



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Kevin Murphy

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Third Session

TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021

Sixty-third General Assembly

Third Session

12:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Kevin Murphy

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Keith Bain, Susan Leblanc

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause of which reads:

“Whereas; the two existing schools in the Town of Trenton and surrounding area, one an elementary school with pre-primary to grade 4 and the other middle school with grades 5 to 8, are totally inadequate.

Therefore we, the undersigned residents of Trenton and surrounding area, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to build a new P-8 facility in the Town of Trenton to replace the two existing buildings, providing the educational opportunities that every child in Nova Scotia deserves.”

Mr. Speaker, there are 1,234 signatures on this petition, and I have affixed my signature, according to the rules.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to table a report of the Standing Committee on Community Services. This is the annual report for 2020.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Clerk has a copy, but I beg leave to table the 2019-20 *Moving Toward Equity: Employment Equity and Diversity in the Nova Scotia Public Service* strategy.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 435

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

Whereas the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute is a Halifax non-profit organization that works to improve educational outcomes for Nova Scotians of African descent; and

Whereas the “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute sponsored a poetry and spoken-word competition to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, held on March 21st; and

Whereas three Cape Breton students were chosen as the winners: Toluwani Osunneye and Olivia Obadan, Grade 8 students at Malcolm Munroe, and Tyra Obadan, a Grade 10 student at Sydney Academy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature congratulate Toluwani, Olivia, and Tyra on a job very well done and recognize the “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute for the important work they do to support our African Nova Scotian students.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 436

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

Whereas the prestigious Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Excellence in Nova Scotian Wines was adjudicated by a 12-member panel of wine experts, established to recognize exceptional quality of locally sourced and produced wines;

Whereas the awards are administered in conjunction with the Wine Growers Nova Scotia and Taste of Nova Scotia in partnership with the Lieutenant Governor’s office, culminating in and leading to an adjudication and award ceremony at Government House; and

Whereas the Lüvo Life Company sparkling rosé was recognized with an award from 37 wines submitted to an adjudicated panel of experts;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the honour bestowed upon Lüvo Life Company and the winery’s ongoing dedication and craft as it helps grow our rural economy.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

RESOLUTION NO. 437

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

Whereas today I am pleased to table the *Moving Toward Equity* report for 2019-2020, which provides an update on our work toward employment equity for the fiscal year; and

Whereas just before the pandemic last March, we launched our new corporate diversity and inclusion strategy called All Together, which has a strong focus on accountability, senior leadership, and building diversity in the top levels of the public service; and

Whereas through this strategy we're seeing more positions created in departments specifically to lead and support diversity and inclusion, more designated positions to proactively recruit equity-seeking candidates, and more diversity in senior leadership;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize and thank the government's Diversity Round Table, employee networks, and all employees for their commitment to putting this strategy into practice to create an environment where all feel welcome to show up as who they are.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of the Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 438

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

Whereas Ka'Le Bay Seafoods, a division of Louisbourg Seafood, is a leading processor of multiple groundfish species located in Glace Bay in Cape Breton County; and

Whereas Ka'Le Bay is soon going to launch a brand new, modern, state of the art, 24-metre groundfish trawler to its fleet to support processing red fish and other species at its facility; and

Whereas the name of the vessel will be *Nathan K*, so named after Jim Kennedy's late father, who passed away on May 2, 2020;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Ka'Le Bay's leadership to Nova Scotia's fishing industry and continued dedication to the proud tradition of the groundfish industry in Cape Breton.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Immigration and Population Growth.

RESOLUTION NO. 439

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

Whereas Nova Scotia recognizes the significant contributions made by immigrant entrepreneurs as they bring their skills, ideas, and investment to businesses and communities across the province; and

Whereas the Office of Immigration and Population Growth's entrepreneur program is seeing steady progress as more and more experienced business owners start or purchase businesses here; and

Whereas 35 businesses are now open under this program and are providing employment and opportunities in Nova Scotian communities across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in recognizing these valued newcomer entrepreneurs and, in particular, Andrea Rautenbach, owner of Ashwood Care in Cookville, Lunenburg County, and Ajay Vir Singh, owner of Osprey Health Care in Sydney, who are operating important businesses in the health care sector.

[12:15 p.m.]

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 440

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative supports universities and environmental organizations to conduct projects on behalf of the management of the provincial sports fishery; and

Whereas topics of research projects include stream habitat restoration, exploitation, fish population dynamics, migration and behaviour, aquatic invasive species, fish health, and salmonid population enhancements; and

Whereas Direct Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative project funding - annually \$40,000 - has resulted in three to four times that amount of in-kind cash contributions from Nova Scotia universities and environmental organizations for the numerous studies that have contributed significantly to sportfishing management in our province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize staff of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, in particular John MacMillan, for establishing the management of Nova Scotia Freshwater Fisheries Research Cooperative.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 441

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

Whereas the prestigious Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence in Nova Scotia Wines is adjudicated by a 12-member panel of wine experts established to recognize exception quality of locally sourced or produced wines; and

Whereas awards are administered in conjunction with the Wine Growers of Nova Scotia and Taste of Nova Scotia, in partnership with the Lieutenant Governor's Office, culminating in the adjudication and award ceremony at the Lieutenant Governor's house; and

Whereas Blomidon Estate Winery's NV Crémant was recognized with an award from 37 wines submitted to the adjudication panel of wine experts;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the honour that has been bestowed upon Blomidon Estate Winery and the winery's ongoing dedication to their craft as it helps to grow our rural economy.

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. 112 - Entitled an Act to Recognize Emancipation Day. (Hon. Tony Ince)

Bill No. 113 - Entitled an Act Respecting Regional Health Priorities and Issues. (Tim Houston)

Bill No. 114 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Residential Tenancies Act. (Lisa Roberts)

Bill No. 115 - Entitled an Act to Establish a Time of Remembrance. (Alana Paon)

Bill No. 116 - Entitled an Act to Ensure the Permanent Closure of the Sackville Landfill. (Brad Johns)

Bill No. 117 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Vehicle Act, Respecting School Bus Safety. (Hon. Pat Dunn)

Bill No. 118 - Entitled an Act Respecting Clean Air. (Karla MacFarlane)

Bill No. 119 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 114 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Crown Lands Act, and Chapter 297 of the Revised Statutes of 1989. The Motor Vehicle Act. (Brad Johns)

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 Pictou East.

MUSLIM COM.: OBSERVING RAMADAN - BLESSINGS

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, today marks the start of Ramadan. It is the holy month that commemorates the first revelation to Muhammad, and generally lasts between 29 to 30 days. It is a time when blessings are to be shared with one and all.

Muslims refrain from food or drink and the fast begins at dawn and ends at sunset. Ramadan is a month for introspection, reading of the Quran, and communal prayer.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all Muslims of Nova Scotia a blessed Ramadan Mubarak.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

AFRICVILLE VISIONING PROCESS: UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY - RECOG.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I want to express my support for an Africville visioning process, as proposed by Councillor Lindell Smith and supported by Halifax Regional Council, and to encourage the Province of Nova Scotia, through relevant departments and offices, to be an active, supportive participant.

This is a unique moment of opportunity to redress some of the wrong committed in Africville. Some descendants are still with us. Federal government investment will result in significant changes on lands close to the historic community. There is a great need for investment in affordable housing with an equity lens and awareness of who has been historically dispossessed. There are municipal lands adjacent to Africville where housing could be located.

The Province of Nova Scotia has a role and a responsibility and must be at the table. The Africville Heritage Society has a strong board of directors and is also looking to the Province for partnership and collaboration. The story of Africville, both the injustice of its destruction and the richness of its community life and history, is important for us all to know.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston-Dartmouth.

MACPHERSON, JAMES: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KEITH COLWELL: I would like to recognize James MacPherson of Lake Echo, who passed away on December 11, 2020 - a good friend and a friend to all he met.

He was always willing to help anyone and often spent many hours working on neighbours' cars or some other equipment. He was a Red Seal heavy-duty mechanic and automotive mechanic. He studied his trade in Cape Breton and eventually moved his family from Newfoundland and Labrador to Lake Echo. He worked in the city of Halifax as a heavy-duty mechanic for 28 years and was a recognized expert and master of all aspects of his trade.

He and his wife Gale devoted countless hours volunteering at St. Anne's Church in Lake Echo. It is impossible to overstate the positive impact they had on the life of their church and the community.

I recognize Jim MacPherson for expertise he has chosen, his career and the many volunteer activities in his community. It truly made a difference in the lives of many individuals, and he will be missed by all.

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

MOORE, ERNEST: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

BRAD JOHNS: I rise today to acknowledge the retirement of Mount Uniacke resident Ernest Moore, who has served for many years as a firefighter at the Mount Uniacke Fire Department.

The community held an open house to congratulate Ernest's dedication to the department and his community over the years.

I would like to take an opportunity to congratulate Ernest on his selfless service to the Mount Uniacke Fire Department, and I ask all members to join me in wishing Ernest a happy and healthy retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

COVID-19 ASSESSMENT CTRS.: EXCELLENCE - THANKS

KENDRA COOMBES: I want to acknowledge and thank the hard-working individuals at the COVID-19 assessment centres. In particular, I wish to thank those who are working at the assessment centre at the Grand Lake Road Fire Hall.

I have been tested several times, including every Saturday since the Legislature has been in session. I can attest to the professionalism and the dedication of everyone working in these assessment centres. They are welcoming, provide clear direction, and are helpful and friendly.

There are hidden members of the team who are working extremely hard - medical lab techs and medical lab assistants, who ensure we receive our test results in a timely manner, are testing thousands of tests a day; they do not often get to see our appreciation.

I ask the House to join me in giving thanks to all these hard-working individuals.

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

SINGH, AMRINDER - PRES.: CBUSU - COMMEND

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise to recognize Amrinder Singh, who is now soon to finish his term as student union president at Cape Breton University. He spent a few years in the student government, supporting students not only on campus but in the greater community.

He showed great leadership this year during COVID, doing his very best to support students as we all transitioned through the pandemic.

I ask all members of the House to congratulate Amrinder on a great term as president of the student union and wish him all the best as he graduates and moves on to his future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**CANNING VALUFOODS:
MAINTAINING FOOD SUPPLY DURING PANDEMIC - THANKS**

JOHN LOHR: Until the arrival of COVID-19, having a safe supply of good food in a clean store safe to shop in was something many of us took for granted. All that changed with the emergence of the COVID pandemic, when suddenly our shopping experience was now a possible COVID exposure hazard, and supply of the food on our shelves was interrupted.

The fact that our store shelves were kept stocked and very few contracted COVID while shopping is a tribute to the extraordinary efforts of all involved in supplying our food. Staff and management at Canning Valufoods worked together and at great risk to provide that safe shopping experience.

Truckers, farmers, and food producers kept on working despite personal risks. We all realize the new definition of essential worker, which includes all those who help supply food.

Today, I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to recognize and thank Sam Elias and the staff at Canning Valufoods grocery store for their efforts to put food on

the shelves, work the checkout counters, and ensure that grocery shopping during COVID-19 was safe, continuous and secure.

[12:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable speaker for Dartmouth North.

**THORNHILL, KENZIE:
SPEAKING OUT AGAINST RAPE CULTURE - RECOG.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I stand today in solidarity with and in gratitude for Kenzie Thornhill, a student at West Kings District High who was suspended for taking a photo of another student's T-shirt and posting it on social media. The shirt said a number of offensive things, including "'tis the season to be rapey."

I also stand in solidarity with Kenzie's fellow students who walked out of school to protest her suspension, which has since been reversed. Rape is not a joke. Slogans about rape on T-shirts should not be tolerated. People who courageously speak out about rape slogans on T-shirts should not be penalized.

We think we've come a long way, Mr. Speaker, but the handling of this situation speaks to the still deeply ingrained sexism and misogyny in our communities and our government systems. These systems will not change unless people in power start calling out misogyny and rape culture wherever and whenever it appears.

As a woman and the mother of small children, I cannot stay quiet. I thank Kenzie for her courage. I'm sorry it is she who is the one who had to take action. (Applause)

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

**ROYAL CDN. LEGION BRANCHES:
PROMOTING REMEMBRANCE - THANKS**

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, annually on April 9th, Canadians pause to remember the Battle of Vimy Ridge, which began on Easter Monday, April 9th, 1917. The Battle of Vimy Ridge is credited with helping create a new and stronger sense of national identity in our country. However, victory came at a heavy price as Canada suffered more than 10,300 casualties, of which nearly 3,600 were fatal.

Our last surviving Canadian World War I veteran passed away in February 2010. The role of remembrance of those service men and women now falls upon those of us who enjoy the freedoms and peace for which they sacrificed.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Royal Canadian Legion members of Branch 43 in Port Hawkesbury, Branch 47 in St. Peter's, Branch 110 in L'Ardoise, Branch 150 in Isle Madame, and Branch 151 in East Bay, who actively carry out their mission to serve veterans, including serving military and RCMP members and their families, to promote remembrance and to serve our communities and our country.

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

**HELPAID, RHONDA - PARAMEDIC:
EMS EXEMPLARY SERV. MEDAL - COMMEND**

HON. LLOYD HINES: I rise today to recognize the hard work and dedication that goes into being an emergency health services paramedic, especially in rural Nova Scotia.

Last Fall, Rhonda Helpard, a paramedic hailing from Steep Creek, was one of 21 EHS paramedics who received the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal for 20 years of dedicated service. This medal recognizes these professionals and the provision of pre-hospital emergency medical services to the public who have performed their duties in a commendable manner, characterized by good conduct, industry, and efficiency.

Rhonda dedicated her career to providing high-quality care of Nova Scotians in their time of greatest need, often at her own personal risk. EHS paramedics are a vital part of our health care system. When Nova Scotians need help in an emergency, paramedics are there.

For that, I would like to thank all EHS paramedics, but I would like to give a special thanks to Rhonda Helpard for her excellent and committed service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

COORDINATED MARITIME PANDEMIC APPROACH - REQUIRED

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has caused extraordinary anguish and stress on the people living in our border community in Cumberland North. Many people have not seen their families in six months, even though they often live only 10 minutes away.

Every day I hear from residents who are denied the ability to see their loved ones to provide elder care, residents are being denied medical care and, most recently, someone was even denied to attend their own daughter's funeral.

Judy Robinson Smith's daughter died unexpectedly two weeks ago in Moncton. Judy lives in Amherst and was unable to receive permission to attend her own daughter's funeral on Saturday. I feel, personally, as though I failed her by not finding anyone in government who would find the compassion to allow Judy to attend her own daughter's wake.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this never happens to another person living in our border community and ask this government to establish a coordinated Maritime pandemic health approach.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**THOSE WHO ACTIVELY ACKNOWLEDGE:
BLACK LIVES MATTER - RECOG.**

LISA ROBERTS: Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter. It needs to be said, repeated, and realized.

I want to acknowledge the pain felt at repeated trauma and evidence of Black lives not being cherished and held up and protected. Daunte Wright's name is added to too long a list that includes George Floyd but did not begin with him.

I want to congratulate and thank Teens Now Talk and Jessica Bowden for opening a storefront, UbU4U in the Sunnyside Mall in Bedford, where anyone can pick up a Black Lives Matter T-shirt or hoodie - it just opened this month. And I want to congratulate Angela Bowden whose collection of poetry, *Unspoken Truth*, highlights the generational pain of Africans living in the diaspora, including here in Nova Scotia. It was just released by Nimbus and Vagrant Press. The collection invites us into difficult but necessary conversations.

Black Lives Matter.

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

NUNEZ, MAX: SPEEDY RECOVERY - BEST WISHES

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer best wishes for a speedy recovery to six-year-old Max Nunez of Hubbards. I also wish to congratulate his family and friends who raised and donated over \$4,600 to send Max to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, for the treatment of brain cancer.

The fundraiser was organized by Vanessa Stevens, a volunteer with Chester Minor Hockey and the Chester Oldies team. Max plays on the U-7 number-one team with Chester Minor Hockey.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating those who helped raise the funds to send Max to get his vital medical treatment.

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

DUKE OF ED. AWARDS: DEVELOPING YOUTH POTENTIAL - RECOG.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the efforts and the accomplishments of the international Duke of Edinburgh Awards Nova Scotia in their work of youth engagement. The award program began in 1956, funded by the late Duke of Edinburgh. The award came to Canada in 1963.

His Royal Highness dedicated much time and commitment to the development of youth through this program and its mandate challenges young people to reach their fullest potential in preparation for a successful future. Over 500,000 young Canadians have benefitted from this program and, ultimately, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh's vision to champion the development of the world's young people.

Our office has worked with the Duke of Edinburgh's International Awards Nova Scotia as a community award leader and found that many young people in the area greatly benefitted from the awards' opportunities for growth.

I hope to continue our collaboration with this award program team in the future, in hopes that we can continue to give the communities' young people all the opportunities possible to achieve their goals for success in their futures.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle-Barrington.

RUCKSACK MARCH: SUPPORTING WOUNDED WARRIORS - THANKS

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Rucksack March of Remembrance held on November 7, 2020, in Yarmouth. It was the only march in Eastern Canada for Wounded Warriors Canada.

The Rucksack March was established to raise awareness and money to support Canadian Armed Forces members, first responders, and their families who are battling PTSD and occupational stress injuries. I proudly took part in the march with a lighter rucksack on my back and completed the 15-kilometre walk with over 40 other participants.

I want to recognize the amazing efforts of one of my constituents, Jason Kitchen, who raised more than \$2,700 for this event - the most in all of Canada - and who walked 10 kilometres a day, 21 days in a row, carrying 22 pounds before the Rucksack March. His

22nd walk was the day of the march - 22 was in part to remember the 22 victims of last year's mass shooting.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the Legislature join me in thanking all participants, organizers, and volunteers for their hard work in support of our wounded warriors.

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

MADANI, ARASH - BROADCASTER: COM. SERV. - THANKS

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Arash Madani.

Born and raised in Truro, Arash started working at the *Truro Daily News* as a volunteer while attending CEC High School, covering local sports and local community events. He is now living his dream working with Sportsnet.

Since 2009, he has worked in many roles with Sportsnet including the World Series, Super Bowl, NHL playoffs, the Masters, NBA playoffs, and many more. In 2017, Arash was recognized by his peers as a recipient of the prestigious George Gross Award in Broadcasting. Arash is a true ambassador for our community and the province.

Most recently, the Town of Truro worked with the local African Nova Scotia community and the Municipality of Colchester County to showcase our local African Nova Scotia female athletes. Arash took the time to research and create individual videos for each athlete. The video has been featured on social media channels, with videos being featured on the town's social media sites.

I would like to thank Arash for his support for our community and wish him continued success in his professional career with Sportsnet.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ARCHIBALD, JAN: CRICHTON PARK CRITTERS SOCCER - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an amazing community volunteer and organization in Dartmouth North: Jan Archibald and the Crichton Park Critters Soccer Club. Jan started Crichton Park Critters when her son was about three and she was looking for an accessible place in terms of location and costs to play soccer.

She put the idea of a local soccer club to some neighbours and figured they'd get eight or 10 kids around the neighbourhood playing in someone's yard. Well, that first year

there were 84 kids. Registration cost \$20 for the Summer, and each kid got their very own Critters t-shirt. Fun and friendship with a little soccer thrown in was the name of the game.

The organization thrived for 10 years. In its last season, 300 kids were registered and the cost had only gone up to \$30 for the Summer. Jan has been the constant organizer, and each year she has been helped by two or three moms plus a number of coaches from the area and beyond. I am a proud Critters mom myself and also proudly coached in 2019.

The Crichton Park Critters has seen its final season, and though many families will miss the club, I know that all families who participated are extremely grateful to Jan, and all who helped her run things, for her dedication to the children in Crichton Park and beyond.

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

**BOUTILIER, OLIVIA - RECIPIENT:
ANNE MARTELL SCHOLARSHIP - CONGRATS.**

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Ms. Olivia Boutilier. She's a resident of Upper Tantallon who was recently awarded the Anne Martell Memorial Scholarship.

Olivia is a remarkable young women who has spent countless hours giving back to her community. As a student at Sir John A., Olivia was the co-president of the high school student government. She volunteered as a co-advisor of the Free to Give club and as part of the ME to WE Foundation.

She's also a well-recognized athlete. Apart from making excellent grades, she participated in several extracurricular activities, including basketball and rugby. These experiences have allowed Olivia to develop excellent leadership skills that will help her in her future.

This year, Olivia is headed off to St. F.X. to pursue a degree in Human Kinetics. After she finishes her undergrad, she hopes to receive a Bachelor of Education in Phys. Ed. and become an elementary school teacher.

I would ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Olivia on her scholarship and wishing her the best in her academic career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**LOCAL RESTAURANTS:
HELPING THE VULNERABLE DURING PANDEMIC - THANKS**

MURRAY RYAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the various restaurants within my constituency of Northside-Westmount that were there in a time of need. What seems like a lifetime ago but was just 12 short months ago, we were in the midst of the first lockdown. When people were feeling their most vulnerable, these local businesses - the Black Spoon, the Lobster Pound, Commercial Street Deli, Miner's Daughter, Thyme Savour, and Jane's Family Restaurant - together with local lobster fishermen, stepped up to help those vulnerable persons with meals during this most unusual time.

[12:45 p.m.]

I ask all members to join me in saluting the selflessness and community-minded generosity of so many businesses in my community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre.

PAID SICK DAYS: VITAL TO PUBLIC HEALTH - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has shone a light on the importance of paid sick days. Paid sick days, from a public health perspective, are vital not just during a pandemic, but for salmonella poisoning, influenza, and the common cold, to name a few.

COVID-19 has shown us the public health risk when workers are forced to choose between losing a day's pay and going to work sick. Often, parents will send their children to school sick because they cannot afford to take the time off. Thousands of part-time and full-time workers have no available sick time and are struggling to pay bills, put food on the table, and keep a roof over their heads. Paid sick days for all would ensure that people can stay home when they are sick, keep their children at home when they are sick, get better faster, and limit the number of people they can infect.

Mr. Speaker, paid sick days would be a good public health policy and should be part of the Labour Standards Code.

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

SAUNDERS, JACOB - OLYMPIAN: TEAM CANADA SAILING - RECOG.

HUGH MACKAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jacob Saunders who was recently named by the Canadian Olympic Committee to the nine-member Canadian Olympic sailing contingent.

Jacob, with his brother and partner Graeme, participated at the Rio 2016 Olympics in the men's 470 dinghy sailing competition, and now he will partner in the same category with his long-time friend, Jamie Bone, at the Tokyo Olympic Games this summer. Jacob, the son of Chester residents Christie and David Chaplin-Saunders, is a member of both the Chester Yacht Club and the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Chester's Jacob Saunders for once again representing Canada at the Olympic Games.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

NORRIS, BRENNAN: PIZZA DONATION TO COM. EVENTS - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a giving and selfless individual who manages a business in my riding.

Brennan Norris manages the Domino's Pizza on Parkland Drive. His business has donated roughly \$30,000 worth of pizza within the community since 2019. During the beginning stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brennan was instrumental in making my office's initiative a success by donating pizzas to essential workers at local seniors' homes.

In 2019, Brennan also donated 100 pizzas to my 2019 annual community barbecue and again for our 2020 Heritage Day event. Additionally, he has helped with five local school fundraisers and teacher appreciation meals.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that this House of Assembly join me in applauding Brennan on his remarkable kindness and huge heart. Thank you, Brennan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

**GATEWAY CAMPGROUND - HOSTS:
BEAUTIFUL DRIVE-IN GRADUATION - THANKS**

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, the Gateway Campground in Caledonia is owned and operated by Georgie and Helen Uhlman and their two beautiful labs. They have turned this peaceful location on the Medway River into a beautiful property, and during a year that brought many challenges and changes, they once again showed true community spirit.

In July of 2020 and in accordance with Public Health protocols, the Uhlmans stepped up and hosted a drive-in community graduation for the graduates of North Queens Community School. Guests were escorted to their parking places on the pristine grounds and were able to watch as graduates walked across the stage to receive their diplomas.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to offer sincere gratitude to Georgie and Helen for making this occasion possible and memorable for North Queens graduates, and I wish them much success in the years ahead.

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

PETTIPAS, REED - ATHL.: HOCKEY CAREER GOALS - BEST WISHES

BILL HORNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a proud grandfather to congratulate my grandson, Reed Pettipas, whose Under-15 AAA hockey team, the Port City Sharks, in Rothsay, New Brunswick, won the provincial championship this past weekend.

Reed and his team not only clinched the provincial title, but also completed a perfect season. The Port City Sharks were undefeated with 22 wins, no ties, and no losses. In the winning game, Reed scored a hat trick. During the season, Reed was also called up to play for the Saint John Major Midget AAA team, the Saint John Vito's. It is Reed's goal to play for this team next season.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all the House to join me in congratulating Reed and his team on his tremendous accomplishment and wishing Reed the best in achieving his goals. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

ZAC'S WARRIORS: BATTLING CANCER WITH ZAC - THANKS

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Paige and Jake Mackey along with all the team members of Zac's Warriors.

On May 4, 2020, Zac's Warriors organized a special community parade in Lower Sackville for Zac Connolly, a very brave 11-year-old boy who was battling cancer.

Due to pandemic restrictions, Zac missed spending time with his friends, so his friends were brought to him. To Zac's surprise, over 250 vehicles joined the parade, playing music, honking horns, shouting well-wishes and greetings to Zach and his parents, Chris and Angela. A special shout-out to the local RCMP members who sprang into action to help with the parade.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking Zac's Warriors for organizing such a successful community event that collectively put a smile on a little boy's face before his passing on July 14, 2020.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

DEVINE FAMILY: IWK TIE-DYE FUNDRAISER - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the IWK Health Centre is a world-class children's hospital in Nova Scotia and many people regularly travel there from my constituency in Yarmouth. Many children and their families call the IWK their second home away from home.

Yarmouth's Megan Devine has been a frequent visitor of the IWK since she was two years old; she is now 15. Megan's mom, Janine Devine, and Janine's partner, Kevin Mullen, saw the potential for a successful fundraiser with Kevin's talent and skill at tie-dyeing T-shirts. They are now selling tie-dyed T-shirts and donating all the profits to the IWK.

I was happy to have them visit recently, as I was sporting their Alien Spine T-shirt, and you can check out and contribute to their fundraiser by searching IWK Children's Hospital Fundraiser on Facebook.

Please join me in thanking Janine, Kevin, and Megan for starting this great initiative, and please consider purchasing one of their awesome T-shirts while supporting an excellent cause.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**MASON, CATHY - INDUCTEE:
N.S. SPORTS HALL OF FAME - CONGRATS.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Cathy Mason from Stellarton, who was selected in 2020 to be inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame.

Mason has been involved with Special Olympics for 28 years, beginning in 1992, and has served as a volunteer regional coordinator for Pictou County since 1996. Cathy has been a mission staff member and team manager for Special Olympics Canada at five World Game events and served in a variety of roles at ten National Games.

In 2018, she was the Chef de Mission for team Nova Scotia at the National Summer Games, becoming the first non-staff member to fill this position.

I invite all members of this Legislature to join me in congratulating Cathy Mason for being inducted into the builder category of the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SECOND STORY WOMEN'S CTR.: YOUTH SUMMER CAMP - RECOG.

HON. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize the Second Story Women's Centre of Lunenburg for its successful Galentine fundraiser. In February, the centre raised \$2,500 - enough to cover the cost of sending five girls to its Summer leadership camp.

The women's centre has been operating these Summer camps for 16 years. Participants will develop confidence and leadership skills in a safe and encouraging environment. This year, the centre is offering Summer camps for boys, too. They will provide them with educational support around healthy relationships and toxic masculinity.

This Summer the program will host 35 girls and 20 boys, ages nine to 12, from Lunenburg and Queens Counties. The camp also provides employment for two student camp counsellors, who are mentored by staff at the women's centre.

I ask that all members join me in recognizing the Second Story Women's Centre on its valuable program and successful fundraiser.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

LEO'S PIZZA: PIZZA DONATION DURING PANDEMIC - THANKS

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dartmouth East resident and local entrepreneur Thomas Chamoun and the amazing staff at Leo's Pizza here in Dartmouth East.

As I'm sure all members of this House recall, at the early stages of this pandemic we witnessed many of our businesses very challenged with adjusting to COVID-safe protocols. It was remarkable to see how so many adapted to that, and Leo's Pizza was one of them. Now, despite many of these challenges, Thomas Chamoun and the staff at Leo's were able to manage a big thank you to the medical staff at the Dartmouth General Hospital.

While our frontline health care workers worked tirelessly to ensure our health and safety, Thomas and the staff wanted to show some support. Together, they donated many pizzas to front-line health care workers at the Dartmouth General Hospital and at the Halifax Infirmary.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Thomas Chamoun and the staff for their community spirit. This is just one example of the many things they do in our community. I want to thank them for making a difference in a time of great uncertainty. I am so grateful for the support they offered to health care workers. I also want to congratulate them on the opening of their new location in Bedford.

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

ISLE MADAME DENTAL: 8th ANN. GIFT FROM THE HEART - THANKS

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, whereas April is Oral Health Month, I rise today to recognize the Isle Madame Dental's 8th Annual Gift from the Heart.

Annually this clinic's dental hygienists offer free dental hygiene appointments to anyone over the age of 15 who does not have dental insurance and who cannot afford to access these services.

Poor oral health affects and influences the way a person speaks, eats, and socializes, and can contribute to more serious illnesses such as systemic infections and inflammation, poor digestion, diabetes, and heart disease. Awareness and education on addressing oral health concerns before they become more serious would lessen the burden on emergency health services.

I call upon the members of this House to thank hygienists Jessica Boudreau, Jennifer Bona, and Jackie White for donating their time and services to improve oral health in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford.

**SANKOFA AFRIKAN GIFTS:
REPRESENTING A VIBRANT CULTURE - BEST WISHES**

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'd like to congratulate Bernadette Hamilton-Reid on her business, Sankofa Afrikan Gifts.

Ms. Hamilton-Reid started her business in 1991 when she was unable to find dolls and books for her two daughters that represented their vibrant African culture. Bernadette named her company Sankofa, which is an African word from Akan tribe in Ghana. She indicates the literal translation of the word and symbol is "it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind," a potent message about the need to look back at history even as we embrace the future.

In February, Ms. Hamilton-Reid set up a kiosk at Sunnyside Mall during Black History Month. She sold a variety of items, jewellery, T-shirts, pins, fans, and masks; in fact, I am wearing one of them today. I was so pleased to meet her as well as members of her family during that month.

I'd like to wish Bernadette Hamilton-Reid much success with Sakofa Afrikan Gifts, which can be found online as well at www.sankofagifts.ca.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Pictou West.

BLINKHORN REAL ESTATE: BUS. EXCELLENCE - RECOG.

KARLA MACFARLANE: I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Sherry Blinkhorn for being chosen as one of the top real estate agents by *Top Agent Magazine*.

Sherry is a veteran real estate agent. Early in her career, she was ranked in the top 5 per cent of realtors across Canada. Since then, Sherry has grown her own company known as Blinkhorn Real Estate.

Sherry and her team put their clients first and they work hard to achieve what their clients want; that is why 80 per cent of their business is from word of mouth and repeat clients. You can reach her or her agents any time of the day or night. Sherry prides herself on providing excellent and family-oriented service.

I am proud to recognize Sherry's achievements and I wish her continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

PUDSEY, ALEX - ADVOCATE: AEDs FOR SCHOOLS - THANKS

HON. KEITH IRVING: In a moment of crisis, seemingly small things can make a huge difference. Today I want to acknowledge a determined parent, advocate and fundraiser, Alex Pudsey, who identified the need for an AED for a school in New Minas. An AED is a small, portable, and easy-to-use device that accesses the heart of a person in cardiac arrest for shockable rhythm.

It is a tool that saves lives. In these scary situations time is of the essence, and using an AED is one of the only effective intervention tools. With Mr. Pudsey's determined advocacy and fundraising efforts, an AED was purchased for the New Minas Elementary School where his daughter attends. This specific awareness and advocacy initiative brought forward by Mr. Pudsey sparked continued conversations and resulted in a province-wide purchase of AEDs in our schools.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to thank Mr. Alex Pudsey for his advocacy in leading the way to making our schools a safer place for everyone.

THE SPEAKER: The time allotted for Statements by Members has expired. We will now recess for our mandated 15-minute COVID protocol break, and the House proceedings will resume at 1:15 p.m.

[1:00 p.m. The House recessed.]

[1:15 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.: POLITICIZING COVID-19 - EXPLAIN

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, if there have been two constants in this session, they are: (1) the PC Party has been asking thoughtful questions about the vaccine rollout and other health issues, and (2) the Premier has been refusing to respond and instead lashing out with accusations that we are attempting to politicize the pandemic.

In fact, on March 11th, the Premier, in his very first question response as Premier, said, “As long as we continue to work with Public Health, and not politicize COVID-19 . . .”

Well, Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, just shy of a month from the Premier making that statement, the Liberal Party took out an ad in *the Chronicle Herald* that calls the vaccine rollout a political decision taken by the Liberal Government, branded with the Liberal logo and a nice smiling picture of our new Premier, authorized by the official agent for the Liberal Party. This is a clear attempt to politicize the pandemic.

I would like to ask the Premier: Why is the Premier minimizing Dr. Strang and Public Health for political purposes?

HON. IAIN RANKIN (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Public Health and Dr. Strang for their continued work on the front lines, delivering a robust plan to Nova Scotians while the Opposition continues to attack the plan that is a reliable one, a flexible one, and an equitable one across the province, equally getting out the vaccines to cohorts, starting with the age groups, working down - a model that, in fact, other provinces are starting to shift to as well, exclusively looking at ages and working downwards.

We continue to ramp up week after week. We now have clinics operating in African Nova Scotian communities. We have all of our elders in Mi’kmaq communities with their second dose now.

We're leading the country in the way we're managing the pandemic, and that is because of the hard work of Nova Scotians, especially those working in Public Health and on the front lines of our health care system.

TIM HOUSTON: Well, Mr. Speaker, it sounds nice, but when it's time for a smiling picture on the front of the newspaper, the ad makes no reference to the Province of Nova Scotia. It certainly makes no reference to Public Health and definitely no mention to Dr. Strang. In fact, what it does say is "Under our plan . . ." with a clear connection to the Liberal Party and the Premier.

Again, on March 12th, the Premier said, ". . . we are going to . . . work alongside Public Health and not politicize COVID-19." Now, just a month later, Public Health is out of the picture, and the Premier is definitely politicizing COVID-19.

I'd just like to ask him: Why?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, time and time again, the member opposite continues to try to bring politics into this matter. I've been working very hard alongside Dr. Strang and Public Health to ensure that our approach and our response to the pandemic remain focused on science and evidence. That has been recognized throughout Canada - how Atlantic Canada, as a region, works much closer with their Public Health team.

I don't know which province the member opposite would like to compare us to, but if you look across to other provinces right now that are experiencing a third wave, we're working very hard to ensure that we prevent that. That's why we have an approach that is in lockstep with Public Health.

I want to thank those Nova Scotians who continue to have confidence in our system and not listen to the member opposite who tries to tear that system down.

TIM HOUSTON: It sounds great, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately it's not the member opposite who is on the front page of *the Chronicle Herald* minimizing the efforts of Public Health. In fact, it's the new Premier.

I read on social media where somebody referred to the new Premier as Rankin the Reverser because he changes his stories so much. I think that's exactly what we're seeing here. Nova Scotians know that what has gotten us through the pandemic so far has been a clarity of purpose from Public Health and the discipline of Nova Scotians. We like Public Health in charge. That's what we like. Now, under this Premier, we're left to wonder which decisions are political and which decisions are Public Health-driven. That's the reality. That's what the Premier has created.

On March 24th, the Premier said, “We will try not to politicize COVID-19.” Well, I guess they’re not trying anymore, Mr. Speaker - the ad in *the Chronicle Herald* shows very clearly.

I’d just like to ask the Premier: Who is pulling the Premier’s strings and decided it’s time to politicize the pandemic? Is it the same person who decided to run the ad in *the Chronicle Herald* this weekend and take credit for the hard work of Dr. Strang and Public Health?

THE SPEAKER: I’d just like to remind the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition not to use props during Question Period and also not to refer to any opposite members by their names.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I won’t stoop to the level that the member opposite is doing with name-calling in this House, nor will I stoop to the political games with this very serious pandemic.

We need to make sure that we’re continuing to listen to Public Health and work with those Nova Scotians who see that our decisions are continuously based on science and evidence and prevent the type of lockdowns in other provinces that we’re seeing. They’re looking and distancing themselves. We need to make sure that we work with Public Health, and that’s what we’ve been doing.

THE SPEAKER: I’d just like to remind the honourable Premier that the phrase “stoop to the level” is an unparliamentary phrase.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

PREM.: BUDGET DECREASE IMPACT - CLARIFY

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

In 2014, this Liberal government tabled a budget that limited the increase in departmental expenses to one per cent. The former Premier at that time told people to expect this was going to result in the disappearance of some programs and services and the complete revamping of others.

Mr. Speaker, that was the expected result of a budget with a one per cent decrease. This budget before us is proposing that there be a decrease of two per cent - \$200 million - in departmental spending next year.

Why will this Premier not be as clear as his predecessor about what people can expect the impacts of that two per cent decrease to be?

THE PREMIER: I'm very proud of this budget that's being brought forward, which has increases to health care so we can modernize our system and continue to attract world-class health providers from across the globe.

It has increases in education, delivering on more inclusion within our classrooms. It has the highest increase to Income Assistance in our history, with \$100 that every single participant in the program will get. We're going to continue to invest in communities and we're going to continue to invest, within our means, so that future generations can afford programs, too.

GARY BURRILL: The following year, in 2015, this Liberal government - keeping with the projections that had been made the year before - brought forward a budget that held increases to a little bit less than one per cent. The result of that budget was an immediate loss of 320 public sector jobs, a three-year wage freeze, and the end of the Film Tax Credit.

Will the Premier admit that with a two per cent decrease in spending, as he proposes by taking \$200 million out of the budget next year, people should brace for severe cuts to the programs they rely on?

THE PREMIER: The member opposite knows that we've spent over \$600 million dealing with the pandemic and that continues, Mr. Speaker. We have significant investments in this budget for PPE and preparing our nurses and other providers on our front line to ensure that we continue to deal with the pandemic. We expect to make sure that we get through this with vaccines rolling out - first doses for every Nova Scotian by the month of June.

We're going to continue to make key investments in areas. We don't just want to throw money at more issues, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at a holistic way in government, ensuring that we have core services in health care and education and growing back a strong economy, as we were before the pandemic.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, what I know is that the four-year fiscal projections that were in those 2014-15 budgets were nowhere near as drastic or dramatic as the \$200 million for next year that this budget is proposing to decrease departmental expenses.

Yet, in those years from 2014 to 2018, we saw nurses go on a wildcat strike, we saw teachers have their first strike in all of Nova Scotia's history. In fact, the government to this day is engaged in court cases that came out of those instances.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that his \$200 million in cuts next year are going to come not only at the expense of the services that people rely on but also at the expense of the frontline workers who deliver those services?

THE PREMIER: We're going to continue to make sure that we're managing the fiscal purse prudently, Mr. Speaker. We continue to increase health care and education and community services year over year, unlike the NDP government that cut education and cut assistance to universities while signing collective agreements that are unaffordable. There is \$700 million embedded in the cost of government today because of those collective agreements.

We made sure that we looked at wage settlements that we could actually afford so that we can continue to bring more progressive programs - the kinds of programs that that government could not bring in, like pre-Primary. We're increasing investments to health care, historic amounts in our infrastructure, because we inherited the infrastructure deficit as well.

We're going to continue to make sure that we're making spending in those key priority areas where Nova Scotians want us to.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: PUBLIC HEALTH - TAKING CREDIT - EXPLAIN

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians trust Public Health, they trust Dr. Strang and that's a trust that's been earned over a pretty tough year in this province. They tend to trust politicians just a little bit less than Public Health. The Premier has now done more to feed those stereotypes and undermine Public Health than anyone else. We all remember when the Premier gleefully declared that he had directed Dr. Strang to do something.

This past weekend the Liberal Deputy Prime Minister is on the record as saying, "I really believe COVID has created a window of political opportunity . . ." It seems like the Premier has come to the same conclusion and intends to take full advantage of this political opportunity and take credit for Dr. Strang's work and try to use it to the Premier's political advantage.

My question for the Premier is: Why is the Premier putting his name on Dr. Strang's homework?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll continue to make sure that I'm thanking and giving credit where credit is due. Dr. Strang and the Public Health team have worked very well to ensure that they continue to provide evidence to make sure we're making decisions based on evidence and science. That's what this Party stands for, that's what this government stands for as we manage the pandemic, as we make decisions around the environment.

The record on the Conservative government is the exact opposite when you look across the country and how they're dealing with the pandemic, how they look at the environment, how they struggle with the fact that climate change is even real . . . (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: In this House, I've seen the Conservative Party start to look at the way that we are trying to manage our biodiversity in this province. They continue to try to keep us on coal in this province. They try to promote fracking. They want to open uranium mining. They continue to look at ways that's not based on science and evidence.

This Party, yes, will continue to make sure we're working in lockstep with those Public Health experts and on issues related to the environment.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of too many Conservative governments in this country. Obviously there's a Progressive Conservative Government in New Brunswick - doing pretty well. I know the Premier tried to undermine Premier Higgs a short while ago, but he had to backtrack on that. There's a Progressive Conservative Government in PEI, doing very well. But we're not talking about that today.

What we're talking about today is a Premier who would stand here and on one hand make the comment that he respects Public Health, but on the other hand puts an ad on the front page of the paper that totally minimizes Dr. Strang and Public Health - and I'll table this. It's not a prop, it's a sad reality.

We've already caught the Premier taking credit for the work of others. On March 25th, he announced long-term care beds that in effect his predecessor had already announced a month earlier. He put his name on it, tried to claim it on his own. I'd just like to ask the Premier: Why does the Premier continue to claim the hard work of others as his own work for political purposes exclusively?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll continue to commend the work of my predecessor and the work of Dr. Strang and Public Health for standing up and being a model on how we managed this pandemic. I'm thankful to be able to be in this position where I can continue to lead the province and focus on evidence. Unlike the Conservative Party where that member is part of a party where three or four of his members ran in the last federal election. The new president of the Conservative Party was a president of this provincial Party . . .

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

THE PREMIER: . . . but he did point out one Progressive Conservative Party - the Progressive Conservative Party of PEI, who quickly followed our lead after we introduced

incentives for electric vehicles. At least they see the value in electrifying our transportation system. That member and his colleagues get up at every chance to try to criticize the fact that we need to electrify our transportation system at the same time as greening our electricity grid, and they continue to try to use fear and division in this House.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W: DOCTOR WAIT-LIST WORSENING - ADDRESS

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, the list of Nova Scotians looking for a doctor has been updated and once again, I'm sure . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Pictou West has the floor.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Shall I start again? So, the list of Nova Scotians looking for a doctor has been updated and once again, I'm sure to nobody's surprise, it has grown. The Western Zone is up over 2 per cent, the Northern Zone is up over 5 per cent, the Central Zone is up over 8 per cent. But, the real shocker is the Eastern Zone. The Eastern Zone is now up over 35.6 per cent. The list is up by almost 20,000 people from a year ago and has grown for the ninth consecutive month.

[1:30 p.m.]

So, my question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: When will this government get the wait-list moving in the other direction?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We have seen particularly, as the member pointed out, a spike in unattached patients in the Eastern Zone. That is related to the sudden death of a physician in Cape Breton who was serving his patients into his 70s and passed away recently. He had a very high patient volume.

As well - and this has been reported in the CDC - there was a doctor in the member's community whose patient load was cut by the College of Physicians and Surgeons from 4,000 to 1,500.

These factors obviously are outside the control of government, but what is under our control are our recruitment efforts. I am happy that we have had 23 new physicians that have come in this year since last March, even despite the COVID-19 challenges with international doctor recruitment. That includes 10 family physicians and 13 specialists.

Right now, we have in the queue physicians who will be coming between this month and the Fall - 29 physicians, which includes 16 family doctors and 13 specialists. These folks will be deployed in the areas where there is the greatest unattached need.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Look, this Liberal government has had eight years to fix things, and I am certainly not confident that the next 12 months will be any different.

This government is the government that promised a doctor for every Nova Scotian. As we know, that was a catchy election slogan in 2013. It is quite clear, though, that that did not happen. So far, we have not heard any sort of a plan - just more vague promises that it will get better. We have heard those promises since 2013, and yet the numbers continue to worsen. If the House had been open in the Fall, sure, we would have heard the same things then, too.

So, my question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: With the Liberal track record of more and more patients looking for doctors, why should Nova Scotians believe this government can make it any better under a new leader?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, there has been nothing vague about what I said. We have had an increase of population into this province - 30 per cent of the people on the wait-list are new to the province or new to the community they are living in.

We just had a death of a physician who was taking thousands of patients in Cape Breton. I want to extend my condolences to his family. We had a college decision that also took patients off a panel for a doctor. Those factors are not inside our control.

I was very specific about what is happening right now. We have 29 new physicians who are coming in over the course of the next number of months. We have had 23 that we recruited internationally over the last year, even during COVID-19, and these folks are going to be deployed in a way that is going to help us manage that unattached patient list.

That patient list is going to fluctuate. It was going down until COVID-19 when we received this incredible news that more people were moving to the province, and we cannot factor in sudden deaths of physicians, or decisions of the College of Physicians and Surgeons either that impact this.

If the member thinks her Party could do better anticipating those things, then perhaps she can be clear about that with the House.

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

H&W: DOCTOR WAIT-LIST COMMENTS - CLARIFY

KEITH BAIN: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Pictou West, has asked the Minister of Health and Wellness numerous times about the ever-increasing physician wait-list. In response, the minister has claimed that this is due to an influx of new people moving to Nova Scotia - a few, if any, seem to be family doctors.

Last month alone, the wait-list for family physicians jumped by nearly 36 per cent in the Eastern Zone, with 2,320 people being added to the wait-list - 1,626 of these people live in the Dominion-Glace Bay area.

So, my question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: Given his previous comments in this Chamber, are we to believe that over 1,600 new Nova Scotians moved to the Dominion-Glace Bay area last month?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: No, not over the last month. The numbers that have gone up these past months are related to the death of Doctor O'Brien, who was serving thousands of patients in Cape Breton, who died suddenly. I want to extend again my sympathy and condolences to his family, and thank him and his family for, I believe, over 40 years of service, where he was taking on a high patient volume. Obviously, his passing has left a gap in that service.

Also in the Eastern Zone, the College of Physicians and Surgeons cut 4,000 patients down to 15 for another physician for their own reasons. That was reported on the CBC. What I can tell the member is on top of the 23 new physicians who have come here already this year, there are another 29 who will be entering our province over the course of the next number of months. This is through the immigration streams. They're coming from various places in the world. I want to thank the Minister of Immigration and Population Growth for helping us recruit these doctors at a point in time where we need them to deal with a growing population and, of course, to help us deal with the sudden death of Dr. O'Brien.

KEITH BAIN: Considering the Minister of Municipal Affairs compared our detailed Hope for Health plan to the Make America Great Again slogan last week, it's shocking that we heard the minister earlier place the blame on migrants to our region instead of acknowledging the failings of his own government.

In 2013, this government promised a family doctor for every Nova Scotian. Turns out that was just an election promise. This government told Nova Scotia the wait-list would never reach 60,000 people. We've seen how that turned out. Nearly 65,000 Nova Scotians are in need of a family doctor.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister expect to have any credibility on this file, and what election promises and slogans will his government come up with next?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I hope the credibility comes from the fact that I understand these issues clearly in much more detail than the members opposite. Even when I provide them the specifics about what is impacting these numbers - pandemic; increase in population; people moving to different communities; the specific, sudden death of a physician who was taking thousands of patients; a college decision that also took another couple-thousand-plus off a doctor's patient panel - these are the reasons why we're seeing these numbers specifically. There's nothing vague about this explanation.

We're responding by expediting our international recruitment. We're going to start seeing doctors enter Nova Scotia from that program beginning this month, and they'll be coming in steadily until the Fall. That's 29 new physicians, which includes 16 family doctors and 13 specialists.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

H&W - NSHA: SUSTAINED PRESSURES - ACKNOWLEDGE

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Premier. At four o'clock on Friday afternoon last week, the Nova Scotia Health Authority issued a statement describing sustained pressure at the QEII Health Sciences Centre that required the NSHA to create emergency capacity across the Central Zone. That capacity came in part from four inpatient beds in the Halifax Infirmary and seven stretchers in the Infirmary's radiology recovery area.

This is not the only kind of issue impacting our emergency departments. In 2019-20, emergency room closures were up 30 per cent. With emergency rooms literally spilling over or closed altogether, will the Premier admit that this situation has worsened under this government?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We have had pressures on the Halifax Infirmary. There were additional circumstances that we did see some overloading on this weekend. We honed in to the issues, particularly at the Halifax Infirmary, to ensure we're addressing the issue of patient flow from a hospital to our long-term care facilities, and patient flow from the emergency department to in-hospital patient care and from the ambulances into the emergency department.

We will be having short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to this issue, because this is a critical issue and it is affecting how that emergency department functions on a daily basis. It does need to be addressed, absolutely.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The release that went out explained that people seeking non-urgent care should call their family doctor or visit a walk-in clinic, but since 2018, according to the most recent numbers from the Department of Health and Wellness, the province has seen a net increase of three family physicians in Nova Scotia. The entire island of Cape Breton has one walk-in clinic, and it's closed on the weekends. Many people who do have a family physician can wait up to a month for an appointment.

With emergency rooms and walk-ins full or closed, and with virtually no progress on family physicians, I'll ask the Premier or the Minister of Health and Wellness, where does he suggest that Nova Scotians go in a health emergency?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Nova Scotians in a health emergency need to call 911 or go to an emergency department. To suggest that we haven't had success in doctor recruitment is inaccurate. I just spoke about 29 new doctors who will be coming in over the course of the next number of months. Even during the pandemic we were able to recruit 23 physicians to come and work here in Nova Scotia.

We do have challenges at particular emergency departments in this province, and we are honed in to find solutions to those so that patients are getting the service they need there, so they can be directed to the appropriate levels of service if their situation is not an emergency.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

H&W - DOCTOR RECRUITMENT: MUNICIPAL ISSUE - RECTIFY

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Guysborough County is offering a \$100,000 signing bonus to doctors willing to relocate to that area. As AllNovaScotia points out, health care isn't a municipal responsibility, but under this government it's increasingly a municipal issue.

We've all seen that the Liberals have failed to meet the challenge of bringing doctors to Nova Scotia. This isn't actually the first time that Guysborough County has had to step up to fill gaps that are being left by the Nova Scotia Health Authority in Halifax.

My question to the minister is: Is it a mistake of the municipality to do this? Or is it necessary that they do this to pick up the slack for the failing Liberals?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, municipalities have been involved in providing local incentives to recruit doctors since before I was elected, over 10 years ago. That happened under Progressive Conservative governments, NDP governments, and it still happens today under a Liberal government because our communities are very engaged in this process.

Rural areas in Nova Scotia have a harder time recruiting family physicians than other areas. That is for a number of reasons and that is historically true. One of the reasons is finding employment for spouses, as well as a desire to be in a bigger city centre.

These are statistics that are long-standing. I'm very proud of our municipalities that step up and work in partnership with us to get doctors where they are most needed in this province, and creating financial incentives is a good way to do that. Guysborough County is not the only municipality that does that.

As I mentioned, Yarmouth did that for years before our government and under previous Progressive Conservative and NDP governments. Our communities are working

in partnership with us right now. We actually provide support in grant funding to help them engage in this partnership.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't so sad it would be entirely funny. On the one hand, this government is attracting so many people to the province that they don't know what to do with them all, and on the other hand they can't attract any people to the province. This is exactly what happens when you talk to this government about every single issue.

It didn't take long for their talking points about how great the one health authority is for recruiting and managing and stuff. It just unravels right there. The minister just said one health authority is not helping, rural Nova Scotia municipalities have to step up. Guysborough County is spending \$100,000 to recruit doctors, two years after it spent \$20,000 to recruit nurses. Sixty-five thousand Nova Scotians know that the Liberals have failed on doctor recruitment.

Nova Scotians know this, Mr. Speaker. When municipalities have to divert scarce resources away from municipal services to cover for the provincial government that is failing to allow their citizens to access health care it's time . . .

THE SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

TIM HOUSTON: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker. It's time for the minister to accept the failure that we've all acknowledged.

My question for the minister is: Will he stop pointing his fingers all around the room and just at least say they've failed and they'll try to do better?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I wonder if the member can tell me how his Party would respond to the sudden death of a physician who was seeing thousands of patients, or a College of Physicians and Surgeons decision to cut thousands of patients from a doctor, or a doctor who chooses to move away, or the fact that there is statistically less chance that doctors want to go to rural Nova Scotia. What are the answers to that?

I don't know that he can speak to anything, other than this hyperbole about there being nothing but failure in our health care . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

ZACH CHURCHILL: . . . because let's be honest, that's all we're getting from the Leader of the Official Opposition - hyperbole. We are speaking in facts. The reasons why our wait-list has gone up is because our population has grown; thirty per cent of people on that registry told us that themselves.

[1:45 p.m.]

We've had a recent death that impacted thousands of patients. We had a recent college decision that impacted thousands. We are responding. Twenty-nine new physicians are coming into this province within the next number of months - 16 family physicians and 13 specialists.

We have recruited, on average, before COVID-19, 120 to 130 physicians a year. We now have the most competitive compensation framework there is for many family physicians, for EDs, and specialists. We are training more doctors than ever before. There is no easy solution . . .

THE SPEAKER: Just before we advance, I would like to remind everybody that the agreed-upon time limit for questions and answers is 45 seconds. If there is any change to that, then you can advance your request through your House Leaders, they can have a discussion, and we can alter that.

If anybody wants to take this seat and try to manage that, I'll quite gladly step aside.

The honourable member for Inverness.

H&W: ROTATIONAL WORKERS - VACCINE PRIORITY

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think you are doing a great job, and I'm not saying that to get an extra five or ten seconds.

I have another question for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Last week I asked the minister why rotational workers in Nova Scotia are not being prioritized for vaccines like they are in New Brunswick, P.E.I., and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The majority of our cases are travel-related, and variants of concern are spreading rapidly throughout the country. The minister said he believed rotational workers were prioritized in Phase 2, but that he would confirm.

Can the minister provide that confirmation today?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Yes, I can confirm that rotational workers are prioritized in Phase 2, but we are going to start seeing our age-based approach moving even quicker than our Phase 2. Our best tool right now to get to herd immunity as quickly as possible is our age-based approach.

We currently have close to 160,000 doses in arms. Over 126,000 of those are first doses into individuals, and we have over 30,000 second doses administered. We are going

to see this number grow every single month as more supply gets into Nova Scotia and more vaccines get into arms.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think we need greater clarification. Last Monday, Dr. Strang said that rotational workers would be vaccinated by age group rather than being prioritized in Phase 2, and the minister is saying today - I think I am hearing both that it is coming in Phase 2, but it is also coming by way of whatever age they are.

Priorities can change, Mr. Speaker. We saw that with the reversal of the decision on police officers, who have since been given priority to receive a vaccine. We have a lot of rotational workers around the province who are very anxious.

Can the minister provide some confirmation here? By what date can these people begin to expect to receive their vaccinations?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Any Nova Scotian can go online and see when they are going to be vaccinated based on their age category. This is going to be the most efficient way to do it, particularly when the guidelines changed on the time in between doses. So with the change of that time, we are actually going to see our age-based approach surpassing the Phase 2 - moving quicker than the Phase 2 that was previously scheduled under the previous guidelines.

Our age-based approach is going to start overtaking the Phase 2 approach and people are going to get vaccinated quicker as a result.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

H&W - WORK TRAVEL: HEALTH CARE - DENIAL

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

As we can appreciate, our essential workers have a vital role to play in our province and their work does not stop, even through this worldwide pandemic.

One of my constituents is a pilot. Although he has been exempt from many restrictions regarding travel in and out of the province, he is being denied access to medical services such as his yearly EKG and medical, which are required by his company in order for him to continue doing his job.

He has been told that for him to receive these services he is required to self-isolate for two weeks. His spouse is also being denied proper care in the emergency room after telling the doctor that her husband is a pilot.

My question is: Why are these Nova Scotians who must travel for work, and their families, being denied basic health care services?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I would be happy to look into that specific case with the member. As the previous member mentioned, the greatest risk to Nova Scotia are those travelling in and out of the province. This why the quarantine rules are so critical. They have been one of our chief tools that we have been able to employ that have kept Nova Scotians safe. The majority of provinces are not utilizing the quarantine from out of province travel. We are because it is keeping us safe. It is one of the most effective tools that we have employed in the fight against COVID-19.

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that response. Our caucus has also heard from a flight attendant who attempted to procure the AstraZeneca vaccine online. She told the truth about her work travel on the online form and the system kicked her out, denying her access to the vaccine. The lack of clarity is not only confusing but, as you can imagine, very frustrating.

These essential services are crucial for our province to continue to move forward. My question is: Why is this pilot and flight attendant made to feel as though they are doing something wrong when in fact they are not, and they're putting their lives on the line for us?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, nobody's doing anything wrong if they're following Public Health and safety protocols here in the province. We've done very well with the management of COVID-19 and it is because of the compliance of Nova Scotians, the hard work, the sacrifice that they've put in, and the leadership of Dr. Strang and the government on these files that has allowed us to do that.

If people have any specific case-based questions, if they get the right consent form signed by their constituents, we are always happy to help them get answers here in the department, and I would encourage all members to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PREM. - IMM. STATUS: LACK OF SERVICES - RECTIFY

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Our COVID-19 strategy in Nova Scotia relies on low case numbers, widely available testing, and now the vaccine rollout. But I am hearing concerning reports that people without MSI cards face barriers to accessing both COVID-19 tests and vaccines. Health card numbers are required to book vaccine appointments online and on arrival at testing centres, and that means some people can't access these services.

Can the Premier commit to clearing all the hurdles so that every resident of Nova Scotia, regardless of immigration status, can access both testing and vaccinations?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, an important question that I will certainly bring back to the team in Public Health to ensure that we do have equitable access. It's one of the areas of pride for us as we work with community leaders in vulnerable communities to ensure we're working alongside them to deliver the vaccines.

This issue that has been brought forward. I know that MSI was one way that we could track people down to find out how we could communicate with them directly. But it's my understanding that all have access to get testing, and we'll make sure we have that conversation.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, some people working on the front lines of the pandemic may not be able to access health care if they get sick - for example, an asylum seeker who worked at Northwood throughout the pandemic outbreak there, all the while not being eligible for MSI. Another client of the refugee clinic is an NSHA employee who should be getting vaccinated as part of Phase 1 but has no MSI number to log into the online booking system.

At this moment where my health depends on my neighbours' health and all of my neighbours' health depends on my health, can the Premier agree that people who put their lives on the line for Nova Scotians - working in health care during the COVID -19 outbreak - should have access to our public health care system?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, absolutely I agree. All people in our province should have access to the vaccine and to testing. I would encourage them, if they don't have an MSI card, they can call the phone number that's available and we'll make sure if there's any individual circumstance that we need to help with that, any barriers that they face - first by phone that's how they book, but we'll make sure that we can help out the constituent whom the member referenced.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

H&W: EMERGENCY WAIT TIMES STATS - PROVIDE

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, constituents in Queens-Shelburne continue to suffer as a result of an overwhelmed EHS service. Last month a gentleman from North Queens area required urgent medical assistance as the result of a brain bleed. His family called 911 and tried to provide what care they could for approximately 90 minutes until an ambulance finally arrived.

Does the Minister of Health and Wellness have any statistics on how frequently Nova Scotians in emergency situations wait beyond the mandated response time?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'm very sorry to hear about that situation. I can certainly look in to see if that is data that's collected by EMC.

KIM MASLAND: Imagine being in that position of this gentleman and his family, how terrifying it would have been to have a loved one uncontrollably vomiting blood, not knowing when help was going to arrive. Fortunately for my constituent, eventually he was rushed to Halifax and is now recovering at home, but sadly, similar or even longer wait times have happened in other circumstances with less positive outcomes.

What assurances can the minister provide to constituents in Queens-Shelburne that if they happen to require an ambulance, one will actually reach them in time?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I am very pleased to hear that the constituent survived that and that he is in recovery. What I can tell is that the average wait times are very close to the standards that we have in place. We do have more paramedics per capita than the national average, with more being hired next month as well. We've also put more ambulances in our fleet, and we have enhanced the service to make sure that we're responding appropriately to people for the right reason at the right time.

When there are situations like this, there are also qualitative reviews that happen to evaluate the situation and do a diagnostic on the operational and clinical issues surrounding it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

LAE - WCB: WORKPLACE TRAGEDIES - COMPENSATION

JOHN LOHR: My question is for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education. I previously asked part of this question, but just to reiterate, before Christmas, Nova Scotians heard about the tragic news that 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. I'm asking this question on behalf of his mother, Lori Phillips, who has given me permission to ask.

Although other members of the crew would have been eligible for the \$15,000 death benefit from the Workers' Compensation Board, Aaron's family did not receive anything only because he did not have any dependants. My question for the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is: Can the minister explain why the WCB values some lives more than others when it comes to workplace tragedies?

HON. LENA METLEGE DIAB: Thank you very much to my colleague for the question. It is a difficult and tragic situation, and again my heart goes out to the family and all families in the community that have been affected by this tragedy.

In the event of a workplace fatality, the Workers' Compensation Act does outline how and to whom benefits can be paid. As minister, I don't have authority to decide individual claims, but I have looked at it, and I understand there is flexibility in the Act for situations like this.

[2:00 p.m.]

JOHN LOHR: I'm not quite sure what the minister is getting at, but I can tell the minister that Aaron Cogswell's mother, Lori Phillips, is devastated by the loss of her son, as we all can understand. Her grief is compounded by the fact that she feels WCB put no value on her son's life - zero - and she believes that the policy is flawed and discriminates against those who do not have any next of kin, who are single. This Act is more than 20 years old, and in the last 20 years, thousands more people who are single are now covered by WCB. She would like to have the Act changed to do right by single people working in the workforce.

On April 12th, just yesterday, she got a letter saying there was no intent on changing the Act. My question for the minister is: Will the minister commit to making this right for Lori Phillips and to changing the Act?

LENA METLEGE DIAB: As I indicated, as minister I don't have authority to discuss specific claims, but as my colleague referenced, I have received a correspondence from him. There is flexibility in the Act. I have contacted the Workers' Compensation Board to ensure that they connect with the family, and I have asked the board to provide the family clarity on what they may be eligible for. I understand today that the Workers' Compensation Board is in the process of contacting the family.

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

H&W - RICHMOND CO.: NEW DOCTORS - UPDATE

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, there are now 8,836 people in the Eastern Zone on the Need a Family Practice Registry. This is an increase of 35.6 per cent, as we heard earlier. That's an increase of 2,344 people from just last month.

I can assure the minister that, perhaps, as much as we have had a doctor who has passed away - and my condolences to his family - as well as, perhaps, a few people who have come into that zone through immigration, I can assure him that a lot of those people are from Richmond County.

My question to the minister is: How many of those 16 family doctors are actually slated to come into Richmond County?

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We do have that information and I'll make sure that we get it to the members. We have information on where every one of those doctors is going.

ALANA PAON: Thank you. I would simply love to know it right now, if there's at least two of those doctors who are coming into Richmond County. I don't think it's that much of a difficult question for you to respond to.

The Doctor Kingston Memorial Community Health Clinic has been short a family doctor since March of 2020. In February of this year, the Arichat Medical Clinic announced that they were also losing a family doctor. I appreciate that the doctor who was there has become a hospitalist at the Strait Richmond Hospital - however, we are still short these two doctors. So we have a new doctor who has come in in March, but that still leaves us behind two.

My question again for the minister is: How many of those doctors, those 16 doctors that he is saying are coming in the next couple of months, are slated to come into Richmond County to take care of the residents, the thousands of residents that no longer have access to primary health care?

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to thank the member very much. We'll get the specifics on that to her when we locate it. I know there will be some going to the Eastern Zone, and we'll see if we can mine the specifics of that for the member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

H&W: PICTOU DETOX UNIT RE-OPENING - CLARIFY

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, last March, the Liberal government closed the detox centre in Pictou, under the guise of COVID-19 precautions. After some months, the residents were advised that the centre would close permanently but the services would soon be offered out of the Aberdeen Regional Hospital.

We were led to believe that these services would be up and running by the end of 2020, but here we are in April 2021 with no detox services in sight.

My question to the minister is: It's time for the Minister of Health and Wellness to tell us today exactly when the detox unit will reopen so the good people of Pictou can stop suffering.

HON ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much. We did give a specific timeline for this in Estimates last night. The renovations have begun for that facility, and I'm being told that it should be operational this July.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Last night in Estimates you were speaking about the mental health unit. This is the detox unit. I think you have been confused in your answers but I'm going to continue on . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd just like to remind the honourable member to keep her questions directed through the Chair.

KARLA MACFARLANE: With the closing of the detox centre in Pictou, many residents have been left wondering what will become of the building itself. It has a strong foundation, and there has been lots of interest around the town in purchasing the building.

I'm going to redirect my question to the Minister of Justice: What is his department planning on for the former detox centre in Pictou?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired. I'll get the honourable Minister of Justice to reply to the member directly offline.

We'll now take our mandated 15-minute COVID-19 break and the House proceedings will resume at 2:20 p.m.

[2:05 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:20 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, 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 a Committee of the Whole on Supply.

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

BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak about the 2020-21 provincial budget. We are talking about over \$11.5 billion.

One of the things that we are looking at is not just where the money is going, but how well it is being spent. It is true that if you are spending \$4.6 billion versus \$4.7 billion on health care, there is not a lot of room for change.

I did write a speech, but I am putting it away in favour of two things. One, I wanted to make a comment on something that was said during Question Period where one of the members from the government claimed that their department was basing decisions on science. As a researcher and scientist, I found that interesting because this government had to introduce legislation on the Continuing Care Assistant Registry just to mandate that this government count the number of CCAs in the province of Nova Scotia.

This is the same government who is not collecting the data needed to make this scientific decision on how to establish minimum staffing levels. This government is the one that took three years to implement the interRAI system in long-term care, which has not actually even been fully implemented yet. That was promised three years ago. Mr. Speaker, I would want to emphasize the importance of data when you are making your decisions based on science.

Another comment that was made by the Minister of Health and Wellness during Question Period just a few minutes ago on a question from the Leader of the Opposition said that - the Minister of Health and Wellness said - and I think I have him quoted: he clearly understands the issues more than the Opposition.

I am not exactly sure how many weeks the minister has been in his position, but as a health professional who started my training in 1980, I found it a little disturbing that someone who has been in a position for mere weeks believes that they understand these issues more than the Opposition. Not just the fact that I, as a physiotherapist and a health professional - we have other MLAs who are RNs, paramedics, and I think those who are watching who are trained health professionals with their master's degrees and PhDs are also going hear that statement, that he understands the health care issues more than others, and it is going to create some consternation.

I am grateful that the Minister of Health and Wellness also said that he wondered what our Party would do if we thought we could do a better job. In fact, in the very soon-to-be-called election, the people will decide that very fact. The minister said if we did feel that we could do a better job, why didn't we say so?

I would like to draw the minister's attention to our clearly outlined plans called Hope for Health, the Dignity for Our Seniors in home care and long-term care, and our Universal Mental Health Care plans, which are freely available online for anyone to read.

As a matter of fact, some of the things that are on there - including the CCA registry that we put on almost a year ago - this government is, in fact, taking and using.

What I have discovered since my time in the Legislature is that the government likes to say that the Opposition is just trying to stir up trouble. I am not entirely sure what questions their constituency assistants and they get asked by their own constituents, but I thought rather than go on with my planned speech, I would just read what my constituents wanted this government to hear. I do not know if we will ever get any answers to their questions, but this is what my constituents are saying they want this government to answer that they are not sure this budget actually answers.

I am just going to read them as quickly as I can for as many as I can get in the next 10 minutes.

This is one from ST - they would like to know why there is not a tax credit for those who have exercise memberships or health care memberships, because they would like to move toward preventive health measures.

JG asks why they didn't stop unessential travel in and outside the province. With over 40 cases that are almost all travel-related, would stricter isolation rules not be appropriate?

HD said: In these trying times, is it possible for all members of the Legislature to put aside their political theatrics and partisanship to come together for the greater good of the citizens of Nova Scotia?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I just want to remind the honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage that if you are going to quote constituents, you need to attribute a full name, a real name, to each quote and you have to table them. If you are not going to table them, you are going to have paraphrase.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage.

BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To protect their anonymity, I will paraphrase: When can I and my neighbours expect to get a family doctor, and when are long-term care facilities going to be introduced to take the strain off the hospital system?

This person is a rotational worker and they have been trying desperately to be able to get the vaccine so that they can actually come home to their family. They have not been able to do so, despite reaching out to every single MLA in the Nova Scotia Legislature.

Other people are wondering about the supplement for electric vehicle infrastructure, which is a great idea, but they are also wondering about the contributions to plastics in the ocean and the other garbage that is continually getting washed up on our shores.

Another person was wondering why house and home care workers were vaccinated, but the people in those homes they are visiting are not a priority before the public got vaccinated.

Other people are wondering why the government is introducing a finance Act to clarify Cabinet borrowing power, because they are concerned that this is going to allow more borrowing to be done in secret.

There are other members who have asked about staffing levels and why the government hasn't indicated a minimum staffing level.

Another person asked about the strain and the backlog of nursing home wait-lists, considering there haven't been any new beds introduced since 2013.

Someone else said: Is it possible for all members of the Legislature to sit in the Legislature, given that all children are expected to sit in classrooms?

Someone is asking why there is not a provincial bubble agreement with the three other Atlantic provinces.

Another person is asking about the opioid crisis. We really haven't talked about it in the Legislature, and so they are concerned about the addiction rate in our province.

Another person asked why our province is trailing the country in terms of vaccinations, and in reference, there is a vaccination tracker online that shows that Nova Scotians have been vaccinated about 12 per cent, which is the lowest in Canada. I know we have the best place to live in terms of vaccinations, but this person was commenting on the fact that our vaccination percentage is still lower than the rest of the country.

Someone else is asking about why wood is so expensive, considering it is a local resource and, with so many woodlot owners in our province, how are we not able to make wood more affordable for Nova Scotians?

Another person asked, and I've had this asked a lot: Why is the vaccine only for those over the age of 16 when they have a child who is under the age of 14 with multiple health issues?

There are numerous questions from people saying: I can't live in my community. There is no more affordable housing. When will there be more than lip service?

Another person asks: How is the government planning to help out single parents with the astronomical rise in housing, when these people don't feel like this current budget is, in fact, addressing the housing issues in the province of Nova Scotia, or that whatever is coming is coming a little too late.

One of the other questions that got asked by a number of people is: With the increase in rent, taxes, and utilities, why hasn't the monopoly on Nova Scotia Power and our power rates been dealt with?

Another person - actually, several people - asked about the ambulance wait times. This person stated that they called and it took almost 40 minutes for an ambulance to get to them, and when they were apologizing to the person, said, well, we were stuck in Halifax waiting to off-load.

These are things that we ask in the Legislature during Question Period. Every time we ask a question, the government behaves as if we shouldn't ask any questions, that we are not representing what our constituents are saying, when in fact that is exactly what we are doing.

[2:30 p.m.]

When I asked whether my constituency was getting a collaborative health centre, which was promised to us by the previous MLA, the government said oh, well that wasn't really a promise, when in fact everyone on the doorstep was told it was already approved, that it was coming. Then no sooner was the election over when oh, sorry, not here, not now. Over the past four years this government has not brought one there. We learned today that there are 89 collaborative health centres; and yet despite over 1,100 people submitting a petition from my constituency, this government has indicated that it is not a priority.

One of the other things that came up is why did the government not tell us that there was an application for an asphalt storage plant going in South Woodside. When I asked the minister of that department, could you please notify my constituents because COVID-19 shut down public consultation, they said that no, this company, by putting a little ad in the paper, has met the minimum requirement.

I said well, with all due respect, this is the health of constituents. So I printed off 1,000 letters and took them around to every constituent and hand-delivered them to make sure they had time to respond, and 49 of the 50 people who responded said we do not want this here, we want more information, delay your decision until we can talk about this. The government went ahead and approved it.

On top of that, they were already building the road into the area constructing the asphalt storage tanks. So, my constituents do not feel like the government took their health needs into account, they do not feel like there was any consultation, and they certainly are waiting for the minister's department to come and deal with the fact that they still smell asphalt directly across the street from their homes.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other things that my community was talking about were the flip-flopping on the Lahey report implementation and Biodiversity Act number four.

Frankly, there are quite a few who are in favour of the Biodiversity Act and those who are opposed to it. Frankly, right at the moment no one who has written to me is very happy because they felt the government has gone back and forth. People really don't understand exactly how this is going to impact them, and they don't find that the government has been forthright about this.

Of course, other people wrote in about Owls Head and the decision to secretly delist this. I went to the community consultation about that. So, there is this common theme through a lot of the questions - why is the government doing all these things in secret and then, when they get caught, having to backtrack? That is not the kind of accountability that they are looking for and certainly is not the way that the Nova Scotia PC Party wants to enact things.

Some of my constituents who watch us more closely are wondering why this government dismantled Public Accounts Committee and changed it from once a week to once a month; why committees such as the Health Committee were shut down for seven months; why this government shut down the Nova Scotia Legislature for an entire year; and why, frankly, there are only 11 MLAs allowed in the Nova Scotia Legislature when you can have 30 children in a classroom? We have a lot of teachers and a lot of parents who would like to know the answer to that question. In fact, who made the decision to allow 30 children in a classroom, but you can have only 11 MLAs sitting in the Nova Scotia Legislature?

Mr. Speaker, there are a whole lot of questions about accountability in terms of child protection, in terms of the employment services and income assistance, in terms of the fact that this government did not increase the ESIA rates for decades and then gave an extra \$50 and then \$100, but yet there is no funding for a phone for people who are continually required to call in to make an appointment to talk to their Community Services worker.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing I want to say is that my community - which is not rural, it is a metro constituency - it is the only one in Nova Scotia without a single, family doctor. Fortunately, because I was able to negotiate a clinical nurse practitioner for our community and get us on the 811 Need a Family Practice wait-list for Dartmouth (when we were accidentally left off for years) we went from an unattached rate of 27 per cent to 1 per cent.

However, we have no mental health services. We have no community services. We do not have any of the other services that the majority of the other communities have, including a collaborative health centre. There are 89 in the province; there are 51 constituencies. It is completely unfair that this government has repeatedly said, over and over again, it is not a priority. They have said that moving mental health services out of downtown Dartmouth, which was accessible by bus, is not a priority or a problem for my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from all the calls that have come into my community, my community members and all the non-profit organizations, the church groups, the food bank, every single one of them came together during the pandemic to work together to make sure that we were looking after each other. When you look at spending over \$11.5 billion, we're not just looking at how you're spending the money and where you're spending the money, but who is making the decisions. Are those things accomplishing the goals that were set out? For the constituents of Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, I would suggest to you that we need to do better for the constituents in my area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few moments debating into Supply on this budget to speak about something that has largely been left off the table in the budget discussions.

Here in the NDP caucus, we talk a lot about systemic issues and the systemic challenges that face our province. We talk about racism, ableism, misogyny, and we talk about them because these are the things that constrain us from truly living up to the reputation that we have and, in some ways, we deserve. We know that this Premier and this government have acknowledged the systemic nature of discrimination. We saw it in the recent leadership race, we have seen it in various debates and conversations, and yet despite that acknowledgement, it is persistent.

The question is, how do we deal with it? I would like to take a few moments this afternoon and talk about misogyny and the misogyny that women in this province experience every day. I want to suggest, as NDP spokesperson for the Status of Women, that we are not doing enough to fix this. I want to offer a few examples - some from my constituency, some from other places.

I got a call a couple of days ago from a woman in Dartmouth South who was livid because her friend had decided, after much consideration, to report a historic sexual assault that had happened to her. The Province established a free legal advice line that women in her position could access a couple of years ago in the Department of Justice, where they could call 211 and register and get a couple of hours of free legal advice from a lawyer.

The woman called 211 and was asked to describe the incident, which is not what she's supposed to be asked, and then was told by the operator at 211 that what happened to her didn't fit the definition of historic sexual assault. This is systemic misogyny. This is dismissing a complainant before they've even had the opportunity to avail themselves of advice.

In my constituency is Holly House, which is a transition house for criminalized women run by the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia. The Elizabeth Fry Society and Coverdale Courtwork Society have been working closely together throughout

the pandemic. Coverdale Courtwork Society runs a similar facility in Halifax in Caitlan's Place. Both these organizations, which operate on a very limited budget, have faced hurdle after hurdle as they try to meet the needs of their constituents.

One of those hurdles has been that they've spent thousands of dollars - and they're not the only ones - we've discussed this in this Chamber) - on hotel rooms for women who are homeless or are in jail because they don't have a place to live. We know that our jails - particularly at Burnside, which has a high remand population - are doing double duty as homeless shelters for people who are in there for very minor offences and have not gone to trial but don't have anywhere to go.

More recently we became aware of something very troubling. Unlike all the other shelters and transition houses in Nova Scotia, these two organizations don't fall under the banner of transition houses of Nova Scotia, and their frontline staff - unlike all the other frontline staff - aren't being vaccinated. We're talking about the two organizations in Nova Scotia that arguably deal with the most vulnerable women in our province, that do not have the opportunity to social distance. They run food banks, clothing banks, but are not being offered vaccinations. They have gone through every channel of Public Health, we have brought it up with the minister, and still these staff members are not being vaccinated.

The issue that's really brought this up this week for us is education. I'll give a couple of examples before I turn to what's happening right now. In December, a Grade 12 student at Sydney Academy, Chloe Feltham, organized a protest against the school dress code, which sexualizes the bodies of women and girls. Students at the protest said that although the dress code had some restrictions for male students, as is often the case with school dress codes, these aren't enforced, or they're enforced differently.

Despite the fact that we did have school boards, and I'll speak more about that in a minute. Part of the reason for removing those school boards was the argument that we would have more consistency. Years later, we have no formal policy on dress codes or their enforcements, which leads me to what happened last week.

At West Kings District High School, a young woman was suspended. She went and sat in her classroom, and the male student in front of her was wearing a T-shirt with very misogynistic epithets on it - those have been tabled in the House earlier. The phrase in question in particular was "'tis the season to be rapey." Rape culture, as we would call it, was on full display. She went and alerted someone at the school about the existence of this T-shirt. Nothing was done. She returned home and posted a picture of the shirt, not the student, on social media, and she was suspended.

Not only was she suspended, but she was threatened with not being able to graduate if she continued to make waves, and this is all in the article that was tabled previously. Her peers protested, as well they should have, and many of them in those protests wore spaghetti straps and short skirts and all the things that women and girls are constantly

policed about, to show the double standard and the misogyny. We still have yet to hear any strong statement either from the government or from the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education. We know that there's still not a consistent policy, that there is still not a consistent repercussion for this type of behaviour.

One more example, Mr. Speaker: sexual health services and funding, which ties directly to this rape culture to which I was speaking. Sexual Health Nova Scotia represents the provincial network of community-based sexual health centres. The Halifax Sexual Health Centre is one of only six sexual health centres across the province that has a clinic. They have different streams of funding, including funds from MSI, small project grants, and part of an annual provincial grant. The provincial grant is not guaranteed. They have to re-apply for this provincial piece of their funding every year.

There's around \$30,000 allocated each year, and running the clinic costs about \$700,000. The South Shore Sexual Health Centre has continued to operate with only \$33,000 in annual core funding. There continues to be limited care in the region, inadequate access to counselling support for survivors of gendered violence, and so many of these folks on the front line have to spend the majority of their time advocating for funding and doing the administrative work required to bleed the funds out of this government that they need to run their services. The question is: How do we fix this?

[2:45 p.m.]

I would submit that it's actually not that complicated, and I'll tell you how we don't fix it. We don't fix it by deciding that what we need is more training. While training is necessary - and there are lots of brilliant trainers, anti-racism trainers, feminist trainers whom we should continue to listen to and learn from - it is not even close to sufficient. What we need to do is support the systems and the people who are doing the work. There are different ways to do that. For the Elizabeth Fry Society and Coverdale Courtworks Society and the sexual health centres, that's sufficient core funding that they need to do their work, that they shouldn't have to fight the government for every single year.

It might be oversight, Mr. Speaker. So for 211 we need to ensure that when the Department of Justice sets up a program dealing with vulnerable women, survivors of trauma, that that program has in it the proper resources and pieces so that the proper training can happen for frontline staff.

It might be not eliminating entire democratic orders of government. I am, of course, speaking about school boards. In this article from *The Atlantic* magazine entitled "The Sexism of School Dress Codes" - and this is an American example, but I think it's quite pertinent to what we're discussing - it says:

"According to students, the best solutions for remedying these issues entail more inclusive policymaking and raising awareness about the

subject. And students and administrators tend to agree that schools should involve students early on in the rule-creation process to prevent conflicts from popping up. By developing a system like this, they have a stake in the decision and are significantly more likely to both adhere and respect the final verdict.”

That’s what school boards did, Mr. Speaker. Did they need work? Absolutely, but the solution to an order of government that needed work was to disappear it in the name of consistency, in the name of efficiency, in the name of better government, and I would submit that none of that has come to pass, especially for our most vulnerable students.

In closing, and back to the budget, comparatively it is our position that this budget does not make significant impacts on women - not in the caring professions, not in child care, not in education, and not in supporting vulnerable and criminalized women. The upshot for that lack of investment is all the examples that I gave today.

I will leave my colleagues with this parting thought, particularly my colleagues on the government side, Mr. Speaker: show us, don’t tell us. Don’t tell us that you care about equity and then not invest in it. Don’t tell us that you’re bothered by misogyny but not do anything to make it better. This government has an opportunity, and we are waiting for them to live up to it. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The House will now recess for its mandated 15-minute COVID-19 break, and get set up for the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

[2:48 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:03 p.m. The House resolved into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Susan Leblanc in the Chair.]

[8:03 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 considerable progress and begs leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: 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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, would please call Bill No. 4.

Bill No. 4 - Biodiversity Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and move third reading of Bill No. 4, the Biodiversity Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens-Shelburne.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer a few remarks on Bill No. 4 this evening. A lot has happened since the introduction of this bill on March 11th. Sadly, we have witnessed fear, concern, anger, passion, uncertainty and much more. I have heard from hundreds of landowners who were filled with anxiety and fear, not only from just my constituency but the entire province, and I have heard from constituents and residents across the province who supported the bill as it was originally introduced.

At the end of the day, this legislation introduced by this Liberal government has deepened the lack of trust from both sides of the bill. The government has had two years to get this bill right and they failed. At the introduction of Bill No. 4, Nova Scotians were told by government to not worry about the wording in this bill, a bill that was very powerful, a bill that was overreaching. A bill that included words like "take any measure the Minister considers necessary" in the minister's opinion. Words like offences, contravention, individual fines of up to \$500,000, imprisonment, emergency orders, unclear powers of investigation, and undefined human activity.

All words that as a landowner do not make you feel as if your rights are being respected and protected. Instead they are words that make many feel threatened - threatened to lose their ability to earn a living and to put a roof over their heads, to put food on their table, threatened to lose their ability to pay for their children's education or save for retirement.

Thankfully many private landowners took notice and they started to question this government as to why they would put forth a bill with such power, why they would put forth a bill that had the potential of government stepping into the rural way of living and

interfering with the enjoyment of their private land or how they sustain themselves and families by working their lands.

The mobilization of private landowners across this province saw the minister and the Premier walk back their signature biodiversity bill. I still find myself deeply concerned why a government would introduce such a bill that would cause such fear and anxiety, a bill that required landowners - honest, hard-working men and women - to divert their attention from making a living and being forced to invest their time, their money, and their energy to protect their own land.

Mr. Speaker, I was shocked by the number of landowners who reached out to my office who just learned of this bill. This bill has been kicking around since 2019 and many were still not aware, but yet government insisted that consultation was broad and that it was inclusive.

Mr. Speaker, good pieces of legislation involve broad consultation. Consultation does not mean you hand-pick invitees and then request them to sign a confidentiality agreement. Poor consultation results in fatally flawed legislation - and that is exactly what has happened here. It is government's responsibility to introduce legislation that will be reasonable, rational, effective, constitutional, and balanced. The bill we saw on March 11th did not coordinate any of what I just mentioned.

The government stated it was never their intention to enter on private landowners' land, it was simply voluntary. Yet only after private landowners screamed from the hills, the heavily redacted form of the original bill arrived at Law Amendments Committee at the eleventh hour. So, if Nova Scotians were told that you do not need to worry or be alarmed about this bill when it was introduced, why was so much removed, with little to no information?

Imagine, a bill that had 55 clauses and the narrative of "do not worry" suddenly reappearing with only 19 clauses simply because this government could not mitigate the fears, fears that were just by Nova Scotians.

I spoke of the divide this bill has created. Throughout the last few weeks, I have been deeply saddened by the comments I have seen on social media, correspondence I have received at my office about the people who work the lands and the forests in my constituency. Many of these people I call my friends. Some are my family. But at the end of the day, it doesn't matter about the relationship to me. It is that they're human beings. They are people.

They are hardworking, honest Nova Scotians who have made a choice, a decision to remain in our rural communities. They have families and they employ families, making a very modest living in our forests and in our farms, and they inject thousands of dollars into our local rural communities.

They understand biodiversity. They care about our environment. They care about the lands, which in most cases have been passed down from generation to generation. They do not oppose biodiversity. They do not want to destroy the environment. They enjoy the rural way of life and freely allow others to experience their lands for hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, ATVing, snowmobiling. These people give to the less fortunate in their communities, they sponsor the kids' sports teams, and I could go on. They're humble individuals who work their hearts out from daybreak to dusk.

It sickens me to hear people call these hardworking men and women and their families greedy and destructive, for them to be threatened. If the Department of Lands and Forestry and this Liberal government believe that our private landowners are not caring for their lands, then work with them. Tell them what they're doing wrong. Have a conversation. Where is the extension services in the department? Educate, fund, and work with landowners. Don't introduce a bill that will make hard-working Nova Scotians potentially criminals. We need forestry. We need farming. We need fishing. These are all resource-based industries that have built this province.

Again, as mentioned, while I'm pleased to see the government reduce this bill from 55 clauses to 19, I'm still concerned. I am one of those Nova Scotians who has deeply lost trust in this government. My colleagues in the PC caucus introduced multiple amendments that would have held government to their word of their intention of this bill. If the amendments were accepted, it would have proven to me and many Nova Scotians that this government is truly only looking to place this biodiversity bill on Crown land. But they were all voted down.

This bill still grants the minister broad policy-making powers under Section 8(1)(a). The bill allows the Governor in Council to pass regulations that could have a direct impact on private landowners. The bill speaks of compensation framework for private landowners in Section 18(1)(i). Why do we need a compensation framework in this bill if it's only going to apply to Crown land? Regulatory authority should be granted to the Governor in Council to pass regulations only on Crown land, not private land. Quite frankly, government has the ability to do that now.

In closing, I would again like to say that I support biodiversity. It is not a new concept. I will always support legislation that is good legislation and legislation that can make us proud as Nova Scotians. I will support legislation that involves broad consultation and collaboration with stakeholders, and I will support a biodiversity bill on Crown land.

This is the third time we've seen this bill come forth. First as Bill No. 116, then Bill No. 4, and then a heavily-redacted Bill No. 4, from 55 clauses to 19 with no explanation and no information as to why. I think I know why. An election is looming.

Tonight this bill will pass without any of the PC amendments to take away the fear and to reassure private landowners. Those amendments would have done that, but it's going to pass tonight without those amendments. We know that.

[8:15 p.m.]

The question this evening is: Will we see this bill in its original state introduced once again by this Liberal government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

GARY BURRILL: We find ourselves, in the New Democratic Party, with Bill No. 4, in an odd position. The position of defending a piece of government legislation which the government has not had the courage to defend themselves.

We find ourselves participating in a path to passage of this bill, a path to passage in which our opponents have represented themselves in ways that have been variously vacillating, posturing, capitulating. I would like to add a few comments this evening to this debate, including a few comments on the bizarre and irregular road by which this bill has made it to third reading.

I would like to begin by reasserting the position our Party took on second reading of the Biodiversity Bill when it was in previous form before us, namely, that the bill is an entirely welcome and an entirely necessary piece of legislation.

Bill McKibben, in his 2019 book *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*, places special significance on the fact that there are now half as many wild animals on Earth as there were in 1970 - as there were, Mr. Speaker, when I was in high school. McKibben calls this - these are his words, and I will table them in a few moments: an awesome and mostly unnoticed silencing. Well he might.

Dr. Michelle Adams, Director, and Professor Karen Beazley from the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie point out in a statement issued in response to the government's announcement of its amendments to the bill prior to the meeting of the Committee on Law Amendments - these are their words: "the Endangered Species Act lists 71 species, with five now globally extinct and three provincially extinct . . . Biodiversity collapse and climate change are twin crises, representing emergencies for humanity." This precisely is our view, and I will table both these documents.

We were, therefore, surprised and disappointed when the government moved, prior to submissions to Law Amendments, to introduce drastic modifications to the bill. One struggles with how best to characterize these changes. It is less like the bill received amendment and more like it received amputation.

Just visually, it is startling to look at the modified bill - the modified document itself. The bill which we supported on second reading contained 19 pages of text, of which the bill now has seven pages expunged. I'm sorry - the bill now has seven pages left and 12 pages expunged.

In the physical text, the deleted parts of the bill are in red and are crossed out so that on page after page, looking at the red crossed out parts, it is as though one acquires the impression as though the bill were, itself, bleeding, which indeed it is - bleeding its scope in its confinement, now, to Crown lands, and bleeding its capacity with the removal of its sanctions which, after all, are what distinguish a law from a mere government suggestion.

The amputated, crossed out, red-ink version of the Biodiversity Bill, which is now before us, most singularly is no longer a biodiversity law for all of Nova Scotia but a biodiversity law for three-tenths of Nova Scotia, the part of the province that is Crown land. It is, in effect, now a kind of mini-Biodiversity Bill, if not a glorified biodiversity brochure.

One reporter called this, immediately, a 180, and I suppose it is, although even that is somehow to impart a greater sense of backbone than here the government deserves. It is more like a shrinking, a shrivelling resolution, such that we can say there is at least one place where species loss is not taking place. There's a new species of invertebrates now in our province - the Nova Scotia Liberals.

And why? As a consequence of a highly financed, high-intensity marketing and pressure campaign by Forest Nova Scotia, through what has essentially been admitted to be a front organization calling itself the Concerned Private Landowner Coalition.

Much ire, Mr. Speaker, has been directed against Forest Nova Scotia over its so-called Stop Bill 4 campaign. Personally, I think the campaign's vilification of what the ads referred to as Halifax Activists - activists with a capital A, mind you - personally, I think it's rather beneath the standard that the organization's members should expect, and at the cost of compromising the moral authority of Forest Nova Scotia's voice. I do not, however, place the culpability for the present gutting of the Biodiversity Act on Forest Nova Scotia.

Forest Nova Scotia, after all, has as one of its significant purposes to be a lobby group, a pressure group. That's what lobby groups and pressure groups do. They lobby and they bring on pressure. Government, however, has a different job. The government's job is to bring forward policy proposals consistent with its sense of what is needed, to consult about them authentically and widely, and then, when the matter is brought forward, to make the case for its program and to make the case for its beliefs in the public democratic sphere.

I think of a previous, intense lobbying and pressure campaign of Forest Nova Scotia's a decade ago, when the organization was known as Forest Products. The campaign was directed towards the previous NDP government's response to the Natural Resource

Strategy in 2011 to institute a 50 per cent limit on clear-cutting to be phased in over a period of five years. Government MLAs were deluged with emails, phone calls, visits, and meetings, all bearing the repeated echoes and messaging, as they say, of Forest Products' campaign against the measure.

One conversation in particular, from that time, stands out. A contractor with Wagner's came to see me one day, in the office I had at that time in Stewiacke, and talked with me about all the reasons, as he saw it, that the government should stay out of the clear-cutting regulating business. We had a good exchange in which we, I thought, listened to one another, and I did my best to explain why it seemed to me that the clear-cutting limits were the best road forward for rural Nova Scotia.

After an hour or so, he got up to go. I asked him, just casually, about his family - he had a couple of little kids - and I asked him then whether or not he would be advising his kids, when they got through school, to follow him and go in the woods as he had. No, no, he said, by that time there won't be anything there for them. I explained that that was all I was really trying to say, and he explained that he was there, actually, on behalf of his employer and he could kind of see what I was trying to get at.

None of that whole important process took place with this Biodiversity Act. What happened instead is that, in face of the first anticipatable critical headwinds, the government eviscerated their own legislation, leaving behind material which I acknowledge is useful and constructive certainly, but which nevertheless has the character of a shell.

What carried this from the odd to the bizarre is that the Liberals did this before the dozens of submissions to the Law Amendments Committee, with the text of the bled-out version of the bill made available only just before that committee's meeting. Many presenters there found themselves giving carefully prepared remarks that were addressed to a bill that was no longer on the table. It is as though the government were participating in a boxing match, and as soon as they heard their opponent come out of the dressing room, they punched themselves and laid down on the mat and asked the referee to call it.

What's the word for that? Ineffective? Capitulating? Vacillation? Probably all three. Mr. Speaker, I invite you to consider what would have happened at Boat Harbour with Northern Pulp if the government had taken this subservient approach. I think it might have been an altogether different story.

Nor is it credible for the Premier to contend that the bulk of the bill has been removed because the government, to use his words, was "listening to the public." We have a pretty good system for listening to the public in legislative matters in Nova Scotia, and that is the Law Amendments Committee process. If listening were what the government was doing in the great biodiversity shrivel, surely they would have done that after and not before people said and submitted the things they wanted to have heard.

As I say, it has been a very odd debate. This is also true in the case of our Conservative opponents, who on the coattails of Forest Nova Scotia have come to the discussion loaded for bear and battle, only to find the government having said uncle before they got there.

A few words about the Conservatives' discourse in this biodiversity discussion. A steady and recurring theme in what the Conservatives have had to say in discussion of this bill to this point is that government is something that imposes things on you, that government is something that cramps and constrains you by telling you what to do, that government in fact does all this imposing and telling from a position of not actually knowing what it's doing. This was evident in a Conservative line of leading questioning of witnesses at the Law Amendments Committee with the question: Who do you think is best to direct your woodlot, the government or you?

This was evident in debate at the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, where the Leader of the Conservative Opposition quoted Ronald Reagan, although I don't remember whether or not he realized or said he was quoting Reagan, to the effect that the most dangerous words in the English language are: we're from the government and we're here to help. You could certainly hear it in the proposed and defeated Conservative amendment underlining, highlighting, and placing in capital letters the fact that the Act would be limited to Crown land, as though the making of public laws in areas beyond the government's own buildings, the government's own land, or the government's own employees were somehow, of its nature, an odious illegitimate incursion.

This line of reasoning which we have been hearing in recent weeks a great deal draws from a well. That is the well of neoconservatism associated with figures like Mr. Reagan, Margaret Thatcher or, in Canada, Stephen Harper and his successors. There are a number of components of this well, ranging from fiscal to deregulatory approaches, but the core defining features of this well are its twin tenets of veneration of the private sector on the one hand and denigration of government, denigration of the public sector, on the other.

I want to make two observations about this overall outlook which are relevant to the present debate.

Number one, this overall outlook is so pre-IPCC. From the time of the United Nations' issuing of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report in October 2018, which galvanized the world with its incontrovertible presentation of what is required to keep global heating below 1.5 degrees within the next now-nine years and the attendant mobilization of the world around the necessity to coordinate, focus, and invest every available capacity to the accomplishing of this goal - through all that time, the importance of government as the only agent with the capacity to bring about this change is something that has asserted itself in the public understanding.

[8:30 p.m.]

I think of Seth Klein's 2020 book *A Good War*, in which he analyzes how only government was able to marshal the resources to defeat fascism in World War II, and how government must now adopt a parallel role with parallel scope in order to avert the existential crisis, and how this thinking about the matter in Klein's volume speaks to the recasting currently of the public mind.

The recent Supreme Court of Canada decision regarding the federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act also highlights this, namely that climate change is of course real, but also that it requires coordinated and collective action. That's point one.

Point two, the neo-conservative government-denigrating view is just so entirely pre-COVID-19. COVID-19 has deeply reawakened our overall society's understanding of the capacity of government for good. When COVID-19 hit and our backs, in all kinds of unpredictable ways, were suddenly put up against the wall, the world did not turn to Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, or Warren Buffet, but rather to governments across the board.

It was governments who expedited the development of vaccines and are implementing the logistics of their rollouts. It was government, when incomes overnight went in the tank, that brought forward programs like CERB and CRB, with a speed and efficiency that neo-conservatives had always belittled their capacity to muster. It is government, to a profound extent, that is upholding small and medium and large business at the moment, with the wage subsidy.

We can expect that business conversations about the wisdom of government spending may not be the same when we hear them in the future. That's the second point.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that the Conservatives' discourse on the Biodiversity Act draws utterly from a well and inhabits utterly a world that has become irrelevant in the era of climate change and COVID-19 and which, throughout their discussion on Bill No. 4, has shown their approach to be both outdated and anachronistic.

Mr. Speaker, all the protestations from the Leader of the Conservative Opposition that he believes in the reality of climate change do not change this, because they do not change the fact that this is the Party in Nova Scotia of fracking and of uranium mining; a Party one-fifth of whose members in Nova Scotia voted for Maxime Bernier to be their Leader; a Party who in parallel numbers voted - in Nova Scotia, mind you - in 2020 to be led by the extreme figures Derek Sloan and Leslyn Lewis; and a Party that, if there were a single one of their present MLAs who didn't stump and proclaim their support for Stephen Harper or Andrew Scheer in recent federal elections, that MLA indeed would qualify as an endangered species.

I want to return, Mr. Speaker, to the debate on Bill No. 4 itself as we have experienced it to this point. In debate in Committee of the Whole House, the member for Halifax Needham offered a straightforward reflection on the genesis of the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, based on a podcast she had heard, to the effect that the source of that bill was a particular moment of opportunity in which Mark Parent, the Minister of Environment at the time, and William Lahey, deputy minister, found themselves, she said, the adults in the room.

The Leader of the Conservative Opposition took exceptional umbrage at this reflection and accused her of characterizing other members of that Cabinet as - his word - "children."

In his response to the member for Halifax Needham, the Leader of the Conservative Opposition has expressed himself with an inadequate sense of measure. "Adults in the room" is a metaphor, it is an expression, familiar in the titles of films and books and essays. Nowhere does it ever indicate that the speaker thinks of others and those named, as to quote him, "children." Is the Leader of the Conservative Opposition suggesting for example of economist Yanis Varoufakis's book, *Adults in the Room*, about the EU and the financial crisis a decade ago in Europe - is he suggesting that Varoufakis is saying that Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron are children? Surely not, because the expression does not mean that.

So much does it not mean that, in fact, that one is left to wonder what does underlie the Official Opposition Leader's out-of-scale response. I suspect that it may have to do with a certain frustration that his Liberal opponents laid down in the ring before he got there, A, and B, his Party has really become irrelevant on the great biodiversity question of this era. Yes, Mr. Speaker, a strange debate, and this bill has followed a course that is bizarre and odd and that is entirely unfortunate in my view.

Something is being lost from view in all this Liberal subservience and Conservative irrelevance, namely the emergency of biodiversity loss itself. No member of any Party surely is going to challenge the portrayal in the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Risks Report that the human species is already responsible for the loss of 83 per cent of all wild animals and half of plants, that over 10,000 species are going extinct each year, and that the current accelerating rate of species extinction is tens to hundreds of times greater than over the past 10 million years. This calls precisely for action of the sort and at the level of what was presented in the biodiversity bill as it was put forward here at first and second reading and which we indicated our support for at that time.

We in the NDP also in fact find ourselves in this moment on this bill between the posturing of the Conservatives and the capitulation of the Liberals, we find ourselves also to be the adults in the room. Although we are critical of the fact that the government is carrying forward less of a biodiversity bill than was first presented, we also understand that there remain features in this legislation which will be positive in their impact - and we

understand particularly the urgency of our province's having, as the legislation puts it in its longer title, An Act to Provide for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Nova Scotia.

The New Democratic Party will be voting for this bill. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Just before we move on, I want to remind the honourable member that while he was speaking I had time to look up a couple of definitions. Early in his speech he referred to the governing Party, the Liberals, as "new species of invertebrates" and I will rule that unparliamentary. I will leave it to the member and everybody else to take time to look up what that means - but we will be adding that to the unparliamentary list of phrases.

The honourable member for Cumberland South.

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, and odd, very odd. I am not sure exactly what the Leader of the New Democratic Party was debating, the government or the Official Opposition, the Progressive Conservative Party. The honourable member should take some recommendations from the Premier from this morning and stick to facts, not fabrications.

It is very true and I do agree with some of the points the New Democratic Leader did say. This has been a two-year roller coaster to see where this government is headed on biodiversity. It certainly did not need to be this way. It did not need to be written on a form where all Nova Scotians saw or perceived that there was a threat in the wording of a bill. Whether the threat was actually there or not, it was certainly perceived, and perception could have been avoided with proper education, proper process.

It could have been avoided with proper consultation, it could have been avoided with collaboration, sharing of ideas, thoughts, dialogue regarding goals, targets, and networking on achievements. It didn't need to wait two years. Two years with controlled consultation, which - I did attend some of those consultations, and I debate whether they were actual consultations. It was more like lectures from a government with tunnel vision and no willingness to listen, set on their own process and plan, and no accounting for open dialogue.

It was more like a pre-set conversation in which stakeholders were told, your concerns have all been heard and taken care of. Well, we know they were obviously not taken care of, but for stakeholders' positions. There was also a consultant hired to reach out to selected stakeholders - not all stakeholders. That consultant reached out to selected stakeholders.

There is the ever-shiny consultation under the screen of "invitation only," with the surprise of a confidentiality contract for participants. Sign on the dotted line or move along was the basic theme of the day.

This is not open dialogue. This is not process. This is a controlled messaging and forging ahead, bypassing collaboration from not only the Opposition in this Legislature - which I am not surprised - but from what we heard from Law Amendments Committee and articles in the media, no one on either side of this debate felt properly consulted, educated, or collaborated with.

I do feel for the new minister of this department, who was dropped into this department to oversee along with another major department, Energy and Mines. The new minister might have been told by the Premier that there was full consultation done, but as we have heard many, many times in the original bill and the current bill, no one shares that same view with the new Premier.

I have a letter, which I will table. A request to the then-Deputy Minister of Lands and Forestry, requesting to attend a scheduled consultation - and I quote, "consultation" - on July 27, 2020. The writer, Kevin Merriam, requested to attend the consultation process. He was denied by the department, and we find out in the wee hours following the consultation that not only was it by invitation only, but the Premier, the then-minister, was present for this meeting, which was cast with the shadow of confidentiality contracts.

How can we make good public policy on such an important issue when the public is restricted in communications that they are allowed to have on this topic - or any topic, for that matter? Restrictions of information similar to the pages and pages of redacted information that our caucus and other stakeholders on many sides of this debate have received when asking for information on the original bill and many other issues this government wants to hide. For instance, the FOIPOP that was requested regarding that July 27th meeting, where much of the detail has been redacted - but maybe, Mr. Speaker, just maybe the information that wasn't hidden speaks more volume than the words that were.

The key message for this meeting was, and I quote: trust all materials will be discussed will be held in confidence. Signed confidentiality agreements, materials to be collected after, the goal - goals, not to negotiate wording. Hope for support but not expect it.

How is this representation of transparent and collaborative government? I think it is not. How can a government expect the public to be receptive of these practices when the public came ready to communicate and work together, and the government comes to a meeting with targets and goals that look very much and like already willing to go into battle? That FOIPOP, which I will table - at least 12 pages of 17 pages shaded out. Transparency at the finest, Mr. Speaker.

Just a while ago I read from a *Chronicle Herald* article where the Ecology Action Centre's Raymond Plourde is quoted as saying: "The Ecology Action Centre, like forest and landowner groups, was also given very limited consultations. It was more like, 'here's what we're doing and we're not changing anything.'"

[8:45 p.m.]

Plourde also said something in the article similar to what I stated at the end of Law Amendments: if government had done a good job and offered real consultation with all sides, good conversation could have resulted without the need for fireworks. I agree, Mr. Speaker.

We see in the mandate letter to the Minister of Lands and Forestry from the Premier that his department is to work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on biodiversity. Biodiversity is rightfully mentioned many times in this letter, but there are no mentions of how these words will become action.

Mr. Speaker, we as the PC caucus stood here two years ago in this Chamber and endorsed the original Biodiversity Act but endorsed it with a statement that went like this: We need to get it right. Now here we are two years later, a second attempt - third if you count the redactions - with a totally redacted document. It almost reminds me of a FOIPOP we received from this government with lines shaded out and pages completely gone.

We have lost two years to this volatile situation. We are seeing a collapse of biodiversity worldwide. We see a government more interested in working in silos than collaboratively working with open dialogue, education, and a process to work with landowners rather than wedge them against each other.

This debate has been labelled many, many times as a forestry debate versus everyone else. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, as the critic for the PC Party, it wasn't just forestry I heard from. It was many landowners all over the province who were not sure of this bill, were not sure of the wording. They were not under the understanding of what the biodiversity bill might mean.

There is an uneducated process. Those were farmers and landowners from all over - from HRM who own land in rural Nova Scotia. We could have got it right. We had a great example of where it can work. That was the EGSPA, where it was all Parties in, communication across all department lines, full head-on community education and cross-department communications.

I still advocate that there could have been a different way, as I stated in second reading: Update the Endangered Species Act, include an emphasis on biodiversity and invasive species. It can and it will work. Before we hear no, no, no - if it is true to the word of this government that they want to protect biodiversity, where there is a will, there is a way.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in good legislation, open dialogue to achieve legislation, even when it is not the point of view that one may want to hear. I do not believe in legislation that does not answer the questions that many Nova Scotians may have. Are we

ever going to get legislation 100 per cent right and approved by 100 per cent of Nova Scotians? No. But is it not acceptable to us as legislators to say that we should have and want at least good strong support for any legislation going through this Chamber? Yes. I have seen it before where government has brought in a piece of legislation and rushed it through, only to return it next session to be improved, to get it right.

Government will pass this third reading tonight. I will echo comments that I have been saying for two years plus now. One: educate Nova Scotians, not just on this bill, but every piece of legislation. The majority of Nova Scotians do not feel an understanding of what this bill was all about. We can blame that on media campaigns all we want, but the truth of the matter is, it is on the shoulders of the government. They presented this legislation and there was a whack of communication in and around it.

Most other jurisdictions in the world, when you look it up, started biodiversity protection with a strong educational campaign. The lack of homework, Mr. Speaker, is what I tell my children: if this government had done the work - the good, hard work - in the early days of biodiversity, there could have been goals and exchange of ideas. I do not believe we would have had this debate today if they had just done their homework.

That brings me to my second point, consultation with openness, fairness, transparency, and collaboration, something that is not seen very often.

Mr. Speaker, with the passing of this bill, there is again a promise of public consultation while the development of regulations takes place. Let us not all forget in this Chamber what public consultation is supposed to look like. I believe there needs to be a strong emphasis on public. The public needs to feel engaged and right now, not all sides do.

All sides of this debate do not feel engaged. They want to be heard in communication. They need to feel that they are part of this process. Regulations will be the defining factor after today. Regulations will be what spells out the intent of the words in this bill and, after all, the devil could be in the details, Mr. Speaker.

This bill should have been worked collaboratively together with all stakeholders at the table to come with a bill that would have worked throughout all of Nova Scotia, with all Nova Scotians on the same goals and targets, where biodiversity isn't a topic of resistance. It shouldn't be a topic of resistance. Biodiversity should be in the first and foremost thoughts of all Nova Scotians in their daily lives, as simple and as common as eating whenever you are hungry.

Mr. Speaker, this debate of 2021 should never have been. We stand here now, and there are too many interpretations of the wording of this bill. We have a government that has tabled a bill for the second time and could or would not or maybe cannot put education,

science and explanation behind the words that are in this bill to give any side of the debate a comfort level in any form of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, we did hear the Premier state today that he would rather hear facts, so let me get to my point of fact. Just some facts: 60,000 Nova Scotians on the list who don't enjoy a doctor in every Nova Scotian. Fact: asking questions on behalf of concerned Nova Scotians is not politicizing the topic, it is holding government to account and getting answers for hard-working Nova Scotians. Fact: a PC government would not have ignored democracy in this Chamber for 12 months. Fact: the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act was brought in by an all-Party collaboration with the strong leadership of the Honourable Mark Parent and professor William Lahey, under a PC government. Fact: despite comments this morning, it was the Premier who changed the biodiversity bill, not the PC caucus.

Fact: when things don't go right for this government, the government gets defensive, and that goes for everyone. The right approach would have been to have stakeholders at different points of view together in the same place to foster the exchange of ideas, share experiences, and set a path forward, a path that Nova Scotia has taken before. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we all have different points of view and that's what makes us Nova Scotians.

When people come together on serious issues as this, to develop ideas without wedges, without campaigns, and without harsh words, that makes Nova Scotia. That is Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, and working together for the good of all, for the betterment of our province, supporting each other through actions, not harsh words. Hard-working world leaders in many fields we are in Nova Scotia, setting examples and passion.

This is the Nova Scotia I represent when I speak here, Mr. Speaker, willingness to work together. We didn't see it in this bill. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I am going to sketch out my understanding of what we have lost with the many, many clauses that are not going to pass into law with the biodiversity bill, and then maybe reflect a little bit more on what we have lost as a province, where evidence would be that we do need faith in government and government to be willing to exercise its unique role in order to tackle many problems that are collective and which cannot be addressed without government exercising its role and its power.

So, what is missing? Biodiversity emergency orders. What might that have looked like? Well, an example was given by the Nova Scotia Invasive Species Council to Law Amendments Committee. They talked about zebra mussels, which I think many people would have hear about quite a lot in the news. They have clogged up water filtration, water treatment systems in various jurisdictions in North America. They were first confirmed -

one way they've been introduced is by moss balls that have been sold in aquarium shops. They were first confirmed in those in the United States and then made their way to Canada, where they were eventually confirmed in aquarium stores here in Nova Scotia.

It's not something that we might ingest, it's not a firearm, it's not something that is covered in other legislation. It is a legislative gap. This sort of legislative gap is what biodiversity emergency orders were intended to address. The department itself gave a different example, in its briefing to media and to members of our caucus, as a potential application of a biodiversity emergency order: issuing an order to a greenhouse selling an invasive plant species; preventing the public from entering into a bat cave to prevent spread of White-nose syndrome. These are the sorts of instances where government needs a tool because government works through law. In these sorts of instances, because of the great weakening of this bill, there will continue to be a legislative gap.

The need to address this sort of gap was first identified in the Natural Resource Strategy, or at least that's the first place where I can see language around it. On page 28 of the Natural Resource Strategy, it talks about the need to establish clear and effective leadership and governance related to biodiversity, including references to implementing new laws and updating existing laws to support biodiversity.

I note, too, in the introduction to the Natural Resource Strategy, that the Natural Resource Strategy reflects commitment to EGSPA. That was written by the NDP Minister of Natural Resources, Charlie Parker, in the introduction to the Natural Resource Strategy.

The Natural Resource Strategy itself was developed by very broad consultation. I look at it occasionally because it's so relevant to so many of the files for which it's been an honour to serve in our caucus as the spokesperson. That number - 2,000 people engaged in consultations on the Natural Resource Strategy. There is a reason why that strategy, like EGSPA, loom large in this province as examples of good governance, of leadership, and yes, of bringing people into the room and into dialogue with each other to establish trust and establish the basis on which to move forward, to tackle important issues for us as a province, for us as a collective of people living on this beautiful land.

A brief tangent on EGSPA because some members took except to the way I categorized it. I went back and listened to that podcast on the weekend, just sort of wanting to check myself, because I actually don't like to cause offence, and I rarely speak with the intention of causing offence. I do try to speak truthfully. It was my background before I was in politics. I was a journalist, so I like to get it right - at least get it right as in truth. I went back and listened to that whole podcast again, and it's a great one, and I really encourage anybody who cares about politics and public policy to go and listen to it.

[9:00 p.m.]

Former PC Minister of Environment Mark Parent talks about how he got involved in politics, how it was because, for him, politics was a way to work on behalf of the community. He got involved with the Progressive Conservative Party because - and he talked about the particular influence of Flora McDonald - it was a party that talked more and prioritized more the community than the individual. He actually drew a very clear delineation between that era of Progressive Conservatives and the politics of Stephen Harper, which was the time when he was being interviewed.

He talked about there being a void. What I remembered as an opportunity, he talked about there being a void and that void was what he and Bill Lahey took advantage of as they put forward something that government could do to address that need for collective governance, as an opportunity to show leadership, both for everybody here now, but also everybody into the future.

Listening to him, I just can't help but think how differently he framed the role of government from some members of his party in this House now. He did not talk about government as overreach or of law as a constraint on liberty. He talked about the role of government as valuable.

How did we lose the trust? Well, part of it, actually, I think, can be explained by the consultations on this Act which did happen. In the summary of consultations, there was a document that was shared at the bill briefing. This is how the department captured it: "The legislation introduced in March 2019 was specifically informed by initial stakeholder consultations in 2013, with 11 organizations representing industry associations, as well as provincial and national environmental groups, and again, in January 2018."

2013 and 2018 - that is a long time to leave the work of a Natural Resources Strategy, which was faithful to EGSPA, which was inspired by EGSPA and then carried through by the NDP government. That's a long time to leave a major piece of work on a shelf. Relationships, I find, need tending, especially when those relationships are complicated.

If I've learned anything in my role as Natural Resources and now Lands and Forestry critic, it's that there are not two sides of issues, there are often five sides. There are really different pressures, different interests, different stories. There are not urban activists and rural landowners at odds with each other, and we saw that that was not the case during the Law Amendments Committee process.

There are many, many rural woodlot owners who see themselves very much at odds with the coalition, the coalition of - what is it called? The Concerned Private Landowner Coalition, whose website is now gone, who claimed to be speaking for Nova Scotia's private landowners.

In forestry, things are complicated. People have different interests. Yes, there are often economic pressures. Woodlot owners who make a living by harvesting wood are making approximately the same amount of money . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Sorry to interrupt, The House will now recess for 15 minutes for the mandated COVID-19 protocol break and proceedings will resume at 9:20 p.m.

[9:05 p.m. The House recessed.]

[9:20 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Halifax Needham, with a maximum of 48 minutes remaining.

LISA ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I won't take that whole time, but I will try to remember exactly where I was. I do not write my speeches, I kind of sketch them and sometimes I go off my path.

I was talking about the loss of trust as consultations on the Natural Resource Strategy were basically suspended from 2013 until 2018. I know that contributed to, I guess, an opportunity to then mis-characterize the Biodiversity Act when it came. But there were consultations done. Maybe they were not ideal. I regret that we did not build on the momentum of the Natural Resource Strategy because, again, forestry is complex and the people involved in that industry have a whole host of different interests.

Apparently there were, according to the government, five regional sessions held across the province: 70 organizations and individuals were invited; 148 participants attended - 35 in Halifax, 51 in Caledonia, 56 in Bible Hill, and 6 in Membertou. Maybe there should have been more; maybe it should have been different.

I also think that it is the job of government to govern, and it is not realistic - I don't know, but I don't think it is realistic to think that with 30,000 landowners, everyone is going to educate themselves about a government bill about biodiversity. Unfortunately, that is where the information campaign became powerful because a lot of people are not going to read a bill. Frankly, I did not go to law school; that is not my background. I don't know that I had ever read a provincial government bill before I was elected, and certainly a whole bunch of them affect me.

Instead we saw a campaign published in *the Chronicle Herald* that said things like Bill No. 4 is not about the environment, it is about who gets to control private land. That is the kind of thing that was said. And who has the resources to counter that sort of misinformation? The government does: Communications Nova Scotia, the minister, the Premier. They have the resources to try to counter that sort of misinformation.

In fact, I think about 40 different environmental organizations - I don't have the right piece of paper here, but I have it - did come up with the money to purchase sort of a counter-ad, including everything from the Tusket River Environmental Protection Association, a whole bunch of folks who care, naturalists, yes the Ecology Action Centre, but also the Nature Trust. A bunch of different organizations did purchase an ad that talked about what the bill actually did, but their voice was not as powerful as that coalition of concerned private landowners, who in fact did not represent all landowners at all.

One quote from one submission to Law Amendments Committee:

“I am a private landowner and embraced and celebrated the original Biodiversity act as an indication that the Rankin government was truly committed to making tough decisions that would ultimately protect us all and leave a better environment for our children and grandchildren. We all must be accountable to the environment and if we are then no one should be concerned about this legislation in its original form.”

That's from Greg Cosman, who submitted it to the Committee on Law Amendments but, of course, by that time the bill had already been significantly altered.

This bill was not about significantly curtailing people's enjoyment of their land to the extent that it had the potential to curtail their liberty on their land. It certainly would not have done so more than any number of other acts, notably the Expropriation Act and the Mineral Resources Act. The Endangered Species Act, passed in 1998, can designate privately owned land as core habitats for endangered species and prohibit activity that can harm those species. Yet, people are still buying land and harvesting and enjoying.

I guess the questions that I'm left with are: Why the government did not defend this bill as it was? Will it actually bring in a Protection from Invasive Species bill at its next sitting of the Legislature, so that it will actually resolve those legislative gaps, the governance gaps, that are going to continue?

But also, are we going to prick the balloon, the bluster of the rhetoric around this bill and recognize that it is the job of government to regulate and to legislate and to seek the common good and recognize that we're all living on Mi'kma'ki, and further, we're all living on the planet. The largest private landowner in Nova Scotia is an investment company with offices in the United States and in Ontario, which is wielding a fair amount of influence, including by emailing ATV clubs to say, please protest Bill No. 4.

Are we going to prick that balloon and look for what is real and look for what serves us as a province, as citizens, as biological creatures who also need our environment, as parents, as grandparents? Are we going to have the courage to have difficult conversations that are truthful and take steps that we know are needed and that we know aren't always

welcome? Because change is hard. Wearing a mask all the time is hard, and we're doing it because we are seeking the common good, we are seeking to minimize harm to each other.

Tackling the climate crisis is literally impossible without, actually, those who have relative privilege being willing to recognize that it is in their interest too - in a broader sense - to relinquish some of that privilege, to step less heavily on the Earth and to share a little bit more equitably with both the other people on it and also the other creatures on it. If we can't do this, I could despair.

[9:30 p.m.]

At the Law Amendments Committee, Barrie MacGregor, who is a private landowner and environmentalist from Yarmouth County, pointed out the need to find common ground and the government's responsibility to help us find it. His quote is sort of beautiful, so I'm going to read it at a little of length. I'm certainly glad to table it, though it has already been tabled because it's from Law Amendments Committee.

“My final point is that there are really not two sides to this discussion if we look at the long term. In forestry and biodiversity what other choice have you? The question is - what do we want to pass on to our grandchildren and great grandchildren? What's your vision? I firmly believe it is the responsibility of the Nova Scotia government to clarify the long term plan of where we are headed as a province for our forest land. If we do not have a clear common destination we'll never agree on how to get there.”

I want for Nova Scotia, for Nova Scotians, a government that wants to help us set our sights on a common destination that is not defined by private interests but by the common good. All the same, what remains in this bill is positive, not as powerful as it was intended to be, but it is positive. It'll be my pleasure to support this bill.

THE SPEAKER: I'll remind the honourable member, she referred in her remarks earlier to the Rankin government. Just a general reminder to all members that it's not proper to refer to any other member by their proper name.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: It has been interesting listening to the discussion tonight on Bill No. 4. Certainly, as I listen to the discussion, I think about Nova Scotians. I think about the impact on real people.

It was quite entertaining almost, if it wasn't so sad, listening to the Leader of the NDP who is only focused on me. He was only on the PC Party. It kind of tells where we're

at in the election cycle, but how ironic it is to hear the Leader of the NDP lecturing anyone in this House about relevance is quite, quite entertaining and pretty remarkable.

I haven't been a student of politics for all that long, but I'm told there was a time when the NDP held some position of some relevance, that they played some role on the political spectrum. I just don't think that time is now, and I think from the speeches we have heard from the members of that caucus, we understand why that's the case.

I'm not a student of the English language, either. Mr. Speaker, like you, I had to Google some of the words. I did understand that the Leader was trying to say that I wasn't very smart. I got that.

I heard a lot of words from the Leader, but I never heard one single word about a forester, except to make some disparaging comments about one who visited his office at one point and his intelligence. I never heard one single word about our farming community. I never heard a single word about landowners, nothing about Nova Scotians - all about their own ideology and reconstructed view of history and the world.

I would like to talk about those Nova Scotians because that's what I'm here for. That's the reason I'm here, to talk about making our communities stronger. That's exactly the reason.

When we talk about Bill No. 4, I will not be supporting Bill No. 4, and I'll tell you why in one simple statement. The reason why is that the written words of this bill are inconsistent with the spoken representations of the Premier of this province. Already the ink is not even dry on the paper of this bill and the written word is completely inconsistent with what the Premier has said.

Nova Scotians should know that the original intent of this bill - the 55 clauses of this bill that were initially tabled two years ago and re-tabled in this session of the Legislature - those words are the intent of this government. Those Nova Scotians who are watchers and people who can understand what happens in this Chamber and how it impacts them - the threat remains of this bill, of the original intent of this government.

The Liberal Bill No. 4 is still very much at the door. It is still something that this government is intent on doing as it was written. On the one hand, the Liberal government has said that the bill will only apply to Crown land, but the words of the bill aren't that explicit and the written words of the bill don't match the spoken word that the bill doesn't apply to private land.

When we come to a situation where we see that the Liberal government is keeping the door open to come after private lands, we have to ask ourselves, why are they keeping that door open? We tabled some very reasonable amendments that would have made the bill very explicit that the bill does not apply to private land. The Liberals rejected them.

Peter Spicer, I think, spoke for a lot of people when after listening to the Premier, he said he would believe the changes when he saw them with his own eyes. That was, of course, after the Premier said, we are going to stay away from private land. We are going to prove and develop the street cred on Crown land only. Peter Spicer said, I'll believe the changes when I see them with my own eyes.

Well, guess what? That change to explicitly confirm that this doesn't apply to private land is nowhere to be seen. It is nowhere to be seen. If you are looking for that with your own eyes before you can believe it, there is no reason to believe it.

Why would the Liberals reject amendments that hold them to their own words? They rejected amendments that actually held them to what they were saying. Raymond Plourde said that if government had done a good job and offered real consultation with all sides, a good conversation could have resulted without the fireworks. That's what Ray of the Ecology Action Centre said. That didn't happen either, because the government didn't want a good conversation on this. If they did, there was certainly one to be had, but they didn't want good conversation. They wanted a headline.

They wanted the headline that said, Nova Scotia passes the first Biodiversity Act. That is the headline that this government was looking for. That was the only goal of this Premier, who wants to rebrand the government. Well, sadly, as we talked about at committee - newsflash: for the Premier to have been the first leader to pass a Biodiversity Act, he would have had to start when he was somewhere around nine or ten years old, because that happened back in 1992.

I had used a quote in the Committee of the Whole House, but I know the Leader of the NDP thought that I didn't really have the understanding of where that might come from. I do want to assure him that I did look for a quote from a famous NDP leader that would also be relevant, but I had trouble finding one - and not just a quote, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, 1992 is when Prime Minister Brian Mulroney helped bring the United States on board at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in support of the Convention on Climate Change. Under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's leadership, Canada became the first industrialized country to sign the biodiversity accord treaty. Why? Why? Well, because Canadians have long recognized the need to maintain a healthy environment and have long been concerned about the degradation of ecosystems and the loss of species and genetic diversity, which results from human activities.

People are concerned. No political Party, as much as some may think they have a higher pulpit on this, it's just a human thing, Mr. Speaker. This is not new. In 1992, in fact the Government of Canada, with the support from provincial and territorial governments, signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. That was back in 1992, so it's far too late to be first.

But why would that happen? Because the biodiversity treaty accord was known to be a very important global and national instrument for promoting and guiding efforts to conserve biodiversity and preserve sustainability.

This is not new. My advice to the Premier would be: if you can't be first, you should at least be good. That's certainly advice that I received over my lifetime, as well, on many things. This government missed the boat on being good because they were so focused on being first.

I know there's talk today of a bubble being burst, and that would certainly have been one for the Premier when he learned that he couldn't be first. But still undeterred, this government is still not willing to take the pressure off rural Nova Scotians and people who are concerned about government overreach.

Obviously not everyone in this Chamber is concerned about government overreach, and not everyone in this Chamber understands the concerns of rural Nova Scotia. It is good to have the voices of rural Nova Scotians around a caucus table. It brings some balance to discussions. When we don't have that rural Nova Scotian voice at your caucus table, well, you see what happens. You've heard some of that here tonight.

The threats and fears of Bill No. 4 are still very much dangling in front of Nova Scotians. The Liberals may have hit pause on this, but they are not stopping, and that's why we say Bill No. 4 is still very much at the door.

When I talk to people who make their living in forestry, and I've had some tough discussions with them over the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker, because, of course, I supported the government on the Boat Harbour legislation. That led to some tough discussions with people working in forestry in particular. But the thing is, when you have principles and values you stay true to them. You don't just blow in the wind with whatever the flavour of the day is and where the biggest protest is; you actually stand for something.

As much as I stood with the former Premier on the Boat Harbour Act - which, believe you me, was not always easy, being the MLA for the area and having a lot of people who worked at the mill at that time, or in the woods - you have to stand for something. Now on this bill I'm also standing for something, and that's that this bill went too far. When you are guided by principles, you can cut out the rhetoric and you can just be sincere about people. I think we could do with just a smidgen more of that in this Chamber. Nova Scotians would be better served by that.

This bill was always about a power grab, and it's a power grab of unprecedented proportions. The whole thing of the government knows best, and this is government knows best legislation to the highest order. It is unprecedented. I've heard some people say, what's the big deal? This has been a common theme of the debates that I've had publicly and privately around this bill.

We heard it tonight that - the Leader of the NDP said it - I'm not very smart, I can't really understand some of these things. I've had that in exchanges over emails with people. That's where people go, that's the lowest common denominator. When they can't make a valid argument to you, they resort to those types of name calling, whether it be misrepresenting what somebody said, whether it be intentionally using a wrong Party name to create some other kind of illusion.

Sticking to the facts is a hard road. I know it is not the road for everyone, but it is the road for us in this Party. I have heard those say, what's the big deal? Somebody is fearmongering or somebody is writing lies; they are lying about this in the newspaper.

[9:45 p.m.]

It is not fearmongering. I saw extreme positions on both sides of this for sure. I listened to them, I had discussions with people who had self-professed extreme positions, on both sides. I didn't see the fearmongering. I actually didn't see the lies. When I challenge people and say, what was the lie, what was the lie that was in the ads? There is no answer for it. I am going to go through why.

This was unprecedented legislation. I have heard the argument, well it is no big deal, other legislation already does this. Not true. One of the bills that is referenced is the Endangered Species Act. The Endangered Species Act is actually very, very specific on when government can take action on private land. In that case, under that Act, both the species and the organism need to be totally defined; in fact, the Endangered Species Act is very explicit too in the definitions. Essentially, for it to apply to a particular species or organism, it must meet the definition of "faces imminent extinction and is listed as an endangered species."

There is actually a test that must be applied to determine by the Species at Risk Working Group that is established under the Act. It is very specific. It is in no way comparable to this - Bill No. 4 is wide open; it is open to any organism, any species. Essentially, whatever they decide, whoever the "they" is, it is totally open for anyone. Big, big difference.

Still, others point to the Wilderness Areas Protection Act and the Environment Act as examples of what's the big deal. We already have these Acts, what's the big deal? Here is the big deal: neither of those bills includes broad, undefined references to organisms or species. Bill No. 4 does. Yes, Bill No. 4 is overreaching. Yes, Bill No. 4 is still at the door.

I have heard some members say - I even heard it certainly alluded to tonight - how ridiculous it was that some landowners started to warn snowmobilers and other off-roaders that they would not be able to use their land if at least the original Bill No. 4 - not the original, the second version, the original to this session - Bill No. 4 was passed. How ridiculous is that? Well it is not ridiculous at all when you actually look at the words of the

bill. It is ridiculous when you are interested in rhetoric and shaming people, but it is not ridiculous when you look at the bill. I would say shame on those people who would make a statement like that and try to intentionally mislead Nova Scotians. That is where the real shame in all this lies.

Would you let somebody use your land if you knew that their actions could lead to a very significant fine - \$500,000 to \$1 million? Would you let somebody use your land, cross across your land, enjoy your land as you had been doing for probably generations in most cases, if you now knew that under some legislation they could do something that is undefined that could result in you getting a fine like that? And you didn't even know what it was.

Of course, you would be conscious and saying, what is it that might happen that could trigger this fine? Well, we are not telling you, we are going to figure that out later as a government. We are going to decide and make a list later of what it is you are not allowed to do that could trigger a fine.

Of course you would say, hold on here. I don't want people just using my land that might trigger a fine for something that I don't know what they are doing. That is not ridiculous at all. Some activists may think that is silly. I do not think it is silly. I think it is a common-sense reaction to government saying they are going to do something, they are going to tell you what you can't do at a later date.

All these arguments start to fall away when you get past the name-calling and the commentary on people's intelligence and you actually get to the facts. They fall away. If you need any more evidence that those arguments were not based in fact and were not realistic, I'll point you to the actions of the government who, when they got caught out, got their red pen out and dissected their entire bill because they knew they were caught out. They knew the arguments were not fearmongering. They knew the arguments were not silly. They knew the arguments were true and honest representations of what the bill said.

That intent is gone from some of the words of the bill, but it's not gone from the hearts of this government. It's not gone. This is exactly where people will find themselves again after the next election if the Liberals happen to form the next government. You can rest assured that this is high on the agenda of the Premier, who may have been caught out this time and may be getting paused this time but will be back.

If there's no risk of that, then why not allow the written words of the bill to match up to the spoken words of the government? Why wouldn't they be the same? What a shame it is, Mr. Speaker, that we've arrived here, because through it all there was no real effort to work with or to consult landowners.

I think this is a key differentiator between what we know in the Progressive Conservative caucus and what some other members of this House of Assembly either don't

know or don't respect. I'll tell you where we stand, so there's no confusion. We stand with the landowners of Nova Scotia. The foresters, yes, and the farmers, yes, and the other landowners, because we know that they know what is best for their land. They literally, in most cases - in many cases - depend on that land for a sustainable future for their family.

They need a sustainable woodlot. They need a sustainable farm. They need flourishing property because their family depends on it. I respect that. That's the voice I respect. The guy who called me, and I said, did you see the changes that the Liberals made to the biodiversity bill? He said, Tim, how could I see the changes? I'm out here trying to make a living. I don't have time to pay attention to what's going on in that Legislature. I'm kinda busy right now driving a truck. That's what I'm doing today.

Those are the voices that I never heard referenced in here. I heard a lot of rewriting of history, and I heard a lot of little political attacks that I might have thought might be below some people, but obviously aren't. The pressure of an election does things to people, I guess, Mr. Speaker.

Those are the voices that I'm listening to. Those are the voices that I respect. When I talk to them about generations of development on their woodlots, there's a place for their kids on those woodlots. There's a place for their kids on those woodlots, I will assure you of that, because they are sustainable development and foresters. They know that their livelihood depends on it.

If the answer is, I don't want my child in the woods, I'll tell you why. It's because you have politicians in Halifax standing here and looking down their noses at them, disrespecting what their job is and thinking that they don't want their kids in the woods because they're afraid they're going to ruin the woods. No, they don't want their kids to have to listen to politicians stand in this Chamber and talk down about the importance of their job and talk down about their ability to respect their own land. That's the difference between the PC Party, who stands for Nova Scotians, and other political Parties who stand for themselves. We are always a Party that puts the people before the policies, and those are the voices that should be listened to.

If this government would have sincerely wanted to listen to Nova Scotians and work with Nova Scotians, they would have. They would have, and a little bit of respect, an ounce of respect in working with those Nova Scotians - they could have deputized so many Nova Scotians. They could have got so many Nova Scotians on the same page. There's so much common ground here. There's so much common ground. They could have deputized so many Nova Scotians.

Leaders don't create followers. They create more leaders. This is the missed opportunity. That's the tragedy of what happened here. There was an opportunity to include people and build more leaders. That's what has been missed here, Mr. Speaker, and that's the disappointing thing for me. This government didn't do that.

The minister says he consulted. I'm going to read from Hansard, the minister's closing comments at second reading. The minister said,

“All of the comments around consultation, I believe, are inaccurate. On a future day, as a matter of fact, I will provide in writing to this House and table those consultations, where they happened and with whom, on what dates and times they occurred. That will come forward.”

That was what the minister's promise to the people of Nova Scotia was at second reading. I didn't see that tabled. Maybe we will tonight. I have a theory, Mr. Speaker. I have known the minister for a long time, and I believe that when the minister spoke those words, he believed them.

He's relatively new to the portfolio. This is a bill that has been in the works for two years. I honestly believe that the minister just assumed that the consultations were done, that when he left second reading, somebody in the department was going to pass him a package and say here you go minister, all the consultations for you to table.

We'll find out tonight, but I think the minister was as surprised as we are. I actually think that the minister was probably surprised to realize there were no consultations on this. We'll find out in short order, I guess.

The question is: Was there legitimate consultations that this government can be proud of or was there not? If there were legitimate consultations that this government can be proud of, we'll see that package tonight. If there were not legitimate consultations that this government is not only not proud of, but probably a little embarrassed of, then we won't see the package.

I will tell you this. Whatever way that plays out, if it's only the government that feels there was proper consultation, then there wasn't really consultation. It needs to be Nova Scotians who feel there was proper consultation. That's when the consultation process works.

In fact, I heard the Premier speaking at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, and he said that the best ideas come from outside of government. I don't want to misrepresent the context, but that was the takeaway that I took from that. Certainly, the spirit of those comments was that it's worthwhile to consult with Nova Scotians because Nova Scotians have ideas. Nova Scotians bring perspectives to the table. Nova Scotians have insights. That was the kind of the spirit of those comments. That's right. Nova Scotians have valuable ideas and input, and it is worthwhile to consult them.

The Premier says this bill will not apply to private land for five years. That's what he said. Will it? Will it not? We don't know, but why not allow the bill to say that if that's the case? Why not allow the bill to say it?

Amendment after amendment after amendment, the PC caucus presented to the Liberals. Amendment after amendment after amendment, the Liberals voted them down. These amendments matter because we want to hold the Premier to the account of his words. That's what should happen with this bill. The ink's not even dry on the bill yet.

Why is this government not wanting to be held to the high standard of their own words? Why wouldn't the government want to be held to the standard of their own words? Why not? Sadly, we can look at the precedent of this government on holding themselves to account on their own words. It's not a great record. It's just really not, Mr. Speaker.

Nova Scotians will remember the famous political promise of a doctor for every Nova Scotian. Remember that one. Sixty-five thousand Nova Scotians don't have a doctor and, really, from what we can see, there never was a plan to actually make that happen, beyond the words. It was nice words, it was a campaign phrase.

Similarly, nice words we're hearing right now, to appease the people who are concerned, saying this won't apply to private land. Is there a wink involved in that, Mr. Speaker? That's the question.

[10:00 p.m.]

What happens with Bill No. 4 last time and this time? It's a very un-Nova Scotian thing that we've been witnessing here. The reason Nova Scotia has done well in the COVID-19, in terms of keeping our cases down, is because we're Nova Scotians, because we value our way of life, because we respect our communities, because we respect our province and our neighbours. That's why we've done well.

In this case, in the case of Bill No. 4, the government hasn't respected Nova Scotians. We, in this caucus, will make sure that the voices of Nova Scotians are respected, and it's more important now than ever, I would say, that Nova Scotians are respected.

People are noticing Nova Scotia. They are seeing Nova Scotia in a positive way and many people are saying, I want that quality of life that they have in Nova Scotia. While some people are looking at it and moving to Halifax, many others are looking for those wide, open spaces in the rural parts of the province - our beaches, our fields, our forests - these are the things that people are looking at and seeing on social media or elsewhere and saying, that's what I want, I want to live there.

I support the efforts to work with Nova Scotians to preserve this quality of life, to preserve the charm of this province, to preserve our planet. I support those Nova Scotians

and I think those are good intentions. I think the new Premier has good intentions on this piece of legislation, but good intentions aren't enough - not in this Chamber. Even close to good enough is not enough for us. There may be others in this Chamber who say they don't agree with the bill but what the heck, they'll vote for it. That's not where we stand. We think higher of Nova Scotians. We think Nova Scotians deserve the very best in legislation, the very best in health care, the very best in education.

We're not the well-it's-close-enough-Party. We'll leave that to others. Others can decide what level of respect they have for Nova Scotians, but I can assure you that we hold a very high level of respect for Nova Scotians.

We're in the business of supporting good legislation, and there's still something missing from this piece of legislation. I encourage the Liberal government to add those missing words. Of course, the missing words are the ones that make this explicit only to Crown land for five years. I encourage the Liberals to make that change. Pull this bill again, fix it, bring it back. We'll support you as you go through it but above all else, I encourage you to only sign your name to the words you are saying because if you won't sign your name to the words you are saying, where does that leave us?

If there are others who will sign their names to something because well, it's okay, it's not right but what the heck, we'll do it - that's for somebody else. Otherwise if you won't sign your name to your words, they are just words and they are empty words and they are words that will only lead to disappointment to Nova Scotians, like those other famous empty Liberal words: a doctor for every Nova Scotian.

Today I urge the Liberals to put Nova Scotians before their partisan pride, to show respect for Nova Scotians. Make this bill consistent with the words that they're speaking. That's the only way, that's the only hope that Nova Scotians have in believing the words. If you won't even make the words on your paper be the words you say, there's a reason to be suspicious.

Nova Scotians, they might not have the ability to stop this bill tonight. There will be lots of members in this Chamber who just vote for this bill because somebody else told them to or because they think it's advantageous for them personally to do so. There will be others of us who stand on principle and stand on values and vote against this bill. Nova Scotians, we can't stop this bill tonight because of the majority government, but I will guarantee you that in the not-too-distant future, you will have the chance to stop this government and bring some respect back to the political process.

With those few words, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton-Richmond, with 15 minutes before the COVID-19 break, and then you can continue after that if you need to.

ALANA PAON: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to be able to stand and say a few words here - more than a few words. I'm going to take some time. This is obviously an extremely contentious issue, probably the biggest contentious issue, other than what is going on in health care, to have been dealt with during this sitting.

We're talking about the Biodiversity Act, of course - an Act to Provide for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Nova Scotia. We've heard from other members, and there's been a lot of boxing back and forth verbally between the two Opposition Parties with regard to respectful behaviour and some wording that's been used that they're taking exception to. I'm going to take a different direction with this.

I guess the biggest thing that I see with regard to biodiversity in this province - and I've mentioned this before when we were talking about this in the other reading - that again to remind people that biodiversity is really dealing with all life, from the air that we breathe to the land that we walk on to the water, obviously, that surrounds the Earth. It's a massive thing. It's all living things. I think as human beings we sometimes think of ourselves, because we're at the top of the food chain, as something special. We get to be sitting in the House right now and discussing, obviously, a law that has an effect on all other living creatures within our province.

It's something for which we need to take great precaution. It is something for which I think we need to make certain that we have proper consultation. It's something for which I would have liked to have seen, as with any bill, to understand what, at the end of the day, are going to be the regulations that are going to come with this bill. If I may say, Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, I think we need a massive redo, a renovation, of how we go about talking about these bills. Again, you can put a bill on the table and you can pass the bill and it becomes legislation but then there's this other portion, which - I'm not certain that everyone in Nova Scotia is aware - is the regulations that come with the bill.

When we are speaking about these bills, it's an overarching sort of idea of what the government in this instance is wanting to enact into law, but we have no understanding of what regulations are going to come after it, which I personally find to be extremely disconcerting, and an area within how our democracy is structured that I think really needs to change.

I think if a bill comes forward and MLAs are being asked to debate as well as to vote on this legislation, not only do we have to ask the general public their input and consult, obviously, with as many Nova Scotians as possible, and we are here to represent our own constituents on the matter, we are also - all of us who are in this House - given equal access and equal opportunity to be able to debate in a public format such as this the regulations that come attached to these bills.

Many times, regulations are changed without - if you don't have access to or you don't know about the *Royal Gazette*, a lot of the time, most people don't even know when

regulations have changed within an Act. I find that to be extremely disconcerting. I think, in all fairness to transparency and accountability to the people of this province, there should be a part of the process that is worked into our sitting in the Legislature, even if that means that we have to sit longer or more often, where we have full access and are able to debate regulations as much as we debate a bill and what is being tabled - for example, a biodiversity bill.

With biodiversity, some of what I am going to say this evening may not make me very popular, but I often tell people I did not go into politics to become popular. I went into politics to try to make change, positive change, obviously, for the people whom I serve and for Nova Scotia as a whole. Sometimes that means talking about things which are very difficult, sometimes things that are not very popular.

So I am going to say this: as a human being, I'm pretty much the same as everybody else who is sitting in the Legislature or coming in via the Zoom call we are on tonight. We're 99.9 per cent, if I remember correctly, genetically the same as the person who is sitting beside us, but we tend to see ourselves as these special creatures. In doing so, I think that has caused this sort of separation in many ways from the rest of the living world.

We are, I think, 80 per cent similar in DNA to cattle, 85 per cent similar in DNA to mice. We share a lot of our genetic material with other living creatures, other life on this planet. The way that I look at it, from the importance of biodiversity and being able to make certain that we conserve and that we sustain the planet as a whole, is that we have to stop looking at our resources, and living things in particular, as commodities.

It's always astounding to me how everything we look at, whether it's efficiency or how many trees we have growing in the forest to just about everything, we put a value on it, a dollar sign. If we can start to look again at living creatures as living creatures first and the natural world as an extension, if I may say, of ourselves as opposed to being this other thing, then perhaps the whole concept of biodiversity and conserving it and sustaining it may not be such a difficult thing to put into practice.

I live in rural Nova Scotia. I grew up as a kid in the country. My parents and I would go into the woods when my dad was home in the wintertime, when the lake boats would be tied up for the Winter months and the Great Lakes would be frozen over. The first thing that my dad would do within a day or two of getting home was he'd jump into his Ski-Doo suit, and we would be out into the back 40 and we'd be helping my father, basically, sustainably cut sections of our woodland, to be able to make certain that we would be able to heat ourselves for many Winters to come.

My father always taught me, and my parents - it was a goal - taught me to make certain that we should be harvesting from the forest in a very sustainable manner, so that we wouldn't be taking all the trees down at the same time. We'd be doing select cutting as we were going through. I always really appreciated that, way before I knew about

silviculture or selective harvesting, that here's my Dad teaching me these things when I was a child because it was what was taught to him as well. They had long in our family - with my father, with his grandfather - gone into the woods and would have done the exact same thing.

[10:15 p.m.]

This is not a really new idea. I find that a lot of ideas about organic production and sustainable harvesting, whether it's the woods or doing sustainable harvesting for fishing, these are sometimes very old ideas that are becoming new again.

My ideas around not looking at everything within the natural world with a dollar sign or looking at making it a commodity - I was watching a couple of videos, a couple of documentaries, over the weekend and was horrified by what is happening in some places in the world, California being one of them.

I believe another is down in Australia, where farmers in particular are not able to access the amount of water that is necessary to be able to make certain that both their livestock are properly watered but also their crops are not being able to be properly watered because there have been laws put in place to commodify access to water, water being one of our most essential life-giving natural resources that we have in this province. Oftentimes people say there are so many lakes here, there's so much fresh water.

I think that oftentimes we, as Canadians as a whole, sometimes don't understand that probably our greatest natural resource that we have is, in fact, the amount of fresh water that we have in our country.

I was absolutely horrified in looking at how water has been commodified in other areas of the world because, of course, it's becoming scarce because of climate change. I can certainly understand the importance of putting legislation into place to be able to make certain that we are able to sustain, obviously, biodiversity in our environment in a way that is going to ensure that it's here for future generations. But when we're not even having a conversation, as of yet, with regard to what's happening, really, not that far away from us - I mean it's just happening down in the United States. Climate change is happening all around us.

It's worrisome to me that we're overfishing, in many ways, our oceans. I know, obviously, Nova Scotia and Canada try their best to fish in a very sustainable manner, but there are always issues that occur when it comes to overfishing certain species or with the changes in the environment that are happening. There are also issues that are happening with a lot of the species being put at risk in other ways.

When I think of our natural resources - and we have done this again and again in this province, because we have been very natural resource-rich since the beginning of when

European settlers, especially, came to Nova Scotia and started to commodify our natural environment - I think that it has taken us into a direction where it has separated us, in some way, from our natural environment and in other ways . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Sorry to interrupt. We're going to take our mandated 15-minute break, and we will return at 10:35 p.m.

[10:20 p.m. The House recessed.]

[10:35 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll now resume with the honourable member for Cape Breton-Richmond.

ALANA PAON: Before the break we were still speaking about an Act to Provide for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Nova Scotia - the Biodiversity Act.

I had been talking about the commodification of natural resources - every living thing, almost, that human beings have been able to make any kind of money on is commodified. Where I was going with that, basically is not an idea that's new. It's been around for a while. In fact, when I was taking my course work in community economic development back in the late 1990s, the concept was around at that time.

It was basically looking at other ways of being able to measure the prosperity of our province - we were talking Nova Scotia at the time. Of course, everyone knows that internationally, for the most part, we look at the prosperity of a nation or of a province by utilizing the measure of the gross domestic product.

In speaking about the commodification of everything, obviously, the GDP really focuses in on making - the more prosperous a society is supposed to be, the more things it's supposed to be producing. If you're going to make more things, you're going to need more resources, you're going to be utilizing more energy. It's just, basically, use as much as you can, make as much as you can, consume as much as you can.

That's the measure, basically, of whether or not your country or province is doing well. I wanted to open up the conversation because we're talking about sustainability and conservation of biodiversity, which, again, encompasses all of our natural world.

How on Earth are we going to achieve that if we're continuously utilizing the same old measure of the gross domestic product - again, basically, use as much as you can to create as much as you can to consume as much as you can, and you'll have a really good checkmark on the world stage as far as having a great GDP.

There's got to be a better way, Mr. Speaker. If we really want to achieve conservation and sustainability of our biodiversity, we need to start looking at changing our mindset in the way that we produce and consume, and the effect that that actually has on our natural environment around us.

I know that GPI Atlantic has been around for quite some time. They're utilizing a different form of measure - a genuine progress index for Atlantic Canada. It has been around for quite some time, as I said. It's not a new concept. It has been around since, I knew of it, anyway, way back in the 1990s, and yet it doesn't seem to have made any progress, which is ironic. It's called the genuine progress index, but it hasn't made any progress.

It hasn't moved forward in being able to try and measure in a different way how we see prosperity and an overall health - a more holistic approach to the health and well-being of our society. I believe that if we were to actually change our mindset - and that will be a big change. That's an international conversation, but it's got to start somewhere.

If we were to change our mindsets with regard to how we consume and what we consume, and where it comes from, how it's being produced. The actual costs associated with that which we are consuming. If we actually had more information and we're more cognizant of that, I think that in itself would make a massive dent in being able to again sustain and conserve our biodiversity as a whole. But if we are not actually taking the lead in trying to change the way that we measure prosperity here in our own province - I know that the government always seems to like to be first, as much as possible, with coming out with legislation. It seems that with this Biodiversity Bill it has been alluded to that that might be one of the reasons why it is trying to be pushed through as quickly as possible here in this session, before an election is called.

I personally, instead of trying to push things through and just being first at the finish line, I would prefer to get things done properly the first time around, to make certain that we have obviously the best bill for all Nova Scotians and to make certain that Nova Scotians are protected, but also we want to make certain that there is not anything within the bill or the regulations that is going to basically have a government overreach.

From my perspective, Mr. Speaker, with some of what I have experienced myself in the last two years, as much as perhaps some people would like to think that everyone has your best interest at heart, that is sometimes not the case, so there have been issues. I am a farmer, so I represent somewhat the agricultural community. I do not speak for all farmers, but I will speak for myself and my personal experience in agriculture. I just really had a massive concern when I saw the bill come forward with those 55 clauses, and I thought to myself - what does that mean for those of us who are involved in agriculture?

Many of us already utilize sustainable practices on our farms. As I have said on many occasions, I try to practise as much as possible organic farming. I am not certified

organic, but I try as best as I can. I can tell you that in the last two years, as much as I believe that my farm is managed really well and that I am very careful with what I do and even down to cleaning products, for goodness sakes, if someone doesn't have your best interests at heart they can utilize certain legislation to make your life a living hell on Earth, Mr. Speaker.

I've experienced this first-hand and when you get yourself into a situation where someone maybe does not have your best interests at heart, or maybe they even actually want to purchase your land, maybe they have actually got an eye on your property and they would like to maybe give you a little bit of a hard time, can find ways of being able to utilize laws in Nova Scotia to their best interest and sometimes not to the landowners' best interest.

So forgive me if I am coming and looking at this piece of legislation from the perspective of someone who has had to protect themselves from certain situations that have happened in the last two years. I am not quite as much of a trusting person as I used to be. When I am sitting in the House and I am getting phone calls for bogus complaints of things that are happening on my farm, which I know my farm manager manages very well when I am not on-site, when my insurance is being cancelled out of the blue on my farm because of bogus claims that they don't want to insure my farm anymore - and I am very open about this, I'm going to tell you this right now, if there is anybody out there who needs some assistance on how to get themselves out of foreclosure, I am the woman to talk to because I have had to do it in the last two years, and it has been really hard.

I can assure Nova Scotians that you do not go into foreclosure only because you are not paying your mortgage, which was the case for me - the mortgage on my farm was paid. But because I was, let's just say, having a difficult time in other ways - even though the insurance was paid up, and the farm mortgage was paid up - there are ways of being able to use laws in this province to really put a person in a very precarious position.

[10:45 p.m.]

The crazy thing about these laws - when I see a Biodiversity Act like this come in that is giving far-reaching implications that government can utilize to go on private land, with the experiences that I've had in having people claim that I'm abusing my animals, having the SPCA show up at my farm while I'm sitting in the Legislature in Fall 2019 - none of you would have known, but I'm in the hallway trying to take these calls and trying to do my job in the Legislature while of course being locked out of my constituency office and not having a proper caucus office in Halifax, and I'm getting indications that the Department of Agriculture has been called to my farm. I'm getting indications that a private consultant, all of a sudden, is making their way on to my farm. I have no idea who is calling these people.

SPCA ended up giving me basically an apology. The Chief Inspector called me personally and said, we're so sorry, it's obviously a bogus claim. When it happens - and if it can happen to me, it can happen to anybody. I'm a sitting MLA, and I had gone through this process in the last two years. I'm telling you, when somebody has it in for you, they've either got their eye on your farm because you have a choice piece of land that maybe they want - and I'm sure it's all a coincidence that all this stuff was happening at the same time. I don't believe in coincidences.

When this all is happening at the same time, and you're trying to defend yourself, having to buy a lawyer - which Nova Scotians will end up having to do if someone basically claims that they're doing something incorrectly on their own private land - you're put in a situation that is almost untenable.

My stress level was through the roof, basically. It was absolutely through the roof. I'm sure that that probably was the intention of much of that. However, as with many Nova Scotians and many people in my constituency and me, you can give me a good smack in the face, and you're going to knock me down, but I'm going to get back up.

When I see a piece of legislation like this - I can tell you I am all for biodiversity. Again, I own over 100 acres. I own more land in HRM as well, but I am a rural Nova Scotian. When I see something like this coming into play, the red flags go up. Major red flags go up, especially when I see when government backpedals and reduces everything down 19 clauses, to try to package it a little bit nicer. We'll put that through, and then maybe we'll see what happens in the regulations; nobody really notices those anyway.

I have to say - and I wish this wasn't the case - with what I hear when I'm within the House, what I have experienced myself as an MLA, as an owner of a farm, as a rural Nova Scotian, I do not trust any longer that government actually has my best interest at heart.

I just got off the phone earlier this evening with two constituents that I have, a husband and wife, who are beside themselves that they no longer have access to a family physician. They're on that waiting list that currently has about 8,900 people now on it in the Eastern Zone - 8,900 people. How is it even possible that we have these kinds of numbers in this day and age, in 2021, of people who don't have access to health care?

I'm sorry. If we can't even get some of the basic necessities like health care - which the province is responsible for - correct, pardon me if I become a little bit suspicious that we're not going to get this biodiversity bill correct either. It seems that all indications are pointing in that direction when, again, there are these far-reaching implications for private landowners. When we say private landowners - I was thinking about this. I have no idea how many people within the New Democratic Party caucus are rural landholders or landowners.

A landowner is not just someone who owns agricultural land or land in rural Nova Scotia. Anybody who owns property is a landowner. When I see this, the first thing that came to mind - maybe it won't make sense to some people, but the first thing that came to mind, to me, is that we just got government out of our bedrooms.

I'm not interested in giving them a free invitation to come into my backyard. I really am not. It took us forever to get government out of our bedrooms, and I'm sure everybody knows what I mean by that. I'm really not interested in giving them a free pass, especially with what I have experienced in the last two years. I am not interested in giving government a free pass on potentially some sort of bogus claims that I know will cost a general Nova Scotian a fortune in legal fees to try to get themselves out of.

If we can't get just the basic necessities like health care correct, like keeping our roads properly paved, I really have lost confidence in government when I see what has happened with this biodiversity bill. You know what? I would actually be all-in on this if this biodiversity bill would be named "An Act to Provide for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity on Nova Scotia Crown Lands." Because really, as government, perhaps you should be leading the way before you try and put this onto the general public. Just like in so many other ways in the past that government has been a lead first by example - why could this not have been introduced in that manner so that it wouldn't have caused so much controversy?

Put it in place for - I wouldn't say five years, I think five years is too long - put it in place like that for three years, do a review, make it a positive campaign, make it a positive win. Be the actual leads, the stewards that lead the way for the rest of Nova Scotians so that when we take a look at something like this, we're not so terrified that our government is going to end up showing up, as I said earlier, in our backyard for gosh knows what. If somebody dumps oil on my property and it goes into the water system, what's going to happen then? Am I going to be put in jail? Do I get a half-a-million-dollar fine for that? The possibilities are endless.

Again, I want to reiterate that I am a huge proponent to protect the environment, to make certain that we have a positive legacy that we leave behind for our children and our grandchildren. If we want to do that, not only should government take the lead and be the first to show that this is a positive thing, that a bill like this can be a positive thing, but also I will reiterate again that perhaps you should be taking a look at making a change in the way we measure our productivity, our economic output in this province. How about instead of GDP, we start measuring the effect of the utilization of our natural resources on the health of individuals in the province?

There are other ways of being able to measure progress, to measure the health of our people, to measure whether somebody is being prosperous or not. Prosperity to me doesn't only mean obviously the amount of money that you have in your pocket. We need to be looking at it and utilizing all of the social determinants of health. We talk about social

determinants of health and the importance of it in our health care system and how we should be measuring and making choices based on the social determinants of health. I don't think it's really that much different than what we should be doing as far as measuring what should be something alternative to a GDP, Mr. Speaker.

As much as I started my discussion here this evening by saying that there was a lot of grandstanding going on and has been going on, a lot of controversy on this bill, I personally find this bill and the intentions of it to be unclear. I personally find it to be undefined. I am extremely concerned about the rights of individual Nova Scotians because this government is constantly talking about how they are trying to reduce regulation, trying to reduce red tape for businesses all the time. Again, I am going to reiterate, in case I get jumped on, that I am a proponent of making certain that we sustain and we conserve our biodiversity.

Mr. Speaker, I have lost confidence in what we are trying to achieve, or what the government is truly trying to achieve by putting forward this bill. I truly have lost confidence in that. As much as it pains me greatly to say this, I will not be voting in favour of this bill this evening. It does, it pains me greatly to say that, because I want to see a bill put forward to make certain that our natural environment, all living creatures, obviously, within that living environment, our natural environment, are protected for generations to come.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there are too many red flags for me in this legislation, the way that it was rolled out, the messaging, the confusion around the messaging of it and, to me, the overall lack of consultation that has not been done with regard to trying to make certain that all Nova Scotians, but especially rural Nova Scotians, are properly consulted and properly understand the ramifications of this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am pleased to rise for a few short minutes at 11:57 p.m. this April 13th to address not what has happened tonight but what has not happened tonight. My colleagues have very admirably and ably spoken to the process of making this bill, to our view of its contents, and to our position, which will be to vote in favour of it. But I feel the need to mourn the opportunity that we had here.

We are in a climate crisis, and we will say it over and over and over again; this isn't a bill about protecting biodiversity on Crown land because biodiversity isn't only important on Crown land, biodiversity is fundamental to the world that we live in.

The Official Opposition questioned our relevance, Mr. Speaker, and there was some back and forth about quotes and it got me thinking. The quote that popped into my head tonight was a quote from a good friend of the Progressive Conservative caucus, Peter MacKay, when he told Alexa McDonough, the former Leader of the New Democratic

Party, that she should stick to her knitting. I was reminded of that tonight because I had the same reaction that I think Alexa must have had, when we were sort of derided and dismissed as not being relevant.

[11:00 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, we all sit in this Chamber, we represent our constituents, we represent our critic areas, and we do the best we can to do that. I would submit that our role is to tell the truth, and that is what we are doing here tonight. We are telling the truth. We are reminding this Chamber for every time that the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party reminds us that we're going into an election - which by my count was over a dozen in the speech that he delivered tonight - we are reminding people that we are in the middle of a climate crisis. (Applause)

We don't have five years, where we only protect 30 per cent of the ecosystem of this province. It's already too late. In five years, it will be five years more too late. We can only hope that in five years, we will have done better than we are doing with this bill tonight.

What we didn't hear, the opportunity that we are mourning, is a genuine conversation about biodiversity. I have heard everyone who has spoken tonight against this bill say, but I care about biodiversity. You can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker.

It's not a perfect bill. It's an imperfect bill. As I would submit, as someone who has spent some time studying bills and drafting bills, they're all imperfect. They are by their very nature, and we work to make them better. The concerns that have been raised are valid ones. They are valid ones by people who make up, in many ways, the backbone of our economy. Never would we denigrate the experience of someone with their land in their own profession.

We, as legislators, need to take a larger view. We need to take that view for the common good. While we have heard all the reasons why people support biodiversity but don't want to do anything about it, we've heard nothing from the government. We'll hear a few short words from the minister, maybe, but we have heard nothing through this entire debate.

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that that is a big problem. This is a government that tells us. This is a government that came into power - this particular Premier - by telling us that he cared. That he cared about the environment. That he was ready to act. The last time we were in this Chamber, a year ago - I think it was the first day - we had an emergency debate on the climate crisis. But what have we done?

Well, we haven't done anything. What we have done - the NDP caucus - is continually raise the alarm. When you ask about our relevance in this Chamber, there's

part of it. We have continually raised the alarm. We are not in the Executive Council. We don't have the opportunity to make the laws, but we can speak to them. We can do our best to strengthen them. We can support them, even if we don't love them, and that's what we're doing here tonight, Mr. Speaker.

My colleague, in discussing the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, spoke to the story of a void in which this legislation came. When we think about that legislation, and I wasn't in the Chamber for that legislation, but there's other legislation I can think of.

I can think of the Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act that came in last year. I can think of the Act that I was very pleased to have all-Party support on that passed around protecting women's reproductive rights free of interference. I can think of a number of times that I've been in this Chamber when all the members have come together, despite their differences - in some cases, because of their differences - to act for the common good of the people of Nova Scotia.

When that happens, Mr. Speaker, the quality of this Chamber, the quality of debate, changes. I know that I'm biased but I felt that tonight when my colleagues were speaking. When the Leader of the New Democratic Party got up and spoke the truth about the situation we find ourselves in, about this moment, and about the debate that we were having, it was quiet in this room. People were listening.

Similarly, when my colleague, the member for Halifax Needham, spoke - eloquently, as she always does - about the environment, about our need to be good and just stewards of our world, the debate changed. And then that disappeared and that's a loss. That's a real lost opportunity, I would say. I think, Mr. Speaker, we have talked a lot about how we have dealt with the pandemic. I have heard it tonight, I have heard it lots of times where people say, well, we are Nova Scotians; we are Nova Scotians, and we have done the work.

This is not particularly meant as a compliment to the government, but I would submit and I think - I have actually read a couple of things and I wish I could attribute them, but I don't have them at hand today that say, actually, no, you know the reason we have done so well is because of the political will. It is not just the political will of the government, it is the political will of all of us.

Until we came back in this Chamber, at least, all of us in our constituencies, in our caucuses, in our Parties with our different views came together to steward our constituents through this difficult time. It is part of our job as MLAs. I am proud of all of the members of this Legislative Assembly because I think that we had a role to play. I do. I think it was leadership. I think it was political will that we stayed the course, we listened to Public Health, and we had a collective mind about that.

This is in spite of all of the acrimony that we have seen, heated disagreement, heading toward an election. We did that. We are doing that. I just wanted to stand up and say that I think it is a real shame that we can't do that now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Just bear with me while I check the screens here.

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 want to start off by saying it has been a while since I have been in this House. It is a treat to be here this evening,

Things have been different in the last year. We are a little better now with COVID-19 and how we have adapted, not only in this House but as a province. We heard the honourable member for Dartmouth South speak just moments ago about all of the progress, I think that you could call it, that we've made as we have advanced and how well we have done as a group of people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about not only being here, but what this place represents, this historical Chamber - democracy, the right to stand in this place and have an opinion, and to speak that opinion. The honourable member for Dartmouth South just moments ago made a statement - and I will quote it: Tell the truth. Those were her words.

The member for Pictou East, the Leader of the Official Opposition, stood in his place and made many comments both this evening, as well as during Committee of the Whole House. I will not only reference those, but I will table those when I am done, as I will do with all of the documents that I referenced this evening throughout the course of this debate.

He stood in his place and he said: We stand on principles. I quote that, and I also quote: We stand on values. He stood in his place during Committee of the Whole of which there is no Hansard, but we took the time and the patience that it takes to transcribe the video that goes along with that, that has been posted. He talked, and he stated: A lot of this could have been avoided if there would have been collaboration with stakeholders.

I quote again as I look down the transcription - the honourable member, he stood in his place and he said: If government had offered real consultation with all sides, a good conversation could have resulted without the need for fireworks. We can all agree there was no proper consultation here.

I continue to quote, Mr. Speaker: And that is what brought us here. So how could this government say they have done consultation? Do they say it because it is a nice word people want to hear? Is that what he says?

He says tonight, as he stands in his place in this House, and I quote: We will make sure that the voice of Nova Scotians is respected, Mr. Speaker, the PC Party that stands for Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, he makes many quotes, as do others. He talks about, in his words, shame on misleading these people. He quotes evidence, he quotes impact on real people. Those are statements from tonight, Mr. Speaker. You will see that in the Hansard, if you go back to look. I have written it down, and I have quoted it here. He has made many other quotes, but he is not alone. He is not alone at all.

Others have stood in this place, this very historic Chamber. Well, Mr. Speaker, we were all elected to perform and represent and bring to this House the issues of the people whom we were elected by in our respective constituencies to represent them and bring their voices here. That is the right and the privilege, the privilege of every member to be able to stand and do that.

Mr. Speaker, we swore an oath, each and every single one of us, each time that we were fortunate enough to be elected after that period of time, that we call a writ. We have come back here. I have had the honour and the privilege of serving in this House for 15 years. In a couple of months' time it will actually be the anniversary date of that 15 years and it has, indeed, been that.

I would like to think that I have stood in my place, each time that I have spoken over the years, credibly. I have taken that oath, and I have stood, and I have talked about the facts as I knew them to be. I did not wish to mislead or talk about things that I wasn't sure of. Facts were checked, and facts were talked about, regardless of if we were talking about a bill like the biodiversity bill here tonight, Bill No. 4, which we will talk more about.

Mr. Speaker, it is that oath that we swear that allows us the right to take the seat in this very historical Chamber. We must never forget that. All those who have had the honour and the privilege to come before us and those who will come after us, it is the one thing that we must always uphold. We must always uphold it.

Over the course of Bill No. 4, the Biodiversity Act, we have heard an awful lot of people talk about consultation. I want to talk a bit about consultation tonight. I want to go back in Hansard. I want to table some articles, and some statements, more importantly. A number of people spoke in this Chamber throughout the course of second reading, as did I. As has been quoted earlier, I did speak, and I made the statement that I would, at some point on a future day, stand in my place and table the facts. Why? Because the facts do matter.

The facts are what people should be listening to when you present this bill or any other bill and when you get on your feet to talk about anything with regard to any bill or any piece of legislation. We do not have to agree. More often than not, we don't agree in

this place because of our political differences, or so-called political differences. Sometimes I wonder if those differences are even there. I think that every member in this House who has been elected and stands here in their place represents their people and does so on behalf of those people in an effort where they believe what they are talking about is right or what their constituents believe are right, what they bring to this place.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that when I listened to the debate on second reading and in Committee of the Whole House on Bills and tonight in third reading, I heard a lot of talk about consultation, a lot of talk about consultation. I want to make some quotes as I go along, and I will table some facts to go along with that because I think it's important. I think the facts are absolutely important.

[11:15 p.m.]

The member for Queens-Shelburne, in second reading, made a quote: "What many saw in proposed legislation in 2019 is very different from what we are seeing today." I am not sure if that is just her own opinion, if it's a Party opinion, or whose opinion it is, but it would be completely opposite to another member who stood in his place and spoke today. They referenced how they were the same. Which is it?

This member also spoke and said: "I support biodiversity. Biodiversity is not a new concept. I support a biodiversity Act and will be very proud of legislation that makes us a leader - a bill that involves broad consultation and collaboration with stakeholders, a bill that provides balance." I have underlined that part again, "that involves broad consultation and collaboration with stakeholders."

Mr. Speaker, that member represents an area of the South Shore - a beautiful area, Queens and Shelburne Counties, in that area down there. A beautiful place. Wonderful people. She would have you believe in that statement, though, that no consultation took place. That's not the case. Consultation did take place. Very broad consultation took place.

Between 2019 and 2021 - and I'm going to reference that in a bit, and you will see that I will make the point around that statement and others. The facts do matter, Mr. Speaker. When you stand in this place, you should stand with the knowledge of what happened or what didn't happen, and you should speak to the fact that it happened or it didn't happen. That is a privilege of members in this House and for members to receive that information in this House.

Mr. Speaker, there were others who spoke. I'm just going to go through a few of them here. I'm going to take the time because I have the time. I know it's late, but we've got time. Others have had their opportunity to speak and others have questioned why I haven't, so I'm pleased this evening to have my opportunity to stand before you and talk about this bill.

The member for Cumberland North stood in her place, Mr. Speaker - and I'm quoting now in Hansard, and I'll table this as well:

“Over the last two years, as the Minister for Lands and Forestry has said, there has been some consultation, but only with very, very specific stakeholders. The majority of landowners and landowner groups in the province of Nova Scotia, and certainly here in Cumberland North, who would be most affected by the passing of this biodiversity bill had no - none, zero - opportunity for input or consultation.”

That was a quote right out of Hansard by the member for Cumberland North. Again, I will show in a bit the consultation that did, in fact, take place.

Mr. Speaker, she goes on to say in her reading and in her time on her feet that day, “This bill is going to affect private woodlot owners and these private woodlot owners have not been consulted on the bill that has the ability to remove their control over their own land.”

Mr. Speaker, she goes on. In her words, “Unfortunately, when it comes to this bill, government did not engage with our stakeholders, with our private woodlot owners . . . While there have been some positive changes to the bill that was pulled two years ago, there has not been adequate consultation.”

Further quoting, Mr. Speaker: “By not allowing and seeking true and honest consultation with our people, trust will continue to be very weak.”

“Before implementing a biodiversity Act, talk to the people that it's going to be impacting,” is what the honourable member for Cumberland North stated. Thank you for that.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Cumberland South also stood in second reading. He talked at length. He talked again this evening on third reading and made some points. I will just touch on a few of these.

He says, “very few eyes had seen the revisions.” He says, was some consultation done on this bill? “There was some consultation done on this bill. . . I think not. Public consultation is an event that can have public policy discussed in a free and open environment. This did not take place.” Those are the words of the member for Cumberland South: “This did not take place.”

Mr. Speaker, he also goes on to say that “consultation took place between the walls of invitation only.” He goes on to say in second reading as well, “Have all agricultural

stakeholders been consulted? Have developer associations been consulted? Have Christmas tree growers been fully consulted?"

Mr. Speaker, he goes on more and he says, "but as this bill still stands in the clouds of missing consultation and jagged transparency . . . quiet consultation and lack of transparency."

He goes on further to comment, and tonight in his third reading comments: point of view that one does not want to hear.

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my comments here a few moments ago, we sometimes have quite rigorous debate in this House. This is a very odd circumstance for the debate, with very few people actually physically here, unfortunately. It changes how that goes, changes how that feels. It changes everything about this House, quite frankly.

But the fact that we are able to still stand in this place and have this function with this wonderful technology that we're now seeing advanced to allow this House to function and this operation to continue is a great thing, because we get a chance to hear those members stand on their feet and make these comments, and so they should.

Good, hard work, if they could have done their work - that was a quote from a member this evening as well. Not all stakeholders were questioned again. Invitation only question again. Information, lack of information, and it goes on.

A strong emphasis on the public, he quotes this evening, would have been for a different point of view. This is the Nova Scotia I represent, and I'm quoting: This is the Nova Scotia I represent. What he has described in his comments.

That member for Cumberland South actually attended, he states, as do members of that Party, as does the Leader of that Party, the lack of consultation that should or should not have happened. Matter of fact, they say that it didn't happen. Wasn't adequate if it happened at all. Some say none, zero. No, didn't happen. That member for Cumberland South actually attended a public consultation in Bible Hill.

How can you stand in your place as a member of this House, with the privilege that you have and the privilege of other members and all Nova Scotians and say, it didn't happen? How can other members of that Party stand and say the same thing? Did they not know? Does their Leader not know what's going on within that Party? Do they not know what took place? That they actually attended public consultation yet stood in their place in this very historic Chamber and said: No consultation. Didn't happen. That was by private invitation only. Behind closed doors.

That's what was said. You heard me quote, so far, from the documents in Hansard. Those aren't my words; those are the words of the members of the Opposition, who felt that those may be the right words. Talk about politics and elections and readiness, is that what we're talking about here? That should all be forgotten in this House. When you get on your feet, you talk with honesty and integrity. Credibility. Accountability. Character. That's what you talk about in this House. That's how you rise in your place.

I want to keep going here. I've got a few more points to make. The member for Kings North stood in his place on second reading, and I'm going to quote some points as well. He says:

"I also appreciate the fact that there are provisions in the bill for voluntary partnership with private land owners. I know there are private landowners - and I even know farmers - who will be willing to participate with this and who care very much about the environment."

That I believe to be a true statement. Matter of fact, to my knowledge, we have people already contacting us about volunteering, private landowners who want to be part of this biodiversity bill. That's a great thing.

I'll carry on here. I know the hour's getting late, but I think it's relevant. What consultations happened in 2020? I can forgive the minister if not much happened in 2020 because 2020 was a year like no other, and it was not an easy year to do consultation, there is no doubt. He goes on, and I quote, "But it could have been done in many ways." Don't forget that sentence: It could have been done in many ways. I'll continue to quote. It could have been done in many ways. Simply in sending an email. Simply in sending an email saying this is the bill. I understand that forestry has the same issue. What does that mean for our agriculture community?

The honourable member for Kings North's words, not Chuck's words. The honourable member for Kings North. He goes on to say, ". . . on which with our agriculture community has not been consulted." Has not been consulted. His words, not mine.

We carry on further into that member's comments, "I think I can say that agriculture, to my knowledge, has not been consulted on it, and are very alarmed by this, and it is contrary to how we think." Has not been consulted. He goes on to say, "This type of stuff is a chilling message to our agricultural community. I am disappointed that I in a few seconds can establish that no, there was not any consultation . . . I don't hear it and I don't see it."

Those words from the member for Kings North, who stood in his place as a member with privilege and honour, representing his constituents and made those comments. Mr. Speaker, that very member himself met with staff from Lands and Forestry a mere eight months ago, during 2020.

An email - which I will table - shows follow-up to our meeting on the biodiversity bill. I'm pleased to share the attached files. This was sent to the honourable member for Kings North and his assistant, Mr. Harrison. Resource departments, staff guides, public participation, biodiversity bill overview, and key tools. Those things were sent to that member. Not only were they sent to that member, Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a few things that were discussed during the meeting. Where he says no consultation happened, the agriculture society was not available or were not aware - nothing. Did not happen.

On August 27th of 2020, mere months ago, a meeting requested by the Kings North MLA and his constituency assistant - or assistant of some type, Peter Harrison, on the biodiversity bill to address questions relating into how and if the agriculture sector may be impacted. It goes on here to talk about a number of questions and answers that were provided to that member, who is a member of that Party, of which that member for Pictou East is the Leader who obviously does not know what is going on in his own caucus.

He stands in his place and says, no consultation. He makes comments to lead Nova Scotians to believe that they are the Party to trust. He talks about, and I can go back to quote his exact comments, which I will do here momentarily, Mr. Speaker - indeed. Oh, I will table it. Not to worry, I will table it, honourable member. You. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the "you." I know that's not appropriate. You, Mr. Speaker, will be able to read - as will every other Nova Scotian - the credibility issue that stands before this House this evening, in Hansard and in information and the consultation that did happen. Yet nobody heckled him, Mr. Speaker, when he stood in his place, did they? Nobody.

We sat for all three readings, introduction, second reading, Committee of the Whole House, and tonight - third reading - while he went on and on and on and had his say, but Mr. Speaker, now when I stand, which they wanted me to do and waited for me to do - oh no, you better calm down. He can heckle all he wants, Mr. Speaker. That's fairness in this House. That's his privilege if he's choosing to do that. My privilege is to stand in my place.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry has the floor.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: My privilege, Mr. Speaker, is to stand in this place right here where I was elected to do so and to tell the truth and to provide the facts as I said I would do in second reading.

Mr. Speaker, in 2020, consultation happened as well, and in 2021 with the Opposition Parties. The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture has been contacted and will be scheduled even further. As we have said in this bill, from start to finish, further consultation through the regulatory period will happen.

The member - and I'll go back to my notes because I took them - this evening, Mr. Speaker, stood in his place and he talked about the PC party that stands for Nova Scotia.

But members of that Party stood in their place and they provided information that was incorrect. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that was incorrect, and why would I say that it was incorrect? I don't say that lightly, Mr. Speaker. He talks about, and members of his team talk about, no consultation. None. No. Zero (used by one member, and others) would lead you to believe, in this House and every member and every Nova Scotian watching this, everyone in the industry watching this, that it didn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, there was extensive consultation. The member for Victoria-The Lakes in Membertou attended a public consultation. The member for Cumberland South attended a public consultation. The member for Kings North met with the department, was provided answers to questions that he asked - straightforward answers - yet he said nothing happened. That's okay, though. That's alright. That's appropriate, I guess.

The point of this conversation this evening and the closing of this bill - and to remark, take a few minutes and comment on - is the very fact, the fact that I talked about I would present. The facts are this, and I am going to take a few minutes because I still have a few minutes before the clock runs out here, I think. I'm going to talk about those consultations and where.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of consultations that happened. Caledonia, Bible Hill, Halifax, Bible Hill again, Halifax, Bible Hill, Membertou, Halifax, Bible Hill, Membertou, Caledonia, Caledonia again, Bible Hill. There were a variety of afternoon and evening consultations that took place, there are dates, there are times - Halifax on Wednesday, July 17th from 9 a.m. to noon; Caledonia Friday July 19th; Bible Hill July 23rd, 24th ; and so on it goes.

[11:30 p.m.]

Some of the groups that attended - I want to touch on this because I think it is important - some of the groups represented Annapolis Valley Extinction Rebellion; Annapolis River CARP; Annapolis Royal and Area Environment, the ecology action group there; FL Forestry; Atlantic Gold Corporation; Bragg Lumber; Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative; Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq; Conform Limited; Dalhousie Seaside Summer Program Biology Department; Dexter Construction; East Coast Environmental Law; Ecology Action Centre; Elmsdale Lumber; Emera Energy; Brooklyn Power Corp.; Federation of Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners - who, Mr. Speaker, members stood in their place and said they weren't consulted. They were consulted.

Five Bridges Wilderness, Forest Nova Scotia was at consultation; Forest Growth Consulting; Halifax Northwest Trail; Halifax Water; Harry Freeman and Sons; Healthy Forest Coalition; Hike Nova Scotia; J.D. Irving; J.J. Forestry; John Veinot Farm and Forest; large landowner co-operative; Ledgewood Lumber; MacGillivray and Son Lumbering; LJ Crook; Forestry and Farm; Loon Cove Farms; Louisiana Pacific; MacDev Forestry Consulting; and the list goes on.

Maritime Aboriginal Council; Midway Community Forest Co-op; Mersey Tobiotic Research Institute; members of the Legislative Assembly were in attendance, as I had mentioned; Mi'kmaq Conservation Group and Confederacy; Municipality of Chester; Municipality of District of Lunenburg; Native Council Canada; Nature Conservancy of Canada; Nature Nova Scotia; North Nova Woodlot Co-operative (yet we heard nobody in that area was consulted); Northern Pulp; Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture were consulted in Bible Hill.

Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters were consulted; Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities were consulted; and the list goes on; and they are worth mentioning; Paper Excellence; Parks Canada; Port Hawkesbury Paper; Private Woodlot Owners; (inaudible); Region of Queens was consulted; Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve; St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association; Sustainable Forestry Initiative; Taylor Lumber Company; (inaudible); Timberland Holdings; Tuft's Forestry Services; Wagner Forest; Western Woodlot Coop; WestFor Management; Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia; Women That Hunt; Trails Federation; private citizens and participants with unspecified designations at all sessions, plus written submissions.

The public was widely consulted, industry was widely consulted, groups were widely consulted, yet we heard in this House, I quoted them, in their readings that it wasn't done. That is wrong. You don't have to like it, we don't have to like the debate in this House, we don't have to agree. But we stand in our place and we speak to the facts as they are known. If the Party did not know across the way what the facts were, perhaps they should have done the research to find out.

It was readily made available to them. They, members of that Party, were consulted and the member is shaking his head, yes, I hope he agrees; he should agree. He should be voting for the bill, but he doesn't have to because he can stand in his place and do as he wishes. Don't wave me on, I have an hour of time to speak. You will not shorten it, thank you very kindly. You will stay . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable minister not to refer to members opposite directly and keep your comments directed to the Chair.

CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Speaker, it is funny how he doesn't want to hear it when it doesn't suit him. It is funny how he doesn't like it when it doesn't suit him. It is funny what he has to say when, oh, there is a moment when consultation has been proven to happen. But he doesn't want to hear that. The facts do matter in this House, whether it is on Bill No. 4 or Bill No. 54, or you name it.

In all the years that I have been in this House, the facts do matter. Stand in your place and quote the facts. Do not stand in your place and try to tell Nova Scotians something different when you should have known better - and they did and that is clear. Go ahead, you state whatever you want to state when it is your turn. He will have a turn another day.

I am on the closing part of this bill. I have the final say on this bill. That is the point, that is the privilege in this House, to stand in my place. I should be able to do it without anybody heckling, but that's not how it goes in here. It's okay when some other member wants to speak and get on their feet, even though others sit quietly, patiently, listening, taking it all in, worried.

In fact, consultation did happen. One could even stand in my place and question the privilege issue . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time has come for our mandated 15-minute COVID-19 break. The House will adjourn and resume at 11:50 p.m.

[11:35 p.m. The House recessed.]

[11:50 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll now resume with the honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: I can tell you . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. It's been entertaining to listen to the minister's discussion tonight about facts and integrity and truth, but I do want to go back to something that I asked the minister earlier this evening, to table some documents which we haven't seen. We've heard some references to it.

I'm just reading from the minister's own words at second reading. The minister said: All of the comments around consultation, I believe, are inaccurate. On a future day, as a matter of fact, I will provide in writing to this House and table those consultations, where they happened and with whom, on what dates and times they occurred. This will come forward.

Here we are at the end of the closing of the debate. These still haven't been tabled. We've heard lots of references to them. When we speak about integrity and truth and facts, because facts do matter, I think we need to be mindful of the simple fact that this bill took a very odd path between . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. What is the member's point of order?

TIM HOUSTON: A point of order just on the breach of the procedures of the House. I would like to, just if I could, explain why I believe there's a point of order.

We have to think about the course that this bill took from being tabled to being dramatically changed before the Law Amendments Committee, and I want to reference the Premier's own words at the time of changing the bill . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. If the member has a point of order on the procedures, the minister still has time allotted for his comments, which would give him ample time to table any documents that he's referenced. Again, what is the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition's point of order?

TIM HOUSTON: Specifically, the point of order is that the minister has made an assertion to the House, which I can read again from second reading, that he would table all the comments around consultation. He says . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Can the member precisely point out what the point of order is that he's trying to get at? If it's asking for the minister to table the documents, the minister has not yet done his remarks and you're engaging in debate. The honourable member has had his chance for debate.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Specifically, of course, we want to see those documents tabled. We also want to make sure that the minister understands what consultation is, because . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I haven't heard anything relevant to a point of order yet.

The honourable Minister of Lands and Forestry.

HON. CHUCK PORTER: It's a pleasure to rise once again. I will, indeed, table all that I've spoken to this evening. I will table the Hansard, even though it's already in the record. I will table the comments as I've written them from statements tonight that were made.

I think it is relevant. The facts do matter in this House when you get on your feet to talk about any issue, whether it's Bill No. 4 or some other bill. We don't always have to agree, but it is important that the facts are presented as such when you speak in this House.

That is an issue of privilege, in my personal opinion, one that I will leave to you, as you probably further consider what has taken place tonight. Others may rise and talk to this, but I have the last word as minister. That's procedure of this House. Mr. Speaker, I don't need to remind you of that, but you can remind me if you like, and other members, that is the procedure, I believe.

Your quote was: If I recognize the honourable minister it will be to close debate, and so on. I have risen and I move, at this hour, to close debate. I will table my remarks that I referred to earlier - my comments and things as I said I would - but I move to close debate on Bill No. 4 - the Biodiversity Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Just a point of privilege, given the minister's comments tonight about the integrity of myself, my caucus, my caucus members. I think the reality is that the minister keeps referring to these extensive consultations and goes so far as to say that there were, in fact, consultations. I think what we're talking about . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. What is the member's point of privilege?

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: Sorry, the point of privilege is that the minister has made a bunch of comments and assertions about our caucus and that we have been misleading Nova Scotians. Those were the exact words of the minister. The minister said that the comments - and he referenced a bunch of my colleagues - were misleading Nova Scotians.

I want to speak to that specifically because I do believe that is a relevant point of privilege. Specifically, the minister talked about - the discussion is around consultations and whether or not consultations happened. The minister made some references to a member of our caucus meeting with staff at Lands and Forestry and having a back-and-forth. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not public consultation.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I haven't heard anything that constitutes a point of privilege but rather a disagreement of facts.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. GEOFF MACLELLAN: This was clearly an effort to waste time. This was not about a point of order. He repeated the same things. The member knows full well that this is not a point of privilege. He needs notice for a point of privilege.

There's a motion on the floor, Mr. Speaker. I would like to consider that motion now, please.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

TIM HOUSTON: I think the Government House Leader is a little misunderstanding of the rules on whether or not to put something in writing for a point of privilege.

I have listened intently to the minister's discussions tonight, and I listened to him time after time after time accuse members of my caucus and myself of misleading Nova Scotians about whether there were consultations or not. We did not and we have not, of course, misled Nova Scotians. As a point of fact, it's the minister who agreed to table documents about consultations and hasn't.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the minister is using a very loose interpretation of what consultations are, so if the minister . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. This is not a point of privilege. This is a disagreement of facts. We are now going to entertain the motion that's on the floor.

The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 4. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that the 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 government business. We'll meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, April 14th, between the hours of 12:00 noon and 11:59 p.m. With tomorrow being Opposition Business, I would like to invite the Deputy House Leader for the Opposition to provide us with business.

Following Opposition time, government business will include the Committee of the Whole on Supply and Subcommittee, as well as second reading of Bill Nos. 98, 103 and 105.

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

BRAD JOHNS: Following the daily routine and Question Period, Official Opposition business will include Bill Nos. 113 and 99.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, April 14th, between the hours of 12:00 noon and 11:59 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 14th.

[12:00 a.m. The House rose.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 442**

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas every Spring, communities in Nova Scotia nominate a volunteer to receive a Provincial Volunteer Award; and

Whereas Harry and Annette Daeman were recognized for their outstanding contributions by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish with the 2020 Volunteer Family Award; and

Whereas Harry and Annette have been a driving force in the community of St. Andrews with their reliable volunteerism to the Tri Heart Society, the Highlander Curling Club, and more;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Harry and Annette Daeman for being recognized with the 2020 Volunteer Family Award for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and thank them for all they do for our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 443

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas every Spring, communities in Nova Scotia nominate a volunteer to receive a Provincial Volunteer Award; and

Whereas Brenda MacDonald was recognized for her outstanding contributions by the Town of Antigonish as the 2020 Volunteer of the Year; and

Whereas Brenda has been a dedicated volunteer with TOPS for 24 years and supports the Antigonish Junior B Bulldogs, while also volunteering her time at special events being held in Antigonish like the National Special Olympics Summer Games in 2018 and the Nova Scotia 55-plus Games in 2019;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brenda MacDonald for being recognized as the 2020 Volunteer of the Year for the Town of Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 444

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas every Spring, communities in Nova Scotia nominate a volunteer to receive a Provincial Volunteer Award; and

Whereas Jakalee Myette was recognized for her outstanding contributions by the Town of Antigonish as the 2020 Youth Volunteer of the Year; and

Whereas Jakalee has been volunteering since the age of 14 with a long list of organizations and programs like the PHAST Team, the Breakfast Program, Challenger Baseball, coaching soccer, the Women's Resource Centre, and St. Martha's Regional Hospital, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jakalee Myette for being recognized as the 2020 Youth Volunteer of the Year for the Town of Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 445

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas in 2016 Kelsie Atkinson opened her business, the Antigonish Nail Boutique and Spa; and

Whereas since then she has had to move to expand twice in just five years to keep up with her growing clientele and to expand services; and

Whereas she now employs six staff while looking to hire more and continues to enjoy great success;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kelsie Atkinson and wish her the best of luck on her growing and successful business, the Antigonish Nail Boutique and Spa.

RESOLUTION NO. 446

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas every Spring, communities in Nova Scotia nominate a volunteer to receive a Provincial Volunteer Award; and

Whereas Mr. Kenny Stewart was recognized for his outstanding contributions by the Town of Antigonish for over four decades as a volunteer; and

Whereas Kenny sets an incredible example to all residents of Antigonish through his volunteerism with the Knights of Columbus, as operations manager at the John Paul Centre, and to many seniors, ensuring they have the support they require, including transportation to appointments;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Kenny Stewart for being recognized as the 2021 Volunteer of the Year for the Town of Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 447

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas the Council of the Federation Literacy Award is handed out annually by each province and territory to an adult learner who demonstrates outstanding achievements in literacy and makes a significant contribution to their school, workplace, or community; and

Whereas Malak Alahmad was the 2020 recipient for the Nova Scotia Council of the Federation Literacy Award for her accomplishment of reaching a Level 5 in English in less than three years after moving to Nova Scotia and Canada; and

Whereas Malak and her family settled in Antigonish with the support of the Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace after leaving Syria and living in a refugee camp in Jordan for three years, and when they moved here, she spoke no English;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Malak Alahmad for receiving the Nova Scotia Council of the Federation Literacy Award and recognize her many great achievements, including moving to a new country with her family and learning a new language.

RESOLUTION NO. 448

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas on March 7, 2021, Nicole MacGillivray celebrated four years as the owner of The Plum Tree Gift Shoppe on Main Street; and

Whereas the store is well known and a popular destination for its variety of items such as local pottery, jewelry, clothing, glassware, home décor, and more; and

Whereas over the course of the pandemic, Nicole was able to move to online sales through social media offering customers a glimpse of what the store had in stock while offering drop-off and curbside delivery;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nicole MacGillivray on finding an avenue to continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic and for her four years of being a business owner.

RESOLUTION NO. 449

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas every Spring, communities in Nova Scotia nominate a volunteer to receive a Provincial Volunteer Award; and

Whereas Shirley DeCoste was recognized for her outstanding contributions by the Municipality of the County of Antigonish as the 2020 Volunteer of the Year; and

Whereas Shirley has dedicated countless hours to the operation of the Monsignor Donnelly Hall in Tracadie and takes great pride in assisting families with events like wakes, funerals, weddings, and other important milestones;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shirley DeCoste for being recognized as the 2020 Volunteer of the Year for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and thank her for all she does for our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 450

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas Tammy Beaton has been hired as the new executive director at the Antigonish Chamber of Commerce; and

Whereas the role includes working with over 180 members to be their voice for prosperous and innovative business in the community; and

Whereas Tammy is looking forward to meeting with business owners over many different sectors to offer support;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tammy Beaton on her new role and wish her the best of luck.

RESOLUTION NO. 451

By: Hon. Randy Delorey (Antigonish)

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

Whereas Bobby and Jean Vacheresse have been in business with their store Vacheresse Meats for 50 years; and

Whereas they are known for supplying quality products to customers at a good price; and

Whereas there has never been a better time to shop and buy local and celebrate entrepreneurship in our communities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Bobby and Jean Vacheresse for creating and sustaining a remarkable business in Antigonish for 50 years.

RESOLUTION NO. 452

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas Anni Isenor lives near the Northwood Halifax campus, where a serious COVID-19 outbreak resulted in 246 residents and 99 staff being infected and 53 long-term care residents dying in Spring 2020; and

Whereas Anni created the Noise for Northwood Facebook group on April 20, 2020, which quickly grew to more than 2,000 members and was the driving force behind COVID-safe outdoor events that showed appreciation for frontline workers and cheered residents living at Northwood during severe lockdown; and

Whereas Anni has continued to honour essential workers with discounts on her services as a hairstylist, has promoted Northwood's fundraising efforts, and is generally a generous neighbour to this important long-term care facility;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Anni Isenor and acknowledge her generous efforts to keep up the spirits of those working and living at Northwood's Halifax campus.

RESOLUTION NO. 453

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas Northwood, experiencing a serious outbreak of COVID-19 at its Halifax campus that ultimately affected 246 residents and 99 staff, issued a call to the community for donations of cloth masks for its residents and tenants; and

Whereas the Atlantic Sewing Guild was founded in 1996 with a small group of members led by Julie Culshaw, and is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2021; and

Whereas the Atlantic Sewing Guild responded to Northwood's call by making and donating hundreds of masks to Northwood;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Atlantic Sewing Guild on their 25th anniversary and thank them for the support they have shown to Northwood and to Nova Scotia during our collective time of struggle and need.

RESOLUTION NO. 454

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas the Bus Stop Theatre has been operating in its current location for 18 years and is the only theatre space in Halifax that is available to rent by independent theatre companies; and

Whereas the Bus Stop Theatre is also accessible for dance, music, spoken word events, and community meetings at an affordable cost to artists, which allows ticket prices to also be affordable; and

Whereas the Bus Stop Theatre Cooperative formed in 2012 and began seeking government support and fundraising to purchase its building in 2018, becoming owners of 2203 Gottingen on July 30, 2020;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Bus Stop Theatre Cooperative on making their home in Halifax Needham permanent and wish all members and volunteers well on the work - and the shows - yet to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 455

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas the Northwood Halifax campus experienced a serious COVID-19 outbreak that resulted in 246 residents and 99 staff being infected, the deaths of 53 long-term residents, and months of severe lockdown; and

Whereas Gail Giffin has 36 years of service with Northwood and Gail and her team oversaw the redeployment of the Recreation Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Occupational Therapy teams during the pandemic; and

Whereas Gail and her team took on new roles to serve residents and families through the Family Visiting and Face Time Visiting Programs during the pandemic, providing an important link to help combat the loneliness and isolation of residents within Northwood as well as lessen the worries of families who could not see their loved ones in person;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Gail Giffin for her role in keeping families and seniors living in Northwood connected and for continuing to work under such difficult circumstances.

RESOLUTION NO. 456

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas Janessa Williams is celebrating 10 years as executive director of Needham Preschool and Daycare; and

Whereas Needham Preschool and Daycare provides an essential service and is an important home away from home, much loved by parents and children alike; and

Whereas Janessa has led Needham Preschool and Daycare through many changes and challenges, including the rollout of pre-Primary and the closure and subsequent reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and congratulate Janessa Williams for her leadership and for her crucial role in ensuring that Needham Preschool and Daycare has continued to serve families in Halifax Needham.

RESOLUTION NO. 457

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas Kendall Worth is an anti-poverty activist and regular contributor to *The Nova Scotia Advocate*, where he writes about systemic issues facing people living with disabilities and low incomes; and

Whereas Kendall offers important first-voice perspectives on navigating the Disability Support Program and income assistance, and seeking mental health supports and affordable housing; and

Whereas in 2020, Kendall has been recognized with both the James McGregor Stewart Society Award, given to a person with a disability in honour of their ability to overcome barriers, and the Lois Miller Tulip Award, which is given to an individual who makes a difference in the lives of those living with a disability;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kendall Worth on winning these awards and express appreciation for his advocacy and impact.

RESOLUTION NO. 458

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas Northwood Halifax campus experienced a serious COVID-19 outbreak that resulted in 246 residents and 99 staff being infected, the deaths of 53 long-term residents, and months of severe lockdown; and

Whereas Linda Verlinden has been with the Northwood Halifax campus for 17 years and recently oversaw the family communication program, where she responded to family inquiries and managed challenges related to the outbreak at Northwood; and

Whereas Linda oversaw a team of staff redeployed from NSHA to provide weekly phone calls to update families worried for their loved ones in Northwood, who they were unable to see for many months;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Linda Verlinden for her many years of service, especially during a highly stressful time for those working and living in Northwood, and for her compassionate understanding of family for their loved ones.

RESOLUTION NO. 459

By: Lisa Roberts (Halifax Needham)

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

Whereas Northwood Halifax campus experienced a serious COVID-19 outbreak that resulted in 246 residents and 99 staff being infected, the deaths of 53 long-term residents, and months of severe lockdown; and

Whereas Mary Wylde has given 31 years of service to the Northwood Halifax campus, most recently as a hospice nurse, where she made tremendous efforts both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic to tend to the patients in her care; and

Whereas Mary and her staff worked day and night to care for seniors experiencing dire situations during the pandemic and the outbreak at Northwood, working overtime as necessary to provide comfort to patients;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Mary Wylde for many years of service and continued compassion to the people served in the specialty of hospice and for going above and beyond in a time of great need and sadness for patients, family, and staff.

RESOLUTION NO. 460

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Angela Lynch serves on the In The Loop Community Association Board of Directors; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association was established in 2014 with the purpose of bringing together the residents of Spryfield-Sambro Loop area to promote community spirit and pride; and

Whereas the In The Loop Community Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members who give their time to organize free community events such as the In the Loop Yardsale, In The Loop Summer Celebration, and the Children's annual Halloween Party, just to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Angela Lynch on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the In The Loop Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 461

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Hugh Fraser serves on the In the Loop Community Association board of directors; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association was established in 2014 with the purpose of bringing together the residents of Spryfield-Sambro Loop area to promote community spirit and pride; and

Whereas the In The Loop Community Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to organize free community events such as the In the Loop yard sale, In the Loop summer celebration and the children's annual Halloween party, just to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hugh Fraser on his commitment to his community and thank him for serving on the In the Loop board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 462

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Heidi Price-Musolino serves on the In the Loop Community Association board of directors; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association was established in 2014 with the purpose of bringing together the residents of Spryfield-Sambro Loop area to promote community spirit and pride; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to organize free community events such as the In the Loop yard sale, In the Loop summer celebration and the children's annual Halloween party, just to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Heidi Price-Musolino on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the In the Loop board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 463

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Pat Langley serves on the In the Loop Community Association board of directors; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association was established in 2014 with the purpose of bringing together the residents of Spryfield-Sambro Loop area to promote community spirit and pride; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to organize free community events such as the In the Loop yard sale, In the Loop summer celebration and the children's annual Halloween party, just to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Pat Langley on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the In the Loop board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 464

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Sara MacFarlane serves on the In the Loop Community Association board of directors; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association was established in 2014 with the purpose of bringing together the residents of Spryfield-Sambro Loop area to promote community spirit and pride; and

Whereas the In the Loop Community Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to organize free community events such

as the In the Loop yard sale, In the Loop summer celebration and the children's annual Halloween party, just to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sara MacFarlane on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the In the Loop board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 465

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Irene Swindells has served as Administrator at Melville Heights for the past 26 years; and

Whereas the residents of Melville Heights retirement residence were not just clients to Irene Swindells, they were her friends and she was dedicated to providing them the best experience in their retirement years; and

Whereas after working a long career of 26 years, Irene Swindells officially retired from Melville Heights on April 9, 2021;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Irene Swindells on her long service and dedication to the residents of Melville Heights and wish her all the best for her retirement.

RESOLUTION NO. 466

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Adrienne Bowers serves on the Ketch Harbour Residents Association (KHARA) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members who give their time to help improve the lives of the

residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Adrienne Bowers on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the KHARA Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 467

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Angie Gray serves on the Ketch Harbour Residents Association (KHARA) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members who give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Angie Gray on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the KHARA Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 468

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Anna Whalen serves on the Ketch Harbour Residents Association (KHARA) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members who give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Anna Whalen on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the KHARA Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 469

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Chris Flemming serves on the Ketch Harbour Residents Association (KHARA) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members who give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Chris Flemming on his commitment to his community and thank him for serving on the KHARA Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 470

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Chris Stover serves on the Ketch Harbour Residents Association (KHARA) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members who give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Chris Stover on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the KHARA Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 471

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Doug Wasowski serves on the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association (KHARA) board of directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Doug Wasowski on his commitment to his community and thank him for serving on the KHARA board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 472

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Gordon MacEwen serves on the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association (KHARA) board of directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gordon MacEwen on his commitment to his community and thank him for serving on the KHARA board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 473

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Joann Reynolds-Farmer serves on the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association (KHARA) board of directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joann Reynolds-Farmer on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the KHARA board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 474

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Kim Reinnhardt serves on the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association (KHARA) board of directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kim Reinnhardt on her commitment to her community and thank her for serving on the KHARA board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 475

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Kyle Ereaux serves on the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association (KHARA) board of directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Area Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kyle Ereaux on his commitment to his community and thank him for serving on the KHARA board of directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 476

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Pete Rose serves on the Ketch Harbour Residents Association (KHARA) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is a non-profit community group dedicated to strengthening relationships among neighbours, preserving community assets, and celebrating life along the beautiful coast of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Ketch Harbour Residents Association is governed by a dedicated group of volunteer board members that give their time to help improve the lives of the residents of Ketch Harbour through many community events such as holiday events, ice cream socials, pub nights, and coffee houses, to name a few;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Pete Rose on his commitment to his community and thank him for serving on the KHARA Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 477

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Allan Marryatt serves as the Archivist of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSHS) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the

MSSH Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Allan Marryatt on his commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank him for his service on the MSSH Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 478

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas C. Ernest Pass serves as a member of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSSH) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSSH Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate C. Ernest Pass on his commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank him for his service on the MSSH Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 479

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Fay Deviller serves as a member of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSSH) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSHS Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Fay Deviller on her commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank her for her service on the MSHS Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 480

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Grace Dobson serves as the treasurer of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSHS) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSHS Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Grace Dobson on her commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank her for her service on the MSHS Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 481

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Iris Shea serves as the Local Historian and member of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSHS) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSHS Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Iris Shea on her commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank her for her service on the MSHS Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 482

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Leslie Harnish serves as the president of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSHS) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSHS Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Leslie Harnish on her commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank her for her service on the MSHS Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 483

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Starr Bogue serves as the vice-president of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSHS) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSHS Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Starr Bogue on her commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank her for her service on the MSHS Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 484

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Susan Nicholson serves as the secretary of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSHS) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSHS Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Susan Nicholson on her commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank her for her service on the MSHS Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION NO. 485

By: Hon. Brendan Maguire (Halifax Atlantic)

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

Whereas Wayne Shellnutt serves as a member of the Mainland South Heritage Society (MSHS) Board of Directors; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is a non-profit community group dedicated to documenting and preserving the history of our communities from Armdale to the Pennants; and

Whereas the Mainland South Heritage Society is governed by a dedicated volunteer board of community members who are passionate about preserving the heritage of our communities and share this passion with residents through their annual signature event, the MSHS Heritage Tea and Display, and also throughout the year at various community events;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Wayne Shellnutt on his commitment to preserving the history of our communities and thank him for his service on the MSHS Board of Directors.