



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Third Session

THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 2021

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 2021

Sixty-third General Assembly

Third Session

9:30 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Keith Bain, Susan Leblanc

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll now begin with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 305

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 members of the No. 2 Construction Battalion experienced systemic racism during their service in the First World War from 1914-18; and

Whereas this all-Black unit of about 600 men, roughly half of whom hailed from Nova Scotia, was the only Canadian battalion made up of predominately Black soldiers to serve in the Great War; and

Whereas the No. 2 Construction Battalion was segregated and kept from the front lines, although they did do difficult and important work to aid the allied war effort;

Therefore be it resolved that the Province of Nova Scotia and the members of the Nova Scotia Legislature welcome the intention of the federal government to apologize to the descendants of these brave and honourable men and formally recognize and address the systemic racism that they endured.

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 Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 306

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

Whereas people and communities across our province have been directly affected by cancer and share a strong bond with others who experience the disease; and

Whereas the daffodil is a symbol of strength, courage, and life for those living with cancer and the Daffodil Campaign gives Nova Scotians and all Canadians the opportunity to raise awareness and funds to help save lives; and

Whereas Canadian Cancer Society volunteers in Nova Scotia share the same goals, helping people live longer and improving the lives and experiences of those affected by cancer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize April as Daffodil Month in support of the fight against cancer.

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 responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

RESOLUTION NO. 307

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

Whereas April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Nova Scotia recognizes the devastating impact of sexual violence on people, families, and communities; and

Whereas while anyone can be subjected to sexual violence, we know that young Nova Scotians and those from marginalized communities, including Indigenous women, African Nova Scotian women, women with disabilities and 2Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual people, are more at risk; and

Whereas by standing together we can prevent gender-based violence by disrupting cycles of violence, enhancing supports for victims, and shifting attitudes, behaviours and systems that address barriers and promote gender equality;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly work collaboratively with community to end sexual violence, believe victims when they come forward, and better support survivors and pledge to have a role in building a province that is healthier, safer, and more resilient.

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 Seniors.

RESOLUTION NO. 308

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

Whereas we have seen how much can be accomplished when people work together, which has been evident in Nova Scotia throughout the Covid-19 pandemic; and

Whereas three remarkable women in Pictou County - Barb Smith, a Pictou County Senior Safety Program coordinator, Mary MacLellan with Pictou County Senior Citizens Outreach and Dian Day from Pictou County Community Links - came together to ensure the needs of seniors in their community were not forgotten during the Covid-19 pandemic; and

Whereas the group, which calls themselves the Pictou County Three For Seniors, were awarded the 2020 YMCA Peace Medal for their community work during the pandemic ensuring seniors who needed meals, transportation or other services were cared for;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Barb Smith, Mary MacLellan and Dian Day on this remarkable achievement and thank them for the commitment to the well-being of older Nova Scotians in Pictou County.

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 Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 309

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

Whereas William (Bill) Whitman has been an outstanding member of Nova Scotia's Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture for 33 years and is now retiring; and

Whereas in his role as Manager of Coastal Services, Bill confidently led the department in navigating interjurisdictional issues impacting the seafood industry, such as marine conservation and climate change, with an exceptional work ethic and vision; and

Whereas Bill's work has been invaluable to Nova Scotia's fishing and seafood industry and coastal communities and environment;

Therefore be it resolved that all member of the House recognize Bill Whitman for going above and beyond throughout his career and having lasting impacts in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the industry he supported.

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. 310

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

Whereas April is recognized around the world as Earth Month; and

Whereas Nova Scotians are strong environmental stewards who care about our land and waters and the environmental health of our planet; and

Whereas April is a great time of year in Nova Scotia to appreciate the nature around us and to get out and explore our trails, beaches, and parks;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize Earth Month and celebrate the natural beauty that surrounds us in Nova Scotia.

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

[9:45 a.m.]

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.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 79 - Entitled an Act to Reduce the Smoking of Tobacco. (Tim Houston)

Bill No. 80 - Entitled an Act to Amend Schedule A of Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2018. The Education Act, and Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96. The Education CSAP Act, Respecting Healthy Living. (Tim Houston)

Bill No. 81 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 300 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Municipal Elections Act, Respecting Permanent Residents. (Lisa Roberts)

Bill No. 82 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The House of Assembly Act, to Support Public Participation in the Law Amendments Committee. (Claudia Chender)

Bill No. 83 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The House of Assembly Act, Respecting Sittings of the House of Assembly. (Claudia Chender)

Bill No. 84 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 300 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Municipal Elections Act, Respecting Persons Serving a Sentence. (Claudia Chender)

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 Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, TRURO/COLCHESTER:
COM. SERV. - THANKS**

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce past-President Ron Smith, Executive Director Sherry Martell, and board members.

As a former board member, I was able to see first-hand the hard work and dedication that they put into supporting and advocating, both federally and provincially, for the local business community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they have continued to support and navigate the local business community by supplying signs and stickers to help businesses implement social distancing measures, as well as providing free masks to any local business that requires them.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Ron, Sherry, and their board for their continued dedication to the local business community in Truro-Colchester.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MARTIN, KATHY: COVID-19 OUTBREAK - COURAGE

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kathy Martin, a Dartmouth South constituent who showed incredible bravery when COVID-19 hit Nova Scotia last year.

Kathy is a recreation therapy programmer at Northwood in Halifax and is recognized by her colleagues for her outstanding work. Northwood was one of the hardest-hit areas of our province, and despite the tragic events that unfolded there, Kathy continued to show up and work for residents each and every day. During an incredibly stressful and difficult time, Kathy rose to every challenge. She put the residents' needs first and foremost, making sure that they received the care that they required.

Thank you, Kathy, for the leadership, strength, and compassion you showed Northwood residents during the COVID-19 outbreak.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

PINEO, WENDELL - FIREFIGHTER: 40 YRS. COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to recognize Wendell Pineo, who is celebrating 40 years with the Kingston District Fire Department. Our fire departments play such a vital role in our communities, and are always there when we need them most. The Kingston District Fire Department is made up of wonderful community volunteers, and Wendell continues to be an important part of this team as a veteran member.

I have known Wendell for many years, and he was always one of the first firefighters to respond to the alarm. In the latter part of his active firefighting career, he was a leader in the important task of traffic control duties.

I would ask the House to join me in recognizing Wendell Pineo celebrating 40 years with the Kingston Volunteer Fire Department and thank him for his four decades of service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

GROCERY STORE WORKERS: CUMB. N. COVID-19 HEROES - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I would like to recognize some of Cumberland North's COVID-19 heroes - our grocery store workers. Our grocery store management, staff, and frontline clerks have been working tirelessly to ensure Cumberland North's food supply was always available.

These staff have adapted to the public health guidelines and continued to work to keep food in the mouths of my constituents over the last year, including the months of March, April, May, and June of 2020. When many people were in lockdown, our frontline grocery store clerks had hearts to serve.

Mr. Speaker and MLAs, please join me in thanking some of Cumberland North's, and frankly all of Nova Scotia's, COVID-19 heroes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

**ST. VINCENT DE PAUL FOOD BANK, N. WATERFORD:
COM. SERV. - THANKS**

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize the passion and dedication of the New Waterford Saint Vincent de Paul Food Bank volunteers. These volunteers are dedicated to helping individuals in the community who are food insecure. In a community where one in two families, one in five seniors, live in poverty, food banks have, sadly, become a necessity for many individuals.

I want to thank the volunteers of the New Waterford Saint Vincent de Paul Food Bank for helping individuals who are food insecure.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

4-H: 100 YRS. OF SERVICE - RECOG.

HON. KAREN CASEY: The roots of the Canadian 4-H programs are grounded in rural Canada, and it originated for the purpose of improving agriculture and enriching rural life. One of its primary goals was to ensure young, rural Canadians learn the important skills required to succeed both on and off the farm.

4-H has been a part of rural communities in Nova Scotia since 1922 - the first 4-H club in Nova Scotia being organized in Heatherton, Antigonish County, at that time. Next year, in 2022, we will celebrate 100 years of 4-H in this province.

Over those last 100 years, the initial goals have expanded, and youth living in both rural and urban communities are becoming club members. Club activities have also expanded to include life skills, confidence building, leadership, and public speaking, to name a few.

Colchester North is home to three 4-H Clubs, namely the Onslow-Belmont, Glooscap Trail, and Truro-North River clubs. We often speak of 4-H members as being the learners of today and the leaders of tomorrow. I want to congratulate all members in these three clubs, and indeed all 4-H clubs in the province. I also want to remind all of us that members are now recognized not as the leaders of tomorrow, but in fact the leaders of today. They learn, they lead, and they have fun.

Congratulations, and continue to respect the 4-Hs of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

CLASS OF 2020: PERSEVERING TOGETHER - CONGRATS.

MURRAY RYAN: When students returned to school in September 2019, little did they realize how the school year would be so different.

I rise today to congratulate the graduating classes of 2020 of Memorial High School, Riverview High, and Munroe Academy, students who persevered through COVID-19 to finish their final year of high school in June of last year.

I also wish to thank and congratulate school administrators, teachers, parents, and families who worked together to find truly unique ways to provide those graduating with

some type of safe graduation ceremony that, while different, was still just as memorable and far more personable.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HELPING NATURE HEAL: ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION - RECOG.

HON. MARK FUREY: On May 3rd, Helping Nature Heal celebrates its 20th anniversary. This \$1-million landscape company that started as an idea, a dream, in 2001, has grown to become a thriving business. It focuses on ecological restoration, which is about repairing sites in nature that have been degraded or damaged.

It is also a leader in living shoreline management that uses living plants and natural methods to protect our coastline from erosion. Helping Nature Heal's team works by hand so that it does not harm the environment.

The CEO and president, Rosmarie Lohnes, is an entrepreneur, an educator, and a passionate environmentalist who is an amazing human being with boundless energy and a giving spirit, but she says the business wouldn't be the success it is today without her husband Greg and the entire Helping Nature Heal team of dedicated staff.

Her business gives back to our community, as well. Among other things, it has donated \$5,000 each year over the past five years to support a coordinator for Bridgewater's Community Gardens.

Thank you, Helping Nature Heal, for making a positive impact in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**S. QUEENS SOCIAL STUDIES CLASS:
RIVER POLLUTION AWARENESS - RECOG.**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge South Queens teacher Jill Leuschner and her 7th grade social studies students for their efforts to raise awareness of fecal bacteria pollution in the Mersey River. Members may know that the river is frequently used by residents and tourists for swimming, boating, and fishing.

Inspired by youth environmental advocate Stella Bowles and armed with a testing kit provided by her, students started their work and gathered the data. After testing on two occasions at multiple sites, they were alarmed by the results. Student siblings Olivia and Garfield Gallant-Zwicker made a powerful presentation to the Region of Queens and the class has now reached out to all levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply inspired by the leadership shown by Jill and her students, and I ask that all members join me in extending our gratitude to them for working to create positive change in their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CRAWLEY, JASON: FREE TAX CLINIC, 9000 RETURNS - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a constituent. Jason Crawley has been working as a CRA community volunteer income tax program senior tax filer since 2012. While completing his studies in accounting at Mount Saint Vincent University, Jason began a free tax clinic there, along with faculty member Elizabeth Hicks, and became known as “the tax man” around campus. He graduated in 2017.

This year, with tax season not ending for another month, Jason has already completed more than 400 returns. Last year he did more than 900 and over the last 11 years he has completed more than 9,000 tax returns, giving freely a phenomenal amount of his time and skill and helping countless people.

This essential volunteer work is provided to those with modest incomes and simple tax returns, ensuring that everyone gets benefits to which they are entitled.

I thank Jason for his volunteer effort and wish him well as he works towards his designation as a chartered professional accountant.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**CARE & FUN CHILD CARE:
PREPARING FUTURE GENERATIONS - COMMEND**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a woman who has provided daycare services for more than 700 families and created more than 50 full-time and part-time jobs.

Hoda Ibrahim was born in Mansoura, Egypt, and received her Bachelor of Early Childhood Education degree in 1993. Hoda created Care & Fun Child Care - a long-time dream. The daycare provides a safe, caring, and loving environment for children in Clayton Park West.

Hoda also volunteers her time to local causes such as Super Nova Health Fair, the Multicultural Festival, and the YMCA day camp. Hoda enjoys giving back to the community and believes it is important because it helps create a profoundly positive impact on the world around us. She is preparing the future generation for our success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this House of Assembly join me in applauding Hoda for fulfilling her life goals and for enriching our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**ROOM SERV.:
MEANINGFUL EMPL. FOR PPL. WITH DISABILITIES - COMMEND**

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, today I rise today to commend the Cannon family from Lower Sackville.

Johnathan, Craig, and Jeremy Cannon, along with their girlfriends Beth, Monique, and River, and their parents Urban and Darlene Cannon, had a desire to build a family business - a business that mattered.

In August 2017, the Cannons launched Room Service, an online convenience store that gives their customers the opportunity to have their orders conveniently delivered to their front doorsteps. This family business is not only unique, but it is also inclusive. Two of the Cannon brothers are hearing impaired, and they employ others, as well, who are living with disabilities.

I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in commending the Cannon Family for their efforts in giving those living with disabilities the opportunity to have meaningful employment.

[10:00 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

PASHER, STEPHEN: TEE OFF FOR AUTISM RESEARCH - THANKS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, Autism Awareness Day is tomorrow. It is a day to recognize and spread awareness of the rights for people with autism.

Stephen Pasher and his mom raise money for autism research. Last Summer, Stephen set up his 50/50 floating golf green platform in the middle of Lingan Bay. During the month of August, people were able to tee off while raising money for autism research.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Stephen, his mom, all families and all the autism activists for spreading kindness and awareness as we de-stigmatize autism. Let us break down the barriers that people with autism and their families face as we create a more inclusive world.

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

TEAGHLACH ROSS DISTILLERY: KEEPING IT LOCAL - CONGRATS.

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Rick and Jason Ross on the opening of the Teaghlach Ross Distillery in Waverley.

The 6,000-square-foot distillery produces gin, rum, and vodka, 100 per cent distilled and bottled on site. They are a craft distillery and their goal is to keep everything as East Coast and Nova Scotian as possible. They do everything on site. They have their own filtering system, bottling plant, and packaging, and they do everything there, too.

I had the privilege to do a tour and sampled and bought product. The brothers are working to expand their product lines and are looking at hosting events in the future when it is safe to do so.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Rick and Jason Ross on their hard work to get the business up and running. I wish them all the best of luck in the future months to come.

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

TIM HORTONS, COW BAY ROAD: COM. SERV. - THANKS

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the staff at the Cow Bay Road Tim Hortons for graciously donating coffee, tea, and Timbits to the staff at Ocean View Continuing Care Centre on May 22, 2021.

The staff at Ocean View, working with new protocols, were very grateful for such a kind gesture. The staff working at the Cow Bay Tim Hortons were all too happy to give back to the community they serve. Community members reaching out and lifting one another up when needed sure went a long way in my constituency.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in thanking the owners and all staff members of the Cow Bay Road Tim Hortons for their dedication to their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CLIMATE CHANGE: SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS BEFORE 2030 - NEEDED

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to just take a moment and encourage my fellow members to continue to have in their ambitions and in their sight the urgent need for all of us to respond - from where we are and with whatever influence we have - to climate change and the urgent need to address it.

In the first days that this House began to sit again, I did my best to expand my hours in the day to participate in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's conference on climate change. One of the points made there is that we need to see significant reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions before 2030.

Right now there's a lot of conversation and commitments to making changes by 2040 and by 2050, but we actually need to be making changes and emission reductions right now so that we can arrive at 2030 in a place where our children and those younger than us, who are already quite conscious of the threat that we are facing, see that the leaders have taken leadership and confronted this challenge with everything that it requires.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare-Digby.

FRIENDS OF FERALS: CARING FOR THE CAT POP. - RECOG.

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Speaker, the latest recipient of Digby Care 25's donation, the Society for the Friends of Ferals, has as its mission to alleviate the suffering of feral cats and to control the feral cat population.

The group works with both feral and abandoned cats and interacted with 238 different cats last year. To control the feral cat population, the group has a program to humanely trap, neuter, and return cats. The captured cats and cats cared for post-surgery are evaluated to determine if they could be adopted - a possibility for some young feral kittens and most abandoned cats.

Those deemed unadoptable are returned to their feral colony. The group receives financial help from many supporters, including the Municipality of Digby, fundraising, monthly 50/50, sponsorship of cats, and a Facebook page. These sources of funding are very important, especially given the substantial veterinarian expenses.

I join Digby Care 25 in recognizing the efforts of over 30 volunteers and their care toward unwanted feral cats in our area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

EAST SIDE FAM. RESTAURANT: DEDICATION TO SAFETY - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, restaurants have faced uncertain futures through COVID-19. The East Side Family Restaurant in New Glasgow was quick to adapt to all new health guidelines. The exceptionally hard-working, friendly staff rearranged their floor area and added another room to space their tables to adhere to safety rules.

What hasn't changed is the courteous and polite staff, always providing a pleasant experience to customers. No doubt this is the reason why they have a long list of people who return regularly.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the management and staff at the East Side Family Restaurant for their commitment to providing a comfortable, safe place for visitors who wish to experience a homecooked meal away from home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**FISK, REBECCA - ARTIST:
CONFESSIONS OF AN INVISIBLE SISTER - RECOG.**

HON. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Rebecca Fisk, an accomplished visual artist and an art teacher from Mahone Bay.

Rebecca is an African Nova Scotian artist whose work has been featured in gallery exhibitions across the country. Her artwork is also included in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's permanent collection.

In June 2020, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia featured her work on social media before muting its platforms to help amplify Black voices. The featured piece was called *Confessions of an Invisible Sister*. The mixed-media project was influenced by Rebecca's experience growing up as a Black girl in an all-white community on the South Shore. Rebecca presents 12 identical self-portraits on canvas. Each is covered with an available shade of nylon stockings, from eggshell to ebony. The mixed-media piece explores topics of identity, race, and injustice.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing the work of Rebecca Fisk.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

KINSMEN, DARTMOUTH: COM. SERV. - THANKS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Dartmouth Kinsmen, who stepped up in our community of Dartmouth East throughout the first wave of COVID-19. Even in April, when many of us were working from home, this amazing service club was finding a way to contribute.

The Kinsmen Club usually hosts monthly brunches as a charitable fundraiser at the East Dartmouth Community Centre. When this wasn't possible, they donated supplies from those brunches to Margaret's House, a soup kitchen in downtown Dartmouth. They also took steps to provide frontline workers with gloves, cleaning products, clothes, and more

for their protection. Finally, they secured takeout containers for food-security providers like Margaret's House and Souls Harbour.

These are just a few examples of how a group that could have gone inactive stepped up to the plate. I want to thank the Dartmouth Kinsmen and all service clubs in Nova Scotia for their efforts in supporting residents of our province during the first wave of COVID-19.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

JOHNSTON, DARRELL: VOLUN. AWARDS - CONGRATS.

HON KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Darrell Johnston on being awarded both a Halifax Volunteer Award and a provincial volunteer award in 2020.

When people talk about Darrell's volunteer contributions, they mention his humility and his generosity. He's one of those people who sees what needs to be done, rolls up his shirtsleeves, and gets to work. He makes good things happen. He has given many hours of expertise and leadership to Bedford United Church, the Devour Film Festival, the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, the Strongest Families Institute, Kids Help Phone, and the Children's Wish Foundation.

He has also worked to further better understanding and connections between Christians and Muslims. One of my favourite memories is of the human chain we created between Bedford United and Al Rasoul Islamic Society for Canada's Sesquicentennial.

Bedford is a better place because of Darrell, and I'm delighted he has been recognized for his volunteer work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

PARKER, BOB - FARMER: RETIREMENT - THANKS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Bob Parker, owner/operator of West River Greenhouses in Durham, on his retirement. Mr. Parker and the greenhouse have been a staple in Pictou County for over 40 years, offering gardening products and services and advice to beginner and avid gardeners alike.

Mr. Parker's parents and siblings, wife Colleen, and their five children, have all played a role in the success of the business, and over the years they have employed more than 300 students.

I would like to thank Farmer Bob for his many years of dedication and service to our community through the West River Greenhouses and as warden for the Municipality of Pictou County. I wish him all the best in his retirement.

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

**VOLUN. FIREFIGHTERS, CAPE BRETON/RICHMOND:
UNFAILING TENACITY - RECOG.**

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I know of no one who would argue the importance and value of our province's firefighters. Firefighting is one of the most physically and mentally challenging professions worldwide. Almost 90 per cent of this province's firefighters are volunteers. These men and women respond to calls at all hours of the day and night, seven days a week. They brave the elements to assist with structure fires, medical assist calls, ice rescue, high angle rescues, water rescues, hazardous chemical spills and more.

To prevent emergencies, they educate and create awareness in their communities on fire and public safety matters such as the importance of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. I would like to recognize the 10 volunteer fire departments in Cape Breton-Richmond: Isle Madame; District 10 in Red Island; Framboise Fourchu; Grand River; L'Ardoise; Loch Lomond; Louisdale; West Bay and District; St. Peter's; Chapel Island; and Port Hawkesbury.

I want to thank the men and women of our fire departments for their unfailing tenacity to answer the call to action.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

ELSSNER, BERGIT - APPOINTEE: ACCESSIBILITY BD. - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, April 2nd is International Autism Day and an opportunity to put a spotlight on the accomplishments of people living with autism. One such Nova Scotian is Birgit Elssner from Wolfville, who has gained notoriety for her extraordinary accomplishments as a powerlifter. Birgit is best known locally as the woman who enters world power lifting competitions that require her to pull trucks and lift cars up in the air. For over 25 years Birgit has also been known for her work with persons with disabilities.

With World Autism Day being celebrated tomorrow, I would like to ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in extending sincere congratulations to Birgit Elssner for her appointment to the provincial Accessibility Advisory Board. In her new role she plans to continue her advocacy efforts and champion her belief that everyone's life has purpose.

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

NO. 2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION: SERVICE TO COUNTRY - RECOG.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the only all-Black battalion to serve in the First World War. The No. 2 Construction Battalion was originally formed in Pictou, Nova Scotia. At that time Black men who wanted to serve their country were turned away from recruiting offices. This changed when Canadians of all ethnic backgrounds strongly objected to the exclusion of Black volunteers and a battalion was authorized on July 5, 1916. There were just over 600 Black men who came together to form this battalion, with approximately 300 of those being directly from Nova Scotia. Their role was to support combat troops in Europe. These men cut timber to line allied trenches and build roads and bridges.

The brave men continued to face segregation fighting the war as they were not allowed rifles to defend themselves - they were equipped only with tools such as shovels and axes.

On Sunday, March 28, 2021, the Minister responsible for National Defence announced in a virtual address the government's intention to formally apologize.

I would like to take this opportunity to bring further awareness to the brave men of No. 2 Construction Battalion who, through facing discrimination and segregation, nonetheless volunteered to fight for our country.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

AZZI, PIERRE - MSGR.: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, today on this Holy Thursday as we enter the Easter weekend, I want to express my appreciation to Monsignor Pierre Azzi for his 14.5 years of dedicated service to our Maronite Catholic community at Our Lady of Lebanon Parish in Halifax.

Monsignor Azzi's invaluable leadership has strengthened numerous groups at our church, especially our young through the creation of a youth council. His mission in Halifax has been marked by the beginning of our Lebanese Cedar Festival, which has become a beloved annual tradition showcasing our food, culture, religion and people. His guidance and support was instrumental in constructing our magnificent new church and Community Cedar Events Centre in Clayton Park.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in extending our most sincere well wishes to Monsignor Azzi as he prepares to depart to his new pastoral

appointment with the full knowledge that he will forever have the love and regard of the people of Nova Scotia.

[10:15 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

LOCAL BUSINESSES: BUY AND SUPPORT LOCAL - IMPORTANT

COLTON LEBLANC: Over the last year, small businesses, many owned by our friends, family, and neighbours, took a serious hit because of the pandemic. Supporting our local food and beverage suppliers is more important than ever.

By purchasing local, we help stimulate our regional economy, help create and retain jobs, support families, and strengthen community and culture. Buying local helps bring our community together and gives people the opportunity to make a difference.

Local businesses have been consistently working to find innovative, safe ways to get local products into the hands of Nova Scotians, from restaurants offering takeout to local food and beverage suppliers, markets and retailers offering online ordering, with easy pickup and delivery options.

Today, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in encouraging Nova Scotians to continue to support our local businesses and producers by buying local and supporting local.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

GROSSE, TWILA: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I'd like to recognize Twila Grosse of Cherry Brook, who holds a Bachelor in Business Administration degree and a certificate in budgeting and forecasting, and is active in her community and the Cherry Brook United Baptist Church.

She has received numerous awards. To name a few: 35-year service award from the Halifax International Airport in 2019; the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012; and in 2006, the Black Cultural Centre's Rev. Dr. W.P. Oliver Wall of Honour.

Twila's motto: People don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care. She retired from the Halifax International Airport Authority on February 28, 2021, after 35 years in the department of finance as manager of business planning and budget.

I recognize and congratulate Twila Grosse on her stellar career and on her retirement after 35 years of dedicated service to Halifax International Airport Authority. I commend her on her commitment to her community.

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

BORDEN, KEIANNA: OUTSTANDING COURAGE - COMMEND

LARRY HARRISON: I want to give praise to the heroic efforts of Keianna Borden. Last Spring, Keianna, who was just 15 at the time, came upon a gruesome and terrifying scene.

There had been a vicious dog attack and the victim lay motionless on the ground. Keianna remained calm, set aside her fears, and rushed to offer aid.

She checked for vitals and called 911. The victim was unfortunately already deceased. What makes this act of bravery even more significant is the fact that the dog was still present at the scene. This remarkable young woman risked her own life to try to help a person in need.

I ask all members of the House to join me in commending Keianna Borden for her outstanding courage and selflessness in her attempt to help a fellow citizen.

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

**BRAR, GUNNY/INTL. STUDENTS:
COM. SERV. DURING PANDEMIC - RECOG.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: One of the greatest stories of our community in the last number of years is the thousands of international students who have come to study at Cape Breton University and have called Sydney and the greater area home.

One of the strongest memories I have during the pandemic is the international students wanting to do their part to support the community. Led by Gunny Brar, former student union president, they went out and secured thousands of meal kits, not only for international students but for the entire community, with zero government support. They did it on their own, it was their own initiative, and it was their way to show the community how appreciative they are to call Cape Breton home.

I ask all members of the House to congratulate and thank Gunny Brar and the hundreds of international students who participated in ensuring that thousands of Cape Bretoners had food to eat during the pandemic.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

SCOTT, MURRAY - MAYOR: NEWLY ELECTED - CONGRATS.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Honourable Murray Scott. Murray Scott was elected in October 2020 as the first mayor of the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, following a shift away from the warden governance system.

After retiring from the police force, first in Moncton and then in Springhill, Murray served 12 years as MLA in this beautiful constituency of Cumberland South. During that time, Murray served as Minister of Justice, Attorney General, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, Minister of Economic Development, and Speaker of the House in this very Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Mayor Murray Scott on being elected as the first mayor of the Municipality of the County of Cumberland, and wish him continuing success in carrying his experience into the new position.

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

SMITH, LAURA: LIFE-SAVING RESCUE - COMMEND

HON. LLOYD HINES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a quick-thinking constituent. In the Summer of 2020, Laura Smith was taking her puppy out for a short walk before heading to work in the morning. Little did she know it would trigger a chain of events that resulted in the rescue of an elderly man from Country Harbour Lake.

As they began their walk, the puppy started barking uncontrollably, pulling on the leash and leading Laura toward the lake. At the water's edge, she noticed a cooler floating in the water and then heard a desperate call for help. Laura saw a capsized canoe and an older male without a lifejacket in the water, in distress.

911 was called, and within minutes, Goshen Fire Department, ambulance, and police were on the scene. The 75-year-old man was transported to hospital and has made a complete recovery.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Laura, the first responders, and that brave little puppy for pulling his owner to the water's edge that Summer morning.

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

IABONI, SILVANO: PPE SUPPLY DURING PANDEMIC - THANKS

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Silvano Iaboni, general manager of Intertape Polymer Group in Truro, Nova Scotia.

As we know, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals and organizations stepped up to help the community and our country through these uncertain times. As the general manager, Silvano has worked to supply Stanfield Limited, as well as eight other companies, the material for single-use gowns, better known as PPE.

By ensuring that the supply demand is being met, Silvano and his employees will have supplied enough material to equal about 10 million finished gowns. The gowns are being distributed across Canada to ensure Canadians will have access to PPE during the pandemic and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Silvano Iaboni and the team at Intertape Polymer for their hard work and dedication toward Canadians during the pandemic.

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

The honourable member for Hants West.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

I believe we're having some technical difficulties, so the House will take its recess just a few minutes early.

We'll recess for 15 minutes, and we'll resume.

[10:24 a.m. The House recessed.]

[10:45 a.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - LONG-TERM CARE: INVESTMENT PROMISE - EXPLAIN

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, on January 20th, the Premier was interviewed on CTV by Steve Murphy while the Premier was still just a candidate for the job. The Premier was asked, what is job one? The Premier's answer was, well, long-term care needs immediate investment.

In fairness, it did get investment nine days later, but the Premier was still a week and the leadership contest away from being Premier, so I don't know that that counts for his work.

Two months later, when the Premier tables his budget, job number one doesn't really get an investment. It just reminds us of the January 29th investment by the former Premier.

My question for the Premier: If job number one was already done when he arrived, what was job two?

HON. IAIN RANKIN (The Premier): I thank the member opposite for highlighting one of my number one priorities coming into government.

That announcement did come out. I was very pleased to see the government act on replacing or renovating seven sites across the province, increasing the beds in the HRM area with over 230 new beds. That builds upon the new beds that are being constructed in Cape Breton. In this budget, I am very proud of the \$100-million increase to the budget that will deal with some of the recommendations in the independent panel report.

We are going to continue to act swiftly, and we have more work on the way.

TIM HOUSTON: In that same interview, the Premier was asked why the Liberal Government hadn't done a better job on the long-term care file over the years they have been in office. The Premier responded with, well, I'm focused on how we move forward - except the first thing he did in long-term care wasn't to move forward, but to go back and claim investments of the previous Premier. Those more than 230 beds from the budget are the same 236 beds that were announced on January 29th.

Did the Premier look at the January 29th announcement and determine that enough had been done to fix the problems in long-term care?

THE PREMIER: We are just getting started with our investments in long-term care, Mr. Speaker - that investment of seven rebuilds across the province, the new beds in different regions of the province, looking at how we best renovate our existing buildings, an increase five times over for our capital improvements in the budget, and over \$20 million that goes to increasing our operating funds to ensure that we have more access to primary

care and more long-term care assistance in our homes to ensure that we have better services to our seniors, who deserve that.

This is a challenge across the country, and we are acting, both in capital and operating. We have more work that is coming out soon.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to read from the press release from the January 29th announcement. That press release reads: “Government is making a major investment in long-term care.” I disagree with the casual use of the word “major,” but that was the release.

Then on March 25th, when re-announcing the same beds as part of the budget, the press release said, “the Rankin government” will “add more than 230 beds.” The government announcement became the “Rankin government” announcement, and the one thing we know for sure is that the Rankin government didn’t announce these beds. The Premier simply put his name on somebody else’s homework.

I would like to ask the Premier: Why is the Premier claiming somebody else’s investment as his own?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to come into government with such a strong fiscal position so that we are able to invest in the needs of Nova Scotians in this budget.

We see a significant increase in long-term care of 16 per cent, plus another significant increase in home care, which we have done in the past government in every single budget. This budget delivers on the commitments of Nova Scotians in mental health and long-term care. We have already announced seven sites that we are going to rebuild across the province.

There is a process under way that looks at the homes that need the most immediate attention based on how old they are and based on the conditions within the long-term care centres. We are going to continue to look through that list and ensure that we deliver on the commitments and make capital improvements where they are needed.

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

PREM.: OWLS HEAD PARK REVIEW - COMMENT

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, today’s judicial review of the Premier’s action when he was the Minister of Lands and Forestry to move Owls Head from the list of parks and protected areas in preparation for a potential sale, is a judicial review that is drawing a lot of public attention. Why wouldn’t it?

Owls Head is one of 153 areas under the 2013 Our Parks and Protected Areas plan which have never officially been designated as protected, so it's normal and natural for people to have questions and to be concerned now about the other 152.

Mr. Speaker, what guarantee can the Premier offer the people of the province, particularly the thousands of people who participated in the consultations leading up to the 2013 Park and Protected Areas plan, that other areas in that plan are not also going to be taken from that list?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member knows that this is within a judicial review before the courts. It would certainly be inappropriate for myself or any government to make any further comment on that.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, one thing that would not be inappropriate would be for the Premier to answer the following question. The context is those many mandate letters that were sent out in recent weeks to the minister who just spoke, to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, to all the range of ministers, and the line there that called on all of them in their work to conduct their work with what's called a citizen-centred orientation.

Today, citizens are in court two blocks from here contesting the 2019 decision to delist Owls Head, including the government's decision and failure to consult or even to inform the public about that. Will the Premier explain how forcing citizens to go to court with - how this aligns or is in conformity with his citizen-centred approach?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to listen to all Nova Scotians. The member knows that there are hundreds of citizens that signed the petition that was brought to this Legislature asking for the government to look at a potential project in the referenced area.

I'm going to continue to keep my commitments that I've run on. Over the last month we've announced many of those, and some of our commitments are related to protecting more land across the province - wilderness areas and nature reserves. We're approaching 13 per cent.

I'm looking forward to bringing more land forward and working with Nova Scotians to protect more land in the province.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier speaks this morning, on the plaza of the Law Courts the demonstrators have convened in support of the judicial review, and they have done so with a sense of great hope. There's a great hope amongst those who are assembled there - from where I've just returned - that the Premier will show that his words about the environment and about the value of land protection are in fact signifying

something real, and that he will show that by reversing his government's delisting of Owls Head.

Will the Premier tell us whether or not he plans to disappoint them?

THE PREMIER: What I intend to do is to continue to look at sites across the province with the Minister of Lands and Forestry and the Department of Environment and Climate Change. They have a mandate to look at identifying sites from the Parks and Protected Areas plan, as we've done in the past.

That referenced land was not protected, Mr. Speaker. We need to look at continuing to listen to communities, consult with communities, and that's what we're going to do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CNS - GOVT. ANNOUNCEMENTS: NAMING POLICY - COMMENT

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Communications Nova Scotia.

The minister had some talking points all set to go yesterday, and it's good when we get our stories straight. Since the minister seems to have been referring to some very clear guidelines, I would invite him to table those guidelines for the benefit of the House.

According to the press releases on March 23rd, the Rankin government made an announcement at 1:28 p.m. Three hours later, the Province of Nova Scotia made an announcement walking back the Biodiversity Act, and then on the 25th, the Rankin government was back to making announcements again.

My question for the minister is: Do the guidelines say that the Rankin government goes on the good announcements, but doesn't go on the embarrassing ones?

HON. TONY INCE: As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, those guidelines state that "releases cannot use the names of political parties." As I've already said, the Premier leads the government and using his name in releases is consistent with those guidelines.

TIM HOUSTON: So, the consistent guidelines are inconsistently applied, then, is what I hear from that, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to redirect to Premier Rankin. If, as the minister asserts, using the Premier's name doesn't serve a partisan purpose, then it should be on all announcements and not just some of them. It should be all or none. If there's a process that determines which announcements get to be called the Rankin government announcements, then there's a goal

of attaching the name to them, and I struggle to think what that goal might be if it's not a partisan goal.

Again, if it was to make sure that everyone knew there was a new Premier, then the announcement would have been that the Rankin government walks back big sections of the Rankin government's signature biodiversity legislation. It didn't say that.

My question for Premier Rankin is: If the purpose of putting the Premier's name on the government releases isn't for partisan purposes, then what is the purpose?

THE SPEAKER: I'd just like to remind the honourable member not to use any member of this Chamber's formal name, and keep your questions directed through the Chair.

THE PREMIER: I'm very proud of the work that this government has done, and the government before it. I don't have an issue with ministers being listed in media releases, nor do I have a problem with my own last name being listed in media releases. We need to make sure that we're continuing to communicate with Nova Scotians with the priorities that I ran on, and that's going to continue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

H&W: FITCH REPORT IMPLEMENTATION - DELAY

COLTON LEBLANC: Yesterday, my colleague, the leader of the New Democratic Party, raised the tragic story of the MacPhee family, who lost a loved one a mere three and a half kilometres from the emergency department at the Halifax Infirmity. This government sat on the Fitch report for two years without implementing many of the changes that it recommended. The minister said that there will be two investigations: one, a clinical investigation to determine if the outcome could have been prevented; and the second is to determine which operational factors led to a 34-minute response time.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Shouldn't there be a third investigation to determine if the delayed implementation of the Fitch report prevented crucial changes that might have helped this case?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: This would obviously be a story that touches the hearts of everybody in the Chamber and any Nova Scotian who heard it. I do want to thank the family for coming forward and sharing this story.

To suggest that the Fitch report was not acted on quickly is not accurate. Forty-five of the 64 recommendations from that report have either been implemented or have begun to be implemented, so to suggest that there has been inaction on that would be wrong.

COLTON LEBLANC: It's not the first time that I have to correct the minister's response. In fact, the Department of Health and Wellness had the Fitch report in its hands in 2019, and it was only 14 months later that they began negotiations with Emergency Medical Care, the operating company. There is a little bit of discrepancy in the minister's rebuttal there.

This is not the only family that we've heard. We've heard also about the April George family. My sympathies go to both families that have had their situations exposed publicly here. There is a simple social contract in Canada and there's been one for more than 60 years. That is the government collects tax dollars, and in exchange it provides a health care system that will be there when you need it, especially in emergency situations. There's no second provider you can call if you're worried about the service that comes from the government, and that comes with an obligation on the government's part to provide the service equally and effectively. The government failed the MacPhee family in that obligation; the government failed the George family in that obligation, and in doing so they failed the province and paramedics who do their best to work within a broken system.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Why should Nova Scotians have confidence that they will get the help they need when they need it the most?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Of course, when we hear about these tragedies, it's heartbreaking to learn about situations where people lost their lives. In this case, there are two investigations that are going to help us understand if the outcome was preventable, and that's very critical information for us.

The contract negotiation with Emergency Medical Care (EMC) was only part of the recommendations that came forward in the Fitch report, and primarily those recommendations are around accountability with EMC and ensuring that portions of the profits are reinvested. There was a part of those recommendations that were within the contract, but there were other issues that were dealt with previously to that.

While we hear about these tragedies, we also have to remember that our ambulance system saves lives. When people call 911, the lifesaving support starts on the phone, and there are also a lot of cases where people's lives are preserved as a result of this system. It's because of the hard work of our paramedics that this is possible.

We do not want people to lose confidence in this system. We want people to call 911 when they need it, and all efforts are put into supporting them and getting them the help they need when they need it.

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

H&W: VIRTUAL PHYSICIAN SERVICES - RISK

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to set the record straight with the Minister of Health and Wellness. In Estimates on March 30th, 2021, I made reference to our Party's Hope for Health plan, where we would provide virtual physician care options to every single person in Nova Scotia waiting on the primary care wait-list while they are waiting for a physician. The minister was quick to warn me of the dangers of replacing in-person care with virtual care.

We are not looking to replace every physician visit with a phone call or video conference. We are looking to clean up the mess this government has made over the past eight years. I would like to remind the Minister of Health and Wellness of the dangers of replacing in-person visits with no primary care whatsoever. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Will the minister please explain to me the risk of having virtual care physician services available compared to the risk of no primary care?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question and thank her for clarifying her comments on the record here. We are actually looking at extending virtual care in our province. We've made announcements on that recently. I said in Estimates that the greatest application for virtual care alone is on the mental health front, particularly during therapy sessions.

We're also expanding access to primary care in a number of ways in our province - recruiting family physicians, for example. We've approved on average 120 to 130 doctors a year to practise here. We've extended the scope of practice for pharmacists to provide prescription refills for Nova Scotians with certain drugs, and with certain limitations of course. We've also expanded the scope of practice of nurse practitioners. This has been a government that has extended access to primary care every single year that we've been in government. Of course, the virtual component of doing that is going to continue to be an essential part of that expansion.

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I didn't hear the answer to my question, so I'll ask another one. Clearly, the minister doesn't want to choose between virtual care or no care at all. He's not alone there - neither do the 60,000 Nova Scotians waiting on the wait-list. Thousands of Nova Scotians are desperate for primary care. Without access to this care, they will certainly accept what professional medical care that they can access. We see that with the over-reliance of Nova Scotians having to call 811. Even then, callers are told most often that they need to go to an ER or to a private walk-in clinic.

Under this government, we were promised a doctor for every Nova Scotian. What we got over the last eight years was a wait-list for physicians going from 6,000 people to 60,000. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: How can the minister issue

a press release extending virtual care until 2022 on the same day he warns me of the dangers of virtual medicine?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I think the member is really using some hyperbolic language here. We are extending virtual care and virtual care access points for people in Nova Scotia without access to a primary physician. We're doing that through virtual walk-in clinics and through our mental health system. That work to extend access points for people without a family doctor is actually happening. The warning I gave the Chamber was we can't see that as a complete replacement for access to a primary caregiver for the simple reason that in order for people to be properly observed, if they're dealing with a medical issue, the doctor does need to actually be able to do that hands-on work.

That's all I said. We are extending virtual care options. There will be virtual walk-in clinics for Nova Scotians, but for the member to suggest that that can be a replacement for that in-person primary care provider does come with risks and I hope the member understands that, particularly as she's a health care provider herself.

THE SPEAKER: Just before we go to the honourable member for Dartmouth South, I just want to quickly remind everybody that the set time limit for questions and answers is 45 seconds. We've gone significantly over that with the last couple, and I will be cutting people off here.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PREM.: NOVA SCOTIA POWER - RATES

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

This government ran on a ticket to break up the Nova Scotia Power monopoly. Doing this could mean a greener grid and lower rates for consumers. One of the flagship programs meant to accomplish this was called Renewable to Retail. When questioned at Budget Estimates last year, the Minister of Energy and Mines admitted that there had not been a single entity under the program. No uptake at all, ever. The reason is the barrier of high tariffs that Nova Scotia Power demanded and that this government legislated.

Can the Premier agree that his government has, in fact, not made an ounce of progress in breaking up the Nova Scotia Power monopoly?

THE PREMIER: I'm very proud of the work that we've done with renewable energy in the province. We're going to continue to ensure that we have more wind coming online. We're second only to P.E.I. for percentage of wind in the country, and we're bringing on more solar, the most ambitious solar program in the country.

There's more work to do, for sure. That's why the Department of Energy and Mines hired an administrator to go out to a competitive tender so that others - Nova Scotia Power included - can bid on one of the most aggressive plans, most aggressive tenders, for renewable energy in our province's history. I look forward to that competitive tender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Nova Scotia Power. Earlier this year, we learned that despite climbing power rates, there were unplanned power outages somewhere in this province every single day last year. If you ask my constituents, they would say they all happened in Dartmouth. (Laughter)

Part of the problem could be that penalties charged the utilities for repeated outages are not high enough, or that the power company still collects the very same base rate from customers whether or not they have power.

Can the Premier agree that it defies logic to have Nova Scotians paying for power they can't use?

THE PREMIER: Over the last few years, power rates have been stabilized. Under past governments, with the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party, they rose a combined 70 per cent. We're going to continue to ensure that we bring on affordable, renewable energy through competitive tenders. We're going to continue to support efficiency programs so that we actually bring power bills down, especially for lower-income Nova Scotians, like the announcement that I did on day one in this office.

This is a very important file - to keep reliability of the network of our power system, ensuring affordability and ensuring that we're reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, as we have been over the last seven years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W: COVID-19 VACCINATIONS - PREOPERATIVE PATIENTS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

A new global modelling study shows patients waiting for elective surgery should be prioritized above the general population for COVID-19 vaccines. The study was published this week in the *British Journal of Surgery* and the *European Journal of Surgery*, and it included Canadian researchers, actually. The study showed vaccinating preoperative patients could save close to 60,000 patients around the world, and this document is being tabled in the Chamber currently.

So, my question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: With the new information contained in the 140,000-person study, would he put preoperative patients on the vaccine priority list here in Nova Scotia?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We very much appreciate the research that goes into these studies, but, of course, the members have to understand that in the rest of the world - even in the rest of the country - if we just watch the news every night, we see variants, COVID-19 cases, surging. There's a very different context here in Nova Scotia, where we have managed to keep this virus at bay and protect people.

Our vaccine rollout is key to doing that in the short, medium, and long term. The best thing we can do for any patient who has an underlying health condition or who is looking for organ replacement is to get to herd immunity in this province as quickly as possible. That is the best protection that vaccines offer us. It's not about individual protection, it is about protecting all of us through numbers.

KARLA MACFARLANE: I disagree with the minister. Actually, it's very concerning.

Dr. Janet Martin from Western University participated in this huge study. She says that the study was the first piece of evidence in Canada to identify surgical patients as an at-risk group that should be prioritized for vaccination.

She said, and it's tabled in the House, "In every single age group that we looked at there was an advantage of having the vaccine before surgery, even among 18- to 49-year-olds and 50- to 69-year-olds, most of whom are not yet eligible for the vaccine."

That's proof right there, Mr. Speaker. Restarting elective surgeries and catching up with the backlog should be a priority in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

KARLA MACFARLANE: Will the minister act now to protect Nova Scotians who need surgery?

ZACH CHURCHILL: If the members of the Chamber and members of the public watch even just the nightly news, they'll see what's happening in jurisdictions across the world where COVID-19 and its variants are surging in provinces here in Canada. Of course, when the epidemiology is such, provinces are prioritizing those individuals with higher risk factors.

Here in Nova Scotia, our epidemiology is very different, so it is a safer environment to be in. Dr. Strang's been very clear. If the epidemiology changes and the science indicates that we need to change our strategy on vaccines, we will do that. Right now, the best thing we can do is get these vaccines in arms as quickly as possible.

We now have over 100,000 vaccines in arms. This is going to keep ramping up. We're going to get to herd immunity this Summer and that's very quick.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W - FREE PSYCHOLOGIST SERV.: EXPAND - COMMIT

JOHN LOHR: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. I'm thrilled to hear that psychologists in Nova Scotia will be offering free services to people affected by the Portapique tragedy for one month starting April 5th. It's a great initiative, and the first thing I want to say to anyone affected is: if you need help, ask for it. Call the number at 902-422-9183.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what we've been advocating for - psychologists, professionals, on the front line to see what Nova Scotians truly need: timely access to mental health services, faith that help is there, and the reassurance that they are not alone and that the system exists to make sure they get better.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister commit to examining the costs, benefits, and outcomes of this generative initiative from psychologists with an eye to expanding help for Nova Scotians who are desperate to receive health care?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Of course we're going to continue to evaluate our programming, particularly the new programming that we're bringing forward, to make sure that it is effective and having the impact on clinical outcomes that we want.

There are major investments to expand our mental health supports in this budget. We've made great strides in reducing wait times for those individuals waiting for mental health supports. We're going to continue to see enhancements in this area through virtual care, through the new clinicians we've hired into the system, and by also providing additional support for addictions withdrawal support, as well as sexual trauma support, which all impact the mental health of citizens in this province.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, this shows that not only psychologists see the need for access to all of these services but also the Nova Scotia Health Authority, which is providing the services the minister is referring to, and the value in providing free, timely psychological services to those in distress. Psychologists and Nova Scotia Health are on board, Mr. Speaker. All we need is a government that sees the value in true universal health care.

I believe a little bluntness is necessary here. If our health system was properly structured and properly funded, these services would already be available. People would have the help they need from the first day to today and beyond, consistent and seamless.

My question for the minister is: Does the minister acknowledge that this initiative underscores the need for true universal mental health care?

ZACH CHURCHILL: We support universal mental health care programming. That's why we have expanded mental health significantly in the province by hiring more clinicians, not just in our health care system but also in our school system, and providing mental health supports through other government departments that deal with the public, like the Department of Justice and the Department of Social Services, as well as providing funding support for those community groups that are doing exceptional work to serve people in their community that need supports in this way.

[11:15 a.m.]

We have managed to reduce the wait times for both urgent and non-urgent cases very dramatically here in the province. Just looking at the non-urgent wait-time reduction, it has gone from over 200 days to within the national standard of 28 here in the province, and these improvements will continue to happen - and I believe the expansion of our virtual care is going to help us do even more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

H&W: FUNDING - MENTAL HEALTH/ELEC. CARS

JOHN LOHR: This question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The government spent \$220 million on mental health last year. Contrary to what they keep telling Nova Scotians, they did not increase the budget by \$19.5 million for mental health. They increased it from their spending of \$220 million to \$227.9 million, an increase of \$7.9 million over last year's spending.

We are in full acknowledgement that there is not only a health care crisis, but a climate crisis as well. Both need immediate and full attention. However, the Premier's recent electric car rebate is estimated by his own government to cost \$9.5 million, a clear signal that electric vehicles for those who can afford them are a greater priority than those who can't afford mental health treatment.

My question is for minister: Why is there a greater increase in funding for electric cars than for mental health?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: That is not accurate. We have had an additional increase in our budget this year of at least over \$12 million. We now have the most money that has ever been invested in mental health in our province's history, and we are on the verge of expanding some really critical services in this area.

We have already made some dramatic improvements in how mental health is addressed in the province of Nova Scotia. We have done that by supporting mental health supports in our schools for those youngest who need these supports to help them with their life journey, and we have done that by providing additional adult support as well. These

enhancements are going to keep happening I believe every single year, because this is not just a priority for our government, it is a priority for every single Party in this Legislature.

JOHN LOHR: We acknowledge that the budget has increased and that the government is doing more, but the demand for mental health care is quickly outpacing the investments being made by this government. When you look at the exponential increase in the need for mental health services, we are rapidly falling behind.

My question for the minister is: Given the rate at which demand for mental health services is increasing, how is a now actual \$7.9 million increase going to make a difference and meet this need?

ZACH CHURCHILL: In this budget, we do have the largest single increase in investment to mental health that we have ever had, and that is helping us in expanding our services in some key ways - one, through more access to mental health clinicians, particularly through expansion of our virtual care; by bringing in more addictions and withdrawal supports for Nova Scotians; and by creating more access points and having a more timely response to those who require therapy in relation to sexualized trauma.

We are also bringing in a clinical leadership here in the department through the Office of Mental Health and Addictions. They are going to be staffed with 15 mental health experts, and they are going to help coordinate all efforts across government to make sure that we are providing those wraparound supports to Nova Scotians who need these critical resources.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

PREM. - GRANT THORNTON RPT.: CBRM - ACTION

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Premier. Grant Thornton's independent study on the economic viability of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality was released in July 2019. It found that outward migration is largely due to a sluggish economic growth and higher than average unemployment rates, and that increased financial contributions from the federal and provincial governments will be necessary for the continuous sustainability of the community.

I'd like to ask the Premier: What actions does this government plan to take to address the concerns raised by this report?

THE PREMIER: I am very optimistic about the future of Cape Breton, and this government is spending unprecedented amounts of money in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality with our redevelopment of our hospitals there, with the change of the location for NSCC of their Marconi Campus. There are new projects that we are looking at that will

help the viability of Cape Breton in leveraging all of the ingenuity of the work that is happening with the chamber there, with Cape Breton University.

I could not be more optimistic of working with Cape Bretoners to ensure an economic positive future for them.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, that is great, but that does not help the regional municipality. The CBRM cannot keep up with the demand for services in our communities. The Grant Thornton report found that CBRM departments are already stretching their resources to the limit. Our local infrastructure is taxed, buses are overcrowded when trying to get students to CBU and all the others in the workforce, and we're facing a housing shortage.

The municipality is not going to be able to get out of this situation without some significant assistance from the Province. Can the Premier please tell me if the Province will be providing additional financial support to the Cape Breton Regional Municipality?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's important that government plays a role in ensuring appropriate infrastructure in rural communities and in urban centres across the province. That's why we continue to invest in things like rural high-speed internet, historic investments to ensure that we have the right infrastructure, as I listed, in health care and a road system - over \$1 billion, again, in the capital plan. We're going to continue to work with communities, but the government does not drive economic growth. We need to make sure that we're working, tapping into the ingenuity of Nova Scotians, making strategic investments and comparative advantages across the province, supporting our tourism sector, and supporting the other areas that Cape Breton is known for and strong in.

We're going to continue to make sure that we're a strong partner.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

H&W: CUMB. N., PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT - PLAN

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Sadly, here in Cumberland North, many people are going with undiagnosed and therefore untreated acute mental illness. This lack of medical diagnosis and lack of medical treatment is leaving people helpless in our emergency departments and often in our jail cells.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Can he share with me, so that I can share with our local physician recruitment team, what has the department done, what is the plan, what have they actually done to try and recruit physicians for Cumberland North?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we have been successful over the last year in bringing 35 new mental health clinicians into our health care system. We've been successful over the years of bringing more mental health clinicians - including child and youth care practitioners, psychologists, and behavioural experts - into our education system as well.

We have had success in this area, but there are still challenges. There is a shortage of supply with some of our mental health clinicians. Recruitment currently will be a challenge for us and for every single province, but we have a very competitive compensation framework for these folks, and I believe that is going to help us maintain an edge when it comes to recruitment and retention here in the province.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I feel like there's a real misunderstanding of medicine. If you have a cancer diagnosis, you don't see a therapist. A therapist is part of the team, but you actually need the physician, the medical specialist, to diagnose and create a treatment plan, of which a therapist is a part. If someone goes to the emergency department with an infection, with myocardial infarction, with a fracture, they're referred to a medical specialist for a diagnosis and a treatment.

But if someone goes in with an acute mental injury, there's no psychiatrist medical specialist to be referred to. Why are mental illness and acute mental illness not given the same priority as other physical illnesses? Can we please make it a priority to hire psychiatrists?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I very much appreciate the member's comments, which are accurate. Hiring psychiatrists has been a priority for the department. I agree, we have to treat mental illness as if it is like any other illness that people deal with. There have been investments in supports to deal with mental illness. We have reduced the wait times to the national standards when it comes to response for people with acute or emergent mental health crises. That is one area where I think there has been some demonstrable improvement here in the province, where we're hitting those national standards. Most of those folks in urgent need are getting services immediately or within two days.

We do need to grow our capacity, particularly in those non-urgent cases. Where the major pressure is in the system right now, is to enhance our, I believe what they call, tier-two supports for those folks dealing with non-urgent cases. That is why the single session is so important, and the expansion of our virtual care network, because that's where we're experiencing the biggest pressure on the system right now.

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

H&W: PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT PLAN - EXPLAIN

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Yesterday the minister suggested that our community could assist in recruiting doctors to the area and that funds were available to assist with physician recruitment. He also suggested that higher wages and retention make that all easier, but what the minister didn't realize was that the community has been doing this for quite some time. The community has been working very hard to fill the gaps in the recruiting plan.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Many people in Truro and Colchester areas need a doctor. Does this government have a plan to recruit more doctors to our region?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I know community organizations across the province have been involved with doctor recruitment and we now have grant funding available to assist them with their efforts. I am happy to provide that information to the member so he can pass it on to the folks in his community.

Truro has been hit with a wave of retirements, so there definitely are challenges with doctor attachment right now. That is a priority area for the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and they are very focused on recruiting doctors to that area because we do recognize that the retirements that have happened recently are impacting the attachment levels in that area. That is a priority right now for the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and they are working diligently on filling those positions.

DAVE RITCEY: I thank the minister for his answer. In November 2019, the former Minister of Health and Wellness came to the area and brought funding to assist in recruiting doctors, to your point. I will table that document.

The minister stated it is community-driven, and who knows about the community better than the people here on the ground. It is about partnerships and connecting at the grassroots level. The community jumped on board and has been working with the local recruiter ever since. The Truro-Colchester partnership, the local Chamber of Commerce, and local physicians in both municipalities all joined in the community recruitment process.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness: The community is doing its part to recruit doctors. Will the minister come to my constituency and meet with our community to discuss the contingency plan for recruiting more doctors?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I do want to commend the community leaders who have stepped up to the plate. That sounds very familiar to what is happening in Yarmouth, and I know how beneficial that sort of community leadership is. We do have to look at that as supplementary supports for the work that the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the department do to recruit.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority is very active in recruiting doctors from across the world. As a government, we have been focussed on recruitment, of course, reducing barriers to internationally-trained doctors, training more doctors here in Nova Scotia, and making sure that we are a competitive jurisdiction to practise in, from a compensation standpoint.

We now have the highest paid doctors, with certain specialists, in Atlantic Canada. We've been successful in recruiting 120 to 130 new doctors a year. In some communities that has been a bigger challenge, but having partnerships between the department, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and community groups is very key to seeing success in every single community here in the province.

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

EMO - 911 CALLS: LACK OF RESPONSE - CONCERN

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, every Nova Scotian should always be confident that first responders can and will respond to those in need of services. Over a year ago, 911 response callouts for medical first responders ceased (except for fire and vehicle collisions) in an effort to protect them, as they do not have access to proper PPE and training.

The impact has been felt in every rural community, and 90 per cent of the time it is MFRs that are first on the scene. Medical First Response is often the difference between life and death for someone awaiting EHS, and with increasing ambulance delays leading to code critical and an MFR is unable to respond, we are placing our residents' lives at risk.

Government has had 384 days to resolve this issue. Can the minister responsible for EMO explain why our medical first responders are still not able to resume responding to all 911 calls?

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. I would like to, first and foremost, give a lot of credit to the members of EMO and all the great work they do. They do an outstanding job and they work within the resources they have. They're one of the most experienced groups in all of Canada.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear an answer to my question, and I'm certainly not putting any pressure on our volunteer firefighters. I'm trying to assist. The Strait Area Mutual Aid Association, which includes 28 volunteer firefighters and Strait Area Ground and Rescue, is currently operating a 39-year-old emergency paging system. Their system's equipment is failing and they're not able to source replacement parts. They're also being told, hey, you can fundraise to get a new system to replace those parts.

The Emergency Services Providers Fund to the Province can only be accessed every three years to a maximum of \$20,000 per department. Municipalities fund

departments but it's based on population served, so this is creating a disparity in service to those living in rural Nova Scotia. Provincial EHS and RCMP don't fundraise for their equipment, so I ask the minister: Why are volunteer fire departments having to fundraise to purchase their equipment?

[11:30 a.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We continue to work closely with our partners on the ground and with EMO, and we will continue to provide them with the services they need. We are in constant contact with not just our volunteer fire departments but all our frontline workers, and we will continue to be in discussion with them. If there are things they need, I ask them to reach out to our department and we will do everything in our best ability to help them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

H&W: HIGH HOSPITAL PARKING FEES - EXPLAIN

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, residents of South West and South Shore health regions continue to be shortchanged when trying to access health care services in our province.

Back in December, I wrote to the Minister of Health and Wellness's predecessor to ask why the residents of the region pay the highest parking fees in the province at hospital facilities? These fees can keep some low-income residents from accessing services, particularly when they need to make multiple trips for blood work or other treatments. It is also very costly for those families who are involved in the day-to-day care plan of their loved ones while they're waiting for long-term care placement.

Could the Minister of Health and Wellness please explain to my constituents why they pay the highest hospital parking fees in the province?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I know that at the majority of our regional hospitals the parking fees are critical sources of income for them to run their operations. I'm not sure what the number is in the member's riding; I know it's \$4 in Yarmouth. I definitely hear people complaining about that, but it is a source of income that is vital for the operations of the hospital.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, the minister should not need to be reminded that western Nova Scotia has some of the lowest average incomes and highest poverty rates in the province. Forty-four per cent of the hospitals in Nova Scotia have no parking fees at all. Yet, all of the facilities with the highest parking fees in the province at \$4 per hour are in the South West and South Shore health regions.

The situation might be tolerable if the money collected from parking fees was reinvested locally to upgrade and replace aging equipment or to hire much-needed additional family doctors. Instead, there's no transparency of how the money is collected in our community.

My question to the minister is: Would the minister immediately direct the NSHA to put in place free access to all hospital facilities in Nova Scotia so that residents do not have to sacrifice their own health care because of an inability to pay for parking?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we certainly don't want that to happen. That's why there are options for those who can't afford to pay for parking to either be on a payment plan or to not pay. Those options are available to individuals who struggle with the parking fees. I do want to inform the member that all of those dollars that do come in are reapplied locally to operations that are critically needed in our hospitals. Those dollars are being used locally, and for those who can't afford to pay there are options for them to pursue.

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

The honourable member for Cape Breton-Richmond.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to stand on a point of order.

Earlier during our daily routine, we had seven minutes left to be able to rise in our places and be able to present members' statements. It is important, and I know that we put together a unanimous consent earlier on to have this session be a hybrid session, and so we changed certain rules in this House to be able to accommodate that.

However, when there is a technical glitch as there was during that part of our daily routine, which I believe happened, the members were not asked to give unanimous consent on whether or not it was okay to reduce that portion of our daily routine, doing the statements by members. We were not asked if it was okay, basically, to just cut off those seven or eight minutes that we had left.

Again, it is a minute each to make member statements. That would have been seven or eight people who would have been able to come forward and present a member statement on behalf of their communities. I had one, myself. I know that we have at least two members' statements that we can make. I usually try to wait until I know all other members have had an opportunity before I stand up in my place for a second time to make a second statement.

What I would ask, Mr. Speaker, is if you could advise on whether or not, in fact, is even legal based on what this House has and has not agreed upon. As far as I know, we are

supposed to have that entire hour for that portion of our daily routine. We cannot, based on the Rules of the House, go back to members' statements after Question Period, so I feel as though that is a time today.

Some people may just say, seven or eight minutes? Well, we get a lot done, as we can see during Question Period, in seven or eight minutes. We were not asked. It is a privilege of all those who sit in this House, not just myself, to be able to access that time to be able to bring forward issues that are important and congratulate people who do good work in our community as well.

I would ask the Speaker: a) Is it possible to make up that time, either today or at another time; and b) Should members have been asked for their unanimous consent for that time to have been taken away from us?

THE SPEAKER: I want to thank the honourable member for her comments. I just want to make note of a few things here.

First of all, there is no set time for members' statements. They are a part of the daily routine, so as time allows, members' statements are worked in there in advance of Question Period and the previous agenda items. In this particular case, there was a technical glitch as the member had identified; she is correct in that regard.

There are a lot of moving parts that occur outside of the Chamber to integrate the virtual hybrid format to this sitting. The staff at Legislative Television had indicated that they needed some time to rectify that, to ensure the smooth operations for the rest of the day.

There is, usually, approximately a half an hour on a daily basis for members' statements, and I would encourage the member - as she well knows, there is a kind of an informal rotation here. We go from one side of the room to the other, and everybody gets a chance. I would encourage the member to take the opportunity to stand up when the rotation goes around.

Therefore, there is no point of order.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The House will now resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole on Supply. The House will now recess for a few minutes while it does that.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I referred to the Committee of the Whole on Supply. That was my mistake - it is the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

THE SPEAKER: The House will now resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House on Bills. It will recess for a few minutes while it accomplishes that.

[11:40 a.m. The House recessed.]

[12:04 p.m. The House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on Bills with Deputy Speaker Keith Bain in the Chair.]

[5:39 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Keith Bain resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Bills has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 9 - Crown Lands Act

with certain amendments; and

Bill No. 4 - Biodiversity Act

which was reported with certain amendments by the Law Amendments Committee to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills without further amendments. The Chair has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again Tuesday, April 6, 2021, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

Following the Daily Routine and Question Period, the business will include the Committee of the Whole House and Subcommittee on Supply, and with time permitting,

Committee of the Whole House on Bills to consider Bill Nos. 28, 47, and 50, and also with time permitting, third reading on Bill Nos. 1, 4, 9, and 23.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Tuesday, April 6th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 6th at 1:00 p.m. Happy Easter.

[The House rose at 5:40 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 311**

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 Harbour 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;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Chief Dale Smith and all the volunteers of the Harbour 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. 312

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 Little Harbour and Area 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;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the chief and all volunteers of the Little Harbour and Area 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. 313

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas like many other students across the country the Grade 9 students, at Brookside Junior High School, missed out on many anticipated celebrations that are traditional in our community and at their school, including the much-anticipated grade 9 school trip to Toronto; and

Whereas Natalie Sampson, Amber Drew, Joanne Dunnington, Jennifer Rushton, Patti Martin, and Jocelyn Melanson rallied together to plan a special graduation event and extended an invitation for me to join in the celebrations and pass out certificates; and

Whereas on July 3, 2020, starting at Atlantic Memorial School, a parade of cars made its way along Prospect Road passing Brookside Junior High School and Prospect Elementary School to keep in line with the COVID-19 pandemic social distancing rules with decorated cars, posters, and balloons, to encourage the community to come out and cheer on the kids for achieving this milestone;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me thanking Natalie Sampson, Amber Drew, Joanne Dunnington, Jennifer Rushton, Pattie Martin, and Jocelyn Melanson for their hard work to celebrate this special milestone for all of the graduating students at Brookside Junior High School.

RESOLUTION NO. 314

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Sysco Food Services located in the Beechville Industrial Park is the global leader in selling, marketing, and distributing food and non-food products to restaurants, health care, and educational facilities, lodging establishments, and other customers around the world; and

Whereas Sysco has a passion for helping others, so it was no surprise when Sysco stepped up to the plate and partnered with MLA Iain Rankin's constituency office to

provide fresh produce for pop-up BLT Food Bank established during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas the Beechville Timberlea Lakeside areas did not have a food bank in operation prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and as the seriousness of this virus grew and more families were impacted by the pandemic, it was vital that companies and volunteers came together to ensure food security in our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me recognizing and thanking Sysco for their help, generosity, and compassion toward helping others during a very difficult and challenging time.