



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

**DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS**

**Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy**

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**Third Session**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2021**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2021**

**Sixty-third General Assembly**

**Third Session**

**11:00 A.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Kevin Murphy

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

Keith Bain, Susan Leblanc

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We will begin the daily routine.

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage.

**RESOLUTION NO. 351**

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

Whereas Amy Walsh, Halifax native and executive director of Hockey Nova Scotia, was recently named to the National Hockey League's female hockey advisory committee; and

Whereas in 2018, the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association formed a female hockey advisory committee, which is a group of women from the hockey community, to help increase the participation of girls and women in the sport; and

Whereas Amy is the mother of three boys, a former minor hockey coach, a long-time volunteer, a decorated amateur multi-sport athlete, and one of only two women leading a provincial/territorial hockey association in Canada, who is dedicated to creating initiatives to diversify hockey, including leading the Hockey Nova Scotia Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, which will produce recommendations to eliminate racism, discrimination, and abuse in hockey;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Amy Walsh on her new appointment, her current success as executive director of Hockey Nova Scotia, and her role in helping to lead the way for female leaders in hockey and in sport.

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.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 98 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998. The Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008. The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Virtual Meetings. (Hon. Brendan Maguire)**

**Bill No. 99 - Entitled an Act to Ensure Universal Access to Health-care Advice. (Tim Houston)**



**Bill No. 100 - 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 School Capital Construction. (Claudia Chender)**

**Bill No. 101 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2011. The Public Procurement Act, Respecting Transparency in Public-private Partnerships. (Susan Leblanc)**

**Bill No. 102 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 197 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Health Services and Insurance Act, Respecting Virtual Care. (Tim Houston)**

**Bill No. 103 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008. The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. (Hon. Brendan Maguire)**

**Bill No. 104 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 213 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Housing Nova Scotia Act. (Steve Craig)**

**Bill No. 105 - Entitled an Act Respecting Certain Financial Measures. (Hon. Labi Kousoulis)**

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 Northside-Westmount.

#### **SAMPSON, BERNICE: BEST 91<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY EVER - CONGRATS.**

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this group that you are never too old to dream.

Bernice Sampson, a 91-year-old North Sydney resident, had mused that she had always dreamed of going for a ride in a fire truck. Her grandson, Adam, a volunteer firefighter, got to work. That dream came true on January 31<sup>st</sup> of this year as the truck arrived at her home and took a delighted Bernice for a drive through town, with sirens and lights fired up. Bernice was almost giddy as she pulled the lever sounding the horn.

Then, on March 10<sup>th</sup> Bernice celebrated her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. Her new-found friends at the North Sydney Fire and Rescue returned to visit her, wishing her a most happy birthday, presenting her with a fire department t-shirt with her name on the back.

I would like to thank everyone at the North Sydney Fire Department and Rescue for enabling Bernice's dream to come true. CTV's Ryan MacDonald was on hand to film Bernice's ride and captured her great adventure for the news that evening.

[11:15 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**HEALTH COVERAGE ELIGIBILITY:  
RESIDENCY NOT IMM. STATUS - RECOG.**

LISA ROBERTS: It's been widely noted that the COVID-19 global pandemic has shown us places where our society is broken or unjust. I would suggest that that is the case in Nova Scotia when it comes to health coverage.

I have advocated for various people, who do not have MSI coverage but who live and work and are raising families in Nova Scotia, with the past three Ministers of Health and Wellness. I've made the argument that health coverage should be tied to residency, not to immigration status.

Just in the past day, I've heard about clients of the Halifax Refugee Clinic who have been billed for symptomatic COVID-19 testing and of a NSHA employee invited to register for a vaccine but who was unable to because she does not have an MSI number. I beg the Minister of Health and Wellness's intervention to address this issue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**GAYTON, KATHERINE - CAPT.:  
20 YRS. OF WORKING WITH CADETS - CONGRATS.**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, our youth are our future and the individuals who commit their lives to the development of youth cannot be understated. It is with that fact that I am thrilled to highlight the ongoing, tireless efforts of Capt. Katherine Gayton of Liverpool for her work as the Commanding Officer of 545 Privateer Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron.

Once a cadet herself, Capt. Gayton wanted to give back to the program that gave her so much. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that she has done just that and more. Working at times short-handed, Capt. Gayton persisted and persevered to ensure more volunteers and staff joined to help her support the youth of Queens-Shelburne. If that wasn't

impressive, Capt. Gayton has a daytime job as a paralegal in Liverpool. Capt. Gayton will celebrate 20 years of working with the cadet program this month.

I ask all members of this house to join me in congratulating her for her many years of service and the impact she continues to provide to the youth of Queens-Shelburne.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

### **POST-SECONDARY TUITION: 10 PER CENT REDUCTION - REQUESTED**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness to post-secondary education students' ability to afford to further their education.

Over a month ago, I met with local representatives of the Canadian Federation of Students. The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on post-secondary students. It has meant moving to online classes, taking on more debt, and dealing with instability in housing and food insecurity. It also means graduating into an uncertain job market as tuition rates continue to rise.

Mr. Speaker, this government can minimize the financial burden of students and make access to post-secondary education more readily available by reducing tuition by 10 per cent.

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

### **SIMMINS, MARJORIE - RECIPIENT: ESTABLISHED ARTIST RECOG. AWARD - CONGRATS.**

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, Marjorie Simmins is an award-winning author and beloved figure in her community of D'Escousse. She began her career as a freelance journalist in Vancouver. She has published numerous essays, articles, and stories across Canada and the United States, as well as three books, *Coastal Lives*, *Year of the Horse*, and *Memoir: Conversations and Craft*.

Marjorie also teaches seminars and courses on memoir writing across Canada. Marjorie was one of the artists honoured at the 2020 Creative Nova Scotia awards gala. She is one of three winners of the Established Artist Recognition award, which acknowledges people who have emerged from their initial training and development into established artists.

Prior to this, Marjorie received gold in the delightful category of Arts and Entertainment Reporting in the 2019 Atlantic Journalism Awards for her article profiling well-known musician Matt Minglewood and his wife Babs.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Cape Breton-Richmond and the members of the Nova Scotia Legislature, I congratulate Marjorie on her recent awards and I look forward to her next book to be released in May, *Somebeachsomewhere: A Harness Racing Legend from a One-Horse Stable*.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**ONSLOW-BELMONT FIRE BRIGADE:  
60 YRS. OF COMMITTED LDRSHIP. - CONGRATS.**

HON. KAREN CASEY: On November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the communities of Onslow, Crowes Mills, Belmont, and Masstown will celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Onslow-Belmont Fire Brigade.

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1961, six outstanding leaders in the community met at the Lower Onslow Church and planted a seed that grew into the brigade. Those outstanding leaders, namely Karl Barnhill, Lee Higgins, Darrell Clarke, Maynard Wilson, Keith Hamilton, and Kenneth Crowe saw a need within the communities and were prepared to make a difference.

Since that time, the brigade has also grown to its current membership of 48 - both men and women - who have made the volunteer commitment to protect their communities, both the people and their properties. In fact, the number of properties has also grown to over 2,000 private residences and over 70 commercial and residential businesses.

Leadership in any organization, Mr. Speaker, will determine the success in meeting the objectives set by the leaders. Let me congratulate those both past and present who have provided wisdom, guidance, and direction over the life of the brigade. In particular, current chief Greg Muise and deputy Darrell Currie, who have stepped up to the plate, made the commitment to their community, and who have earned the respect of all of their fellow firefighters.

Congratulations, Greg and Darrell, and thank you for your time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**SACKVILLE SNOW DAYS FEST. - ORGANIZERS:  
MAKING WINTER FUN - CONGRATS.**

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the staff of the Sackville Business Association, along with the organizing team of the Sackville Snow Days Festival.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Sackville Snow Days Festival was held from February 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>, and although the festival had to take a different shape this year, the team worked very hard to successfully bring the community of Lower Sackville together.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Sackville Business Association, along with the countless community groups, organizations, businesses, volunteers, and sponsors who continue to support the Sackville Snow Days Festival each year. Without their commitment and hard work, this Winter fun weekend would not be possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

#### **N. WATERFORD KINSMEN: 9 MONTHS LATER MOTORCADE - THANKS**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Kinsmen Club of New Waterford and Area for sponsoring a Canada Day 2020 - 9 Months Later Motorcade.

The motorcade was composed of first responders and frontline workers in recognition of the incredible contributions made by the first responders and frontline workers to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to be invited to participate in this event. It was a joy to be had, and I want to thank the Kinsmen for organizing this, and all frontline, first responders, and essential workers.

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

#### **HUBBARDS STREETSCAPE: CREATING A SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY - CONGRATS.**

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Hubbards Streetscape Project, co-chaired by Melanie McIvor and Matthew Morash, which was able to secure over \$50,000 for their new community improvement plans.

The project committee was struck to work on the creation of both safer roads and a more vibrant main street in Hubbards. The project secured grants from the Nova Scotia Association of Community Development Business Corporation, the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, as well as the Aspotogan Heritage Trust. This money will go toward the creation of a community plan, as well as to further engage community involvement and support.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Hubbards streetscaping project for securing funding to embark on their vision for a safer and more vibrant community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**BULL RUN TRAIL ASSOC.: VARIED SCENERY - THANKS**

HON. MARK FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Bull Run Trail Association, a dedicated group of community volunteers whose hard work and determination over the past 18 years has created the Bull Run Trail, a place where everyone is welcome to explore, be active, connect to nature, and share good times.

The 24-kilometre trail connects to Bridgewater on one side and to the region of Queens on the other. It travels through the communities of Hebbville, Hebbs Cross, Italy Cross, Middlewood, and Danesville. This multi-use trail is used for hiking, running, cycling, ATVing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, and many other activities.

The Bull Run Trail has lots of little surprises. It has one of the only covered trail bridges in Nova Scotia. It meanders along Fancy and Wallace Lakes, as well as farmlands, streams, marshes, and awesome businesses, including the Tasty Freeze and Indian Garden Farms. The trail association's chair, Rayburne Whynot, says there is some lovely scenery, as well as a wetland area that is great for birdwatching, taking photos, or painting.

I ask members of the Legislature to join me in thanking these outstanding volunteers with the Bull Run Trail Association.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**MOSHER, RON: SALES LDRSHIP. - CONGRATS.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, real top salespeople are excellent at their job due to their creativity and originality. Ron Mosher has been at the top of his game as a very successful vehicle salesperson for 37 years, receiving numerous awards in the process, including National Sales Leadership recognition on several occasions.

He has also been the recipient of the highest recognition, Peak Performer, at his dealership on more than one occasion, an award presented to exceptional salespeople in Canada. Mosher is a consistent top-three Atlantic salesperson because he has perfected the art of identifying what his customers want and delivering on those expectations.

Ron is resourceful and goes above and beyond to satisfy the customer and close the deal. That is why he has a long list of lifetime customers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS: NO QUICK FIX - RECOG.**

LISA ROBERTS: I want to share with fellow members just a few highlights from a conversation hosted yesterday by the Housing and Homelessness Partnership called Housing and Homelessness in 2021. It featured a conversation with Jim Graham from the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia.

Just a couple of notes shared to me from my constituency assistant: in December 2019, there were 145 chronically homeless people in the Halifax area; today there are 345. There was a conversation about what would prevent landlords from increasing rent as income assistance rates increase \$100 a month, as released in this budget. The comment was that only rent control, in fact, will keep landlords from increasing rents in response to income assistance rates rising.

There was again urging of the government to seize the potential of purchasing buildings that are affordable older buildings right now, because there is otherwise no quick fix. Indeed, there is no quick fix for homelessness.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Clayton Park West.

**DR. SUSAN K. ROBERTS LODGE:  
DAFFODIL CAMPAIGN SUPPORT - COMMEND**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: In honour of Daffodil Month, I would like to highlight the amazing contribution of our local Canadian Cancer Society, located in downtown Halifax.

On February 6, 2020, my CA and I had the privilege of getting a tour of the Dr. Susan K. Roberts Lodge from the regional director, Kelly Cull. The lodge is funded entirely by donors' dollars and has provided a safe and friendly space for over 800 guests from around the Maritimes. Furthermore, the Daffodil Campaign sheds a light and has provided funding for cancer research for prevention and detection. That is why I proudly wear my daffodil pin today.

It is said that one in two Canadians is diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Daffodils signify love and support. As their famous motto says, "When daffodils bloom, hope grows."

Mr. Speaker, would the members of this House join me in applauding the efforts of the Canadian Cancer Society and all their hard work and research.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**STICKINGS, REBECCA: LIFE-SAVING ACTION - COMMEND**

TIM HALMAN: I'd like to recognize Rebecca Stickings, vice-principal at Mount Edward Elementary School in Dartmouth East.

It's been said that your life can change in a single heartbeat, and this was the terrifying reality for a student, a family, and a school community when in December 2020, a student experienced a medical emergency on school grounds. Rebecca immediately jumped into action and administered lifesaving first aid until first responders arrived.

Due to Rebecca's quick thinking and first aid skills, the student is now receiving the medical care and attention they need. No amount of recognition will ever equate to the magnitude of having saved a student's life, but the Dartmouth East community will always be grateful and proud of Rebecca's heroic actions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**WHALERS HOCKEY - VOLUN.: MAKING IT FUN - THANKS**

SUSAN LEBLANC: A wise person recently told me that it takes a full season to become a hockey mom, and I am almost there. This weekend marks the end of the Dartmouth Whalers Under-7 and Under-9 season, and it has been a fun, rewarding rollercoaster of a first hockey season for our little family.

[11:30 a.m.]

Aside from watching my kids gain confidence and skills on the ice and being proud as punch at what I have seen, I am simply amazed by the incredible work of the parent volunteers who have worked tirelessly against some pretty tough COVID-19 odds to make sure the Whalers players have every chance to be on the ice and to do it safely.

From receiving kids at the door and getting them on the ice during the times when parents couldn't go to the arena, to getting COVID-19 forms sent out each week to be filled out to make sure everyone there was healthy, to livestreaming practices and games, to the regular work of scheduling and fundraising, the work of the volunteers was truly amazing.

As a first time almost hockey mom, I am really grateful for all the folks who kept our kids and so many other kids from our community safe while learning new skills and having fun.

Thanks to all the incredible coaches and assistants and special shout-outs to Gillian Hatcher, Krista Holland, Clinton Macleod, and coaches Alex and Brian.

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



**HEART MONITOR FUNDRAISER:  
CREATIVE AND COMMITTED - THANKS**

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank four groups of young children who showed the true meaning of giving back: fundraising to purchase additional Holter heart monitors for the IWK.

Alyssa and Ainslie Rose, Olivia and Reece Woodill, Cailyn Pearcey, and Kaci and Kaden Sprague all contributed to the fundraiser. Alyssa initially came up with the fundraising idea for her sister Ainslie who was born with a heart defect, and so they wanted to raise money for the IWK, who has been helping her. Ainslie received her Holter heart monitor and that motivated her sister Alyssa and her friends to raise funds for more Holter heart monitors.

The kids held lemonade stands during the Summer and hot chocolate stands in the Winter. They also did a fundraiser with homemade cards and Christmas bows. People were really generous and would often pay more than they were asking, said Olivia. One person literally emptied their pockets and gave them everything they had.

Please join me in thanking this caring group of children for their hard work.

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

**FIRE STN. 16: CHRISTMAS TREE FUNDRAISER - THANKS**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the volunteer firefighters Christmas Tree fundraiser at Station 16, located in the Eastern Passage community. It may not be known that 100 per cent of the funds raised by this program stays in the community.

Funds raised go toward supporting school breakfast programs, educational bursaries, community crossing flags, Station 16 annual Open House, Ocean View Continuing Care Centre, and Passage Days Princess, just to name a few. With COVID 19 restrictions, the 2020 tree lot was still able to operate with the inclusion of proper safety protocols.

I ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing Fire Station 16 volunteer firefighters for their hard work and dedication to their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**GOULD, ERIC: GOLDEN LOCKS FUNDRAISER - THANKS**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, April is Cancer Awareness Month, and I would like to recognize Dartmouth North constituent Eric Gould who, in October, which is Childhood Cancer Month, raised \$2,200 for cancer research and supports.

As an incentive for folks to donate to his fundraiser, Eric committed to cutting off his self-described golden locks of hair, which he had grown halfway down his back over the course of the last two and a half years. At the end of the fundraiser, his hair went to the charity Angel Hair for Kids to be turned into a wig for a young survivor of cancer.

Nicole Steiger at Studio Ten Eighty-One donated her time and talent to cutting Eric's hair in addition to making a donation to his cause, bringing him past his goal of \$2,000. The most amazing part about this is that it wasn't his first time cutting his hair. In 2017, he did it to raise \$1,000 for the same cause.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Eric in exceeding his fundraising goal and to everyone who donated to his campaign. Eric and his supporters brought much light to our community in 2020.

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

**STEVENS, TEMEKA - ATHL.: VOLUNTEER COACHING - THANKS**

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise a remarkable young woman from L'Ardoise, 19-year-old Temeka Stevens. Her 15-season minor baseball career began with the Richmond Cougars Minor Baseball Association before moving on to play with the Richmond Royals. She then went on to play the Under A-18 Dodgers in New Waterford for two years before joining Cape Breton Expos.

Although Temeka has played on all female teams, including provincial Under-14 and Under-16 teams, she predominantly played on male-dominated teams. In fact, Temeka was the only female to compete in the Sydney Sooners competitive baseball league last season.

I would ask the members of this House to join me in thanking Temeka for giving back to the sport she loves by volunteer coaching for the Richmond Royals T-ball and U-11 teams. May she continue to inspire other young women and embolden others to pursue their life passions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**MACKINNON, CAMERON/MIDDLETON, CURTIS:  
TRUE SPORTSMANSHIP - RECOG.**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, one of the great things about Nova Scotia is the excellent sportsmanship of our young people, and there's no better example of the sportsmanship than what we witnessed recently at a junior high basketball game between Maple Grove and Barrington.

In this game, a student from Barrington, Cameron MacKinnon who has Down syndrome, was on the court in the final minutes of the game. With cheers from the crowd and both teams' benches, Cameron took a shot but missed and the ball landed in opponent Curtis Middleton's hands. Without hesitation, he passed the ball back to Cameron a few times until Cameron was able to score a basket. It was a thrilling and special moment that none of us are soon to forget.

Curtis's sportsmanship and Cameron's perseverance exemplified who we are as a community and a region. Please join me in thanking Curtis and congratulating Cameron on reminding us all what true community and sportsmanship looks like.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**BANNER PROG., RIVER JOHN: HONOURING VETERANS - COMMEND**

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the community of River John for their Veterans Banner Program. With the dedication of a few community members, River John displayed 32 banners of local veterans on telephone poles this past Fall.

The idea started when a resident of River John read an article about veterans banners being displayed in the community of River Hebert. A local printing company was contacted to create a sample banner, phone calls were made to family members of known veterans in the area, and the project grew from there.

The banners will be put up each September and taken down after Remembrance Day. I applaud these volunteers for their efforts on this worthy project and for honouring their local veterans. I look forward to seeing the display of banners again this year in River John.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**JR. GIRLS SPORTS, NEW GERMANY: DISTRICT CHAMPS - CONGRATS.**

HON. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate two junior girls sports teams at New Germany Rural High School. The junior girls soccer team

became district champions when they defeated Bayview Community School on November 2, 2020. In February, the junior girls volleyball team also became district champions in their final game against North Queens Community School.

I wish to recognize the teams for their hard work and dedication throughout the sports season. Congratulations to the players and their coaches for winning the district championships.

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

### **HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY: NEVER AGAIN - REMEMBER**

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Yom HaShoah, also known as Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is recognized in Canada this year on April 8<sup>th</sup>, today. This solemn day we honour and remember the approximately 6,000,000 Jewish lives that were lost in the Holocaust between 1933 and 1945 and pay tribute to Canada's diverse community of Holocaust survivors.

With this year marking the 76<sup>th</sup> year since the Allied troops stormed the gates of Auschwitz against the Nazi regime, despite the devastation the Jewish people had faced during the war, they persevered with admirability, bravery, dignity and heroism.

Holocaust Remembrance Day is to ensure that the legacies of the 6,000,000 Jewish lives are never forgotten and to ensure that never again shall we stand for any forms of discrimination in our communities today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

### **MCHUGH, ED - RECIPIENT: MUNIC. & PROV. VOLUN. AWARDS - CONGRATS.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Bedford resident Ed McHugh on being named both a Halifax Volunteer Award winner and a Provincial Volunteer Award winner this past year.

Ed has many volunteer accomplishments and has been involved in many organizations over the years including, but not limited to, 100 Bedford Men Who Care, Northwood, Special Olympics, the Community Justice Society, the St. F.X. Alumni Association, the Alzheimer Society, the Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference, L'Arche Canada Foundation, Basketball Nova Scotia, the Bedford Eagles basketball team, the Nova Scotia Association of Basketball Officials and the C.P. Allen Junior Girls Varsity basketball team. Phew.

Ed's also on the organizing committee for the Bedford Volunteer Awards, and we so appreciate his involvement in recognizing the many achievements of volunteers like him in our community of Bedford. Thank you, Ed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

**LEBLANC, ALCIDE - WWII VETERAN: 101<sup>ST</sup> BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES**

COLTON LEBLANC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honour a Second World War veteran, Alcide LeBlanc, who turned 101 years young on March 21<sup>st</sup>. Formerly of Wedgeport, Mr. LeBlanc lives at the Veteran's Place in Yarmouth.

On his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, because of public health restrictions, there was no big party. To celebrate his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday the Wedgeport Legion members and others gathered outside Veteran's Place to wish him a happy birthday as he watched through a window. He was presented with a Regimental scroll and a coin of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, both of which were the highlight of his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Mr. LeBlanc spent 11 months in combat. Landing in Normandy in July of 1944, he fought the retreating German army all the way to Berlin until V-E Day. In 2014, he received the French Medal of Honour. He is the only surviving founding member of the Wedgeport Legion and its oldest Second World War veteran and member.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the Legislature to join me in thanking Mr. LeBlanc for his service and wish him a belated happy birthday. Bonne fête, Alcide.

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

**SMB SENIORS ASSOC.: EMERGENCY STORM KITS - THANKS**

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Seniors Association of St. Margaret's Bay for creating an important kit called Ready for the Storm, specially targeted to senior residents in rural areas to stay safe during Winter storms, especially those who may live alone or have mobility issues.

Bay Seniors has put together a handy tip guide as well as emergency storm kits for seniors living throughout the St. Margaret's Bay area. While many of us keep candles and flashlights on hand this publication emphasizes the need for such items as extra batteries, a fully-charged phone and, most importantly, an I Need Help sign that can be posted in a window in case of emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, I invite the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Seniors Association of St. Margaret's Bay on their initiative to help seniors stay safe during the Winter storm season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**MCFARLANE, MATT - MUSICIAN: ECMA NOMINEE - CONGRATS.**

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians - particularly younger audiences - may recognize the music line “You can be a superhero too,” sung by Coldbrook music artist Matt the Music Man McFarlane. The lyrics often reflect on Matt’s childhood experiences, which included bullying in school. Creating children’s music was inspired by the birth of his first child, and his lyrics include messages of becoming more self-confident.

Matt has been writing and performing music for nearly 20 years. In 2019, he was the recipient of Music Nova Scotia’s Children’s Artist of the Year Award, and most recently he has been nominated for an East Coast Music Award. His onstage performances capture the full attention and imagination of his younger audiences, with costume changes and a platypus as a sidekick.

On behalf of Nova Scotia’s House of Assembly, I would like to thank Matt the Music Man for his contribution to providing positive and inspirational music for our children and congratulate him for his recent nomination for an East Coast Music Award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**TEACHERS: CUMB. N. PANDEMIC HEROES - THANKS**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I’d like to recognize these outstanding individuals and to spotlight these hardworking professionals by offering thanks for their endurance and hard work during COVID-19. Teachers deserve public recognition for all of the challenges they have faced as they adapted to work to ensure learning could continue during these uncertain times.

For many children, school is an anchor in their lives. The loss of social interaction and extracurricular physical activity, as well as possible stress at home from loss of employment by parents, is a lot for our children to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislature, please join me in thanking our teachers, Cumberland North pandemic heroes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Mr. Speaker, access to healthy, affordable, local food is vital. Halifax is fortunate to benefit from food security initiatives that are making a difference. I want to highlight today Chebucto Connections, Mobile Food Market, Square

Roots Fairview/Clayton Park, and the new Clayton Park Farmers Market coming to the Cedar Event Centre.

Chebucto Connections distributes free produce packs twice a month to those who need them in the Spryfield and Sambro area. The Square Roots team operates bi-weekly market days out of the Fairview Citadel Salvation Army and provides low-cost and free veggie bundles from local farmers, as well as bread, to residents.

[11:45 a.m.]

The Clayton Park Farmers Market will provide an affordable option for up to 40 local vendors to sell directly to community. I'm proud to support these organizations, and I'm grateful for the generosity that keeps them running.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking the countless volunteers helping to put nutritious, affordable food on tables.

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

**BEARCATS ATHLS.: HOCKEY MILESTONES - CONGRATS.**

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Truro Junior A Bearcats head coach and general manager Shawn Evans and Truro goalie Alec MacDonald.

In November, Shawn was recognized for his 1,000<sup>th</sup> game coached in the Maritime Junior Hockey League. Shawn played an integral role in the development of grassroots and junior hockey players in our community. Last week, one of his players, Alec MacDonald of Truro, was named MHL Goalie of the Week. After four years with the team, he celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> game and has an outstanding record of 55-29-5-5.

Our hometown Bearcats are currently on a 10-game winning streak and are preparing for the MHL's Canadian Tire Cup playoffs during these uncertain times. I would like to congratulate both Shawn and Alec for achieving these milestones and wish the Truro Bearcats great success in the 2021 playoffs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

**MCDONALD, ROD - TYPE DESIGNER: CDN. TYPE ARCHIVE - RECOG.**

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize Rod McDonald of Lake Echo, one of Canada's prominent type designers and educators. He is a man on a mission to

preserve some of the history of Canadian type, as well as samples of his work, in an online resource called the Canadian Type Archives.

Since the 1970s, his type of practice has grown and included designing woodmarks and letterforms for General Motors, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, BlackBerry, and magazines such as *Chatelaine*, *Applied Arts*, *Canadian Business*, and *Toronto Life*. He hopes this newest type-inspired initiative, the Canadian Type Archives, will become an online resource dedicated to the history of Canadian typography.

He's seeking information on anyone who has worked in the early Halifax printing industry, and historical samples of printing and typography in the Atlantic Provinces. He's also hoping to determine if there are important type artifacts or historical prints in the collections of Atlantic Canadian libraries and archives that could be included in the online resource.

Halifax is the home of the first printing press in Canada. The first newspaper in Canada, *The Halifax Gazette*, was printed on that press. Rod McDonald, through his initiative and expertise, is serving an interesting part of Canadian history and filling a need in the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

#### **KRONLUND, JIM: CAPERS COM. BOOKS - THANKS**

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Jim Kronlund, formerly from Niagara-on-the-Lake, now a resident of North Sydney, for his Facebook group Capers Community Books.

This group invites people from across the Island to drop by his home and borrow from his hundreds of books. Another major focus is recruiting volunteers to drop off books, free of charge, to seniors or anyone else experiencing a difficult time getting out.

These are difficult times for many, and Mr. Kronlund wanted to give people something to connect with other people, to enjoy their time a little more so we're not so isolated. With COVID-19 happening and so many restrictions in place, an endeavour such as this is wonderful.

I invite all members to join me in thanking Jim Kronlund for making this difficult time a little easier for so many in our community.

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



**SEAMEN'S MEM., CANSO: REMEMBERING LIVES LOST - THANKS**

HON. LLOYD HINES: I rise today to recognize and honour the lives lost at sea. Each year on the second day of August, the community of Canso holds the Provincial Seamen's Memorial Service to commemorate the lives that have been taken while working in the fishery.

Canso has had four centuries of fishing heritage, and their memorial contains numerous names of fishermen and fisherwomen who have lost their lives at sea, and commemorates the seagoing traditions of Canso, Hazel Hill, Dover, and surrounding communities. The memorial draws attention to the hazards associated with the fishery and its importance to many Nova Scotian communities.

Not only do they provide their families with livelihood, but they provide their community and beyond with food to eat. I do not take this sacrifice lightly. It is a dangerous job and many of these fishermen and fisherwomen pridefully carry on that role despite the risks.

Thank you to all the fishermen and fisherwomen out there, and to those who have been taken by the sea and are no longer with us - may you rest in peace.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**LITTLE HEARTS PRESCHOOL: NEWLY ESTABLISHED - THANKS**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, today I acknowledge and congratulate Katelyn Leslie on the recent opening of her preschool for children in Queens County. The Little Hearts Preschool opened its doors on October 5<sup>th</sup> of 2020 and offers classes for both 3- and 4-year olds.

Preparing and opening a preschool requires hard work and determination under normal circumstances and doing so in the midst of a pandemic means even more challenges to overcome. The kind-hearted Miss Katelyn has worked hard to make this dream a reality and has created a wonderful space and environment for her students to learn successfully and safely.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislature, please join me in thanking Katelyn for opening this wonderful new preschool in our community and in wishing her many years of success teaching our young students.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Portland Valley.

**PAW PRINTS DOGGY DAYCARE & SHOP:  
ON-SITE AND ONLINE - CONGRATS.**

HON. TONY INCE: I rise today to acknowledge and congratulate Melissa Sutherland on the first anniversary of her new business. Melissa is the owner and operator of Paw Prints Doggie Daycare & Grooming Inc., a business that has been open since 2016. COVID-19 threw her a curveball and she was forced to close.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, she decided to find a new way to sustain her family by reinventing herself and opened a shop selling quality dog and cat products online to our local neighbourhood of Cole Harbour and surrounding areas. That business is Paw Prints Doggie Supply Shop.

During the pandemic, pet ownership increased with so many people working from home. Why not provide all the products she loves and trusts for her own pets? When Melissa's business opened online, customers could choose to have those orders delivered or they could have the option of contactless curbside pickup. This helps to keep the cost to the consumer low, while helping to keep the pets safe and healthy during the pandemic.

We are happy to say that Melissa's Doggie Daycare has since reopened, and her online pet supplies are thriving. I celebrate her first anniversary.

Melissa, we acknowledge and appreciate the business sense and congratulate you for all your success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**LINDSAY, CHAD - HOST: SACKVILLE.LIVE NEWS CHANNEL - THANKS**

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chad Lindsay of Lower Sackville.

Chad Lindsay, through Sackville.Live, keeps residents informed about what is going on in the local communities. Sackville.Live is a fun and informative community-based virtual news channel which highlights events taking place around Sackville, Beaver Bank, Lucasville, and Mount Uniacke.

Chad Lindsay, the host of Sackville.Live, shares positive, interesting, and informative news stories, sports events, and entertainment. He also focuses on highlighting those people who are working very hard to make their community a better place to live.

I ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking Chad Lindsay for his continued dedication of bringing the local communities together by sharing information and enjoyment through Sackville.Live.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**MOSHER, BUTCH: EXCELLENT CUST. SERV. - RECOG.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, a car salesperson whose skills are product knowledge, business communication, client engagement, and simply being very social are great attributes to have.

Butch Mosher, known as “Crock” by his many friends, always maintains a good balance of communication between himself and the customer. He easily goes with the flow, adapting to the client’s schedule and preferences. He is clear and concise in what he is communicating. He finds out what the customer wants and needs and does his best to satisfy them.

Presently in his third decade selling vehicles, Mosher has earned the trust of numerous lifelong customers. Butch Mosher always sets the bar high and goes above and beyond to satisfy the customer - that is why he has been such a popular and successful car salesperson in Pictou County.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**FLAG SHOP: HEALTHCARE HEROES FLAG - THANKS**

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Deb Hartlen, owner of the Flag Shop on Main Street in Dartmouth East.

Prior to opening the Flag Shop, Deb worked as a registered nurse for over 20 years. Deb is an accomplished professional - she holds both a master’s degree and a Ph.D. Along with these professional accomplishments, Deb finds time to volunteer in our community and is instrumental in facilitating the youth choir at Christ the King Parish.

Once the pandemic hit, Deb and her team at the Flag Stop quickly changed gears in order to make masks for the public as quickly as possible. She also wanted to support frontline workers who were responding to the pandemic, so she designed the Health Care Heroes flag. A portion of all the proceeds went to the QEII Foundation’s COVID-19 Response Fund, and by the end of May of last year they were able to make their first donation of over \$2,200.

On behalf of Dartmouth East, I would like to thank Deb and her staff for their quick and incredible response to the pandemic.

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

**GAUDREULT, JACQUES - AUTHOR: BOOK DONATION - THANKS**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to thank author Jacques Gaudreault for generously donating three signed youth books that he wrote.

In February 2021, I placed a request for children's books on social media to fill a local free library bookshelf at the South Woodside Elementary School. The donation response from the community was heartwarming and overwhelming.

Each of the almost 800 books that came in were appreciated, but Jacques's books *Rebecca & Ruby Meet The Bully*, *The Haunted House*, and *The Mermaid and The Pirate* are very special because they were signed by the author.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing Jacques Gaudreault for his generosity, kindness, and willingness to give back to our Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**BAILLIE, RONNIE: SERV. TO DIST. 4, PICTOU - THANKS**

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Mr. Ronnie Baillie for his 23 years of service as a councillor and a warden for River John, Toney River, and a part of West Branch. Mr. Baillie was first elected as councillor in 1997 and has served as deputy warden for four years and warden for eight years.

In his 23 years in office, Ronnie counts the River John Library among his biggest accomplishments. Some of the other highlights of his time in office was the creation of the River John Community Action Society, building of a septic treatment facility, and being the first community to get LED streetlights.

I would like to thank Ronnie Baillie for his years of dedication and service to District 4 of Pictou County. He has certainly been an integral part of the success and growth of the community he served - and he is a dear friend.

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

**CIOE COM. RADIO: CONCERT, *INSPIRING WOMEN IN SONG* - THANKS**

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate CIOE Community Radio, members of its planning committee, and the many volunteers at the station for their presentation of *Inspiring Women in Song*, a concert which was held to celebrate International Women's Day.

The concert showcased several award-winning Nova Scotian female artists. Enthusiastic music fans were treated to an evening of original music and entertainment.

I ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating CIOE Community Radio and their volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the arts and culture of our province.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. The time allotted for members' statements has just about expired, and that gives me an opportunity to remind all members that the time allotted for each individual member statement is, in fact, one minute. I know sometimes it is tricky, but I would encourage all members to keep their eye on the shot clock there, so we keep in tune.

The House will now recess for 15 minutes, for our mandated COVID-19 break, and proceedings will resume at 12:15 p.m.

[12:00 noon. The House recessed.]

[12:15 p.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.: HEART ATTACKS/STROKES - PLAN**

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. I read this morning in the CBC article about the rise in heart attacks and strokes in Nova Scotia. In the article, the heart attack statistics are truly staggering. This past Fall and Winter, Nova Scotia saw nearly double the heart attacks that we would normally see. The reason that doctors are citing is that the public are afraid to come to the hospital to see their doctor because of the fear of COVID-19, even when they get the early warning signs.

When Nova Scotians ignore early symptoms because they are afraid, they get sicker and sicker. We know that low case counts don't save us because we've had low case counts in this province and people are still afraid.

My question to the Premier is: How does the Liberal government plan to tackle the growing danger to Nova Scotians by ignoring early symptoms?

HON. IAIN RANKIN (The Premier): I think we're in an enviable position, if you look at other provinces right now where hospitals are overrun. If you even look at our neighbouring New Brunswick, in the northern region they have challenges in the Edmundston area and obviously across the province, where they have had shutdowns.

Now we are able to open up more, because of our positive epidemiology. That is because of the positive work of Nova Scotians. We have work to do in this province to ensure that we are intervening earlier on, to make sure that we keep people healthy in this province. That's why in this budget we put more supports in Public Health, to ensure we have more public health nurses in communities, to make sure that we're looking in the front end and not just dealing with the illness.

TIM HOUSTON: The article goes on to talk about the additional pressures that are being placed on paramedics and our ambulance services. Dr. John Sapp noted that while calls for cardiac arrests are within a normal range, they are at the high end of the range and they haven't seen the seasonal dips that Nova Scotia generally sees. With high off-load times and constant Code Critical warnings, the system is stretched to its limits.

We have already heard in this session that increased cardiac arrest calls can have tragic results.

My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier acknowledge that the health care system that was struggling even before the pandemic continues to struggle today?

THE PREMIER: This is a national issue. All Premiers are united in asking for an increase to the Canada Health Transfer. If you go back in time to the 1970s, they were funding health care in levels of over 30 per cent and that has been reduced.

We need to continue to use the resources we have, Mr. Speaker. The member knows we're in deficit but we have strategic increases in areas that Nova Scotians expect and health care is at the top of the list.

TIM HOUSTON: I'd like to dig into the federal component there. I think the Premier just indicated that he's advocating to Ottawa for higher health care transfer payments to Nova Scotia.

My question to the Premier is: Could he share any correspondence with Ottawa and, specifically, is he advocating for a change to the health care transfer system away from just straight-up per capita to a more demographic-based health care transfer system?

THE PREMIER: Of course, we would like to see more consideration given to demographics, the aging population here. We've been united for some time in Atlantic Canada with that approach.

Right now, all Premiers across the country are united in asking the federal government for more of their funds to deal with the issues of long wait times. This is a national issue. We're going to continue to support that, and my name is part of the correspondence from the Chair of the Council of the Federation (COF).

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

**PREM.: BUDGET BALANCING PLANS - H&W CUTS**

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier spoke yesterday again about his plan to balance the budget in four years. Now the four-year fiscal plan he presented to the House shows that his path to get there includes a drop in departmental expenses next year of over \$200 million.

Now since the Department of Health and Wellness represents 46 per cent of the government's spending, that means that the Department of Health and Wellness is going to have to cut \$96 million from that budget next year in order to meet the government goal.

My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier tell the people of Nova Scotia how he plans to take \$96 million out of the Health and Wellness budget?

THE PREMIER: What we have is an achievable plan before the House. We made some strategic investments in this budget. Much of the spending that both Parties opposite have been asking for would have put us in a more challenging position.

I said yesterday that I will not support putting this province back into structural deficits that pre-dated our government. This is the only Party now in Nova Scotia that advocates for balanced budgets, and I'm proud of that.

GARY BURRILL: This is the only Party that in 2015 cut the Film Tax Credit. It is the only Party that then cut the funding grants to the Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia and the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia and Eating Disorders Nova Scotia, and it is the only Party that took millions in 2016 out of the nursing home budget. The Minister of Health and Wellness at the time called that a belt-tightening year.

I think the Premier owes the people of Nova Scotia a straight answer. How does the government plan to further tighten the belt around the Health and Wellness budget over the next three years?

THE PREMIER: I'm very proud of the increases of investments in the core of what government should do provincially. We're increasing health care spending so we can modernize. We're spending record amounts in infrastructure so we can attract world-class health care providers here to the province. We're increasing our spending on education, as we have done.

That Party cut \$65 million out of education, which we reversed. We created the biggest social program of a generation with pre-Primary, which both Parties opposite voted against. I'm proud of the fiscal responsibility this Party continues to stand for, and that will continue.

GARY BURRILL: This is not a history lesson. I'm talking about the present budget that is before us. It says that \$209 million is what the government is going to take out of government expenses this next year. That's more than the budgets of Agriculture, Energy and Mines, Environment and Climate Change, and Fisheries and Aquaculture all combined.

Can the Premier give his word to the nurses and the CCAs and the teachers and the EPAs and all the frontline people in the province of Nova Scotia that there will be no layoffs on his path to a balanced budget?

THE PREMIER: I thought I was getting some history advice from the member with his first question.

The reality is that some of the places he's referencing did need support. We have invested in mental health. We've invested in long-term care - historic investments, a \$100 million increase to long-term care. That's what I said would be my priority immediately on day one, and it is. We continue to look at capital upgrades across the province.

I firmly believe that we should not be burdening future generations with the programs that we're incurring today. That's a principle of this Party. We're going to continue to look at ways that we can grow the economy in record ways, as we went before the pandemic. We were leading in economic growth - the best economic performance in decades in this province - that helped support more revenue into the province, revenue that we can use for health care services and education services. We're going to continue to work from a balanced approach to ensure that we have fiscal capacity for future generations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

#### **H&W - ALC ONLINE GAMING: MONITORING - DETAILS**

MURRAY RYAN: Two weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness a question about Nova Scotia's new online casino and some of the incentives that were being offered to play at alc.ca. I was concerned about the use of taxpayer money to incentivize gambling, particularly at a time when many people are staying close to home. Layer the increased stress of a pandemic life, and I was concerned that the province was fertile ground for Nova Scotians to develop gambling addictions.



The minister responded that the play on the site would be monitored and interventions made when needed. Can the minister detail what types of support or programming will be offered through these interventions?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The decision that was made through Atlantic Lottery Corporation was to provide a regulated, safer gambling site than the international unregulated ones. Furthermore, a certain percentage of the proceeds that go into Atlantic Lottery and through our casino here in Halifax are actually redistributed into gambling awareness, as well as direct supports for those dealing with addictions issues.

Furthermore, government is expanding our addictions and mental health services through various programs, including expansion of our e-mental health services, creating single-session therapy for the non-urgent cases, and creating centres for addiction and withdrawal treatment in every single zone in this province, because we do know that those suffering with gambling addiction oftentimes are suffering from other mental health challenges as well.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister. I want to quote the minister directly from March 26<sup>th</sup>. The minister said at the time, “were doing so in a regulated format where there’s actually tools for intervention. People monitor gambling behaviour, and folks who support those in trouble reach out when they see problematic situations.” When you go to the alc.ca site and read their Terms of Service it says, “ALC will not track or assess Your gambling risk and will not be responsible for taking any action or suggesting that You take any action . . .”

Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, but those sound like direct contradictions. My question to the minister is: Why is the minister promising a level of protection that seems to be against the Terms of Service of the site?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the interventions are provided through government services. A portion of the proceeds that Atlantic Lottery receives does fund some of these services. I’ve identified a list of those services in my previous answer but, again, these services are being enhanced through government. Those are virtual services, single-session therapy in this budget, as well as withdrawal management and addiction services.

We are enhancing those services through government, and certain proceeds from Atlantic Lottery help fund gambling awareness issues and intervention options.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**H&W: ONLINE GAMING - GOVT. DUTY OF CARE**

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the government is enhancing services; however, I have grave concerns about a program that puts the onus on the Province to detect problem gambling behaviour. If this program exists as the minister describes, the Province is assuming a duty of care where, if they fail to identify a problem gambler, the gambler can stand up and say the Province said it would be there to stop me and it wasn't. It places the Province in a potentially terrible situation. It has absolved every player at alc.ca of personal responsibility for their own actions and made the government their caretaker.

Last year the government passed legislation that protects itself from certain lawsuits but, as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board of the day said, the protection does not apply in situations of alleged negligence or omission by operators. My question to the minister is: Does he acknowledge the duty of care that the Rankin government is now taking on?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would just like to remind all members that it's not within the rules of this Chamber to refer to the current government using the last name of the Premier. This may be CNS rules and regulations but they're not the rules of this Chamber. You can refer to past governments using the name of the Premier of the day but not the current one.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The Department of Health and Wellness's role in this - we do not oversee Atlantic Lottery, we're not their regulator. Our role is to provide mental health and addiction supports to Nova Scotians. Those supports are being enhanced. We're also providing grants to local organizations that provide peer-to-peer support and community assistance for those struggling with mental health addictions as well.

Our supports through this department, which is not related to Atlantic Lottery, have grown over the years. I hope the member will vote for our budget because there are significant increases to our mental health budget, which will help us reach more Nova Scotians in a more timely manner, when they need us.

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to redirect to the minister responsible for the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation. First of all, I would like to apologize for my last question. I thought that was good news that the government was taking on a duty of care. Anyway.

The duty of care is a serious undertaking. It says that the province will stop anyone and everyone who has a gambling concern, whether they ask for it or not. If the problem player slips through the cracks, if a problem player doesn't get flagged as a concern, then the Province has failed them. If that player continues to play, any harm that comes to him or her is the responsibility of the government and with that responsibility comes potential

liability. My question to the Minister Responsible for Part I of the Gaming Control Act is: What preparations are being made for this potential liability?

HON. LABI KOUSOULIS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the member that all the Atlantic provinces have been working on this initiative. This is much safer than what current individuals who are gambling online are exposed to. The limits are lower, and it is all housed in-house. This is much safer than the alternatives that are out there, which are hundreds of websites. Atlantic Lotto is government run, and we are providing the safest way for anyone to gamble online.

[12:30 p.m.]

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

#### **H&W - SENIORS' VACCINATIONS: SCHEDULE ISSUES - COMMENT**

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I admit, I'm confused. The Premier told us that COVID-19 vaccines were being given out based on priority, with health care workers and seniors, especially those in care homes, being given priority.

Just yesterday, I was contacted by an irate long-term care/supportive living homeowner in metro who looks after seniors in their homes in the metro area. She had been begging Continuing Care and the Department of Health and Wellness for months for appointment times for her staff, as well as for her residents, many of whom are in their 80s and 90s.

She was finally sent an email on March 31<sup>st</sup> indicating that her staff and residents could receive the vaccine, only to be called a week later to say, sorry, you're not getting it now. When they were asked to put that in writing to explain why this was being withdrawn from them, they refused to do so.

This isn't just isolated to metro - it's happened in rural areas as well. So, my question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Can he explain to me what happened to those vaccines that were promised?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'm happy to get that information from the member to look into that issue because our priorities are getting into our long-term care facilities, where we know the greatest risks are. That's also why we've prioritized our vaccine delivery based on age, because we know that's the single greatest risk factor.

So, I'm very happy to receive that information from the member and look into that specific case on her behalf.

BARBARA ADAMS: I will take him up on that, Mr. Speaker.

The residents in these homes have been on lockdown for almost a year. Many have not seen loved ones the entire time. Staff have sacrificed almost all of their social life in order to stay home for the safety and well-being of their residents, whom they treat like family.

Three weeks ago, Dr. Strang told our caucus directly that 48 of the 133 residential and long-term care facilities had received their vaccinations. This was at the same time as the public rollout started. I received a letter from one of the nursing homes in the province saying that their residents were not going to be considered a high enough risk for the vaccine, and therefore they were being skipped over. After I raised the question to Dr. Strang and his staff, the residents of that facility got vaccinated.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is simple: Why are frail seniors in residential care facilities, who are much older and much more at risk of the complications of COVID-19, still not vaccinated?

**ZACH CHURCHILL:** Mr. Speaker, we actually are leading leaders in the country when it comes to vaccinating our long-term care facilities. Close to 70 per cent of those facilities have been vaccinated, and 40 per cent of those residents have actually received their second dose.

The priority was focused on the public continuing care and long-term care sector, but private - if the member is talking about a private sector home - those are being vaccinated this month.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **DCS - HOUSING CRISIS: PROVINCIAL RESPONSE - LACKING**

**LISA ROBERTS:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Earlier this week, Adsum for Women and Girls shared that it has spent \$50,000 since December to put people up in hotels who would otherwise be sleeping rough outside in the Winter. To respond to an urgent situation with compassion, Adsum drew on funds intended for longer-term, permanently affordable, non-market housing projects. Coverdale Courtwork Society then also shared that it has spent \$15,000 so that women exiting custody would not be released into homelessness.

Does the Premier think that it's acceptable for charitable organizations to cover for the Province in a housing crisis that is the provincial government's responsibility?

**HON. KELLY REGAN:** I want to thank the honourable member for raising this question. It is, indeed, a serious one, Mr. Speaker.

When an organization indicates that they have spent money on housing of this nature, we really want them to come to us and talk to us about it. To be quite honest, I had never had a conversation with anyone from those organization about that particular issue going on this Fall.

It deeply concerns me, Mr. Speaker, and I want to ask them if they would please reach out to the Department of Community Services. We would be most happy to discuss it with them.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that response. At the same time, these organizations are at tables with Housing Nova Scotia, which has moved between various departments. I just can't accept that it is landing on the government as a complete surprise.

This Province has been at the Housing and Homelessness Partnership since 2014, and all the while has underspent on housing and failed to show leadership. While we're now waiting for the Affordable Housing Commission, frontline organizations and their staff are responding at their doors when people who are experiencing homelessness knock late at night.

Will the Premier or the minister commit to reimbursing Adsum and Coverdale Courtwork for their costs in addressing homelessness this winter?

KELLY REGAN: I think it's really important, when organizations are facing a pressure of this kind, that they reach out to us. I know that we spent more on hotels this year too because of COVID-19. We were making sure that shelters were abiding by the distancing requirements.

Things were changing, and things were in flux. I certainly understand that. I would invite them to come to the department and bring their bills with them so we can see what was spent. I am sure that we will be able to assist them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

#### **H&W - LONG-HAUL TRUCKERS: VACCINE ACCESS - ISSUES**

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The federal Minister of Health suggested just last Sunday night that Nova Scotia has over 83,000 doses sitting in the province. People are trying to book appointments both electronically and by phone, only to find out that no appointments are available, even after a CNS release on April 1<sup>st</sup> indicating that appointments would be available starting April 6<sup>th</sup>.

However, if you qualify by age and you live with a family member who may be a long-haul trucker who is travelling outside the province, the system will not allow you to

book the appointment. The system asks you if you have been in contact with anyone outside of the area. Of course, the answer is yes for these long-haul truckers.

My question for the minister is: Why are people who live with long-haul truckers who travel outside the province refused access to vaccinations when booking online?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: When people are unable to get their bookings online, it's because those appointments have been booked and those needles are getting in arms. As we're getting supply in this province, those vaccines are getting into people's arms.

We vaccinated 27,000 last week, 40,000 this week, and are estimated to vaccinate 50,000 next week. We're currently at around 130,000 vaccinations that have been administered in Nova Scotia. We're one of the only provinces that has a central intake system. That is allowing us to facilitate this booking process.

We appreciate people's patience. We know that the demand is high for vaccinations. We're also encouraged by the fact that the appointments are being booked so quickly because that shows that Nova Scotians are eager and willing to get this life-saving vaccination.

TORY RUSHTON: Just a couple points to the minister on his response. It was announced that appointments wouldn't be available until April 6<sup>th</sup>. Many of the constituents went on on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, and still no appointments were available.

Long-haul truckers have been working diligently, bringing essential goods to our province. Without them, we wouldn't have anything to eat, we wouldn't be heating our homes, and we wouldn't be out buying new clothing.

In response to the minister, some of these people had appointments booked, and when they found out that the long-haul trucker has actually been outside, their appointments were cancelled because they'd been in contact with somebody. Now, when truckers and families need the same protection everyone else is getting, they're being refused even if they meet that age requirement.

I guess I'll ask the minister again: When are long-haul truckers and their families going to be eligible to receive the life-saving vaccine? When can they book an appointment that is not cancelled, even though they're in that age qualification?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'm very happy to take this issue and discuss it with our Public Health and vaccination teams to get some clarity on it. If that information is accurate from the member, that's certainly something that I do want to dig into and get an answer to.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**H&W - VACCINE SCHEDULE: ROTATIONAL WORKERS - CLARIFY**

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. We have many rotational workers living in the constituency of Inverness. At any given time, there have been different rules for rotational workers, depending on where they live within the Atlantic bubble.

When we have asked for clarity around these decisions being made, we have been accused of undermining Nova Scotia's confidence in Public Health measures. I would encourage the minister to see these questions as an opportunity to bolster Nova Scotians' confidence in the decisions that are being made.

My question to the minister is: Most of our recent cases are travel-related. What is the reason why travelling rotational workers have not been prioritized to receive a vaccine?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I would like to thank the member very much for the question. I believe our rotational workers are prioritized in the Phase 2 vaccine rollout. Right now, we are utilizing the quarantine measures to protect Nova Scotians for those folks who are travelling to and from the province on rotation, for work. I believe we are going to confirm that those folks are prioritized for Phase 2 of the vaccine rollout.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, all of our Atlantic Bubble partners recognize the sacrifices made by our rotational workers by prioritizing them in their vaccination plans. I think particularly about truck drivers, whom I know my colleague just mentioned as well.

Like Dr. Strang, the respective chief medical health officers of New Brunswick, P.E.I. and Newfoundland and Labrador have all been doing tremendous work keeping Atlantic Canadians safe over the last year. They have all recommended that vaccines be prioritized now for rotational workers.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister explain at what point - in terms of an estimate date - when Phase 2 is going to happen and when our rotational workers are going to get the same prioritization as rotational workers in our Atlantic Bubble partner provinces?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I thank the member very much for the question. Phase 2 does begin in May.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**H&W - QUEENS CO.: SENIORS VACCINATION CLINIC - COMMENT**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, seniors in my constituency are struggling to get vaccinated, despite their best efforts to do so. Those who are above 70 years of age do not qualify for the AstraZeneca clinic that is in Liverpool, and many are forced to travel to either Yarmouth, Halifax, or the Valley to be vaccinated.

Nova Scotians all over the province have done the hard work to squash the COVID-19 curve by staying home, but now our seniors are being forced to travel great distances to get their vaccinations.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: With nearly 30 per cent of Queens County residents being seniors, why is a local vaccination clinic not a priority for this government?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I would like to thank the member very much. Of course, vaccination for our seniors is the priority - that is why we are focused on an age-based prioritization.

As supply ramps up in the province, we do have a distribution network that is established primarily through pharmacies and local doctors' offices. What the member will see, as supply ramps up in the province, more and more locations will be offering vaccinations. That has been happening every single week. Every single week we have seen more locations opened up for vaccine delivery, and we have seen more vaccines getting into arms.

We have vaccinated approximately 130,000 Nova Scotians and that number is going to increase every single week.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am fully aware because I follow the site, looking for when Queens County will actually get a vaccination site for people who are 70 years and over, and they have been neglected. We have sites on both sides, and it is just simply not fair, minister.

I know that seniors can travel to Bridgewater or they can travel to Shelburne from Queens County, but it is difficult for them to get a driver or to incur the cost to go. Sadly, we have seen some hesitancy in this demographic already of our most vulnerable people who say, "I am just giving up," in complete frustration.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister be able to offer my constituents in Queens County the commitment today when they will be able to get vaccinated in their own community of Queens County?



ZACH CHURCHILL: We are expecting all the clinics to be operational by May, and that will include a clinic in Queens County.

[12:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**PREM.: UNIVERSAL PHARMACARE PROGRAM - SUPPORT**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Thirty to 40 per cent of Nova Scotians do not have private drug coverage. This means that among the many essential prescriptions that are not covered is birth control, IUDs, the birth control pill, hormonal implants, and others, but the province's MSI does cover hysterectomies, vasectomies, tubal ligations, surgical abortion, and the abortion pill.

Can the Premier admit that covering some forms of birth control but not others is illogical and unfair?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly an important point to bring up. I know her colleague brought it to the attention of the House, and it's something that's under review at the Department of Health and Wellness.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for that answer. We wouldn't have to be having the conversation at all if we were having a conversation about a universal pharmacare program. Recently in Budget Estimates, the Minister of Health and Wellness was not able to point specifically to actions or policies that this government is taking together with his federal counterpart in support of a national universal pharmacare program.

Can the Premier clarify: Does he support a national universal pharmacare program, and if so, what specific actions is he taking to pursue this goal?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. I support leveraging any federal commitment to that universal program. I know it's been under way, the planning and the striking committees and such. We continue to have those conversations with the national government, ensuring that we're ready to go.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**PREM.: COVID-19 VACCINE ROLLOUT - DELAY**

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians are desperate for a return to a sense of normalcy, and the only way we are getting this back is by receiving a vaccine. Without a vaccine, we will continue to remain in a fog of uncertainty while witnessing COVID-19-related negative impacts, such as increases in domestic violence, stress and anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, and sadly, loneliness and depression. The Premier can claim otherwise, but the data clearly shows that Nova Scotia is behind all other provinces when it comes to getting vaccines.

I will ask the Premier: Does he have a plan to deal with the continued aftermath of these issues resulting from being the slowest province in Canada to roll out vaccines?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be prouder of the women and men working on the front line delivering our vaccine rollout plan. It's a quality program that's been worked on for some time, looking at the infrastructure, having one of the few provinces with a central booking system, one of the provinces that does not have to cancel appointments - which we've seen two other provinces doing this week. When we have our second doses committed to other people, we need to make sure that we make that commitment. I'm proud of the way it's rolling out, regionally fair and equitably fair.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, all due respect, that is not what I asked. I asked if there's a plan for the aftermath. The Premier can sadly continue using this mouldy messaging that he's been using for weeks now. We're all proud of our frontline workers, but the questions are not getting answered. We're frustrated, we're scared, and we're disappointed. People need to get vaccinated. The anxiety we all feel about rising case numbers elsewhere in the country is even worse if you happen to be one of the many Nova Scotians living with a pre-existing condition. The Liberal government alone has chosen not to prioritize them. I don't get it.

With less than 85 days until the end of June, can the Premier please explain how he will ever live up to his commitment of every Nova Scotian being vaccinated by then?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's comments from my friend opposite that are contributing to people being worried and scared. We're well on track to delivering that first dose by the end of June. We're actually ahead of schedule in planning for our age-descending cohorts, and those now over the age of 70 are getting out to book their vaccine. It's not what's happening in other provinces.

When you get your second dose booked, we make sure we have the guaranteed supply so that you have your commitment there. We see reports in other provinces where it's not as equitably delivered across the board and income levels. I'm very proud of the work that our staff are doing to work alongside African Nova Scotian communities and

Mi'kmaw communities, allowing the communities to lead that process. I'm very proud to see the African Nova Scotian clinic open this week and delivering to those people as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

### **H&W: CUMB. NORTH COVID-19 VACCINE - DELIVERY**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, my job is to represent the people of Cumberland North. One week ago today, this government lowered the age for vaccines to 70. At the same time, someone - I haven't figured out who yet - made a decision to take the Pfizer vaccine that was allocated for Cumberland and remove it and reallocate it to Halifax.

My question to the Premier or the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Who made the decision to take vaccine planned for Cumberland and reallocate it to Halifax?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I certainly haven't heard that that has happened. We'll look into that situation right away for the member.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would appreciate that, because I am not happy and neither are the people here, at all. It's time that they are prioritized, the same as everyone else around the province. Also, I will share that the AstraZeneca vaccine for the Northern Zone has been planned for Truro and for Pictou, and none of it has been planned for clinics in Cumberland. Again, I'm not happy, and the people of this area are not happy because again, they have not been prioritized.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Can he assure me that that will be fixed and that some of the AstraZeneca vaccine will be planned to be administered in Cumberland?

ZACH CHURCHILL: When we received the first doses of AstraZeneca, we did receive those late. They were unexpected. They did have a tight timeline for expiry as well. We reached out to Doctors Nova Scotia and the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, which immediately sought partners on the front lines - pharmacists and doctors - who could deliver these vaccines, and we did ensure that that supply was available for all the folks who were willing to do that. We didn't have any providers for that first round, I know, in Yarmouth who were able to do it on such a short timeline, and that may have been the situation in Cumberland as well.

However, I have the map here, and this is provided to the Progressive Conservative caucus, that shows a high number of clinics that are and will continue to be open in Cumberland County to deliver vaccinations.

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

**E&M: CLIMATE CHANGE THREAT - RECOGNITION**

HUGH MACKAY: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Mines. Nova Scotia is a national leader in fighting climate change. We have some of the most ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction goals in the country. To the great astonishment and concern of most Canadians, a national Conservative Party, a party to which members of the Conservative faction of this House belong, recently voted against - against - recognizing climate change as a real and present danger.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister confirm that this government recognizes the reality of the threat that climate change represents, and can he assure the House that this government recognizes the importance of climate change in government policy and decision-making?

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I think it's quite obvious how seriously the government of Nova Scotia takes climate change, certainly by way of our investments. Our budget this year certainly speaks volumes to that: a \$3 million provincial investment in a Low Carbon Economy Fund; \$8 million to provincial housing being invested in green infrastructure projects; the electric vehicle program that we just announced, a \$9.5-million investment encouraging more Nova Scotians to look toward these options. I think we're an obvious yes, to be quite honest, for this question.

HUGH MACKAY: My supplementary question is for the Minister of Energy and Mines. Energy poverty is a significant challenge for many individuals and organizations in Nova Scotia. My question for the minister is: Can the minister provide the House with some indication that this government recognizes and is addressing energy poverty, particularly for individuals, municipalities, and not-for-profits?

CHUCK PORTER: The program that we just announced the other day, the shared solar program, will be a big part of that. That will be an investment, an opportunity for individuals, communities, not-for-profits, et cetera. That's one example. The other, of course, is \$10 million and more invested in the low-income energy efficiency programs that we have been doing, and over \$30 million recoverable from the federal government in the budget towards a low-carbon fund, as I said. There's a lot of movement in this area.

Certainly, we are invested heavily in the energy poverty file, Mr. Speaker. With the green infrastructure programs I talked about, the reduction in GHCs, we're certainly a leader, as the member spoke to earlier in his first question in this area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**LAE: SAULIS CREW MBR. WCB DEATH BENEFIT - ELIGIBILITY**

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, and I have permission from the family to ask this question. Before Christmas, Nova Scotians heard of the tragic news that the scallop dragger the *Chief William Saulis* and all her crew were lost in the Bay of Fundy. Among those lost was Aaron Cogswell, a young man with autism spectrum disorder. Although the families of the other members of the crews would have received a \$15,000 death benefit from the Workers' Compensation Board, Aaron's family received nothing, only because he had no dependants.

My question for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is: Can the Minister explain why WCB, the Workers' Compensation Board, values some lives more than others when it comes to workplace tragedies?

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: I want to say first and foremost that my thoughts are with the mom and with all families and communities that have been impacted by this tragedy, as well as the first responders.

We are aware of this matter, and I can tell the honourable member and everyone who is listening that I have instructed my staff to look into this issue.

JOHN LOHR: I do express my sincerest sympathies to the families as well.

Mr. Speaker, Aaron's mother, Lori Phillips, is devastated at the loss of her son. Her grief is compounded by the . . .

THE SPEAKER: We seem to have lost the connection with the member for Kings North.

We'll move on to the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

**ECC: S. WOODSIDE ASPHALT STORAGE PLANT - CONSULTATION**

BARBARA ADAMS: Last Spring, just as the pandemic was locking down the province, a very small ad was placed in *the Chronicle Herald* advertising an application for an asphalt storage plant in the South Woodside-Shearwater area of my community.

It's my understanding from the environmental report that, due to COVID-19, the normal consultative process was circumvented. Given that there was no notification other than *the Chronicle Herald* ad and two emails, I requested that the company or the government send a letter to all of the constituents living in the area to give them notice of the proposed project and sufficient time to respond in writing. The minister refused to do that.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change tell me: How many people participated in the consultative process, and how many of them were in favour of the asphalt storage plant?

HON: KEITH IRVING: On projects like this, consultation is always a big part of the process. I don't have the results of that consultation in front of me, but I can certainly look into that and get back to the member.

BARBARA ADAMS: It may always be a big part except when it came to my community.

For the minister's awareness, there were approximately 50 people, to my knowledge, who wrote in. Mr. Speaker, 49 of them were against the project, and yet the department approved the application anyway. In fact, I had hand-delivered the notice to 1,000 constituents myself over four days to make sure that they knew what was possibly going into their community, especially as the plant was already under construction before the application process was even submitted to the community.

My constituents are rightly concerned about their health. Every time they smell that asphalt coming across the street to their homes, they are concerned. One constituent, and I'll quote him with permission, says, "I feel very insulted and betrayed by this province and their wishes to keep polluting our neighbourhood instead of creating parks and ciclovia."

My question to the minister is: Can he admit that his government circumvented the normal consultative process of my constituents, and will he agree with me now to meet with their constituents to talk about the issues that they're still concerned about?

[1:00 p.m.]

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, again, all of these projects go through a rigorous review that includes consultation. That is one element of the process, but our folks at Environment look at all the science, the proposed plan for the project, and match that up and look at it with respect to our regulations.

If the project meets the regulations and we can be assured that public safety and the safety of the environment can be upheld by a project, then that is all taken into consideration before decisions are made.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**H&W - VACCINE SCHEDULE: PRIORITIZE**

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, it is not a debate or up for question that a cancer patient is at increased risk of severe cases of infection leading to hospitalization, or death, compared to the general population. This includes COVID-19, yet we prioritize strictly by age. This means that a 16-year old will watch their 40-year old healthy parents get a vaccination before them or their 25-year old sibling.

This is not right. We should not be leaving our most vulnerable children to be literally the last people to get a vaccination. There is no plan for people with underlying conditions, and this is unacceptable.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Why are we leaving 16-year olds, with cancer, to be literally the last people to get vaccinated?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I thank the member very much for the question. Listen, we appreciate the concern out there from those with underlying health conditions. Our goal is to get to herd immunity in the quickest manner possible. Going by an age-based approach, which allows us to focus on the single greatest risk factor, age, that also allows us to move as quickly as we can through the vaccination process.

Nova Scotia still does remain one of the safest places to be in North America, if not the world. I know the member, for whatever her criticisms are, can't name a jurisdiction that she would rather live in than here right now. We have been very focused on protecting those vulnerable citizens in our province, and getting to herd immunity is the best way for us to protect every single Nova Scotian, including those with underlying health conditions.

KARLA MACFARLANE: We have not been protecting our most vulnerable. If we were, we would not be hearing from them as MLAs.

Of course, I love Nova Scotia. Of course, I am happy to be here. But the numbers that are low have nothing to do with people being vaccinated. We have had a full year to plan for this moment - no government business was being conducted, no debates were being held, no transparency was given to Nova Scotians regarding the plan.

All along we were led to believe that the government's focus was on COVID-19, that we are fully prepared to rollout these vaccinations. Many in this province disagree and we are not prepared.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Does the minister stand by the plan to vaccinate healthy 20- to 45-year olds before 16-year olds battling cancer - is this the plan for these children, to simply wait in line?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that some of the comments she made are not true. Dr. Strang and the Premier gave a technical briefing on our vaccine rollout plan that was available to media and the public - they actually provided the same briefing to every single caucus, so the member has been given that information.

To say that there is no transparency on this is not accurate at all. We have been very focused on people's health here in Nova Scotia. We have prioritized firm Public Health policy to protect everybody, particularly those with underlying health conditions. That is why we remain one of the safest places to be right now. We are going to keep that status if people keep following the health directives and if we get to herd immunity in the quickest manner possible, and that is through an age-based approach.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, as we can appreciate, our essential workers have a vital role to play in our province and their work does not stop, not even during a worldwide pandemic. One of my constituents is a pilot and although he has been exempt from many of the restrictions regarding travel in and out of province, he has been denied access to medical services such as his yearly EKG and medical that are required by his company in order to . . .

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

The Honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, Just on a point of order, it is really important that we are truthful in this House. The facts do matter, especially around the vaccination rollout. Nova Scotians know - everyone knows, anyone who can go on a website knows - that Nova Scotia is last in the per capita vaccination.

The Minister of Health and Wellness is kind of juicing up the numbers as he tries to improve the stature from last to something else, and the minister intentionally misled this House in a response to the member for Queens-Shelburne.

The minister said that 130,000 Nova Scotians have been vaccinated. The minister knows full well that that is untrue. There are somewhere in the range of 130,000 doses that have been administered, but those are about 90,000 with the first dose and some of those have received their second. The minister knows that there is nowhere in the range of 130,000 Nova Scotians who have been vaccinated.

I would like the minister to withdraw or clarify his comments that that is the number of doses, not the number of people. It is really important to Nova Scotians.



THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: I know the member opposite is not arguing against those health care workers and long-term care residents who received the second dose. The minister spoke about how many doses have gone out, which is 130,000.

One hundred and thirty thousand doses have gone to Nova Scotians, 100,000 of which was the first dose. We continue to ramp up our supply and he wants to continue (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Premier has the floor.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: It is obvious that this isn't a point of order. It's a disagreement of facts. We continue to talk about the positive things that are happening in this province as we manage the pandemic. We made commitments for second doses; we actually do lead the country in terms of how many health care workers have received their first dose. Over 90 per cent of health care workers in this province received their first dose. More health care workers in this province received their second doses than in other provinces.

We are going to continue to commend those people who are working on the front line during this pandemic while the member opposite continues to tear them down.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, this type of rhetoric from the Premier is really hurtful to - it's going to lead to vaccine fearness [sic]. That's what it's going to lead to.

The reality is that I asked for a simple clarification from the minister. The Premier could rule on the point of order, but I'll leave that to you, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, the Premier and his comments confirmed exactly what I'm saying. My point is that the minister misled the House by saying 130,000 people have received vaccinations. The Premier confirmed that that's not true. He confirmed it is in the range of 100,000 people. I would like the Minister of Health and Wellness to confirm that he's using the number of doses to mislead the House and pretend that that's Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to just bring this matter to a close right at the moment. It is not a point of order. It is a disagreement of facts.

If the member is alleging that another member of the House has intentionally misled the House, that is a point of privilege, and that can be dealt with under that topic.

The House will now recess for its mandated 15-minute COVID-19 reset.

[1:09 p.m. The House recessed.]

[1:24 p.m. The House reconvened.]

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

### **GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

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 the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-CROSSIN: Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, it brings me great pleasure to speak to you on behalf of the people of Cumberland North with regard to the provincial budget for 2021 and 2022.

As I reviewed the budget over the last week, I asked the questions: Will this budget address the problems facing the people I represent in Cumberland North? Will this budget empower - even more important - will it empower the people of Cumberland North and grow our area of the province to lead our province into greater prosperity?

Is this the budget that addresses a pandemic and a post-pandemic Cumberland North in Nova Scotia? Is this a budget that will help Nova Scotians to recover from the pandemic? Is this a budget that will address the weaknesses that have been exposed by this pandemic - weak points, such as supply chains, lack of sick days, lack of private health care coverage, lack of Maritime co-operation, lack of mental health supports for people who are suffering, lack of supports for our health care workers that we may be seeing suffer with PTSD and burnout in months to come?

The provincial budget itself was really quite unremarkable. There was a significant budget deficit, which we all predicted there would be as a result of the pandemic. Revenues for the most part have remained unchanged from pre-pandemic times, revenues from personal income tax, corporate income tax, harmonized sales tax, are actually fairly similar to pre-pandemic times here in Nova Scotia, which makes me assume that government is

likely making an inaccurate assumption that personal and corporate incomes will be unchanged from the pandemic.

I do believe the budget has potential and that is because of the people, people who work in our government departments whom I have gotten to know, who, I think, are amazing. I know they can make magic if given the opportunity. Most important, this budget has potential because of the people of Nova Scotia, for it is the people who make any budget come alive to create the positive change that we need.

Leadership is needed and we will need to bring that leadership from each one of our constituencies and our communities. So, I ask the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, who tabled this budget, if he will allow the freedom and ingenuity within our public sector, within Public Service, when executing the funds of this budget.

[1:30 p.m.]

I believe we have significant potential that is waiting to be unleashed here in Cumberland North and throughout all of Nova Scotia. Pre-pandemic, over the last decade Cumberland North, northern Nova Scotia and in large part all of rural Nova Scotia has seen a decline in both population and prosperity, but it has not killed the spirit of our people. Over the last eight years there has definitely been a shift to centralization of power and decision making, often alienating and disempowering much of rural Nova Scotia. But it has not taken out our fight, in fact may have just fueled it. I think we saw that recently with the original version of the Biodiversity Act. It showed the collective power of the people across this province.

Our political culture unfortunately has lacked collaboration, it has lacked a positive spirit. It seems that not just here in Nova Scotia but throughout much of Canada and even our neighbours in the United States, there has been a real erosion of trust between the people and the political leadership, but I have seen that it has not taken away people's desire for hope and for a better future.

What I am hearing from the people I represent, Mr. Speaker, is that people do not really want to just hear what other people are doing wrong. They want to hear new ideas. They want to see people working together collaboratively for the greater good, working together across Party lines - debating, yes, but debating policy and issues, not one another.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we need to move forward. We need to get through this pandemic. We need to keep our COVID-19 numbers low. We need to work to rebuild and transform our province, and we want to lead from right here in Cumberland North because after all, Nova Scotia does start here. Nova Scotia starts in Cumberland North.

[1:30 p.m.]

The people of Cumberland North want to lead. They want to lead this province. The fact is, we have been healthy. We've been strong. We've had almost no COVID-19 in the last year here in Cumberland North. We can use our strengths and our assets to lead this province through recovery from the pandemic.

We are the heart of the Atlantic gateway and trade corridor, connecting the Maritimes with the rest of the nation. Here in Cumberland North, we have land to grow food, and trees. We have the Northumberland Strait to our east to fish, to use for tourism, to use for our own enjoyment and pleasure, and to attract others to our area. We have significant strong mining, manufacturing, as well as experts in fishing, forestry, and agriculture.

This pandemic has taught us all many things, such as the importance of self-reliance, such as the importance of family and relationships. Here in Cumberland North, you've all heard me talk about the many challenges that the people I represent have faced. We know that we are not through the challenges yet.

I would like to see some dedicated financial investment from this provincial budget specifically targeted to our border community. Our businesses have suffered due to the break in the functional economic zone with southern New Brunswick. Businesses are losing between 20 and 80 per cent of their revenues and customer base.

Exit No. 1 has been closed now for over one year. This is an exit that only the year before had had 550,000 vehicles leave the Trans Canada Highway and take Exit No. 1. Exit No. 1 leads to the visitor information centre, businesses along LaPlante Street, and our downtown of Amherst.

Mr. Speaker, we went from 550,000 vehicles to zero. Although some areas of the province have seen some financial supports in the form of small business impact grants (for restaurants in HRM and Hants County), Cumberland and our border community have not seen any support.

I am hopeful that a recent request to the Department of Inclusive Economic Growth that came from our Cumberland business connector will be granted, which will bring welcome economic investment to our border businesses.

The pandemic has taught us that relationships matter. During times of stress, you will either see relationships grow stronger or you will see the cracks. Those cracks can create deep fissures and even more division. We have had a long history of Maritimes collaboration and Atlantic collaboration.

Unfortunately, through this pandemic we have seen each Maritime province working in isolation, not with each other. This has negatively impacted our border community and continues to do so each and every day.

We have also suffered due to the lack of support from our federal leaders. They literally have been AWOL. In the past we have relied on federal legislation to ensure mobility among our provinces through our Charter. In the past, we've relied on federal legislation to ensure that we could receive health care services in our neighbouring provinces through the Canada Health Act. There has been no federal legislation upheld.

What has this pandemic taught us here? It's taught us that unless there is a renewed commitment of collaboration and a spirit of co-operation, which is what I would want and prefer, then this is the time to build self-reliance.

It's a time to focus on building a safe, sustainable food supply. It's a time to focus on rebuilding our own businesses. Our provincial budget should reflect these realities that we are living in currently and what we've experienced over the last year. We need to learn from it.

This is the time when we need a provincial budget that addresses our weak points and starts building an infrastructure to make sure we can take care of ourselves so that we are in a position of power to negotiate to benefit our people.

Cumberland North needs a provincial lens on the health care needs of our people. The fact is the pandemic has exposed our weak points. We need a budget to reflect this and work toward strength.

So, will this budget allow transformation post-pandemic? Will this budget give deputies and department managers the leeway to address the specific needs post-pandemic?

I do have to say, I've had incredible experiences with some of the people working in provincial departments. Over the last four years, I've received help in many areas for the people of Cumberland North, and I just want to mention a few of them.

Related to a nursing crisis that led to a shutdown of our acute care beds in both our ICU stepdown unit as well as maternal and child, I received help related to making sure that our emergency room at our regional hospital is renovated. I received help bringing a much-needed dialysis unit to Amherst and in ensuring that a new hospital was being built in Pugwash.

On the day of the opening of the Atlantic Bubble, I had help from one of our deputy ministers. We received the new wooden bridge across the Nappan River, now called the Roger Bacon Bridge, that my colleague from Cumberland South also worked tirelessly to ensure. I received a lot of incredible support for the Wallace museum. I'm currently

receiving some provincial support for In the Works, a social enterprise that is a recovery centre for those recovering from addictions and mental illness, which some moms here, Moms With a Purpose, are building through provincial and federal support.

All of these things are made possible because people in our government departments are willing to work with me and people in our area for the greater good, and not just focus on partisan politics.

But, there are issues that we will need more provincial support for, post-pandemic. Issues that we will need to make sure there's room for in this provincial budget, issues like recruitment of more nurses. We're actually desperate for more nurses, both in VON, community care and long-term care as well as in our acute care facility; recruitment of family physicians; recruitment of psychiatrists - and I'll mention that we need to change the remuneration of psychiatrists so that psychiatrists who work in HRM are not being paid disproportionately more than psychiatrists that are paid outside of HRM. We need equity between rural and urban.

We need support for designated palliative care beds. There are no designated palliative care beds at our regional hospital, and our community has been asking for operational funding for a hospice for years. We need funding for a cancer centre, where our people can receive chemotherapy at our regional hospital so that they don't have to drive to Moncton or Halifax. We need provincial support for accessibility supports, for safe walking access to our hospital, which this Province built outside of town limits on the other side of the Trans Canada Highway.

We need provincial supports for repairs of provincial structures, like the Tignish pedestrian walking bridge that connects the Chignecto Ship Railway. We need the provincial supports to build an NSCC campus downtown, like the Province is doing currently in Sydney. We need expansion of our industrial park to build capacity for economic growth, and we need investment for production of a safe, healthy food supply here in Nova Scotia, which can start right here in Cumberland North.

I will say this again, we need the Cobequid Pass tolls removed. We feel separated from the rest of the province. I hear that again and again. We feel separated for many reasons, and one of them is the Cobequid Pass tolls. The fact is the road has been paid for ten times over. If those in charge like the tolls, then take them to your area. We've had enough of them in Cumberland. We don't want them anymore. We've paid our dues and then some.

The fact is, it creates a division of Cumberland from the rest of Nova Scotia. Pre-pandemic, we at least felt connected with New Brunswick, but now we're disconnected from both sides, north and south. Our own government - we are residents and citizens of Nova Scotia - our own government does have the power, at least, to change what's happening to our south. So we ask again for the Cobequid Pass tolls to be removed.

Mr. Speaker, one of the best outcomes of the pandemic is being reminded of the importance of family - okay, I'll wrap it up.

I'll finish off here. I just ask our government to lead. Start in our border community, working together as a Maritime-Atlantic region, and that alone will take any provincial budget and make it work exponentially, not only for Cumberland North but for all of Nova Scotia and the entire Maritime region. It's time for Eastern Canada to show our strength.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

COLTON LEBLANC: It's not only an honour but a privilege to be speaking into Supply this afternoon.

Before I provide a few comments in the time allotted this afternoon, I do want to begin by recognizing the work of all the staff at the Legislature who have ensured a relatively smooth functioning of this hybrid legislative session. In fact, it has been overwhelmingly demonstrated that, just like in many other jurisdictions across our country, we could have been conducting our legislative business many months ago and avoided the government-imposed democratic shutdown.

I also want to highlight and recognize the work of the PC caucus staff for their immense support and assistance over the past year. It has been certainly very much appreciated in helping us as MLAs fulfill our jobs.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention my constituency assistant, Jeanette d'Entremont, who joined my office staff just a few short months before the pandemic. It happened to be when we were going into the Legislature, so it was a relatively quick transition for her. She's been doing an amazing job serving the constituents of Argyle-Barrington and supporting me in my role as MLA. So to her, thank you.

I've spoken about it before, but what makes our province and all our communities a great place to live is the people. It's the people who make Nova Scotia what it is, in fact - right now, the envy for many across the country and around the world; but again, it's Nova Scotians themselves. It's the collective efforts of Nova Scotians, from here in my constituency to the most northern parts of our province, who have truly gone above and beyond in a year that has been very difficult, and have sacrificed so much, have been faced with so much heartache, struggles, and challenges. I recognize it certainly hasn't been easy, but I do want to recognize that, and a heartfelt thank you to our essential workers.

It's honestly a privilege to be a member of this House. I take great pride in representing my constituency, and I've learned that the job of an MLA is quite open-ended. You never know what's going to come through the door, what a phone call might bring or what question you might be asked when you're doing groceries, but it's truly a humbling opportunity to represent our communities.

Whether we have roles in our constituencies, we also have roles here in this Legislature. As I noted earlier on, it's great that government decided that it's time to do its legislative business, and as an Opposition, it allows us to continue to do our job in this Chamber.

Government's job includes putting forward good legislation, proposing a budget, governing appropriately. It's our job as Opposition to ensure that government is being held to account, to maintain some sort of transparency, which is difficult at times. It's too bad that we weren't here for pretty much a year to do that. That's the least that's expected from Nova Scotians when almost \$12 billion of their taxpayer dollars are being spent on the governance of this province.

Government has its job. So do Opposition Parties. We point out the obvious, and sometimes we point out the not-so-obvious. We debate legislation. We review and dissect plans, budget, policies. We ask questions. Sometimes they're tough. We offer input and insight on issues that impact Nova Scotians in every corner of our province. I couldn't be prouder to be part of a caucus team that works tirelessly for Nova Scotians in our various capacities. Despite what's been said before, we haven't been hiding behind a rock. In fact, we've been leading from Opposition, demonstrating through passion, drive, and tenacity - to not only offer criticism but also comprehensive and well thought-out plans.

[1:45 p.m.]

Hope for Health, Dignity for Seniors, Universal Mental Health - these are more than just titles, more than just catchphrases, as alluded to by members from the opposite Party. In fact, you don't need a title to actually understand the contents. You can read the title of a book or a cover of a book, but it doesn't mean you're going to understand the book. It's more than just ideas. These plans are actually thought out and costed out. If the biggest thing that's being criticized about our plans that we put forward over the last number of months is the title, I think we're doing pretty good.

Frankly, I do not know what the government was expecting when we returned after their 364-day hiatus. However, over the past couple of days there have been comments and statements from members of the government, who were quite frankly very critical of the role of Opposition MLAs. Maybe they don't realize what the role of an Opposition MLA is. Government was quite defensive, and I'd add confrontational in some regard - offering some sort of long-winded aspirational lamenting lectures and criticism, only adding insult to the injury, adding injury to the problems that Nova Scotians face day in, day out. Seems that there's a little bit of opposition coming from the government side.

The fact is, whether the Liberal MLAs like it or not, we are simply fulfilling our legislative duties. I hope that it was not hoped that we'd return to the Legislature and say, hey, it's been a while, long time no see, hope you're keeping well, and everything would be hunky dory - maybe very few questions would be asked, maybe very few tough



questions would be asked, no accountability, and maybe it would be some sort of a love-in.

But that's a very hopeful ask. That is not democracy. That does not stand for our democratic processes. There are other countries that exist out there where that's what they do. There will obviously be differences in policy and legislation and opinions but, despite how challenging the times are, we should recognize that we're very fortunate to have democracy. It's because the sacrifices of many before our time have been made that we have democracy here in Nova Scotia and in our beautiful country. We should do what we can to bolster our democratic process.

On to the budget, with the few moments I have remaining. Last year before COVID-19 arrived on our doorsteps, we were talking about good debt, and it sounds like the government's good debt is on the rise. It's sad to know that we've had budgets over the last seven or eight years that have been balanced on the backs of Nova Scotians with the failure by this government to address the acute and chronic issues of the system, which Nova Scotians have felt and continue to feel the burden.

What's included in this budget? Well, it's a mile long and an inch deep, like our Leader, the member for Pictou East, has said. If it were a swimming pool, I wouldn't be jumping off the deep end. You could certainly get your feet wet, but you couldn't go swimming in this budget. There's something for everybody and not enough for anybody. There's lots of soundbites, and maybe soundbites help politicians at the podium, but how much do these soundbites actually help Nova Scotians?

There's very much lacking in this budget, lacking in plan. I think if you look at the construction plans for a house of cards you will find more detail. I do recognize that these issues did not happen overnight, nor will they be fixed overnight. But at the hand of the current government, these issues have worsened and progressed in certain ways. What we see here is a government with its eyes on an election rather than its eyes on Nova Scotians.

There are various elements of broken culture between Nova Scotians and the current Liberal government - broken trust with government. I would like to see a little bit more emphasis on highway plans and how the Department of Transportation and Active Transit is going to be addressing coastal roads that are impacted by flooding and erosion, due to rising waters, and more susceptible to flooding.

It has been said that safety is the number one priority for this department, and when it comes to cancer care, dialysis seats access, grants for home renovations, emergency health services, doctor numbers are growing, our human health resources, emergency room closures, long-term care - I could go on, Mr. Speaker.

Speaking of long-term care, government must realize that their pre-election sprinkling of funds is only a start and will require ongoing investments. Let's break down

long-term care, Mr. Speaker: 230 or so beds for long-term care when there are 1,000 to 1,500 people in Nova Scotia who are waiting for a long-term care bed. At that rate, I think we'll still be building beds when it is my time to end up in long-term care.

Why now? That's what Nova Scotians have to ask themselves. Why now is this government presenting this type of budget? Well, eight years into this government, is it better late than never? Is that the reason that we should accept it? Do we accept that it's a different government, with a new leader? Really? Is it the beginning of a new era? I think not.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians should ask themselves whether the problems they are experiencing today, that they have been experiencing for years now - have they gotten any better? Do they believe they will be getting better any time soon? Maybe, we'll see. But how much more can Nova Scotians physically, mentally, socially, financially continue to wait and see? Look at just the unheard response from this government on various files, including the EHS file.

This government has had years to deliver to Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker, and it is very unfortunate that, with a looming election kick-off, they finally realize there are some issues that need some attention and that it is again time for them to make promises. We've got to wonder if in fact they will be kept. Look at where the 2013 promise of a doctor for every Nova Scotian has got us. There's more than 60,000 Nova Scotians who very well remember that promise, and it certainly hasn't been forgotten.

Eight years later, Mr. Speaker, and what we are experiencing today is due to this Liberal government's failure to anticipate, it's failure to plan, it's failure to react when appropriate. How much more of this can Nova Scotians afford?

A provincial budget is more than nickels and dimes when I guess we're speaking millions, or rather billions. It's probably \$100 bills. At the end of the day it comes down to one thing and one thing only. It's the people of Nova Scotia, the 55 constituencies that I and my colleagues of all political stripes are elected to serve.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of my constituency; the communities of Argyle-Barrington; the significant potential that exists in our communities; and the people, the residents of Argyle-Barrington, who demonstrate through their love for each other and their amazing hospitality, their empathy, their compassion for their friends, family and neighbours, their engagement to support one another and organizations in times of need.

For me, Mr. Speaker, being a member of this House is about not only making Argyle-Barrington a better place to live, and southwestern Nova Scotia as well, but also making Nova Scotia a better place to live, work, play, and thrive in all aspects. I've said that many times before. This job of an MLA is one that I take very seriously, and I recognize that it is a significant privilege and honour to serve my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in being a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, members of a dedicated caucus team with various backgrounds who bring a wealth of knowledge around our caucus table, who share their experiences and their enthusiasm to put forward better ideas to make Nova Scotia a better place to live.

We will continue to lead from Opposition. We will continue to strive to become the government and focus our efforts to be a government that is fiscally responsible and socially progressive, that listens to its people, that embraces technology, that learns from its past, that preserves the best and unique heritage in our diverse cultures, that listens to its people.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. These are all Progressive Conservative values. I will continue to do what is right and stand up with my MLA colleagues from the PC caucus, stand up for Nova Scotians, and stand up for our beautiful province, a province that I am very much proud to call home.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The House will now recess for 15 minutes while it resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

[1:55 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Susan Leblanc in the Chair.]

[7:16 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Kevin Murphy, resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply will now report:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole on Supply has met and made progress and begs leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

**PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 95.

**Bill No. 95 - Parenting and Support Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 95 be now read a second time.

The federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over marriage and divorce. The laws associated with these family matters are captured under the federal Divorce Act. Provinces, on the other hand, have jurisdiction over family law matters involving parents who are not married or who are in common-law relationship, and are separating. Recent amendments to federal legislation have resulted in inconsistencies with the provinces' Parenting and Support Act as they relate to the same family law issues.

The changes we are introducing are about providing consistency to families, regardless of their parental relationship. These will bring our law more in line with the federal law, which means that children and families will be treated similarly if the parents' relationships break down.

This is in the best interest of Nova Scotians and is part of our approach to improve access to justice. These amendments include removing the term "custody" from the Act and replacing it with the terms "decision-making responsibility" and "parenting time." This revised terminology describes parenting arrangements in more child-focused terms and will bring our Act more in line with the federal Divorce Act.

We also believe that this is a step towards positive parenting arrangements. Using the same parenting terms in both the Divorce Act and the Parenting and Support Act should make reading a court order easier for those who need to understand them such as administrators at schools, caregivers, and physicians.

We will make it clear that day-to-day decision-making responsibility rests with the person who is exercising parenting time unless a court otherwise orders. Nova Scotia's current parenting law says that the day-to-day decisions of the person with parenting time must agree with those of the person who has custody. What we are proposing is to change the wording regarding day-to-day parenting decisions in the updated Parenting and Support Act to better align with the new federal Divorce Act.

Mr. Speaker, the new wording will still let the court set out different day-to-day decision-making arrangements, if that is what is in the best interests for the child. For example, a judge could still order that certain day-to-day decisions be made by one parent and that the other parent must follow those decisions.

Next, we're also proposing changes to relocation processes to better align with Canada's Divorce Act. Unfortunately, conflict can arise when one parent wants to move with their child, and these kinds of cases often end up in court. Our proposed changes will require the court to determine whether the move is in the child's best interest.

We're also making changes to how parenting arrangements are decided in the child's best interest. When deciding which parenting arrangements are in the best interest of the child, our proposed changes will require courts to consider any civil or criminal proceeding, order, condition, or measure that is relevant to the safety, security, and well-being of the child. This will help our courts deal with family violence issues more clearly and better protect the child.

Finally, to protect children from the harmful effects of conflict, we're setting out the duties of parents and guardians when they're dealing with a family law issue. Under the Act, the parent or guardian must act in the child's best interest and protect the children from conflict; must try to resolve conflict through a dispute resolution process when appropriate; must give full, current, and accurate information to the court and tell the court about any civil or criminal matter that may relate to their family law issue; and obviously must follow court orders until they are no longer in effect.

These arrangements will help ensure families are able to navigate family legal matters more easily and not be burdened with the added stress of potential confusion of dealing with inconsistent laws. The changes will also work to better protect children with their best interests as a top priority.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues as this bill moves through the legislative process.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer a few remarks to this bill this evening, an Act to Amend Chapter 160 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Parenting and Support Act.

I understand that this legislation is intended to bring the Parenting and Support Act more in line with the federal Divorce Act. The most substantive practical change is how proposed relocations of a child are considered, depending on whether or if they are an existing court order in Clause 4(a).

The remaining will simply update language to support positive parenting arrangements, such as changing references to “custody” to terms such as “parenting time” or “decision-making responsibility.” It will make clear that day-to-day decision-making responsibility rests with the person who is exercising parenting time, unless a court otherwise orders. It will ensure courts have the information needed to make decisions about parenting arrangements to ensure the child’s safety and best interests are the main considerations at all times, and it changes words and phrases, such as “maintenance” to “support” and “single woman” to “person” - all changes that I certainly appreciate being made.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the government consulted with Nova Scotians last Spring. We’ve been told that the feedback was uniformly supportive through consultation and that the few changes that were requested to be made were made.

As legislators, I believe it is our responsibility to ensure legislation always supports the best interests of children. I look forward to listening to my colleagues and those who will have their voices heard at Law Amendments.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will add that as a single parent for many years, who experienced much conflict in going through the process, I am very pleased to see this bill and the wording of this bill, so thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of this bill and to follow on the words of my colleague from Queens-Shelburne. As we were listening to the minister open debate on second reading, we were just having a little side conversation here and saying it’s difficult to even listen to the contents of this, because we know that divorce is such a difficult time, even in the best-case scenario, if there is such a thing. So the easier you can make the parenting and support arrangements the better it is for everyone.

We are really pleased to see the consultations that went into this. To see the changes in this legislation, in any legislation, when it can be updated to reflect changing family structures and to centre the needs of children. We talk a lot about changing family structures, and we know often in this Chamber we are playing catch-up and here is a place where we are doing that and we are trying to do it. The government has done it, we would say in this bill, really with attention to the needs of the child, which is of course as it should be, and as it is in family law.

It also brings our Act into alignment with changes made by the federal government and, notwithstanding the consultation that was done, we certainly look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Committee on Law Amendments and anything further they may have to say.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for sharing perspectives and I certainly appreciate their support for this bill as it moves through the legislative process. I very much appreciate their acknowledgement and recognition of the consultation that took place. I would be remiss if I did not recognize the work of the staff within the department who led that work as well.

With those few words, I move to close debate on Bill No. 95.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 95. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 97.

**Bill No. 97 - Electricity Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 97 now be read for a second time.

On Wednesday, I introduced amendments to the Electricity Act. These changes build on Nova Scotia's position as a national leader in the fight against climate change, creating more ways that businesses and communities can adopt renewable energy sources. Our government has set one of the most ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction goals in the country. By 2030, our emissions will be 53 per cent below 2005 levels. By 2050, our emissions will be net zero.

More and more people and organizations want to be part of our cleaner energy future. That is why we have introduced amendments that will increase renewable energy in our communities. These amendments will clear new pathways to grow clean, renewable energy sources. They will help grow the solar industry in Nova Scotia, creating more jobs in the green sector and give communities and businesses more options to use renewable energy sources like solar. All of this will be done while keeping rates stable for ratepayers.

The amendments we have put forward will allow us to create a new solar program we are calling Community Solar, which will reduce barriers to solar adoption for individuals, communities and businesses in the province. The details of the new program are not yet final, though we are committed to consulting with communities and stakeholders to better understand their local concerns and their ideas. The details of the program will be finalized once the consultation process is complete.

The general idea however is that under the new program municipalities, First Nation communities, co-ops, and not-for-profits can create community solar gardens, which would help reduce energy poverty and provide direct benefits to communities. These developments can make productive use of contaminated lands or existing buildings as the location for new solar farms. We want to reduce barriers to the adoption of solar electricity by removing requirements such as home ownership and access to capital.

This means those renting an apartment can adopt solar through a shared ownership model. This will build on the work we have already done, including the Solar Homes Program, to expand the use of renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

There is more, Mr. Speaker. These amendments will also increase the current cap of 100 kilowatts per hour for non-residential customers using solar energy. That will allow these users to scale up their solar installations while still benefiting from the program. The new cap will be determined through stakeholder engagement.

The amendments we're introducing today will continue to expand the options for renewable energy by creating an avenue for community-driven renewable energy projects. These amendments will not affect power rates for non-participants of these programs. That is something we are committed to.

Last year, the federal government and the Province entered into a memorandum of understanding to help the federal government reach its goal of using 100 per cent clean electricity in all federally-owned facilities by 2022. As a result of the MOU, the Green Choice Program was created and will help the province procure new renewable sources for electricity to meet the needs of the federal government and other interested large-scale power customers.

Earlier this year we announced that the provincial government would also participate in the Green Choice Program. Our aim is to source 100 per cent of our electricity needs from renewable sources by 2025, helping us achieve our ambitious climate change objectives. These amendments we're introducing today will continue to expand the options for renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments will translate into more jobs across the province. They will grow our clean energy economy. They lead to more inclusive and equitable participation in clean energy. Most importantly, it will build a cleaner energy future for



every Nova Scotian. These changes will ensure Nova Scotia remains at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

I look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues opposite.

[7:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Good evening, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak on this bill this evening.

Much remains to be determined with this bill. I know the minister had indicated what he can this evening here, but in terms of limits on the amount of energy, the prices paid for it, and even the practical ability for people to take part in it - much of that has yet to be determined. We don't know exactly what we are being asked to support or what this is going to look like in the end. There's little said about economics. I hope people are given a choice that is environmentally sound but also sensible from a financial perspective so that anything that's aimed to be achieved here is viable.

I do think back to the COMFIT program, a program this government ended. I know that with the COMFIT program, we could have put more renewable energy on the grid for the same price, if the goal was really to add more renewable energy into our energy mix. A lot of the fees under the COMFIT program were much higher than they needed to be because they were designed more to support community participation than to put the most green energy on the grid for the least price.

We look forward to hearing more from the public. We presume this bill will be passing, and we look forward to seeing what the consultations will show when the time is taken for people to have their say, and what the government decides based on those consultations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I can agree with my colleague on one thing, which is that there's a lot that not in this bill. I'm happy to speak to the amendments to the Electricity Act.

I will start by saying it sounds great. It definitely responds to many requests from the solar industry, from communities that we have heard from directly in our caucus, that we have heard at committee over the years. Virtual net metering, lifting the cap for commercial installations - those are direct recommendations from CanSIA's Nova Scotia Solar Roadmap from January 2020, which they did present to the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee. The ability for renters to access solar energy, which

the minister spoke of, reducing energy costs significantly, is absolutely a potential step forward in addressing energy poverty.

With that being said, we would like to see a more detailed strategy on eliminating energy poverty. We have tabled legislation many times in this House that would require a genuinely coordinated response to inequality and the need to transition to a green economy.

One concern that prevails when speaking about policies that promise green jobs is whether the policies are designed to actually build the capacity of local industry. Will there be procurement policies that favour local companies which may not be in the same place, and almost certainly are not in the same place, as companies from Ontario who have more ability to access that market, who may have more experience. Will they find it a significant challenge to meet other bidding requirements, like eBonding?

Program design is a particular concern after the failure of the Renewable to Retail program, which we discussed just the other day in this Chamber. That promised to break up the power monopoly and allow independent renewable retailers greater market access, but in fact didn't have a single subscriber.

In the case of another flagship renewable energy program which the minister referred to, the Nova Scotia Green Choice Program, the government has actually appointed an American company, Customer First Renewables, to administer procurement. Mr. Speaker, was there a search for a procurement company in Nova Scotia or even in Canada that could have administered this program? If we really want to address the climate crisis, if we want to green the province, we need to do that all the way through the system, not just with programs but with workforce, capacity, and procurement - the whole nine yards.

I will disagree with my colleague on consultation. I have spent lots of time in this Chamber calling for more consultation. On this, I actually don't think we need it. I think that we would, of course, like to see the regulations. We would like to know what's in them, but I think it's long past time that we need to consult on whether we respond to the climate crisis.

What we have seen with environmental legislation that comes into this House is that it sends good signals, it sounds really good, and it establishes a consultation period which either doesn't happen or never ends. That has been the case with the Sustainable Development Goals Act, and it looks like it might be the case here. That causes us concern.

When the Sustainable Development Goals Act passed in 2019, after hearing from dozens and dozens and dozens of presenters at a marathon Law Amendments Committee session, we spoke against the decision to put targets in regulations precisely because we would be going forward without goals in place in critical areas like this, like renewable energy, waste, local food, and land protection. We made every effort to amend the bill to include that. We were turned down, and nearly two and a half years later, we still don't

have those targets. Public consultation has not happened, and we have seen no timeline from this government. You can't blame us for being a bit skeptical.

One timeline we do have, Mr. Speaker, is from the IPCC. In 2018, we were all put on notice that we have a decade to radically curb emissions. This government has not responded with anything approaching urgency. This bill gestures in the right direction, but with the promise of consultation and no timeline before regulations are set, we are concerned about what will actually come of it.

I sincerely look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendment Committee and from my colleagues going forward.

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

The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I appreciate the comments from both of my honourable colleagues across the way. We take them into consideration, certainly seriously. I also look forward to what the Law Amendments Committee will bring, the presentations that will come from there and who we will hear from as we move forward.

A lot has changed in the energy sector over the years. Certainly, my colleague from Inverness mentioned the COMFIT program, which was in place some years ago. Much has changed over the years in pricing and building and how this whole new energy market works. It's quite amazing, actually. The more you learn about it, the more interesting it becomes.

I think there's a great future in renewables in Nova Scotia, and I look forward to being part of that. I'm excited about this, and I'm excited about hearing from those who are stakeholders. I hope the Law Amendments Committee is filled right up with folks who want to talk about this.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I move to close second reading on Bill No. 97.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 97. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 92.

**Bill No. 92 - Continuing Care Assistants Registry Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to move second reading of this bill. As we discussed in Estimates, and we discussed previously, this bill will help us with workforce planning for our continuing care assistants. This will make having a registry mandatory and registering with that registry mandatory. Right now, that registry for CCAs is voluntary, and we do have less than 10 per cent of our staff that are registering, which does create workforce management recruitment and retention challenges.

This was a recommendation that came from the long-term care expert panel and we're very pleased to move forward with this in this session. We believe this will go a long way in helping us better manage, recruit, and retain that critical workforce here in the province of Nova Scotia.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak on Bill No. 92, the Continuing Care Assistants Registry Act.

The PC Party of Nova Scotia will be voting in favour of this bill. As a matter of fact, we think it's such a good idea that we actually put it in our Dignity for Our Seniors plan that we released almost a year ago. We also raised this issue several times in the House, and so we're very happy that it's coming forward. Although in the words of somebody who texted me, and I want to get it right: This was literally the least amount of effort put forward into doing something from the long-term care expert panel that one could think of, but it's a step in the right direction. I hope I quoted them correctly.

Anyway, what I do want to draw the House's attention to is the fact that the expert long-term care panel report was published December 21, 2018. This is April 2021. It is almost embarrassing to have to talk to the people who wrote this expert panel report - Janice Keefe, Cheryl Smith, and Dr. Archibald - to say that it took almost three years to respond to a simple request to collect data.

This is not going to bring more CCAs to the province. This isn't talking about additional pay. CCAs are the backbone of continuing care home care. It is almost a \$1 billion budget out of an \$11.5 billion-and-change budget. Almost 10 per cent of our budget is dependent on having a sufficient workforce to look after the frail and the disabled, and this government took two and a half years to decide we're going to count how many we have, which is around 7,000 funded FTEs.

The fact that we need approximately 4,000 more is an estimate. We don't know, because the government did not collect the statistics. Why does it matter? Well, it matters because we have over 30,000 home care clients. We have over 9,000 long-term care clients, and because of the changes in the rules to home care, you have to be much sicker to get home care, and you in fact have been getting fewer hours of care each year over the last four years. It's down from approximately 104 hours per year per client to approximately 95 hours per year.

[7:45 p.m.]

For those who aren't aware, each Nova Scotian who is eligible for home care can get up to 100 hours per month, and I know because I used to run a home care, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy company, and I worked with these amazing continuing care assistants on a daily basis. The level of frailty of seniors in this province has steadily increased because they're having to wait longer to get their home care, longer to get into long-term care, because we changed the rules because of the wait-list.

We are having over 30,000 people getting, according to the Nova Scotia Health Authority's By the Numbers, 2,933,955 hours of care. That takes a lot of CCAs. These are people who have a back-breaking job - bathing, dressing, toileting, feeding, transferring, and that is just the very basic of care - brushing their teeth. Those are the very basics, making sure that this person is getting the nutrition and the change in position that they need to reduce pressure sores, to make sure that their mental well-being is looked after.

Mr. Speaker, given COVID-19 and the impact it has had on the profession of CCAs, normally under this government for the last eight years approximately 600 CCAs were trained each year - last year less than 300. Kudos to the NDP government, they brought in a CCA grant program and under their watch, over 1,000 CCAs were trained every year.

Right at the moment, we have under-trained every year by a minimum of 400 CCAs at the same time as the senior tsunami has been increasing to where in 20 years we'll have twice as many seniors. So right now if we have approximately 1,500 people waiting for a long-term care bed and this government builds zero long-term care beds during their past two terms, we are never going to have enough long-term care beds for the people who need it. We are not going to have the staff we need if we don't even know how many we have.

One of the things that came out in the long-term care report, the Minister of Health and Wellness at the time asked the expert panel to indicate a recommended staffing level for long-term care. The one thing that everyone was waiting for at that press conference was that number. I was there that day and I was there when Janice - whom I have the utmost respect for - said that we don't have enough data to make that determination. We cannot base it off other provinces because they have a different level of frailty going into their home care, going into their long-term care. That's why I introduced Bill No. 17 - the Frailty

Strategy Act in this Legislature, so that we could make sure that we have the information and the data that is needed.

One of the other things we learned during Public Accounts Committee, because we didn't get the information during the Health Committee when we were talking about long-term care - the deputy minister sent us a letter dated April 1, 2021, on a request to answer how many people were waiting for home care. Try to imagine: we have over 30,000 frail seniors needing to be bathed, dressed, given their medications, fed, toileted, transferred, and moved so that they don't develop pressure sores. Well right at the moment, according to the week ending March 19, 2021, we have a total of 1,396 people in Nova Scotia waiting for home care.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I ran for this position here now is that over the years that I have been a physiotherapist, I saw every time I would go to a home, that home care staff were showing up less and less often: they leave my mother after 20 minutes - they get her in, get her a shower, get out. They're gone in 20 minutes, they bill my mother for an hour and they're on to the next person - and I can't blame them. They are so short-staffed that much of the time on evenings, weekends, holidays, there is no one to show up.

The other day a home care worker left a 100-year-old woman, who had already broken one hip and another hip and a fractured wrist, left her home by herself and left 20 minutes early to go on to the next appointment, leaving the door unlocked.

There are two patients in my constituency where the CCAs left on a Friday, they cancelled on Saturday, they cancelled on Sunday, they showed up on Monday morning, and they were on the floor from Friday.

I could go on for hours about the stories of home care cancelling because there is no one. I know because I call all the home care agencies to talk about the issues because I am getting those calls from around the province on a regular basis. I worked with these staff, and they're frustrated.

There isn't enough of them. Many of them don't have a car, so they're relying on public transportation. You can imagine what a nightmare that was during COVID-19.

While I applaud the registry bill as a baby step towards just counting how many people we need, it doesn't talk about regulating the profession. I did ask during the bill briefing if CCAs themselves were consulted. They weren't. The employers were, and the Department of Health and Wellness was consulted, but the CCAs themselves were not consulted. Having worked at Ocean View Manor for six months during the pandemic where nobody took a break, and everyone was run off their feet, these staff deserved to be consulted.

The PC Party of Nova Scotia, given that we have four health professionals, knows that the people who have the answers are the people providing the care. The Expert Advisory Panel on Long-term Care tried to be their voice. It took two and a half years just to decide to count the number of CCAs that we have - just to count them.

Right now, there are a whole lot of other recommendations from the long-term care panel that have not been done, important things that are actually checked off when they have not been done. I asked the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness during the Health Committee on long-term care: Where is the long-term care strategy that was promised in 2015? If you go to the government's website from 2015, it says we will have a plan in 2017. It will be a five-year long-term care plan. There is no plan. In health care language, we use SOAP: subjective, what are people saying; objective, what are the measures that you're looking at; analysis, how much do we need, is it working, what we're doing; and plan. In 2015 - six years ago - this government said they would have a plan.

The deputy minister at the Health Committee said there is no plan. When I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness where the plan was, he said, oh yeah, we have a plan. I said, I think you should talk to the deputy minister because he said on camera that there is no plan. The deputy minister did say he was relying on the expert panel's recommendations, and I agree with that, every single recommendation in here.

If you had talked to any health professional providing home care or providing long-term care, or any family member looking after a senior who is trying to figure out how to get their family member around the corner into a bathroom where the doorway isn't big enough for a wheelchair, and they can't get a government grant to make renovations because they earn \$50 over the limit - they know that you need a plan. This isn't a plan. This is saying we're going to count how many bodies we have.

There is no indication as to why people were not filling out the registry. We know it was voluntary. You would have thought there would have been an effort to increase those numbers. It was free, with the exception of one time. Why did people not fill out that registry? You need to ask that.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we know is that there was a Nova Scotia Continuing Care Assistant Program Advisory Committee, CCAPAC. The terms of reference, published February 2016, said, "The committee shall establish an annual slate of meetings in sufficient frequency to action its responsibilities." One of the things on there in the role of this committee was providing governance for the CCA registry. If you Google this now, it takes you to nowhere. There is no reference to this committee or what they accomplished. This was five years ago.

Mr. Speaker, every health care professional out there knows exactly what happens when you can't get off the toilet by yourself. We have a saying in physiotherapy: you can no longer live by yourself when you can no longer stand up by yourself. Continuing care

assistants are the ones who are most often at the end of that buzzer when someone presses the button.

Right now, the Homes for Special Care Act says that, in the regulations, there is a specified staffing level that must be maintained. This would apply to CCAs. We need to know how many we have. If you're going to mandate how many should be there, you need to know how many you've got, how many you need, and how many you can actually supply.

We have no idea how many of these CCAs are full-time, part-time, but I can tell you that a majority of them - perhaps not a majority, but a huge number - are working two part-time jobs for two different owners, not having any benefits, and haven't had a pay raise in years. It's insufficient to keep them in the workforce. The recidivism rate, before they've even graduated, is far too high.

The CCA grant program that should have been brought back, to match what the NDP had done eight years ago, to make sure that all CCAs got that grant until such time as we had enough people to make sure that my mother wasn't getting a shower in 10 minutes and then leaving before they could do the other things that they were supposed to be there for.

Trust me, when I call the owners of those continuing care assistant companies - I've worked with every one of them - they all have tremendous respect for their clients. When I call and ask them to explain to me why it's a different CCA every time they show up - meaning that the family member now has to go through the entire care plan to explain how the patient gets their medication, when they get their meals, how they must be transferred - I even joined the VON board of directors to try to help with the staffing issue because we had a situation where one private nursing home had one VON to see one person in the morning and a different VON came in in the afternoon. We do not have a continuity of care in the CCA system. We have thousands too few of the CCAs.

The injury rate in long-term care is higher than construction. It's higher than any other profession. I know because I treated them as a physiotherapist. When you get injured and can't do a standing pivot transfer or safely do a two-person transfer from bed to wheelchair, you're out of a job.

During COVID-19 at Northwood, their staffing level dropped to 60 per cent at one point. I know this for a fact. In case anybody says that's not true, I know it for a fact. There was a crisis there that did not get responded to as quickly as it should have.

One thing did happen that gives us a glimmer of what is possible. It's the fact that when some people from Northwood recovered from COVID-19, they were moved into a hotel. I happened to speak to a CCA who worked in that hotel and I asked them what it was like. They said it was fantastic. I said that that's the first time I've heard that; tell me why.



They said there was one staff to every four residents. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists were there. Any time they needed it they got the equipment they needed. They didn't have to do what I did at Ocean View, which was to take a wheelchair dump chair from that person to give to this person because this person became more frail from a fall and now their need outdid the other person's. Physicians were always there on site.

A few years ago, I don't remember the exact date but it was around Christmas - it was the same day as the Premier was making an announcement at Dartmouth General on the grand opening of the orthopedic wing - two long-term care facilities in the Truro area and Debert lost their physician. The long-term care facilities made the extraordinary decision to say if you are living in our long-term care facility and go to the hospital, you can't come back because we don't have a physician who can readmit you.

[8:00 p.m.]

So not only are CCAs struggling with overburdened workloads, they are also required to do the work without the same oversight from the physiotherapists, from the occupational therapists, from the social workers, from the psychologists, and from the physicians because so much of the work is being done virtually.

You will call a physician, who has never seen the client, to make a life-altering decision to perhaps put somebody in a wheelchair for the rest of their life. Trust me, the CCAs who have to bring that issue forward do so with the greatest of care and concern for the family member, as well as the resident, knowing that many of the decisions they have to make impact not only one's quality of life, but the duration of one's life.

Our CCAs are there with our residents in long-term care until the day they die; they are often there with them when they pass away. It is a very challenging profession. It is a specialty that has not been recognized by this government, by this province, but I can tell you from working with them that they are equal partners in the health care of our frailest members of society.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things they need from us is greater support to get through their training. We have far too many quitting the program. We had programs that were cancelled because there were not enough registering. If the trend of training only 300 a year persists, we are going to not be able to fill the long-term care beds that we have; we are not going to have the home care that we have now - and the home care that we have now has over 1,300 people waiting.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to the seniors and those who are disabled in our province because it is not just seniors who get home care, there are a lot of people who are younger who need home care as well. If you were following Facebook during the pandemic, there were younger people who were posting online the fact that they were being

put to bed by their CCA at six o'clock at night because that is the only time they could get someone to show up.

I have another constituent who literally has me on speed dial - and when she calls I will get up and go down to her home - who gets her breakfast from a CCA at 11:30 a.m. and then the next CCA shows up at 12:00 noon to give her lunch - and she has to take her diabetic pills then and there. These stories are not one-offs. These staff deserve much better.

One of the things that the unions asked for - in addition to the minister himself who said, I need a staffing ratio, tell me what you think - the unions happily stepped forward and during a long-term care committee meeting said 4.1 hours of care per resident per day in long-term care.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia said, deal, we are not going to discuss it anymore, we are not going to wait until this government counts the number of CCAs. Right now it is 2.6 hours of care per senior per day in long-term care, or 3.1. And why would it be different? That is a very good question, because if you think the amount of care that is offered in each nursing home is standardized across the province - guess again.

There is a report coming forward to the MLAs showing the discrepancy in care of the number of physios and OTs and physio assistants and OT assistants around the province. There are some nursing homes that have a perfect ratio of rehab staff to residents and then there are places that have almost nothing. There are those who have great access to air mattress beds to reduce pressure sores and those who do not.

There is a domino effect every time the government makes a decision, so I will go back to when I referenced the fact that in Truro and Debert they lost their physician and they were not going to be allowed to come back to the long-term care facility because they did not have a doctor to readmit them. The government's response was to make an announcement of an extra \$1.3 million for the conversion of residential care beds at a facility in Halifax into long-term care beds.

They were missing a doctor in Truro and Debert, and so the announcement was, let's convert some beds from residential to long-term care. We needed to convert them because you're not allowed to get into long-term care until your frailty level is so much more advanced than it used to be that now the level of acuity for our CCAs to look after people has dramatically increased, well above their training level by the way, because I have done training with the CCAs. I have taught the back care and lifting class to the CCA program. I'm well aware of what is in their training.

Many of the programs were never designed for frailty levels 8, 9, and 10 exclusively. They were designed for frailty levels 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. You would have some light acuity frailty level to balance out the heavier-lift patients. Now you go into those long-

term care facilities, and the level of frailty and transfer and the acuity needs of these clients has dramatically increased, and the CCAs were not trained for that.

Many of them are much younger now than they used to be, and they don't have as much practical life experience as some of the older CCAs. We have to give them the staffing ratio that they need. Mr. Speaker, 4.1 hours of care per resident per day is recommended by all of the unions, by the CCAs themselves. The PC Party of Nova Scotia is committed to that.

One of the other things that we are committed to is that the CCAs deserve to be able to work in an environment that is safe. Right now, we have CCAs working in hotels. We have long-term care patients living in hotels. I can't get over the fact that we have reached that point. We want to get them out of hospital beds. CCAs work in the hospitals as well, and there's an insufficient number of them there as well.

One of the things that happened during COVID-19 that we don't talk about very much is that CCAs got diverted from home care to long-term care. I'm the one who got those phone calls from around the province saying, Barbara, they're cancelling my home care because they don't have any CCAs. Oh well, you're on your own. That never got restored to the level that they were at before.

We can talk about wait-lists and wait times, but what has happened - and people don't want to admit it, but the stats in NSHA By the Numbers show it - is that fewer Nova Scotians are getting home care, and that same number are getting less hours. That is not an expansion. That is not an investment in our seniors or in our CCAs. At a \$1 billion investment, the least this government could do is know how many staff they have for each of the professions.

Of course, the PC Party of Nova Scotia will be voting in favour of this bill. It was in our health care plan for the province. I hope the government will take a look at the rest of our plan and literally take all of it and implement it because there is an awful lot in there that subscribes to the planning, the long-term care strategy, the home care strategy that our Nova Scotian seniors deserve. I look forward to hearing what they have to say at the Law Amendments Committee, and I would encourage any CCAs or anyone else who has a vested interest in this bill to come forward and speak.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am glad to say a few words on Bill No. 92, An Act to Establish a Registry for Continuing Care Assistants. First of all, I would like to say that I was very glad to learn today from the minister that there will not be any fees associated with this registry that the CCAs will have to pay.

I understand it's intended to support workforce planning and that it comes from a recommendation in the minister's expert panel review on long-term care. CCAs, who provide the bulk of personal care for older and disabled Nova Scotians, are essential workers. I believe Nova Scotians understood this before the pandemic and they understand it now. But CCAs face incredible workplace challenges, as do many of the workers in continuing care - low wages, high injury rates, burnout, and more. The system overall has many challenges with recruitment and retention.

Experts agree that one of the key measures that would vastly improve working and living conditions in long term care is establishing standards of minimum care, specifically 4.1 hours per resident per day, as is outlined in the NDP's Care and Dignity bill. Our caucus absolutely would have welcomed changes that brought in the minimum standards of 4.1 hours per resident per day, but it seems like that's not going to happen in this legislative session and it's not a government priority, which we've heard throughout the Estimates process. (Interruption) Shame. Of all the things that could have been done to attract and retain CCAs during this time, implementing those standards of care would be one of the best ideas.

This registry will track and count CCAs. That is fine and that is good and it's important, but that does not get us at the key issue. There are simply not enough CCAs, and they aren't being compensated at a level that will attract enough people to that profession.

The minister said that this bill will go a long way to attracting and recruiting and retaining new CCAs. Do you know what else will go a long way? Paying CCAs what they're worth. Paying them what they're worth, making sure that there are enough of them so they don't all have to be working overtime and on evenings, weekends, and holidays, as my colleague suggested, and that they won't have to endure physical injuries for the stress of the job that they're doing.

Pay them more, make sure there are minimum standards so they are able to actually do their job and want to be doing their job, and make sure they're compensated at a level that would make the profession more attractive to more people.

That's all I'm going to say tonight, Mr. Speaker. It's a second reading. I really look forward to hearing from stakeholders at Law Amendments and discussing this legislation with them and with this House, and also discussing what more we can do to support CCAs in our province. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

KENDRA COOMBES: Hear, hear, to my colleague, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad to speak to Bill No. 92. I think the idea of tracking our CCA workforce for the purpose of planning is a fine idea. But it's certainly not the most pressing issue facing the workforce, as my two colleagues who have spoken before me have stated.

Wages and recruitment and retention go hand in hand. They are completely intertwined, like peanut butter and jam, Bert and Ernie. They certainly make a pair. I do have a two-year-old, yes - not even yet two.

But the ongoing wage for unionized CCAs is \$16-\$17 an hour and non-unionized CCAs make less than that. It is shameful. These are the people who are at the very front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, whom we called heroes, who we applauded every night, who provide so much of the critical care that Nova Scotians rely on, and yet we give them lip service.

The Nursing Homes Association of Nova Scotia has asked the Department of Health and Wellness to conduct a full compensation review of all roles in long-term care. I would urge the government to consider this as well as they go about their workforce planning.

I look forward to hearing from Nova Scotians at Law Amendments and, with that, I will take my seat. Thank you.

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the Parties in the House for all supporting this bill.

I do want to correct a couple of statements that were made. The member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage did mention that utilization of home care did drop, and in 2020, during the pandemic year, that is true. It did drop by approximately 15 per cent: 1 per cent of which was related to agencies cancelling because of staffing issues, and 14 per cent of that drop was related to the clients themselves actually cancelling, presumably because they were taking additional safety measures to prevent people from coming into their house.

So, to suggest that it is because there have not been increased resources or increased support in the home care sector would be completely inaccurate. In fact, we have increased the budget in a lot of ways. We have gone over that in Estimates, particularly in the self-directed funding, and we have seen utilization improving on these new programs that we do have in place.

Of course, compensation is important for recruitment and retention, as well as data-keeping. Our wages are on parity with the rest of the country, so there is wage parity here

in Nova Scotia with other jurisdictions across the country and of course we do have a process by which those contracts are negotiated.

[8:15 p.m.]

At the end of the day this is one of many steps that we are taking to improve our long-term care and home care programming here in Nova Scotia, including the creation of new beds in a long-term care facility, replacement of old beds, as well as enhancing the options that are available to seniors who are able to stay at home.

Of course it would be remiss of me to not mention the great work that our staff has done to prepare our long-term care facilities to meet Waves 2 and 3 of COVID-19 and keeping that virus out of our long-term care facilities. That is a direct result of following the IPAC recommendations and the Northwood recommendations, which undoubtedly have saved lives in our long-term care facility over the course of the last year.

I want to thank everybody for the great work they have done in doing that, thank our CCAs for the great and challenging work they take on, on behalf of all of us. I really look forward to getting this registry in place because we know that in the long term it is going to help us with workforce management, recruitment and retention, as these registries have done for other professions here in Nova Scotia.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to move to close debate on second reading of this bill. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 92.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Public Bills for Third Reading.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry. Actually, just before we do that, it is time for our mandated 15-minute COVID-19 break. The House will resume at 8:33 p.m.

[8:18 p.m. The House recessed.]

[8:33 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

### **PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING**

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 1.

#### **Bill No. 1 - Police Identity Management Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, the Police Identity Management Act, be now read and do pass.

I would like to first recognize the families and survivors who continue to grapple with the events of last April. As I've said before, their pain and loss remain with me and, I believe, with all Nova Scotians.

I'd like to thank my colleagues from all parties for their remarks and support of this bill thus far in the legislative process.

I shared an overview of this bill in the second reading, so I'll try not to repeat all of those details here tonight. In short, the Police Identity Management Act further restricts someone from being able to access items that would facilitate the impersonation of a police officer. Limiting interactions and dealings with these items will further limit potential risk and improve public safety. I appreciate that there's no way to entirely eliminate all risk, but I do believe that these restrictions will mitigate against the most significant risks.

When passed, this legislation will be the first stand-alone, comprehensive piece of legislation in the country restricting the use, sale, reproduction, and possession of police articles. Our ultimate priority is to make our streets and communities safer, an objective I believe all members in this Legislature share.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing remarks from my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

KIM MASLAND: I'm pleased to offer comments to third reading of Bill No. 1, An Act Respecting the Management of Police Identity to Prevent Unlawful Activity.

As I stated in my remarks at second reading, I and my Progressive Conservative colleagues are very pleased to see this bill, a bill that we have been calling for since the terrible, senseless tragedies in Portapique that shook Nova Scotians to the very core last April, a tragedy in which our province lost 22 beautiful, innocent souls, and we will forever be heartbroken.

The delay of this legislation being introduced was disturbing to me, and we are blessed that this delay has not resulted in more tragic incidents. I mentioned at second reading what happened a few months ago in Antigonish, when a man was arrested for impersonating a police officer, which again involved the use of a vehicle that resembled those used by the police.

I'm very relieved that we're finally here today. I'd also like to thank the brave men and women who, with courage and compassion, put on a uniform every day, willing to sacrifice their lives for us. These officers make a huge difference in the communities in which they serve and make tremendous sacrifice each day. I cannot even begin to imagine the fear of our officers responding to a call that involves searching for a suspect impersonating their colleague with a fully functional vehicle.

This bill will increase public confidence that when we seek out a police officer for help, it is actually a police officer. It is my hope that these steps, that this legislation, will prevent such events as what we endured as a province in April.

In closing, I too would like to acknowledge the grief and trauma suffered by those who lost loved ones in the events of last April. We are united in grief and our hearts continue to hurt with you. Wherever a beautiful soul has been, there's a trail of beautiful memories, and I pray that you find solace in those memories. The Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting Bill No. 1.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm pleased to stand and speak very briefly on this bill. I think this is common sense legislation. It's legislation that in retrospect we realize should have always been in place. It's necessary, it's reasonable to protect public safety, and we absolutely support it. It's absolutely only the first step in starting to grapple with the events of a year ago that really have cast a pall over this session and over our lives as we deal with COVID-19 as well.

I do look forward to being able to reconcile with some of what happened through the work of the Mass Casualty Commission and other processes that are ongoing, to really ensure that we find the roots of what happened and ensure it never happens again and do justice for those families. To this bill, it makes sense. We're glad to see it come forward and we're happy to support it.



THE SPEAKER: If I'm to recognize the honourable Minister of Justice, it will be to close third reading of Bill No. 1, the Police Identity Management Act.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: In short, I'd like to again offer my thanks and my appreciation for my colleagues in the Legislature, again of all Parties, for their comments on this bill, in particular their comments in support of the bill, but also in the shared recognition in the work done by our frontline officers and other people who respond in times of emergency, as well as the condolences shared to those who have been most directly impacted by the tragedy. Again, I think this piece of legislation, as my colleague mentioned, is common sense legislation.

I think the approach and the response of the members of Legislature showed that common sense legislation can move through the Legislature with unanimous support, and I really appreciate that. With that, I do move to close debate on Bill No. 1.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 1. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 23.

**Bill No. 23 - Adoption Records Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I move that Bill No. 23 - An Act to Open Adoption Records in Nova Scotia be now read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased to be here today before both virtual and in-person members of this House to talk about our legislation that will create more access to adoption records in Nova Scotia. I know this will disappoint you, but I'm not going to take us all through the history of adoption records in Nova Scotia, because I've already done that a couple of times. I will just have a few remarks.

I will remind my colleagues that an attempt was made previously in the early 2000s to amend the 1996 Adoption Information Act, but it was abandoned. After that, no

government was willing to open the issue. We know that opinions and ideas about the circumstances surrounding adoptions have changed over time. We heard this through our consultations with Nova Scotians over the last couple of years. In those consultations, we heard that people were not happy with the law as it stood. In fact, 82 per cent of respondents indicated that they did not feel the Adoption Information Act, first passed in 1996 - 25 years ago - they felt that the Act did not provide them with enough access to identifying information.

In addition to public consultation, we partnered with the Association of Black Social Workers in the Spring of 2020 to conduct targeted engagements with the African Nova Scotian community. We also received feedback from Mi'kmaw bands regarding open adoption legislation. Their impact on this bill was significant. I'm grateful that Scott Pyke and Monica Kennedy from the Nova Scotia Adoptee Advocacy Group have been such strong advocates on this issue. Their input was instrumental in the creation of this piece of legislation. I was happy to receive feedback from the Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO), as well as my colleagues here at the Legislature as we work to strike the appropriate balance within this Act. We took all the comments seriously and I believe, as a result, the bill is stronger.

I want to again assure the members of this House and indeed all Nova Scotians that this legislation was created with the utmost consideration for those who will be affected. I know this is a deeply sensitive and personal matter for many people. Throughout this process, I've heard many people's stories, all heartfelt and some heartbreaking. I believe the new Act strikes the right balance between meeting the needs of those who want open adoption records and those who want to maintain their privacy.

With this in mind, I'd like to again outline key aspects of the Act. What this bill does is flip the onus. Just as we did with the Organ Donation Act, consent will now be presumed but parties to an adoption can opt out. They can do this in a couple of ways.

One method is a disclosure veto. This is a document that a person will file with the government stating they do not want to share information that can identify them. Disclosure vetoes will be available to all adoption records in Nova Scotia. It doesn't matter when the adoption took place. This is in line with what we heard in our consultations: 65 per cent of survey respondents felt that all adoptions should be treated the same, no matter when they happened.

Another method for opting out is through a contact notice. There are several different ways to use one, but basically a contact notice allows an adult adopted person or birth parent to indicate they're willing to share identifying information, but they don't want to be contacted. Or a contact notice can indicate they're open to contact, but they wish to spell out how they want that contact to occur. The registrant can choose to remove or change their contact notice at any time, and it expires upon their death.

Anyone who does not want to share their identifying information can file a disclosure veto to confirm their desire to maintain privacy. This includes those who previously did not consent to their information being released.

When they're filing the disclosure veto, the person will be encouraged to provide a statement detailing their reason or reasons for wanting privacy. They will be asked to update medical information and to provide such additional non-identifying details as they may wish to share with the other party to the adoption - for example, cultural, racial, linguistic, family history or even personal interests. This information can have a significant impact on the person receiving the updates and their children. My department will also have supports in place so that Nova Scotians can access the help they may need to process the new information they receive.

[8:45 p.m.]

As I have mentioned before, these changes will take full effect in the Spring of 2022. This will allow people the opportunity to learn about the new legislation and to file disclosure vetoes or contact notices if they so wish. It will also give us time to expand our programming so we can better support Nova Scotians through this process.

This is an important step forward for adoptees and their families. This legislation recognizes how attitudes towards adoptions have changed. It supports privacy for those who wish to keep their information confidential. It provides supports and services in a respectful, trauma-informed and culturally relevant manner, and it reflects the views of the many Nova Scotians who participated in our consultations.

I would like to thank them one more time for their feedback, whether it came via a face-to-face meeting, a letter or a survey. Their perspectives, experiences and thoughts have been instrumental in the creation of this bill, and I would like to thank our Community Services staff and Legislative Counsel for their work on the bill. Their work will mean so much to so many.

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

**BARBARA ADAMS:** Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to have the opportunity at this historic moment to speak to Bill No. 23, the Adoption Records Act. One of the very first memories I have as a new MLA was someone who came into my office and said, I need to get access to my adoption records, but I can't. I have adopted cousins - never thought of them that way, but I did know that they were. I never worried or wondered about whether they had access to their records as a child, but this was someone coming to me saying, I need your help.

We did the due diligence and looked into it and discovered that we were one of the only provinces that had not taken this step yet. We did do the work and on March 14, 2019,

I introduced Bill No. 117, the Adoption Information Act, because people like Scott Pyke, Monica Kennedy, Mike Slayter, my constituents, my family members, and so many others were willing to advocate for something that was deeply personal and desperately needed.

An awful lot has been said about this legislation. There are those who are nervous about what it might mean for them personally or for their children or for a loved one. I want to commend the government because I believe that they have done the work that needed to be done, and I am grateful to them for doing so.

This is excellent legislation and I believe that all of the concerns that people brought forward were listened to. I do believe it strikes the right balance and I am incredibly proud of the minister, as well as the government, for bringing this forward at this time.

Finally, what I would like to do is just thank every single birth parent who chose the difficult and highly personal, and often painful, decision to place their child for adoption. It is an incredibly selfless thing that they have done, to put their child's needs at the forefront. I want to thank every single adoptive parent who welcomed their child into their home, with open arms and an open heart. Everyone deserves to be part of a loving family, to know where they came from and to feel part of the community that we all value so much. I'm grateful to the government.

I am proud to stand here today to be part of this moment, and I thank everyone who participated in the process leading up to today.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

**KENDRA COOMBES:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak in support of an Act to Open Adoption Records in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia is the last province in Canada to open adoption records, and that is why I'm so pleased today to support the passage of this bill that will finally allow adoptees and their families greater access to their own social, cultural, and medical history.

I would like to thank the minister for accepting our changes to the gendered language included in the original bill. As we bring forward new pieces of legislation, I think it is important to update the language to reflect our present understanding of gender identities. I would like to thank the minister very much for that.

I was pleased to see that this Act establishes a role for the department to provide trauma-informed support services for adoptees, their families, and birth families. It will be critical for the government to commit the resources, the funding, and the appropriate staff to successfully implement this Act that's so very much needed.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the Nova Scotia Adoptee Advocacy Group and the other advocates whose hard work was essential in getting us to this very exciting moment.

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

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all members of the House for their comments on Bill No. 23 and for the comments last year when we discussed the concept of changing the legislation - or maybe it was a year and a half before - sometimes with COVID-19, I leave out a month or two - the day that we discussed this in the House. I thought it was a really thoughtful exchange. I thought it was a very heartfelt exchange. It was one of the days in the House that I'll always remember. I always remembered it, too, because it was mostly women who spoke on this bill.

I thought that adoption was something that seemed awfully personal to us, because all of us had a story. Some of us have adopted children. I have a weird thing where two of my kids are adopted, but I gave birth to them. When my husband adopted them, if I didn't adopt them too, then I wouldn't have been their mom any more. It was just sort of one of those crazy things in law. It was one of those days in the House that I will always remember because it was heartfelt, and it was clear to me that it was time to change this legislation. I so appreciate your suggestions and your support of this bill.

I would like to end third reading today with comments from Scott Pyke and Monica Kennedy of the Nova Scotia Adoption Advocacy Group. Monica said this bill is the first step to allowing thousands of families to reunite with a chance of a positive reunion. Scott said this bill puts the decision-making back in the hands of those involved instead of government making these very personal decisions.

With these comments, I move to close third reading of Bill No. 23.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 23. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 9.

**Bill No. 9 - Crown Lands Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I do move third reading of Bill No. 9. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, on that short note, I am very pleased to support the minister's move for this bill and the PC caucus is pleased to support this move, as recommended by the Lahey report. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Sorry folks, I have a speech. (Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER: Keep the trend going here, please. (Laughter)

LISA ROBERTS: I am going to speak, I am going to speak. We welcome this amendment to the Crown Lands Act. It is indeed something that was recommended in the Lahey Review of Forest Practices and it is necessary. At the same time, I am going to take a bit of time about my hopes and my trepidations around this bill. This was a recommendation of the Lahey Review.

I am concerned that it has been more than two years since this government accepted the recommendations of the Lahey Review and this change, which is a change to the purpose clause of the Crown Lands Act, certainly could have been brought forward in an earlier legislative session. In fact, in the 2019-2020 departmental business plan of - I think it may have still been the Department of Natural Resources at the time, although frankly, I forget when that change happened, but in the 2019-2020 business plan there was a stated commitment intention to do a review of the Crown Lands Act - the whole Act, not just the purpose.

I am hopeful that this change is coming forward and I am trepidatious. I would suggest that I and my colleagues in the NDP caucus, and many people across this province, will be watching to see how that purpose translates into the change that many Nova Scotians want to see actually on the landscape of Nova Scotia.

We know - and I would say that it is not unique to this government - that the Department of Lands and Forestry and the previous Department of Natural Resources has not always done the work that is given to it by law. In fact, it is quite sobering reading the case where the department was found to have not followed the Endangered Species Act. In the words of Justice Brothers, from the very first paragraph of that decision: "When

government is entrusted, through legislation, with duties and responsibilities, but fails to discharge them, there must be recourse.”

So, our effort in this caucus to take good advice that came to us from people who showed up at the Law Amendments Committee, who actually used that committee for the purpose for which it is intended and to add some additional language to the change to the purpose is all in an effort to make this change more robust because we are actually trying to change course in Nova Scotia, to change course on our Crown lands in a significant way - and I don't want to see the government in any way backslide on that commitment.

In the government response from 2019 to the Lahey report, the language was used that the key to Professor Lahey's report is the adoption of a new paradigm: ecological forestry.

I remember the first time I hear the word “paradigm” used, in a paradigm shift. I was attending a university presentation where I was one of the people speaking, but there were three of us. It would have been 1992 or 1993, around the time that global warming and climate change were first being talked about at the level of the UN, and one of the other presenters used this term of a paradigm shift. I went through the entire presentation not knowing what - going, where is my dictionary? It was before cell phones were invented. Kind of gleaned what it meant but not actually having ever heard the word before.

It's a big change, and we want to see the provincial government, on behalf of all Nova Scotians, have the courage to actually make the change towards ecological forestry that is called for in the Lahey report, and that it committed to in its response to the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia.

We have seen backsliding before. We have seen widespread calls for change before, we have seen commitments to change before, and we have seen those abandoned. We saw the Natural Resources Strategy, which came out of the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, which engaged thousands of people, which was put out not under one Party's banner, but under the Province of Nova Scotia. It was the Province of Nova Scotia's Natural Resources Strategy with a plan for our resources from 2011-2020, and we saw significant parts of that just abandoned, the work just left, including a commitment to a 50 per cent reduction in clear-cutting on Crown land.

It was the abandonment of that target, and then forest practices that people could witness on the landscape that they are travelling through and know well, that caused the outrage that resulted in the then-Premier in 2017 committing to the review of forestry practices. That was done in the Budget Address, which came on the eve of, or maybe two days before, the writ drop. We've seen this crest of concern and then the political reaction to the concern, but not always the follow-through, and we need follow-through. I recognize from talking to so many people that change is hard - you can witness that in many dimensions of our lives and of our society. Change is real hard.

I would suggest we are at a moment - in terms of Crown land management, in terms of that particular department - where change is required, and it's overdue. It's been promised and now it's time to deliver.

One of the changes, as part of that paradigm shift to ecological forestry, that is difficult to live up to is actually leaving forests standing while harvesting them, which is the beauty of ecological forestry. One forester I've spoken with a lot says you can do an awful lot by providing a little bit of space and a little bit of light. That's what makes forests grow. You can harvest selectively, even using significant machines, and create some space and create some light and encourage regeneration and never leave the soil exposed. Never leave an expanse of destruction on the landscape.

That is the kind of paradigm shift that is called for in the recommendations of the Lahey review, and again, we are more than two years past the government accepting them. That's why this past Fall, as we approached that two-year anniversary, I as the NDP spokesperson on Lands and Forestry called for a moratorium on even-aged harvesting practices on Crown lands until significant milestones were reached in terms of implementation of the Lahey report, including adoption of the new silviculture guides.

I know I'm not an expert, and in fact, if I wanted to be an expert, even after devoting myself for decades, I'm not by nature a person who is 100 per cent certain that I'm right or will project myself as more certain than I am. It's just not a way of being that I'm all that comfortable with. So I really hesitated and tried to double-check and verify that we were at the point to call for that moratorium, but I did feel that we were, that people across the province were losing confidence that the change that they knew was necessary was going to happen.

Then just a very short time after we made that call, I realized that, in fact, seven members of the minister's own Advisory Committee on Forestry, within weeks of us, had made the same call. I didn't know that at the time. Just to quote a little bit of their letter that they wrote to the minister, they said that they had learned that:

“. . . mills [in the WestFor consortium] in Southwest Nova Scotia currently have five years of harvest plan approvals in place. This means the practices that Lahey rejected will remain the dominant treatments on forested Crown lands for many years after Government accepted the recommendations of the Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia.”

We have not been able to get a commitment from this government, an absolute clarity, that when they adopt the silviculture guides it will then apply to all cuts from that day forward. So we are, like many Nova Scotians - I'm not, but countless citizens are devoting so much time to watching the Harvest Plans Map Viewer, to looking at the sorts of cuts that are approved.



This is a list of the cuts that are open for comment right now, in Annapolis County, in Halifax County, in Queens County. The majority of them are variable-retention cuts. Variable-retention cuts are the sort of clearcutting, to use a not very technical term, that is allowed to happen on Crown lands, with the interim guidelines that were announced in December 2018 - interim guidelines. So they are significant cuts where a portion of that plot will not be cut.

That's better than it was. It is significantly better than it was, but if you picture a football field and 20 per cent of it is left forested and the rest of it is clear-cut, we know that there are going to be real challenges to implementing ecological forestry on that whole football field, because 70 per cent of it, the soil is exposed. Regeneration hasn't started to take hold by leaving that space and that light. The ecosystem is damaged. To then say, okay, well now, I don't know, in 2022 we're now going to do ecological forestry, it becomes far less viable

These are a couple of the reasons why we're concerned and why we are continuing to join our voices with many other people who are calling for a moratorium on even-aged harvesting until the silviculture guide is indeed guiding all cuts on Crown land. It's also why I hope my comments have given a sense as to why we moved some amendments to the Crown Lands Act and why we are glad. I'm personally gratified and grateful that the government was open to those amendments.

One of those amendments adds consideration of climate change to the many different values and considerations that the department will consider for its management of Crown lands along with recreation, cultural values, and economic values. It's also why we were able to add another sort of subclause to the purpose that says that the department will engage in land use planning in order to pursue all of the other different considerations.

That goes back, again, to Lahey, because the recommendation is that ecological forestry will be the dominant way of doing forestry going forward. There will also be high-production forestry on certain pieces of land, on certain parts of the landscape. At this point, again more than two years later, we don't know where those will be.

Some people would argue that high-production forestry is sort of what we've done up until now, assuming that we're always going to be able to move on to another piece of land that hasn't been touched in a long, long time. We've kind of used up Crown land for one-time high-production forestry instead of practising ecological forestry, where we are continually kind of coming back to some of the same landscape but not ever leaving it barren.

Including a reference to land use planning in the purpose clause, I hope, is significant. Adding consideration of climate change to the Crown Lands Act, I certainly feel, could be significant. For me, it's hopeful because we should actually be considering

climate change in pretty much every single aspect of the way that we govern Nova Scotia at this juncture.

The last thing I'll say about climate change in regard to the Crown Lands Act is that I think we're at the point where we also have to be really looking hard and being honest with ourselves and with our trading partners in conversations around the use of biomass for energy.

I asked some questions about this at a recent committee meeting - you know, have we ever done a life-cycle assessment of whether it is true that we can consider biomass for energy as a renewable energy source? We know it has been written about quite widely in scientific journals that there was a calculation error initially when biomass was designated a renewable resource. It was considered to be neutral if you cut it down because if you cut down trees to use for biomass, the trees would grow back. Therefore, it was considered neutral when it went up the smokestack but, in fact, there are greenhouse gas emissions that come out of those smokestacks when you're burning biomass that are currently not calculated, to the best of my knowledge.

[9:15 p.m.]

Also, the point has now been made that the time frame during which we need to seriously address climate change is actually much shorter than the time frame that it would take for that tree to reincorporate the same amount of carbon again in a tree. Trees take longer to grow to significant size than we have right now to address climate change. That's another aspect of the work of the department and the work of the Lahey review of forestry that I hope will proceed in part guided by this purpose of the Crown Lands Act.

I want to say just two last things. One is that the point has been made - and I think it's important to remember as the department and the government commits and recommits to the Lahey review and does not backslide - that the Lahey review and the Lahey recommendations are a compromise. They are the compromise. If we compromise on implementation of Lahey, we're not making the change that we need to make. The compromise is baked into the triad approach.

The last thing I want to say, and I've said it before, outside this Legislature to people who were raising their voices earlier in this session, and I've said it in different parts of the province when I've met with people - I want to acknowledge the work and the stewardship of many citizens. Crown land is our collective land. It's our common land, and many Nova Scotians generously - and also because of a lack of confidence in the government's, or in the department's, stewardship of Crown land - are keeping an eye on and putting a lot of time into that.

I want to acknowledge that because it's significant. It has resulted in changes including that political move to call for the Lahey review years after the Natural Resources

Strategy had been effectively abandoned. It's important. I really appreciate people's time and effort and caring, and I really appreciate all the learning that I have done as our caucus's spokesperson on this file.

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

The honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, I move third reading on Bill No. 9.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 9. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

**Bill No. 28 - Land Titles Initiative Acceleration Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 28 be now read a third time.

I want to thank the members opposite for their comments at second reading. Clearly there is much support for these amendments, amendments that represent a step towards correcting a historic wrong. I want to thank the members opposite for that support. I also want to acknowledge all the hard work from my colleagues across multiple departments who are united in the common goal of accelerating the Land Titles Initiative.

As outlined during second reading, this legislation will expedite the land claims process and remove more barriers so that residents in five historic African Nova Scotian communities can get clear title to their land - the land that their families have been living on for generations. With legal certainty of ownership, more Nova Scotians in these communities will finally be able to exercise the benefits of land ownership that the rest of us take for granted, such as obtaining a mortgage, dividing or selling their land, accessing housing grants, or building equity in their homes.

The actions we'll be taking through this legislation will not only significantly expedite the Land Titles Initiative, it will also help us continue to build trust with African Nova Scotian communities, create positive and lasting change, and it's just one more step in addressing a historic injustice.

With those brief remarks, I'll take my seat and look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues.

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

BRAD JOHNS: It is a pleasure to be able to stand and give a brief reply to Bill No. 28. My Progressive Conservative colleagues, as well as myself, certainly support this legislation and recognize the goals that it set out to achieve. It is certainly beneficial to many African Nova Scotian families in the few communities that are here. We're very glad to see that the government is extending this and certainly hope that there will be a Phase 3 if this doesn't resolve any of the outstanding work that needs to be done.

With that, I'll sit. The PC caucus does support this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am pleased to speak in support of this bill. The NDP caucus will support this bill. We are glad to see it. We're glad to see progress.

As I said on second reading, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that progress has been quite slow on this file. That included a court case with the government, and hurdle after hurdle. I want to start by just thanking and acknowledging the families who have been here for generations, in most cases much longer than my family has been here, who have had to withstand the lack of certainty, the lack of security, and the systemic disadvantage that comes from not having clear title to your own land.

We are very pleased that that situation continues to move forward. The situation with land titles in historically Black communities in Nova Scotia is one of the clearest examples of systemic racism in our province. Land was given to the Loyalists in the 1800s but only white settlers were given title. So, everyone got land, but if you were white, you got title - if you were Black, you didn't.

We know that property ownership and inheritance are significant sites of power and privilege in our society. Starting in 1800, and right through to 2021 in many cases, African Nova Scotians have been denied that.

I want to note on that line that this hasn't been the case for everyone who was denied clear title. Some Acadians also experienced that but when the government determined that it wanted to remedy the situation, it was remedied. No one applied, it went

quickly, it was cleared up. That speed has not been applied and still isn't quite being applied for the communities that are impacted by this bill, which are North Preston, East Preston, Lincolnville, and Sunnyville.

It is encouraging that this is called the Land Titles Initiative Acceleration Act, but we still don't quite understand what the speed standards are here. How quickly will this happen? How much capacity has been created? We definitely applaud the appointment of Angela Simmonds as the executive director of the program. It's incredibly encouraging. She has been a tireless champion for African Nova Scotian families, and on this file in particular she has been working on it since she was a law student. She is tremendously capable. Our understanding is that many of the stakeholders have increased faith in the process knowing that she'll be there to guide it.

We are very hopeful that the government will be able to assuage, if not us, then those families still going through this process, how progress will be evaluated, how communities will be involved, and how this process will genuinely be accelerated.

This is a great step in the right direction. We support the bill and we hope that progress is swift, and justice is as well.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. RANDY DELOREY: I thank again my colleagues throughout the Legislature for their remarks. Most significantly, it's simply the continued support for this bill, as through the other readings, and at this point as well. I think what this shows again is the unanimous recognition of the need to address and improve the speedy delivery of the land title clarification process.

Indeed, as I mentioned in the second reading, the feedback and the input from families and communities that have been involved in the process is what actually led to the specific amendments and changes and investments that are being made to accelerate this process. With those few words, I now move to close debate on Bill No. 28.

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

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

**Bill No. 47 - Municipal Government Act (amended) and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended).**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 47 be now read for a third time.

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

DAVE RITCEY: I'm pleased to be speaking to Bill No. 47, the Municipal Government Act (amended) and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended), Respecting Accessibility.

The Progressive Conservative caucus is in support of this bill, along with being committed to working with all municipalities and the government in partnership ensuring Nova Scotia is fully accessible by 2030.

I was a bit disappointed that the amendments to Bill No. 47 presented by the PC Party of Nova Scotia were not passed. The proposed amendments that we presented were to ensure that the Department of Municipal Affairs would not download this to the municipalities and will continue to fund the majority of the required grant support for small businesses to meet the requirements under the Accessibility Act.

In closing, again, the Progressive Conservative caucus will be in support of this bill, along with being committed to working with municipalities and the government in partnership ensuring Nova Scotia is fully accessible by 2030.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm happy to say the NDP caucus will be supporting this legalisation, as we have heard that it allows some municipalities to undertake specific projects with businesses.

The goal is to make this province accessible by 2030. Delays only put off social inclusion and hold our communities back. We believe that, although providing funding for this work is not the responsibility of municipalities, there is more harm done by preventing these projects than there is in the problems that may result from this enabling legislation. However, it was the job of the government to find out through consultation if municipalities share that view.

[9:30 p.m.]

This has been a theme in the legislative session. Some government consultation is done, but stakeholders find that there's not appropriate follow-up or sharing of information. Legislation apparently based on consultation comes as a surprise to those who will be most affected.

Mr. Speaker, we will vote for this legislation in the hopes that most small businesses understand the intense financial pressure that municipalities face and will not demand assistance that should be coming from the Province. On the topic of what should be coming from the Province, I am concerned to see that the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage's Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program has had fewer participants in the past year than in the years 2018 and 2019. In February 2019, the government reported that they had invested more than \$1 million that year to help 41 businesses increase their accessibility. For the 2020-21 program, only 21 businesses received grants totalling \$488,191 - I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, this night is getting long. That's less than half of the funding.

Why this drop in the Business ACCESS-Ability Grant Program? With all this attention on giving municipalities the power to offer direct financial assistance to businesses, I hope the government will be ensuring that its own programs are fully subscribed and well funded so that we are all working toward the 2030 goal as quickly as possible.

Finally, a point I made in second reading: the municipalities have been asking for increased funding. I will table the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities resolution concerning municipal funding that passed in 2018 and was retained in 2019. Part of this request is that, "The Province of Nova Scotia cost share 50/50 in all municipal projects required to comply with the Accessibility Act, if those projects do not receive other funding, beginning in 2019."

As I vote in favour of this bill that will allow a few municipalities to help businesses with their accessibility upgrades, I remain eager to know if the government is willing to help all municipalities comply with the Act as requested.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I want to thank the member for Cape Breton Centre and the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River for the points that they made. I will assure you that we will continue to work side by side with our municipal

leaders in NSFM and every corner of this province to ensure that they are sustainable and that their needs are met.

With that, I move to close debate on Bill No. 47.

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

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

**Bill No. 50 - Municipal Government Act (amended) and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended).**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

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

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

DAVE RITCEY: I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 50, the Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Codes of Conduct.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the codes of conduct of municipalities has been a long-standing discussion since 2018 amongst the stakeholders. Our Party feels the opportunity for this bill continues to be that the department's ability, in consultation with stakeholders, is to create and provide a clear and consistent set of standards with sanctions. The implementation of this process will help level the playing field for all municipalities in Nova Scotia.

Our caucus is supportive of much of the content of this bill. We feel it has potential, but only if the stakeholders and the municipal units are consulted.



The Progressive Conservative caucus will be in support of this bill, and I hope that we can strengthen our partnership with all municipalities by implementing a process with clear and consistent actions across the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to support Bill No. 50, an Act respecting codes of conduct. Enforceable codes of conduct at the municipal level are long overdue, and we in the NDP caucus are supportive of this.

In the last municipal election, we saw women break through in historic numbers. We also saw some breakthroughs in terms of racialized candidates. The face of municipal representation is changing, and this is very good news. Not everyone can see themselves reflected in the makeup of our councils.

What's worse, though, is that some people do not feel welcomed or respected, even when they become elected. Enforceable codes of conduct are crucial to ensuring that progress and more diverse representation on council keeps moving in the right direction. Something we heard in the Law Amendments Committee was that codes of conduct are not much use if they're not enforceable with clear sanctions.

As a councillor, I have personal experience of this. While waiting for a meeting to begin, I bent over to pick something up and another councillor commented, "Good thing she stood up. I was going to spank her on the fanny." As a young female councillor, I deserved as much respect as anyone else. The comment was patronizing, sexist, and degrading. The comment stopped me, quite literally, in my tracks.

We had a code of conduct. What was lacking was an understanding of how that code of conduct should guide interactions and what would happen if a councillor crossed the line. I became well aware that the diversity officer was not able to sanction the councillor. Truth be told, I felt that this councillor might never have addressed me in that way if there had been training and an understanding that specific sanctions would follow a breach of the code.

What many municipalities have been calling for is a code with teeth. Known, prescribed sanctions can prevent a lot of harm before it begins. I am happy to see that in this bill.

In the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, I was disappointed, though, that the Liberal government voted against the funding for municipalities to prepare and implement these codes. We know that financial inequalities across municipalities is a problem. The robust implementation of codes of conduct should be an option for every municipality, regardless of their budget.

With that, I will end on this: if the government continues to bring these enabling bills to do more - four so far this session, Mr. Speaker - it needs to make more funding available to the municipalities. I would welcome a bill, a budget line, or an announcement that provides substantive response to the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities' repeated request for an increase in the municipal equalization program.

With that, I am happy to support the fact that there are going to be codes of conduct, and I will take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Cape Breton Centre for sharing her very personal story and assure her that there will be extensive consultations and sanctions along with this code of conduct.

I want to thank the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River for his support. Again, I would like to assure him that we will be reaching out to our NSFMM members for excessive consultation.

Mr. Speaker, with these two bills tonight I would also like to thank all the stakeholders involved in the consultation. I would like to thank the Department of Municipal Affairs and the staff who worked around the clock to engage, listen, and bring forward legislation that is reflective of the needs of our municipalities.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 50.

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

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today? I move that the House do now rise, to meet again tomorrow, Friday, April 9, 2021, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Following the daily routine and Question Period, business, of course, will include the continuation of the Committee of the Whole and the Subcommittee on Supply, followed by second reading of Bill Nos. 98, 103 and 105, as well as third reading of Bill No. 4.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House to adjourn, to meet again tomorrow, Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House is adjourned until tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 9:42 p.m.]