how unfortunately this province has actually treated and seen different cultural groups, people who come from different political backgrounds, but also people who come from different economic situations and actually come from different religious backgrounds as well.

I would like to remind those here present that if we go back and take a look at our history in this province - without proper title to land, it was not so long ago that you were not permitted to vote. We now in some instances take for granted that we have the ability to be able to have a democracy that allows us to be able to go and put our X next to our choice of whom we want to represent us in municipal, provincial, and federal elections.

There was a time no so long ago, Mr. Speaker, that without a clear title to land you had no say with regard to who would represent you, which means you likely have no representation whatsoever in this House.

[5:00 p.m.]

I look forward to seeing this piece of legislation go through the Law Amendments committee process. I welcome the commentaries of other members of this House. I am very pleased to see that finally - finally - these fine people who have been in our province and who have contributed to our province for hundreds of years, like many of our ancestors, are finally able to get clear title to land which they have lived on for so long.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

RANDY DELOREY: I thank my colleagues who spoke to this bill. First, I want to express my appreciation about the remarks thus far that certainly signify this bill is proceeding with unanimous support - at least at this stage of the legislative process.

The remarks that have been shared show, I believe, unanimous appreciation for the historic systemic issues that we're trying to deal with here as well as a number of commentaries relating to the tangible impacts of the problem we're trying to address - that is, again, providing title to people who haven't had title for generations, to right that obviously historic wrong.

I just want to acknowledge and express my appreciation as the mover of this bill to my colleagues for sharing not just their support of this bill but equally their thoughts and input pertaining to the underlying systemic issues we're trying to tackle. This is just one example. We know that there is a lot more to be done.

I'm quite confident that my colleagues both in this Legislature and in the Executive Council and throughout government - that we are committed to advancing initiatives like this to tackle the various systemic issues that exist, to take down those barriers and to do it as efficiently as possible.

Again, I want to thank everyone for their remarks and support of this bill, including all of the employees and the community members who have provided input and feedback to us through the Land Titles Initiative thus far based upon those numbers.

There was some commentary about even some challenges through the first phase of this work. That's exactly why we're taking these steps. It's the lessons we've learned. We want to, again, roll these changes out, see the improvements, and clear more titles. Thank you all.

With that, I move to close second reading on Bill No. 28.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 28. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 47.

Bill No. 47 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I move that Bill No. 47 be now read a second time.

Today, I am pleased to bring forward and speak to changes on the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter that will allow local governments to help businesses become more accessible.

As you are aware, we have passed the Accessibility Act, which has identified an important goal: to make Nova Scotia barrier-free by 2030. Government alone cannot make this happen. All Nova Scotians contribute to this important goal. Municipalities are a key partner in helping the province reach this goal.

Municipalities want to address the barriers that exist in their communities. Under the Accessibility Act regulations, municipalities are required to develop accessibility plans. The purpose of these plans is to make municipal buildings and public spaces accessible and meet provincial standards.

Due to COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, the timeline for completing these municipal accessibility plans has been adjusted to April 2022. Government recognizes that the past year has been a challenge for everyone, and we want to make sure municipalities are able to consult with their citizens on these plans. The amendment that I am bringing forward today is enabling legislation. Currently, the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter do not allow municipalities to provide direct financial support to a business. The amendment will create an exception allowing municipalities to support accessibility initiatives by businesses.

Although the request came from HRM to support accessibility taxis, we recognize that all municipalities should be able to provide similar support for accessibility initiatives if they choose. We want to ensure that they have the tools they need to do this work. With the changes, municipalities will have broader authority to support accessibility to promote more inclusive communities across the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on Bill No. 47.

The PC caucus welcomes the opportunity to make the province of Nova Scotia more accessible for all Nova Scotians and visitors by having it barrier-free by 2030. This goal represents something that is necessary and creates many opportunities for more Nova Scotians and for tourism.

The more people who get to enjoy our streets, our local businesses, and our province as a whole, our small and medium-sized business share in the hospitality that makes Nova Scotia very unique. This is a great province we live in, and we have so much to offer to everyone.

However, it is very concerning when a government picks winners and losers. It was not that long ago that the former Premier said, we are not here to pick winners and losers, but to support all Nova Scotians. With Bill No. 47 today, we see a government that is taking

their own goals and downloading the responsibility to the municipalities across the province.

Many of these municipalities have no capacity to issue grants or assist small businesses or larger businesses of any kind with money to create accessibility. Using taxpayers' money from municipalities who have many other competing responsibilities, such as fire, water, and sewer, to support businesses in this initiative, would be great if they had the wealth and the ability.

However, today we know of many rural municipalities across this province that are struggling. That is why they were given COVID restart money. Budgets are tight. We know that municipalities have not been widely consulted about this legislation. Mr. Speaker, we know of only one region to date that has been consulted about this legislation. It is concerning that during our briefing, it was suggested that this was widely consulted and asked by the municipalities across the province.

It is very concerning when a government presents a bill without having full consultation with the stakeholders and, most importantly, the people that it affects the most.

We saw the result of that with the Biodiversity Act. Municipalities in this province have had to do a lot, and it is unfortunate that they have not been given full consultation on this bill. My phone has been ringing off the hook since this was announced yesterday, and it is important that consultation and engagement moving forward needs to happen.

It is for that reason that the PC caucus cannot support this bill as it is today. Without consultation, we do not support any legislation moving forward unless we understand that it is the full response of all municipalities. I look forward to the Law Amendments committee process, when we can fully listen to the municipalities so they can have their say on this bill and how it affects their communities.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I am going to close my comments and wait for those who should have been consulted earlier to have their say - the stakeholders.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

KENDRA COOMBES: I am happy today to rise and speak to Bill No. 47. Accessibility is a human right, and our province is not where it should be in terms of making our communities, our workplaces and facilities accessible to all.

I, as well as the NDP caucus, do recognize that some municipalities have been asking for this legislation but, Mr. Speaker, I do hope that there may be funds that they can access federally and pass on to businesses. They may have particular projects they want to undertake. However, we need to be clear that funding businesses for accessibility upgrades

is not the responsibility of municipalities. The province needs to provide adequate funding related to fulfilling the responsibilities under the 2017 Accessibility Act.

Some municipalities are at the breaking point financially, dealing with deteriorating infrastructure, and this amendment to allow them to provide direct assistance to businesses may not feel particularly relevant to them. The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) has been calling for a \$20 million increase for municipalities in funding over three years. This is where our focus needs to be.

I do look forward to hearing more from the stakeholders - the municipalities - for it is they that will have this burden, and I look forward to hearing what they think at the Law Amendments committee meeting.

THE SPEAKER: If I recognize the honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs, it will be to close second reading on Bill No. 47.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the words of the members opposite.

When it comes to consultation and support, I will remind the members that there was a statement made yesterday from the president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, and the statement read:

“Our members support our provincial goal to become a more accessible province, but it is costly. It’s not just a built environment, it’s also things like websites, communication, access to information, and many other minute details that determine what accessibility is. Our members recognize the value and the importance of business and non-profit in their communities. Changes that will help them become more accessible to our residents are very welcome.”

So, we have the full support of NSFM, which is the elected body, and we also have the full support of the Accessibility Advisory Board. This was a piece of legislation that was brought forth from municipalities, and with consultation and with full support of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

With that, I close second reading on Bill No. 47.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 47. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

[5:15 p.m.]

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 50.

Bill No. 50 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 50 be now read a second time.

Today I am pleased to talk about proposed changes to the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter that will strengthen the requirements for the code of conduct for municipal councils. Some key components of the proposed amendments include requiring municipalities and village commissions to adopt a code of conduct and to appoint an independent body to receive and investigate alleged breaches of a code of conduct.

Another key element of the changes will enable councils or commissions to sanction members found to have breached the code of conduct. Councils will be able to go in camera to discuss these breaches. Additional regulatory authority will be given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. We will be working with municipalities as we develop regulations to have their input.

Nova Scotians have high expectations of the people whom they elect. Nova Scotians expect their local government leaders to be accountable and transparent with public dollars. They expect them to conduct themselves in ways that maintain the public trust.

Currently, most municipalities have adopted a code of conduct, some based on the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities model. These proposed changes will ensure consistency in codes across municipalities.

The requirement to have a code of conduct for municipal elected officials was a key recommendation of the Joint Municipal Accountability and Transparency Committee. This committee was established to address issues related to the management of expenses of municipal staff and elected officials.

Bill No. 10, introduced and passed in 2017, addressed three key recommendations of this joint committee: hospitality policy, expense policy, and code of conduct. Both the hospitality and expense policy pieces were proclaimed, but there was more work to be done on the code of conduct piece before it could be proclaimed. Since then, we have added more detail to the code of conduct piece by providing minimum requirements which resulted in the amendments we are talking about today.

With these amendments, I am pleased to say that all recommendations from the committee have been implemented. I thank all municipalities that have contributed to this work by sharing their ideas. It is through open communication and collaboration that we can truly work together for the greater good of our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

DAVE RITCEY: I welcome the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on Bill No. 50, the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. We know that a code of conduct for municipalities has been a longstanding topic of discussion.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I always welcome any opportunity to speak about increased transparency and accountability in any level of government. We have advocated for a code of conduct. We support the idea of an independent investigator.

However, we also have concerns about this legislation. For instance, why has the government decided to bring this legislation forward rather than proclaiming Bill No. 10? The minister said yesterday that the government held off the proclamation because there was more work to do on it. I don't understand why work didn't simply happen.

Another concern is around the kind of sanctions that could be handed out to those who breach the code of conduct. I guess this is another area where the government did not complete the required work.

Finally, there are no timelines attached to this bill. Why is that? There's no way for municipalities to know when they have to satisfy the requirements of this legislation. Again, a little more work from this government was needed prior to presenting this legislation.

There are many other concerns when it comes to in-camera sessions regarding the MGA and the HRM Charter. It is welcome news when a process for in-camera sessions around this topic is outlined in legislation. We hope further clarification is gained through regulation.

Our Party has some concerns when it comes to the actual code of conduct itself. This bill does not say that it will outline and create a minimum set of standards, or code of

conduct, for all municipalities. A minimum standard would help level the playing field and be consistent for all municipalities while clarifying the concerns of many Nova Scotians.

People just want transparency and accountability from their elected officials. Setting a baseline for all municipalities, at least in this area, a government can do in regulation. It is a reflection on the government when it does not want to prescribe the baselines for accountability and transparency through a code of conduct.

Many municipalities have codes of conduct in place. There are still a few that have been waiting for some guidance and direction from the province so that they can create their own code of conduct and investigate the process and sanctions. It is necessary to standardize this process across the province. Municipalities do not want to waste time when it comes to this topic. They would like guidance and to act once and for all.

This legislation addresses municipalities, towns, villages, and regions in a fair manner when it comes to investigation and sanctions. However, we really need to make sure that the consultations that follow the passage of this legislation include a baseline for code of conduct. Municipalities do not need any more surprises from this government. A clarification of the minister's role with respect to the code of conduct would be welcomed by our caucus.

I'm looking forward to seeing municipalities have their say before the Law Amendments committee as this bill goes forward. Our caucus is supportive of much of the content of this bill and we look forward to having our partners in the municipal governments speak as this bill moves forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I hope we can strengthen it with our municipal partners working with us through the Law Amendments committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

KENDRA COOMBES: I am pleased to speak to Bill No. 50. People have been asking for a code of conduct for municipalities for a long time. Considering that the code of conduct was an unproclaimed part of the bill put forward by this government in 2017, it is well past due.

The minister is correct. Constituents do, and should, have a high expectation for how elected officials conduct themselves. Having been a municipal councillor myself, I know how much this is needed.

That said, due to my experience as a municipal councillor, I do have some concerns about the ongoing lack of commitment from the Department of Municipal Affairs to provide municipalities with the resources they need.

This bill requires municipalities to appoint a person or entity to conduct investigations regarding alleged breaches of the code of conduct. I agree. It is important that this is done independent of the council, but the reality is that many municipalities struggle to pay for a solicitor. How will they afford an independent investigator for breaches of conduct?

With any code of conduct, there should also be more training. Will it be left up to each municipal council, regardless of their resource level, to ensure that their council understands the code of conduct and how to best apply it in their role? Providing some of these resources at the department level would also allow for more consistency in the application of the code.

There is nothing in this bill that sets out what will be included in this code of conduct. I think if there was, it would be even more clear that municipalities need dedicated funding to make a code of conduct as meaningful as possible. For example, many municipal councils, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the conflicts in fisheries, want to do more both on their council and in their communities regarding anti-racism. It is essential that this is included in any code of conduct. Again, especially with regard to anti-racism, it is essential to provide funding and other supports to ensure that this part of the code of conduct is applied in the best way possible.

Training, consultation, and initiatives in the community are all needed to make the code of conduct not just punitive but a tool for building capacity and doing better. Again, why is there nothing about funding in this bill? Why does the Department of Municipal Affairs consistently refuse to offer the practical supports and resources that municipal units need to succeed? Mr. Speaker, we have to stop adding more to the plate of municipalities without recognizing the imbalances of the responsibilities they are given and the resources they have to work with.

I look forward to hearing testimony about this bill at the Law Amendments committee. I look forward to hearing from the municipalities, and I look forward to hearing from the minister on some of the concerns that we have, but this bill is a great step forward.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I want to thank members for their words and both Opposition Parties for their support on this bill. The member from Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River had mentioned the regulations and that we did not complete our work. Part of this is collaboration, and the member had mentioned that word several times. We will be collaborating with municipalities on regulations. We will be collaborating with them to fill out what they feel they need on a ground level.

A big part of this bill is putting the framework in place, and we will be working as soon as it passes. We will be working with those municipalities to ensure that their voices are heard and that their needs are reflected in this bill.

With that Mr. Speaker, I close second reading on Bill No. 50.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 50. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Friday, March 26, 2021, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Following the daily routine and question period, business will include the Committee of the Whole and Subcommittee on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to rise to meet again tomorrow, Friday, March 26th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 5:29 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 260**

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (The Premier)

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

Whereas Tasha Smith was waiting in line at a local market in Timberlea to pay for her grocery items when ahead of her an exhausted health care provider who had been tirelessly working throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas flustered from weeks of long tough days at the hospital coupled with handling her own child care challenges, the health care provider was devastated when her credit card wouldn't work, and she couldn't locate her debit card; and

Whereas sensing her panic, Tasha without hesitation, quietly stepped in and paid for all of the health care provider's items and even carried them to her car.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me thanking Tasha Smith, who is well known in the community for her kindness, her generosity, her compassion, and her ability to care and support the people in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 261

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Liverpool Fire Fighters Association continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Trevor Munroe and all the volunteers of the Liverpool Fire Fighters

Association for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 262

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Mill Village and District Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Donald Whynot, and all the volunteers of the Mill Village and District Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 263

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the North Queens Fire Association continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Chris Wolfe and all volunteers of the North Queens Fire Association for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 264

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Port Medway Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Kendall Farmer and all the volunteers of the Port Medway Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 265

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the CGC Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Cliff VanBuskirk and all the volunteers of the CGC Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 266

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Ingomar-Roseway Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Lewis Chetwynd and all the volunteers of the Ingomar-Roseway Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 267

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Jordan Falls Fire Department continued to serve the public during COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Dale Slack and all the volunteers of the Jordan Falls Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 268

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Lockeport Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Wayne Chetwynd and all the volunteers of the Lockeport Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 269

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Middle and Upper Ohio Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the Chief and all the volunteers of Middle and Upper Ohio Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 270

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Mill Village and District Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Donald Whynot, and all the volunteers of the Mill Village and District Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 271

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the North Queens Fire Association continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Chris Wolfe and all volunteers of the North Queens Fire Association for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 272

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Sable River Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Todd Sisk and all the volunteers of the Sable River Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous

expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 273

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Shelburne Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Darrell Locke and all the volunteers of the Shelburne Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 274

By: Kim Masland (Queens-Shelburne)

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

Whereas the fire chief and members of the Greenfield and District Volunteer Fire Department continued to serve the public during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021; and

Whereas this public service was done willingly and at great personal risk to themselves and their families; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic also caused significant extra work and time commitment on their part in training, in extra cleaning and in addressing health concerns; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Moyal Conrad and all the volunteers of the Greenfield and District Volunteer Fire Department for stepping up and being willing to serve our community above and beyond any previous expectation, at great personal risk and placing the needs of others before their own during the COVID-19 pandemic.