



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS**

**Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain**

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**First Session**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2021**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2021**

**Sixty-fourth General Assembly**

**First Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Keith Bain

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Please rise. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, preceded by his escorts and by Mr. David Fraser, Sergeant-at-Arms, bearing the Mace, entered the House of Assembly Chamber. The Lieutenant Governor then took his seat on the Throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms then departed and re-entered the Chamber, followed by the Speaker, Hon. Keith Bain; the Chief Clerk of the House, James Charlton; and the Assistant Clerks David Hastings and Cara Locke.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that everyone present be seated.

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**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE****A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Nova Scotians**

Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, Nova Scotians: Welcome to the First Session of the 64th General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature. Today, we would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathering on Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people.

The future of our wonderful province is very bright. We have our challenges, but I remain incredibly optimistic about our opportunities. For starters, I am so pleased that today's gathering, for the first time in 19 months, looks normal. Nova Scotians should be proud of what we have accomplished from the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. I give thanks to Dr. Strang and the entire team at Public Health for their guidance, and also to Premier McNeil and Premier Rankin for having the courage to follow Public Health recommendations with the necessary public policy.

Nova Scotians did their part. From staying home, respecting Public Health restrictions, missing our families and friends, to doing our parts and getting vaccinated to protect our most vulnerable, our collective efforts shone a positive light on Nova Scotia. We have truly been the envy of the world.

And when the world started to take notice of Nova Scotia, they increasingly liked what they saw. The world is learning what we already knew. Our response to the pandemic opened a window through which the world was exposed to our beautiful shores - our beaches, our blueberry fields, our hockey rinks, our golf courses, our hiking trails - and, most importantly, they saw our people.

It is our people, both born and raised in Nova Scotia and newcomers choosing to make their home here, who make us one of the most desired places to be. And it is our people who upheld our most enviable attribute of all, our democracy, when they selected each and every member of this Chamber to take their respective seats.

Our system is fair and equitable. It gives a voice to the people no matter how long you've lived here. No matter who you voted for, no matter the colour of your skin, your gender, who you love, the language you speak, or how you pray, you have a say.

Notre système est juste et équitable. Il donne une voix au peuple, peu importe depuis combien de temps vous êtes ici. Peu importe pour qui vous avez voté, peu importe la couleur de votre peau, votre genre, qui vous aimez, la langue que vous parlez ou la façon dont vous priez, vous avez une voix.

It was Nova Scotia that led the way in establishing this system. We led in democracy, we led in the pandemic, and we will continue to lead in so many other areas.

There is so much to be optimistic about for the future of our province. With record high vaccination rates, we are able to open and safely return to normal much sooner than anywhere else. This means a renewed focus on our economy and population growth.

Nova Scotia is a province where people want to be. Now it is the job of the government to make it possible for them to be here. We can do that while also ensuring those who are here have every opportunity to succeed. From providing world-class education to cutting red tape and enabling businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive, Nova Scotia can offer the foundation for success, resulting in growth of both our economy and our population. All of this is possible.

But having the opportunity to succeed also means being healthy. We have to be honest about the challenges in our health system. When we are honest about where we are today, and if we commit to working together, we can overcome the challenges and ensure that:

- Nova Scotians have access to timely primary care;
- paramedics are supported and 911 response times are improved;
- wait times in our emergency departments and operating rooms are improved;
- and
- our seniors age with dignity.

Yes, the challenges are significant, but they can be addressed and doing so is the number one goal of our government.

We have to return to the place where every person in this province knows that when they get sick, they will be able to access the care they need. To that end, we are starting from a great foundation. We have world-class health care workers who are dedicated to providing the very best in care. Their government is listening to them. Doctors, nurses, paramedics, CCAs, and everyone delivering health care has an important voice that is respected and valued. They will help guide us forward.

Nous devons revenir à une situation où chaque personne dans cette province sait qu'elle pourra obtenir les soins nécessaires si elle est malade. Pour ce faire, nous misons sur une excellente fondation. Nous avons des travailleurs de la santé de première classe qui se consacrent à offrir les meilleurs soins possible. Leur gouvernement les écoute. Les médecins, les infirmières, les ambulanciers, les auxiliaires en soins continus et toute autre personne qui offre des soins de santé ont une voix importante qui est respectée et estimée. Ils nous guideront dans nos démarches.

### **In Memoriam**

A strong future is dependent on remembering our past. Sadly, COVID continues to take lives. Our hearts break for those families and friends who lost a loved one. It is our

hope that everyone who can does their part to get vaccinated and further protect their fellow Nova Scotians.

This year also saw the loss of a Nova Scotian and Canadian giant of business and philanthropy. Many people will remember Donald Sobey for his business vision and insight and his unwavering community support and love of the arts, but we will remember him for his kindness and his generosity with his time and wisdom. With all of his successes, Donald never forgot where he came from and was always proud to call Pictou County home.

Just last week, Nova Scotia lost a son of Cumberland County, former Premier Roger Bacon. Premier Bacon was a tireless and dedicated public servant and a pioneering farmer who helped transform Nova Scotia's blueberry industry. Our province is better and stronger because of his many contributions.

Earlier this year, we mourned the loss of the Duke of Edinburgh. Prince Philip served by Queen Elizabeth's side for more than 70 years. He led a remarkable life dedicated to public service, working well into his 90s. He will long be remembered for his support of many charities and organizations, including his creation of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award program that encourages youth around the world - including thousands of Nova Scotians - to develop themselves through personal discovery and growth, self-reliance, perseverance, and responsibility.

[1:15 p.m.]

### **A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Health Care**

Much has been said about the state of our health care system in Nova Scotia over the last few years. We have all heard stories from friends and neighbours of the tragedies they have faced. Some of us have our own stories of navigating the system.

Now is the time to focus on this crisis. We live in the best country in the world. And Nova Scotia can be a leader in this country, from our economy to our education system, but it all begins with providing access to health care. There is no reason we can't offer world-class access to health care, and we will do it.

It starts with engaging those within the system. No one understands the issues preventing and delaying access better than those working on the front lines every day. We have and will continue to listen to them speak up for our health system. To date, not only have they identified areas of concern and improvement, but they are bringing forward common-sense solutions.

Listening to and respecting our health care professionals is a first step in establishing more and quicker access to health services. Our government isn't focused on

simply saying what they think people want to hear to improve health care. We are actually interested in improving the lives and health of Nova Scotians.

We will continue to do the work and the research, putting forward solutions for Nova Scotians. These solutions will include:

- incentivizing health care professionals to stay and to move here;
- listening to local communities and allowing them to have a say in recruitment;
- helping foreign-trained doctors get credentialed;
- implementing a retirement fund for full-time physicians;
- providing immediate access to care through telehealth to everyone on the wait-list for a doctor;
- changing the way we do patient transfers to free up more ambulances for emergencies; and
- increasing surgical hours to tackle the wait-list.

Solutions to the health care crisis are at the forefront of this government's priorities. The newly created Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment has already seen some early successes and promising leads. Two anaesthetists and a psychiatrist have signed job offers to practise in Cape Breton, and two family doctors currently practising in Halifax have worked with the office to address concerns and will now stay in Nova Scotia. Several other physicians are also consulting with the office to come to or stay in the province.

We need to recruit and retain more physicians, nurses, paramedics, continuing care assistants, and others. This new office brings the dedicated focus we need to find simple solutions to address common problems, and we are already making headway. The new office is focused on attracting and keeping doctors, nurses, continuing care assistants, paramedics, and other professionals. It will also work to eliminate existing barriers.

Efforts are underway to create a pilot project to make the continuing care assistant profession more attractive by offering on-site child care at a nursing home in Sydney. Continuing care assistants report they have difficulty finding care that matches their shifts.

We will do everything possible to make sure that Nova Scotia is known as a welcoming place for health care professionals. This means improving working conditions, removing barriers, and streamlining the system to bring and keep health care professionals in Nova Scotia. More and happier health care providers will mean more access to much-needed services, which, in turn, will lead to a healthier Nova Scotia.

### **A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Mental Health Care**

A healthier Nova Scotia means more than access to physical care: It also means access to appropriate, timely mental health services. Statistics suggest that at least one in five individuals experience issues related to their mental health, but we know that the

numbers are climbing. Thousands of Nova Scotians of all ages and backgrounds struggle with mental health conditions that are likely manageable if they have access to appropriate support.

Access should not be exclusive to those who are fortunate enough to have insurance coverage or who can afford private care. Access should be truly universal. The benefits of receiving treatment can be life-changing. It can improve lives and it can improve our economy. It could transform our entire health system.

As a province, we must mobilize our collective resources now and remove the barriers of the two-tiered system. We will do whatever we can to end the days of individuals sitting silently in pain and struggling because they can't afford the help - help that would be available if their hand was broken, or their leg needed stitches.

Les avantages d'un traitement en matière de santé mentale peuvent changer une vie. Un tel traitement peut améliorer notre vie et notre économie. Il pourrait transformer notre système de santé dans son ensemble. En tant que province, nous devons mobiliser nos ressources collectives dès maintenant et éliminer les obstacles du système à deux paliers. Nous ferons notre possible pour que les gens n'aient plus jamais à lutter silencieusement contre leur douleur parce qu'ils n'ont pas les moyens d'obtenir de l'aide.

Help would be available if their hand was broken or their leg needed stitches. Mental health care is health care, and access to mental health care is a right, not a privilege. The government has a duty to provide mental health care that must be:

- free of stigma;
- accountable;
- universally accessible.

We are committing to build the most progressive mental health support system in Canada, one that embraces people and treats mental ailments with the same urgency as physical ones. That system starts with a separate Minister for Mental Health and Addictions making someone accountable. This dedicated minister will be responsible for making sure the system is truly accessible. To ensure accessibility, our government would be the only one in Canada investing in universal mental health care. Nova Scotia must lead on this important issue.

If you don't qualify for private mental health coverage, under our plan you will. We will work to reduce wait times for treatment and give Nova Scotians the care they need for better health outcomes. We will work to attract new mental health professionals to Nova Scotia. We will work to remove the stigma associated with mental health concerns and treatment. Our Nova Scotia will be a leader in mental health care in Canada and the model that every province strives to achieve.

### **A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Seniors**

Too often our seniors feel forgotten. That shouldn't happen. Our seniors have contributed to our province, and to our communities, their whole lives. They've paid their taxes, raised families, looked after their neighbours, and donated and volunteered with charities and local organizations. They have done this work to leave a positive mark on their community and to set up the next generation for success.

Nova Scotians need to know that their government will make the right decisions to care for our parents and grandparents as they age. This means a significant investment in long-term care that includes:

- building new single-bed long-term care rooms to begin to meet the demands of those on the waiting list and seniors who will need beds in the future;
- hiring more long-term care staff to support residents and to support current staff; and
- increasing the minimum standards of care in long-term care properties.

We also know that long-term care homes are not for everyone and that many seniors want to spend as many years as they can in the homes that they bought and built themselves. Unfortunately, as many age and are unable to perform some household tasks, it can become increasingly difficult for them to maintain their homes.

We will provide additional support to help with household services for seniors who live independently and qualify. It's a recognition that sometimes, as we get older, we might need extra support and that not every senior has a neighbour or kids or grandchildren who live close enough to do that. Not only do we want to support people who are living independently, but we want to ensure that they can continue to do so. Seniors shouldn't feel the need to push their limits. We will respect our seniors and provide them with dignity and respect as they age. No one should live in fear of what's next.

### **A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for the Economy**

We also have tremendous opportunities. We have breathtaking scenic landscapes. We have dedicated educators empowering our next generation. We have an abundance of attractions bringing tourists from all over the world. We are becoming a mecca for filming television and movies. We have world-class wine and agriculture products. We have capable and talented people and organizations. Our government will support them with made-in-Nova Scotia solutions that tell the world Nova Scotia is open for business and has the confidence to invest in its people and its future.

Notre gouvernement les appuiera par des solutions néo-écossaises qui annoncent au monde entier que la Nouvelle-Écosse est prête à faire des affaires et a la confiance nécessaire pour investir dans ses gens et dans son avenir.



Everyone wants higher pay, and every employer would love to pay their team more. Our government will position Nova Scotia to compete with other provinces and countries and invest in ourselves by putting more money in employees' pockets. Our government will give employers a choice: leave the money they paid as corporate tax in the hands of the government or ask for it back on the condition that they distribute those same dollars to their team. That's an easy decision, and it will mean more money in the hands of those who earned it: Nova Scotians.

This isn't a plan for the rich: This is a plan for the middle class and those struggling to join it. If you want to stay competitive, you will pay a competitive salary. This means better-paying jobs and growing businesses.

To support this growth, we need more trades workers building homes and apartments, roads, and other infrastructure around the province. We know parents don't want to lose their children to Alberta. We want to keep them here and give them every advantage to stay. Our government will eliminate personal income tax on the first \$50,000 of income for trades workers under the age of 30. Once they're here, they won't want to leave.

[1:30 p.m.]

We have to train them. That means increasing capacity in our trades education in our high schools and making students aware, at a younger age, of the possibilities that exist. We will place an increased emphasis on young girls and students with diverse backgrounds, educating them on the opportunities available to them.

There is a housing crisis in Nova Scotia. We have a plan to address this crisis, and attracting and training more tradespeople is critical to its success.

By focusing on Nova Scotia - our people, our talent, our beauty, and our goods - so much is possible. This made-in-Nova Scotia approach will grow our province. It will retain our youth and will attract more. This is essential, because in order to make the necessary investments in health care, we need a healthy economy. Health care and the economy go hand in hand, and we will work to ensure that as health care sees the investment it needs, the economy is receiving equal attention focusing on growth.

### **A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for the Environment**

In 2006, the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act laid the framework for Nova Scotia to make transformative environmental change and position Nova Scotia as an environmental leader. These 2006 goals forced the Province to take decisive action on the environment, which laid the groundwork to position Nova Scotia as a world leader. In 2021, environmental leadership is a non-negotiable prerequisite for any government.

There is no debate over whether climate change needs to be addressed. The debate is only about how it should be addressed.

Les objectifs de 2006 ont obligé la Province à prendre des mesures décisives en ce qui a trait à l'environnement, ce qui a jeté les bases pour permettre à la Nouvelle-Écosse de devenir un chef de file sur la scène mondiale. En 2021, le leadership environnemental est un prérequis non-négociable pour tout gouvernement. Il n'y a aucun débat à avoir: Il faut absolument aborder le changement climatique. Le débat doit se concentrer sur la façon dont le problème doit être abordé.

Nova Scotians demand that their government walk the walk on environmental action and re-establish goals in the best interest of future generations. Striving for modern-day solutions starts with bold legislation that builds on our history of leadership in adopting green measures and putting forward solutions for climate-friendly, sustainable development.

We will set aggressive targets that 80 per cent of energy will be supplied by renewable energy by 2030. We are focused on the future and decisions that keep our province, country, and world sustainable for future generations.

We will take the lead from former Prime Minister the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, who said: "Now is the time to act. Now is not the time to imprison ourselves in ideological arguments. Now is the time to test the outer limits of what we can achieve for future generations."

### **A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Accountability**

A healthy government is one where Nova Scotians have the information and opportunity to hold their government to account. We welcome this and will provide members of the public and the Members of the Legislative Assembly with the tools to do so. A government should be willing to defend, in public forums, the decisions it makes. This is a key commitment of our government. There are only so many mechanisms that the Opposition really has to hold the government to account. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts is one of them. We will return this committee to its original format and allow departments to be called as witnesses before a committee that meets regularly.

Nova Scotians are also faced with constant uncertainty around the timing of elections because they live in the lone province that does not have fixed election dates. That practice ends with this government. Election dates will be set immediately so that every Nova Scotian knows the timeline upon which they will be able to exercise their ultimate right of holding this government and every subsequent government to account. This session will see the creation of fixed election dates in Nova Scotia.

La date des élections sera établie immédiatement pour que tous les gens de la Nouvelle-Écosse connaissent l'horaire selon lequel ils pourront exercer leur droit absolu de demander des comptes à ce gouvernement et à tout gouvernement subséquent. L'établissement d'une date fixe pour les élections en Nouvelle-Écosse aura lieu au courant de la présente session.

Finally, much has been written about our freedom of information laws and the lack of effectiveness of our current laws. While stronger privacy laws may be uncomfortable for the government, discomfort is warranted if it means holding the government to a higher standard. For us, this means providing those protections to Nova Scotians and walking the walk.

### **Closing**

It is time for Nova Scotia to move forward with solutions that work for Nova Scotians. It's time to embrace what is possible for health care, for our economy, and for our future. We know Nova Scotians share the hope that we have for our beautiful province and its potential. Nova Scotians are right to expect that we all live up to the highest standard. We resolve to give everything we have to make life better for you, but if we work together we can get the job done much quicker.

We can put Nova Scotians on the path to financial sustainability and fix health care. We can support our traditional industries and build an environment plan that fights climate change. We can make our province a magnet for doctors, investors, and tourists alike, and remain proud of our traditions and our heritage.

No matter how long you've lived here, no matter the colour of your skin, your gender, whom you love, the language you speak, or how you pray, our government will listen to you, will respect you, and will do everything in our power to make access to health care better and your life more affordable. We have worked so hard, but the work is just getting started.

There will be some tough decisions ahead but today we can have optimism. We can have hope: hope that health care will get better and hope that tomorrow will be better than today.

God bless Nova Scotia, God bless Canada, God save the Queen. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour the Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Please be seated.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act Respecting Oaths of Office.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice begs leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act Respecting Oaths of Office.

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

The Clerk will read the title of the bill first, sorry. A good start.

THE CLERK: An Act Respecting Oaths of Office.

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

His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, has been pleased to make a speech to the members in General Assembly, of which speech for better accuracy I've obtained a copy, which the Clerk will now read.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE CLERK: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, Nova Scotians, welcome to the First Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature. Today I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathering in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people.

The future of our wonderful province is very bright. We have our challenges, but I remain incredibly optimistic about our opportunities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speech from the Throne be taken as read.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the Speech be taken as read.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Hants West. (Applause)

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise today to move the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne as read by His Honour, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and honour to have been asked to rise before you and the rest of the members of the House today to move the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be adopted. I would first like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your position as newly-elected Speaker in this, the oldest legislative building in Canada.

I would like to congratulate all candidates who were brave enough to put their name on the ballot and to congratulate everyone here who was victorious and claimed the incredible honour of taking their seat at Province House.

Mr. Speaker, I will take a few minutes of my allotted time this afternoon to say what an honour and privilege the people of Hants West have bestowed upon me on August 17, 2021. On this date, I became the first female MLA ever elected to the constituency of Hants West since the riding was divided into two electoral districts in 1949. (Applause) Over the course of those 72 years, six previous males had held the seat; one of them being the late Ron Russell, who is remembered for his encyclopedic knowledge and masterful use of the Rules of the Legislature, his unwavering respect for the people he represented, and his legendary wit.

As well, out of those 72 years, the Progressive Conservative Party had occupied this seat for 53 of them. It is my great pleasure to have returned the seat to the Progressive Conservative Party.

This being my first experience running as a political candidate and doing this while in a world pandemic and state of emergency, it was certainly stressful, awakening, and at the same time an inspiring process for me. After being elected and receiving the support of my constituents, I wholeheartedly feel the weight of their expectations and the trust they have given me. It will be my absolute goal to focus and represent them to the best of my ability.

My great-uncle, the late Dr. Gerry Sheehy, was MLA for the riding of Annapolis for many years. He was a Minister of Health in the late 1980s. He was one of the hardest-working MLAs of all time, and I hope to work as hard as he did in my term in office.

Mr. Speaker, I had the true pleasure of being asked to run for the riding of Hants West by the then-Opposition Leader and now our 30<sup>th</sup> Premier. From the first time I met the Premier at the Long Pond banquet in Windsor in January 2020 and through all the discussions and pep talks, his belief in me, and hearing his vision for Nova Scotia, I knew his full effort and heart were dedicated for all the right reasons. I feel very confident in saying I see no change taking place in the Premier's chair for a very long time. (Applause)

I also remain confident that the work our new government is doing under our health care mandate will bring about real hope and change which our frontline workers have not had in a very long time. The Premier's focus on health care will be welcomed by the people in Hants West, who have nowhere to turn for a walk-in clinic, worry that the emergency

room will be closed over the weekend, wonder if the ambulance will arrive on time, and have waited years for a family doctor, then for them to get one and have them leave.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged that in the very early days of this government, our Premier toured the province to speak up for health care workers. He spoke to frontline health care professionals. He talked to the people who are holding the system together to find solutions that will improve health care.

Mr. Speaker, please allow me to take the time to thank my campaign team who worked tirelessly behind the scenes so that I could be free to do what I do best, which is getting to know the great residents of Hants West. My team was a small group but loyal and committed to helping me become an MLA.

Some had worked many campaigns in the past like Dan Boyd, Doug Symonds, John Trites, Clary Hazle, and Wayne Hines. Others were new people who stepped up, or whom I had met along the way: Marc Comeau, Bill Clarke, Sharon Reid, Mark Richard, Gladys Sanford, Justine Keats, Doug Pynch, John Shanks, and Joy Sanford. I will forever be grateful to them for supporting and believing in me. (Applause)

There were many challenges along the way, from frigid days of minus 20 degrees to days with a feel-like temperature of plus 40 degrees. From being car sick, to long hours without food or washroom facilities, to not knowing how we would be greeted at the door and then the lockdowns that made us need to pivot how we would get my message and branding out there.

Despite these challenges, I knew that in order to earn the trust of my constituents, I would have to meet them so that they could know me and know that my whole heart, like the Premier's, was in it for all the right reasons. I am convinced that without having worked as hard as I did that I would not be standing here today.

My team at home played the largest role in my success for winning the seat. From my husband of 24 years, Todd Richard, who used every free hour and vacation day that he had to drive me, encourage and support me, and give me his unconditional love on the days that I needed it the most.

My three boys - Luc Richard, who is 22; Maguire Richard, who is 20; and Brody Richard, who is 16 - had to fend for themselves and keep the house running by making sure there were always bananas on the counter and milk in the fridge. They stepped up when I needed them most and I am beyond proud of all of them.

Luc is a power engineer at BioVectra in Windsor. Maguire is in his third year at Dalhousie University studying applied computer science and has already been hired for his first co-op this winter. Our youngest, Brody, is in Grade 11 at Avon View High School and was recently rostered to the boys varsity hockey team.

I also want to thank my parents, Steve and Trudy Sheehy, who cooked a meal for us every week, and my in-laws Wayne and Deborah Swinimer, who delivered fresh eggs and garden veggies which were both welcomed and appreciated. Their unconditional love and support helped keep me grounded when I was feeling overwhelmed. I will be forever grateful to them as well for their continued support, and I hope to keep making them proud every day.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank my new constituency assistant, Priscilla Miller, who took a leap of faith with me and is working hard in my constituency office. I am also thankful for the support of Dan Boyd, who has agreed to stay on with us on a part-time basis while we're getting the office running smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to recognize individuals who we lost over the past year and a half who were prominent and played vital roles in the community of Hants West: Barbara Hughes - what more can be said about her? She was instrumental in the incorporation of Evangeline Savings and Mortgage Company in 1964; Eric Nott, the former Town of Windsor Mayor; Don Beatty, a friend and a former long-time Director of Public Works with the former Town of Windsor; Ron Robinson, former long-term councillor with the former municipality; Roy Haley, long-time CAO with the former municipality; well-known optometrist Dr. Ned Lyons; well-known individual Lois Taylor; businessmen Gerald Bonang of Nothin' Fancy Furniture and Bob Cochrane, who without a doubt could literally sell a car to any human being; and Freeman Swinamer, a long-time volunteer who was heavily involved with the Hants County Exhibition and the Maritime Ox-Pulling Association. My sincerest condolences to family and friends of all those who were lost in our community.

Mr. Speaker, on April 1, 2020, the former Town of Windsor and the former District of West Hants Municipality consolidated to form the newest regional government in the province. The new West Hants Regional Municipality resulted in shared services, a new council, and a new CAO.

Many challenges have been overcome to date with this new regional municipal government. I would like to take this time to congratulate all those involved, from municipal staff and councillors, past and present, to the provincial representatives who helped make this a reality.

Nova Scotia is seeing unprecedented growth and development and many people wanting to move here and call this wonderful place home. Our municipalities play a critical role in providing and administering public services vital to the needs of housing, infrastructure, and recreation, along with many other functions. Our new government will be committed to supporting all municipalities. I look forward to successful consolidations and to our province leading the way and promoting future municipal modernization.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a moment to recognize Dr. Kevin Walsh of Falmouth, who after months of training and preparation was successful in climbing Mount Everest, reaching the summit at the highest point of the world above sea level. When he finally reached the top, after a two-month climb, he said that the sky was blue and the wind was calm at the top of the world. Quite remarkable.

Secondly, I would like to recognize Mark Smith of Falmouth, who led the Canada Women's Softball Team to a bronze medal at the 2021 Olympics in Japan as head coach. Mr. Smith has been head coach of the Canadian Women's National Softball Team since 2009. He has led the team to several great victories, highlighted by a gold medal finish in the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto, Ontario, which marked the first gold medal for Canada in this event since 1983.

Mr. Speaker, one of the major issues in Hants West is the status of our Lake Pisiquid and freshwater Avon River, which presently does not exist because of a ministerial order that was written and has been renewed on a bi-weekly basis since March, which leaves the gates open on every outgoing tide. It has left us with a dry riverbed, dust storms, negative economic impacts, lost property values, and lost recreational use.

Our farmers and community at large are devastated that such a valuable freshwater resource is let to go out to sea twice daily when other parts of the country are facing drought situations. We have looked to government for answers since March, without reply. When the new government in Ottawa is sworn in, residents and stakeholders will continue to knock on every door until we are heard and a better solution can be found.

Mr. Speaker, the area of Hants West is rich in history and agriculture, being home to North America's largest and oldest agricultural fair, the Hants County Exhibition, and serviced by several successful companies and small businesses, with many new places opening all around us.

We are a community that always comes together when the needs of others arise. We are conveniently located to the HRM and the Annapolis Valley, which makes it a great destination to live, work, and play.

We are home to the oldest private school in North America, known as King's-Edgehill. We are also known as the birthplace of hockey and pumpkin capital of the world.

It is so exciting to be the new MLA for my riding. I look forward to telling you more in my remaining time on a later date.

Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to thank His Honour for the Throne Speech, and with great pride and great confidence I move a motion that the following Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, as read by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, do pass. (Applause)



[2:00 p.m.]

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

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to support the Speech from the Throne and a motion brought forward by my colleague for the constituency of Hants West. I want to acknowledge her election in the great constituency of Hants West and congratulate all those who were elected on August 17<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured and proud to be standing here as the second member of the Ritcey family. My grandfather Gerald Ritcey was a member from 1968 to '74 as the Minister of Tourism and Industry. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, Premier, fellow MLAs, I thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, Arthur J. LeBlanc, for the Speech from the Throne. On behalf of the citizens of Truro, Bible Hill, Millbrook, and Salmon River, I am honoured to have the privilege of seconding the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne, a speech which lays out an innovative and visionary plan for a healthy Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin today by expressing my sincere congratulations to our Premier, the member for Pictou East. He is hard-working, dedicated, and a visionary leader, and I wish him success over the years to come.

As all members sitting in here know, in order to be successful in earning a seat, you need to be dedicated and motivated. As well, you need to have the support of your community, your family, and a hard-working campaign team, and I was fortunate to have all of them during my election.

My family was supportive from day one. My wife, Amber - her dedication to my re-election was incredible and most times inspirational. My two daughters, Addison and Alexandra, showed real patience and understanding when Dad had to go out the door, do the community thing - door knocking, attending events, and stakeholders meetings - so time away from them was missed. I am grateful to be able to express my gratitude and love for them publicly here today. (Applause)

I also want to send my sincere thank yous to my entire campaign team and volunteers, led by my campaign manager, Chris Guinan, for their hard work, dedication, and endless patience. And I cannot forget former member, friend, mentor, Dr. Jamie Muir. He was an MLA here - Truro, Bible Hill, Millbrook, and Salmon River - from 1998 to 2009, and he was a wonderful support during my two elections. Thank you. (Applause)

I have an amazing community. It's a culturally diverse area with a large and vibrant African Nova Scotian community, and one of the most progressive First Nation

communities in the province. Mr. Speaker, the Town of Truro, the home of the Truro Bearcats, is the largest town in Nova Scotia. We're in the centre of the province, better known as the Hub of Nova Scotia. Within the Town of Truro, which is the urban hub of Colchester County, there is the growing village of Bible Hill, the second largest village in Nova Scotia; Millbrook First Nation community; and Salmon River, better known as Hockeyville.

The constituency has an active academic base with the Nova Scotia Community College. Across the Salmon River, in Bible Hill, we have the Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus, which houses people from all over the world who study in the fields of agriculture and food production for the future.

The largest and longest-serving employer in the town is Stanfield's Limited. Stanfield's is 165 years old and is a leader in its field. It takes pride in its products and their ability to adapt and stay ahead of consumer market needs. A prime example of this agility was the company's ability to quickly adapt and readjust at the beginning of the pandemic. Stanfield's was the first to step up, along with Intertape Polymer, to help protect the country against COVID-19 by making and supplying PPE.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that healthy, strong, and vibrant communities are key to the province's future success. To support and strengthen the health and well-being of our communities, our government's number one priority is to provide better access to health care for all Nova Scotians. Our government communicated clear, costed solutions to reduce the pressure on the health care system. I am very encouraged by the common-sense action that has taken place since the election to fix the health care system.

We have three ministers to focus on health care: the Minister of Health and Wellness; the Minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions; and the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care. The Premier, the Minister of Health and Wellness, and senior health officials have undertaken a tour where they listened to frontline health care professionals. In every region, health care professionals explained the challenges they see and experience in the system. They outlined the solutions they think would improve patient care.

This tour gave dedicated health care professionals an opportunity to sit face to face with the Premier and give their opinion and know that he values what they have to say. I am personally pleased to see them receive this kind of respect, and thank you, Premier.

I have every confidence that together with our frontline workers, we will implement changes that work for people who rely on the health care system and those who work in the system. Mr. Speaker, no one should have to wait or do without health care services. Nova Scotians should not worry that their parents and grandparents will not receive the care and dignity they deserve at their age.

Our economy has struggled. We need to realign ourselves as a leader. Our government will be innovative, bold, and brave with our plan. We need to invest in people. With rising prices making it difficult for some Nova Scotians to make ends meet, that's why our government will introduce the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee. This will provide an opportunity for businesses to reinvest back into their people.

The proposed provincial tax reduction for people under 30 interested in trades will help them keep money in their own pockets and money to spend on their priorities. To further grow our economy and create more good jobs, we will continue to invest in key building blocks: roads, safe communities, and a green and clean environment.

Nova Scotia is the greatest place to live, work, play and, definitely, raise a family. Today's Speech from the Throne lays out a plan to build our strengths and tackle our challenges head-on in a meaningful way. It's an excellent mix of practicality, vision, and leadership - and we're just getting started.

I am honoured to second the motion that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne do pass. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Thank you Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to yourself and all members of the House for being elected. Certainly to the new government and the new Premier, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations on taking on this task. It truly is a privilege and an honour and I am proud to represent our caucus as we get ready for another productive session.

I am sure we are going to have a lot of meaningful legislation on the floor to debate. There are a lot of issues facing our province and so I am looking forward to looking through a number of them, namely health care, housing, environment, education; all these issues that we care about as we represent our relative constituencies.

On the Speech from the Throne, there are always positive things in the Speech from the Throne and so there are a number of them on there that I will comment on. The government clearly wants to make health care a priority, which is admirable. There are a number of bold promises from the campaign that are reiterated in the Speech.

They did say on the campaign that they would be ready on Day 1, and so as the Official Opposition, we take our role very seriously in holding the government to account on those promises. They said they would fix health care and they said they were working on plans for over a year, Mr. Speaker.

We are waiting for action to see a number of promises that have been developed over time: 2,500 new beds in our long-term care sector and 2,000 more employees working

in that sector; CCAs and nurses that we are waiting to see in the system; and another \$100 million in mental health to go over some of the priorities that were mentioned in the Speech so they can deliver on those items.

We will be making sure that we see action and not waiting for the budget because, after all, it is a health care crisis, as mentioned in the speech. There is no need to wait for the budget to inject the half-billion dollars that was promised in the election into the system, so we will be asking questions to see when that money will be spent and the resources need to take on these issues that were promised to Nova Scotians. We will be there to support the government when they make positive changes in the system and we will be asking questions to assure that we hold the government to account to see these changes made in our health care system.

The other crisis that has been looming throughout the pandemic, as a result of success in population growth but exacerbated by the conditions of COVID-19, has been limited housing, affordable housing, that had a total of one paragraph attention in this Speech from the Throne. We are looking to see some action. It did say that the government has a plan to deal with housing for Nova Scotians and so we are not going to be waiting for the government. We think action should be taken now and we will be providing some ideas, some of it which we campaigned on and some of it new in this session, starting tomorrow with some legislation on how we protect tenants and how we grow our housing stock.

The government said supply is the problem. That's obvious, but that is a cold comfort answer to those who are in apartments and having unimaginable increases - 50 per cent and some 100 per cent rental increases. We have to solve that supply problem and in the meantime we have to protect tenants, especially as we get ready for Winter.

Now this government has taken action in this area. I was Premier for five months and we put aside significant funding to ensure we had permanent supportive housing. We will be pressuring to make sure that we have at least the 100 units for those who are on the street. We will be pressuring to ensure that there are resources going into wraparound services for those who need it in these housing units, whether it is the modular housing units that HRM has stepped up to provide even though it is a provincial responsibility, and the \$25 million we committed to for the Affordable Housing Commission. We expect that to be delivered on, plus the other recommendations, as we understand the government does support that report.

COVID-19 has shown that there are a number of challenges in our society and in our province. While we managed COVID-19 well and it is good to see the new government continuing down the path of relying on that Public Health advice, there were Nova Scotians worried about which direction they would take and, by all accounts, it seems that they are listening to Dr. Strang to keep Nova Scotians safe. That is a positive thing and we certainly want to see that continue.

[2:15 p.m.]

The vaccine passport or policy was a positive step. The mandatory vaccines for employees of the public sector were a positive step. We'd like to see a continued focus on testing, even asymptomatic testing. Even though there has been a reduction of that availability to the public, we'd like to see that continue so we don't get to a place where other provinces, like New Brunswick, are seeing over 1,000 active cases. We'll continue to ask questions in those areas, but we do want to see more emphasis on housing as the immediate issue that's facing our province, not only in Halifax.

We will hold the government to account on health care, and there are a number of issues that are facing the province beyond health care that we will be asking questions on. We still very much believe that our economy and equity and environment are connected, so we'll be pushing to ensure that the government understands the need to ensure that, as we get through COVID-19, we have a plan to rebuild our economy in an equitable and sustainable way. We see some elements of that, although the only goal in the environment that was mentioned in the report is actually already in law. That is the 80 per cent renewable target.

We know there is legislation that has been promised to be brought forward this session on new goals, so we want to see more goals. Of course we'll critique those, and we still very much want to see the province get off coal by 2030. That wasn't mentioned, but I appreciate that the Premier did extend a meeting with the Leaders of the Opposition to talk about a potential project to transition away from coal. These are important issues.

Equity is a very important principle that this Party stands for as our values, so I have to point out in this speech that I don't agree when it said that our system is fair and equitable. We have a long way to go before our system or systems are truly equitable. There's a big difference between giving people equal say and equal opportunity and an equitable say. For over 400 years, African Nova Scotians have been oppressed in this province, so I would like to see more mention of that - people who have not been given title to their land, people who have been located next to toxic waste sites or landfills.

There is a need to redress environmental racism. There needs to be acknowledgement that there's much more work to do. The African Nova Scotian Justice Institute was just the beginning of how we tackle systemic racism in our justice system and the overrepresentation of African Nova Scotians and Indigenous peoples. We will be holding government to account.

We think the Speech from the Throne has some positive elements to how we promote a healthy population, but it's not just about administration of a bureaucracy of health care and where we can spend and what kind of wait times we have for surgeries and access to primary care. It is truly about how healthy our population is - how healthy all Nova Scotians are. More resources for Public Health, for upstream investment, for

preventive health, ensuring that you have programming for all Nova Scotians - these are the things that the Liberal Party will continue to stand for. We will have tough questions to ask of the ministers.

I look forward to working with the various ministers and the new Premier to ensure we are doing our best to uphold the public interest. We will be bringing bills forward to debate what our best approach is to how we deal with our affordable housing stock in the near future and protect tenants and Nova Scotians. These are just some of the priorities that we'll be speaking with.

With those few words I am going to adjourn debate. I look forward to saying more on Thursday. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: There is a motion to adjourn debate. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for today. I move that the House now rise to meet again on Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now rise to meet tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 2:20 p.m.]