



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

**Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain**

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**First Session**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021**

**Sixty-fourth General Assembly**

**First Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Keith Bain

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

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

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

**RESOLUTION NO. 4**

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

Whereas modernizing our democratic institutions to reflect our changing demographics makes institutions more welcoming to all Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the Rules that govern this historic Chamber must evolve to ensure Province House is truly the people's House; and

Whereas no matter the colour of a person's skin, their gender, who they love, the language they speak, or how they pray, they must feel welcome by their government;

Therefore be it resolved that Rule 16 of the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly be amended by replacing the words "read prayers" with the words "allow a moment of quiet reflection."

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. 11 - Entitled an Act to Protect Access to Health Services. (The Premier)**

**Bill No. 12 - Entitled an Act to Dismantle Racism and Hate. (Angela Simmonds)**

**Bill No. 13 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 2004, The Police Act. (Hon. Brad Johns)**

**Bill No. 14 - Entitled an Act Respecting Tenants' Right to Know about Human Health Hazards. (Suzy Hansen)**

**Bill No. 15 - Entitled an Act to Implement Gender-based Analysis Plus. (Lorelei Nicoll)**

**Bill No. 16 - Entitled an Act Respecting Health Care for New and Expectant Mothers. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)**

**Bill No. 17 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, The Residential Tenancies Act. (Suzy Hansen)**

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

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**RESOLUTION NO. 5**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, as we informed the government and both House Leaders yesterday, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Be it resolved that Rule 16 of the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly is amended by striking out “read prayers” and substituting “allow a moment of reflection.”

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.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**CREATIVE PICTOU COUNTY:  
DISPLAY OF LOCAL ARTWORK - RECOG.**

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, we are very fortunate in Pictou County to have a group of individuals promoting the local arts and artists. This past summer, Creative Pictou County partnered up with the deCoste Performing Arts Centre to have a display of local artwork created by our county’s thriving arts community. The display was a way for our thriving arts community to promote their artwork and to share and engage with the public. Many of the pieces were also available for sale.



[1:15 p.m.]

Their art display was a great success and saw many visitors in to view and purchase the artwork. I hope that this becomes an annual event and that the arts community in Pictou County continues to thrive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**SQUARE ROOTS FAIRVIEW-CLAYTON PARK:  
VEG. DELIV. TO FAMILIES IN NEED - THANKS**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, in honour of the provincial day of recognition for the non-profit sector, I rise to recognize an outstanding non-profit organization that provides an incredible service to constituents of my riding and neighbouring communities: Square Roots.

Square Roots aims to reduce food waste and food access challenges by redirecting surplus farm produce to community members at an affordable rate. They rely 100 per cent on the hard work and dedication of community volunteers. Among the incredible work they do includes packaging and selling local veggie bundles at \$1 per pound.

All revenue is used to purchase more produce to provide free produce for families in need. People can choose to purchase a \$20 produce bundle, which provides a 10-pound bundle for them and a 10-pound bundle for someone in need.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the House to join me in thanking Square Roots Fairview-Clayton Park, a vital non-profit organization, and their volunteers. for their amazing work.

THE SPEAKER: I would ask the members to try to keep their member statements within a minute so that it will allow for more member statements to come forward.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

**NEW WATERFORD BOXING CLUB:  
RECIP. OF SPORT N.S. SUPPORT 4 SPORTS AWARD - CONGRATS.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to Congratulate the New Waterford Boxing Club on Receiving a Sport Nova Scotia Support 4 Sports Award.

The New Waterford Boxing Club “demonstrated resilience and determination to bring boxing back for its athletes, finding new ways to keep their fighters engaged, which included at-home sessions and a drive-in fight event.”

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Boxing Club also give back to the community in various ways such as hosting garbage cleanups and bottle drives where they donate the proceeds to a local charity for families. I thank them and I hope everyone will congratulate them with me on their beautiful award that they received.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**SPRINGHILL COM. LEADERS AND RESIDENTS:  
HEALTH CARE RALLY - RECOG.**

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has been difficult for so many Nova Scotians, but particularly for members of our medical community. Sadly, we are encountering this in Cumberland County, where we have experienced a loss of registered nurses for this and many other reasons.

Mr. Speaker, the loss of nurses has resulted in a change of hours at All Saints Hospital. This issue did not happen overnight. It has been a growing issue for some time – I have spoken here in this Chamber about it - and our government is committed to working on health care for the betterment of all of our province.

Mr. Speaker, today, the residents of Springhill and surrounding area are holding a rally to remind us all of this: After years of neglect, now more than ever, Nova Scotians need practical solutions to fix our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize the community leaders and other people of Springhill and area for their deep commitment to their community and the people who live in it, their commitment and collaboration to work together for solutions. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**MACKINNON, BRUCE:  
CARTOON WORK TO BE FEATURED ON STAMP - CONGRATS.**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, we in Nova Scotia are truly lucky to have one of Canada's great cartoonists working for our provincial newspaper, and I am lucky to have him as a constituent.

Since 1986, Bruce MacKinnon has drawn more than 8,000 cartoons for *The Chronicle Herald*. His work is often funny, sometimes sad, but always thought-provoking. Bruce has won 21 Atlantic Journalism Awards, six national newspaper awards, and was appointed a member of the Order of Canada in 2016. His most recent honour, achieved just this month, was to be chosen as one of five cartoonists whose work will be featured on a collector's stamp issued by Canada Post.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House - some of whom have been the subjects of Bruce's work - join me in congratulating Bruce MacKinnon on his latest honour. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I might ask that you revert back to Government Notices of Motion. I was standing and was not recognized before we finished Government Notices of Motion. If you would be so kind as to permit me to proceed.

THE SPEAKER: Are we agreed that we go back to Government Notices of Motion?

It is agreed.

### **GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 6**

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

Whereas Nova Scotia is home to over 13,000 professional fish harvesters; and

Whereas on Tuesday, October 12th, 2021, after many years of work and dedication by industry, the Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Board of Nova Scotia celebrated the official launch of their activities to register and certify Nova Scotia's fish harvesters;

Whereas the Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Board of Nova Scotia will promote the sustainability of the fish harvesting sector by building industry capacity through a strength and training and safety culture;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Board of Nova Scotia and all of the dedicated industry representatives who have contributed to this initiative that will recognize the professionalism of Nova Scotia's fish harvesting sector.

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.

Just one thing for the honourable member: That should come under ministerial statements, I think, or Government Statements. So that's fine.

**[STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS]**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**MI'KMAQ FRIENDSHIP CENTRE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge an amazing community space and organization that's doing great work in my community of Halifax Needham.

The Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre has been in operation since 1975 and has a mandate of creating an inclusive and open environment and responding to the needs of community members in a respectful manner.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Friendship Centre did just that, speaking out about the need for affordable housing, access to services such as mental health care, and other needs - not only for the Mi'kmaw community, but all community members. They took on the task of opening more shelter beds to meet the greater demand, providing a space out of the weather for homeless and precariously housed individuals. They also provided the Out of the Cold shelter with space for the wet shelter. It holds a near and dear space in my heart because my mother once worked there and I did as well as a young person.

So Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in acknowledging the amazing work of the Mi'kmaq Friendship Centre.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

**FAVARO, JESSICA:  
ASSISTANCE TO GUYS.-TRAC. CONSTIT. OFFICE - THANKS**

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jessica Favaro of Guysborough. Jessica was the constituency assistant to the previous MLA for Guysborough-Tracadie.

Jessica was a dedicated CA who cares deeply for the constituents in our communities. Jessica has volunteered her time to assist my constituency assistant in her transition into this role. Jessica has brought her knowledge of her years in the constituency office and has offered her assistance in any way she can.

Party lines do not come into place with Jessica, as her passion for the constituents in our area is her main concern. She realizes that a new constituency assistant is starting with a blank slate with no history of any of the ongoing issues, which can be frustrating, and her guidance has been greatly appreciated and welcomed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer thanks and appreciation to Jessica Favaro for her assistance to the Guysborough-Tracadie constituency office through this transitional time. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

**MCNEIL, HON. STEPHEN:  
SERV. TO PEOPLE OF ANNAPOLIS AND N.S. - THANKS**

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize former premier and my predecessor as MLA for Annapolis, the Honourable Stephen McNeil.

Earlier this year, Mr. McNeil stepped away from political life after an exemplary career of public service that spanned nearly two decades. As MLA, he was a strong voice for the people of Annapolis. As Premier, he steered the province back to a strong fiscal position, made tough decisions in our collective best interest, and guided our province through one of the most challenging periods in recent history with compassion, strength, and integrity. Annapolis is better because of him, Nova Scotia is better because of him, and I feel fortunate to be able to call him a friend.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking the Honourable Stephen McNeil for his many years of devoted service to the people of Annapolis and to all of Nova Scotia. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

**RICHARDSON, ADAM: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of Adam Richardson. I met Adam over a backyard fence when he and his family moved into our neighbourhood. We set up an old ladder so the kids - my daughter Keira and Adam at age eight, and my son Jason, age 10 - could climb up, pop a head over the fence and see who was around to play.

The three of them spent hours jumping on the trampoline, bicycling around and around the block, launching drones and more. In more recent years he and Keira were learning to snowboard at the same time. It was the perfect winter sport for Adam, who worked hard at tricks on his scooters the three other seasons.

Adam was a kind, curious, emotionally connected child. If you were in conversation with him, his beautiful blue eyes would remain locked with yours, seeking to share and to understand.

Adam struggled in school and in the community. His family fought for access to services. Adam died at the age of 14 this past June. He should have turned 15 on October 12<sup>th</sup>, the day that this House first met.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in honouring the life of this young Nova Scotian whom we lost too soon.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**FRANEY, JIM: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the time and commitment put forth by Mr. Jim Franey as a dedicated community volunteer since joining the Aylesford & District Fire Department in February 1962. During his time at the fire department, Mr. Franey has been Black Hat Deputy Chief, Chief, and is currently a Safety Officer. This coming February will mark 60 years of outstanding service to the Aylesford & District Fire Department.

Mr. Franey also joined the Aylesford Fire Commission in 1983, becoming chair in 1988 and still holds that position today. As well, Mr. Franey has been a member of the Maritime Fire Chiefs Association since 1985.

Mt. Franey is a pivotal community volunteer who has been described as a man who cares deeply about his family, friends, and community.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you and the members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Jim Franey for his many years of service to the Village of Aylesford.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

**WAMBOLDT, LAUREN/KOHLER, SAM:  
RECIPS. OF HUNDAL SOCIETY AWARDS - CONGRATS.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, back in 2015 a Bedford teenager named Angad Hundal passed away suddenly as the result of an accident. His parents, Simardeep

and Jagdeep Singh Hundal, were understandably devastated. Angad was their only child. He was just about to start university.

Out of this tragedy they created a scholarship to help deserving young Nova Scotians get an education. In 2016 they gave out the first Angad Hundal Memorial Award. In 2019 they created a second scholarship, the EMERGE Scholarship, for students who overcame great obstacles.

In 2020, the winner of the fifth annual Angad Hundal Memorial Scholarship was Lauren Wamboldt of Cole Harbour District High. She attends Queen's University and hopes to become a doctor. The EMERGE Scholarship went to Sam Kohler of Halifax West High, who despite being born 15 weeks premature is now studying at Saint Mary's University.

I'd like to congratulate Lauren and Sam on their awards and thank Simardeep and Jagdeep Singh Hundal on their devotion to helping young Nova Scotians get their educations. Through this act of selflessness, their son Angad lives on.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**BANOOK CANOE CLUB ATHLETES:  
AWARDS IN 2021 CANOE KAYAK CAN. CH'SHIPS - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, this past August 11, Banook Canoe Club athletes participated in the 2021 Canoe Kayak Canada National Championships with impressive results. Congratulations to Raine Myers for a silver medal in the U17 Women's K-1 100m, Emily Parsons for silver in the U18 Women's K-1 100m, Jack Hall for bronze in the Senior Men's K-1 500m and Cole Parsons for bronze in the U19 Men's.

Ivy Murphy won three U16 Women's medals - bronze for the K-1 100m, silver for the 200m and gold and Canadian champion in the 500m. Ian Gaudet brought in three gold medals and Canadian championships for the U18 men's K-1 500m, 200m and 100m and was awarded three trophies.

The resilience, commitment, and talent shown by these Banook athletes is something Dartmouth can be very proud of. I ask the House to join me in congratulating them and all of the Nova Scotia athletes who participated.

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

**GAUDET, JAX: CHOSEN TO CO-PILOT  
FAMOUS SKY ARTIST D. NEONAKIS - CONGRATS.**

DAVE RITCEY: I rise today to recognize an incredible young Nova Scotian who I am proud to say is from Truro.

At only 16 years old, Jax Gaudet has been a committed fundraiser for over 10 years, having raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Make-A-Wish Foundation to help grant wishes to children with critical illnesses.

Because of his significant charitable impact, Mr. Gaudet was chosen as one of only two teens from the province for a once-in-a-lifetime experience to co-pilot famous sky artist Dimitri Neonakis on a plane ride from Halifax to Sydney in early September.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating the efforts of such a selfless young man.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**HORIZON ACHIEVEMENT CENTRE:  
OPENING OF NEW FACILITY - CONGRATS.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place to recognize all of the staff and the friends and families of the Horizon Achievement Centre in Sydney. Horizon Achievement Centre is one of the largest organizations we have to support adults with intellectual disabilities who face barriers to employment.

It has been a journey for the Horizon Achievement Centre as they progress to their new building. It's an exciting time for them. It has been a long time coming. This organization raised over \$1.5 million themselves to get to this point, and as a result they're going to get ready to open the doors on a new facility in the CBRM.

I rise in my place today to congratulate them, to thank all levels of government from both sides of the floor who have been so supportive of the organization. It's a really great story for the CBRM and it's going to help a lot of families who never had an opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.



**DOMAN, BEV: RETIREMENT FROM 15 YRS. OF CONSTITUENCY  
ASSISTANT WORK - THANKS**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize Beverley Doman. Bev retired from her role as Dartmouth South constituency assistant this fall after 15 years of service in this capacity to the people of Dartmouth, and before that Cole Harbour.

In that time, Bev's unparalleled patience guided thousands of constituents through some of the most challenging times of their lives. She helped people access housing and assistance, find family doctors, get their power turned back on, and navigate programming and funding. Bev humbly supported the community with a kind ear and an open heart. Her voice on the phone and welcoming smile in the office will be missed by many.

Outside of this role, Bev is also a tireless community volunteer for organizations ranging from the Dartmouth Handcrafters Guild to local seniors centres to the Dartmouth NDP Community Service Award.

Please join me in thanking Bev Doman for her years of service and in wishing her a very happy and well-earned retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

**MULLINS, CONRAD/BENNETT, BEN:  
GERRISH & GRAY OPENING - CONGRATS.**

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a new coffee shop and restaurant that has opened in Windsor. It is known as Gerrish & Gray and for good reason, as it is at the corner of these two streets.

Some folks have described the uniqueness to the interior and exterior as looking like something out of old-town Montreal. I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work that has been undertaken by owners Conrad Mullins and Ben Bennett, who believe it is part of the resurgence taking place in Windsor.

This new business is staffed by Chef Norm Samways, pastry chef Steph MacNeil, general manager Brianna MacCara, servers Brandie Sim, Alexa Purdy, and Alisha Christie, and floor manager Heidi Haines.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Gerrish & Gray for their new business that opened in Windsor.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**MATTHEWS FAMILY:  
WORK TO ESTABLISH B FOR KAI FDN. - THANKS**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: It with a heavy heart I rise today to acknowledge Norrie, Kari, and Vea Matthews, a family from Hubley on their work to establish the B for Kai Foundation in memory of Kai Matthews.

On June 1, 2021, the unimaginable happened when their vibrant, energetic, and athletic 19-year-old son and brother, Kai Matthews, suddenly passed away of meningitis B. Kai had just finished his first year of study in kinesiology at Acadia University.

Kai was well-known for his skills and talent as a soccer player with the Halifax County United and for his swagger and style as a freestyle snowboarder with Nova Scotia Snowboard. His talent as a snowboarder earned him a spot to represent Team Nova Scotia at the Canada Winter Games.

Kai was fortunate to have travelled around the world at the age of 12, visiting over 52 different countries. His broader view of the world, in addition to his gentle and friendly personality, attracted many friends and positioned him as an inspiring leader.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Norrie, Kari, and Vea for their work to raise awareness of meningitis B and with the hope of increasing vaccinations for this preventable disease and to keep Kai's legacy alive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

**PORT MORIEN WILDLIFE ASSOC.:  
SPORTSMAN MEMORIAL PARK REVITALIZATION - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Port Morien Wildlife Association's revitalization of the Sportsman Memorial Park in Gardiner Mines and River Ryan.

I want to thank the association for their hard work and generosity. The work the association has put into repairing the park has brought it back to life. The dock area looks wonderful and the parking lot has never looked better. The Sportsman Memorial Park is a beautiful area that overlooks the River Ryan and is surrounded by large trees where many residents go to enjoy the outdoors.

In the Winter you will see people ice fishing and when the weather warms up, people go there to enjoy water activities such as kayaking and to enjoy the serene view, especially in the Fall when the leaves are turning colour and the vibrant reds, yellows, and oranges across the water are breathtaking.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Port Morien Wildlife Association for working to preserve the beautiful park.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

**MUSQ. HBR. & AREA COC/OLD SCHOOL COM. GATH. PLACE:  
FREE RAPID COVID-19 TESTS - RECOG.**

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to two community organizations for their ongoing efforts to bring COVID-19 rapid testing to Musquodoboit Harbour and surrounding area.

It may not be known that the Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce and Civic Affairs, in partnership with the Old School Community Gathering Place, have secured a grant that allows for free rapid COVID-19 testing on Mondays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. This valuable service offers Eastern Shore constituents a safe and local option for testing.

I ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing these organizations for implementing this important community initiative.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**BISHARA, DAVE/BISHARA, NANCY:  
ACTIONS TO SAVE 4-YEAR-OLD BOY - THANKS**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this summer a tragedy at a popular local beach in Yarmouth County was averted thanks to the quick action of Dave and Nancy Bishara, my aunt and uncle. A four-year-old child who was on a small inflatable raft was quickly blown out to the Yarmouth Harbour and heading out to sea. The child's parents, in an effort to save their son's life, pursued him by swimming as quickly as they could, also imperilling their own lives as they both quickly dealt with exhaustion.

When Aunt Nancy overheard the radio call for a water rescue on Cape Forchu, she quickly called her husband, my Uncle Dave, who headed immediately out on his boat. Dave used his DFO skills and his skills he'd acquired during the Swissair rescue to locate both the mother and child, who were stranded in a really large body of water and weren't easily seen.

Because of that heroic action, a four-year-old boy was saved and the mother was saved. I'd like the House to join me in thanking Dave and Nancy Bishara for their quick and heroic actions, which made the difference between a joyful and a tragic outcome for a family in our community that day, and in recognizing the bravery and love of the child's parents, which drove them out to sea in pursuit of their son.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

**MI'KMAQ HISTORY MONTH:  
PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP THEME - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to reflect on a key theme of Mi'kmaq History Month: Peace and Friendship. As British settlement expanded in Mi'kma'ki, both nations turned to treaty-making to establish peace and friendship that was to endure forever.

The Peace and Friendship Treaties are not about land. They are agreements about how to live together in Mi'kma'ki. Unlike later treaties signed in other parts of Canada, the Peace and Friendship Treaties did not involve First Nations surrendering rights to the lands and resources they had traditionally used and occupied.

Throughout the 1700s, particularly when conflict occurred, new treaties were sought to reaffirm the treaty relationship. The treaties are living documents signed without end dates. The time frame of the agreements is “their heirs and the heirs of their heirs forever.”

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to take time this month, in Mi'kmaq History Month, to read the Peace and Friendship Treaties to better understand our obligations as Treaty People.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**TAGGART, JILLIAN/ROACHE, COLIN:  
DAUGHTER - BIRTH CONGRATS.**

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge how young families are so important to the future and the growth of our great communities. It brings me great pleasure to inform you that young Hazel Mae Roache has proudly announced the birth of her baby sister, Violet Jane Roache, born happy and healthy on October 5, 2021.

Hazel, Violet, and proud parents Jillian Taggart and Colin Roache, are happy to be back at home from the hospital where they reside in Debert, Nova Scotia, in the constituency of Colchester North.

I ask all members of the House of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in sending a warm and heartfelt congratulations to the Taggart-Roache families and wish them many happy and healthy days over years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

**D’PENHA, SUPRIYA:  
CASTING VOTE FOR 1<sup>ST</sup> TIME AS CDN. CITIZEN - RECOG.**

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge Supriya D’Penha. There are a lot of unforgettable moments during the last couple of weeks of our campaign, but I wanted to share a special moment a few of my volunteers were fortunate enough to experience on election day with Supriya, who had called to request a drive to the polling station.

This was a new experience for her, and she was very appreciative of the drive. When the volunteers arrived at her home, she came to the car carrying an envelope. They asked no questions. After Supriya came back to the car, she was smiling from ear to ear with excitement. Everyone could feel it.

She explained to everyone that it was her first time casting a vote as a Canadian citizen. Turns out the large envelope contained her citizenship papers. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, Supriya did not have an opportunity to have a citizenship ceremony, but she did express having the right to vote in the province in which she lives and calls home made up for that. Our volunteers took a picture with her that day so she could remember her first time going to the polling station.

I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing all new Canadians, just like Supriya, who had an opportunity to cast their first vote and participate in a democracy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**BANOOK CANOE CLUB ATHLETES:  
SEL. TO REP. CDA. AT INTL. EVENTS - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to represent the district that includes Banook Canoe Club, and why wouldn’t I be? In keeping with the theme of bragging about Dartmouth North athletes, seven Banook athletes were selected to represent this country in several exciting international events at this year’s National Team Trials.

Both Ivy Murphy and Raine Myers will be representing Canada for women’s kayak in the Olympic Hopes Regatta for Under 16 and 17 in the Czech Republic. Five athletes will be travelling to Portugal for the Junior and Under 23 World Championship: Alex Canning and Jack Hall for the Under 23 Men’s Kayak, Ian Gaudet and Cole Parsons for the Junior Men’s Kayak, and Emily Parsons for the Junior Women’s Kayak.

If that wasn’t enough, just last month Ian Gaudet won bronze in the Junior Men’s Kayak 500m at the Junior World Championships, the first Banook athlete to medal at the Junior Worlds.

I ask that this House join me in cheering on these talented and determined Dartmouth athletes, and help me in wishing them all the best in their future competitions.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

**DOUCETTE-COFFIN, ANN BERNICE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour the life of Ann Bernice Doucette-Coffin of Glace Bay - sorry - who passed away on September 27th after a short battle with cancer. Ann was a kind-hearted person who demonstrated patience and compassion for all, and she did this through her actions and her words daily.

Ann's passing is a great loss for Glace Bay-Dominion. She's spent a lifetime and decades raising money for ball teams, school sports teams, and the Glace Bay Minor Hockey Association. Ann is a founding member of the Christmas Crew Society, where her kindness and compassion will live on.

Of course, she will always be reflected through her sons, Jaden and Brady, and her two daughters, Kayleigh and Courtney. My sister-in-law - oh jeez - Ann, will be profoundly missed by her sister Junie and me; her nieces Robyn and Kennedy; her father, Walter; her mother, June; and of course her husband, Barry, and of course her children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

**POTERI, STUART:  
40 YRS. OF SERV. WITH CENTENNIAL ARENA - THANKS**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the achievement of Mr. Stuart Poteri, who is celebrating 40 years of service with the Centennial Arena. It is one of the busiest and, in my opinion, the best arenas in Halifax.

Celebrating its 54<sup>th</sup> year in operation, Centennial Arena has been a blessing to the Fairview-Clayton Park community. Mr. Poteri, the facility's manager, was preceded by his father Jack, another well-respected man who ran the arena from its opening in 1967 until his passing in 2011.

Indeed, Centennial Arena seems to be in the Poteri blood. Stuart shared the story of meeting his wife, Michelle, while roller skating with her in his youth, and then holding their wedding reception there years later. Now a fourth generation of Poteris, Stuart and Michelle's grandkids, skate, play, and carry on the tradition of love for that arena.

It's dedication and warmth like Stuart's that keeps our community reaping the benefits of sport and recreation. With the recently added multi-purpose room, Centennial Arena is a true hub for a community.

It's my honour to stand here and say thank you to Stuart for everything he does.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**LAIR, ALISON - CUMB. YMCA:  
AFFDBL. HOUSING COMPLEX DEV. - THANKS**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Allison Lair and her community development team, Ellen Gaudet and Amanda Mollon, of the Cumberland YMCA.

One year ago, the MLA for Sackville-Cobequid and MLA for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River came to Amherst and we had a grassroots public meeting to gather ideas and solutions to address the housing needs. Jim Graham from Affordable Housing as well as a representative from CHMC attended.

Allison Lair and her team, together with Affordable Housing Nova Scotia, have developed a four-unit affordable housing complex in Amherst. This houses a two-bedroom apartment as well as a pair of two one-bedroom units and an accessible bachelor unit.

There is a housing crisis in Cumberland North and throughout Nova Scotia. We need more projects like these to help the community and those in need. I receive many calls and messages daily from people who are frustrated and worried about finding a place to live, families living in campers, and homeless on the street sleeping in bank entrances. There is still much more work to be done.

I would like to thank Allison and her team, Ellen and Amanda, for their work in our community and helping to address the housing needs in Cumberland.

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

**FALL RIVER & AREA LIONS CLUB:  
HOSTING 10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GOLF TOURN. - CONGRATS.**

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Fall River & Riverlake District Lions Club on hosting their 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament.

The annual golf tournament is one of the important fundraisers for the Fall River & Riverlake District Lions Club to raise money for the many services they offer to the community. Over the last 10 years, they have raised \$54,000 for our Local Lions Club.

Mr. Speaker, it is thanks to the many local businesses and volunteers that the Fall River Lions can plan, operate, and successfully run this tournament. I must recognize one Lion in particular, Lion Kirk Stephen, who has chaired this tournament for all 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating the Fall River & Riverlake District Lions Club on another successful golf tournament and thanking them for all they do for our communities.

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

**NOURISH YOUR ROOTS TEAM:  
SUPP. OF HEALTHY EATING PGMS. - THANKS**

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mx. Speaker, Nourish Your Roots is a farm school fundraiser to help support healthy eating programs and initiatives that many of us would be familiar with. Boxes of fresh produce are sold throughout communities, putting farmers' products in the houses of Nova Scotians. This initiative supports farmers and schools and enables children to eat a healthy breakfast.

This year, Madeline Symonds Middle School encouraged parents and friends throughout the community to order their boxes online and either keep it for themselves or donate it to a family at Thanksgiving.

Mx. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the House to join me in thanking the Nourish Your Roots team from across the province who helped make this possible and in particular, the team at Madeline Symonds Middle School, including teacher Karen Binder.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

**D'EON, SHELLEY - ROSALIN NICKERSON CARE FUND:  
SUPP. OF SHEL. CO. CANCER PTS. - THANKS**

NOLAN YOUNG: Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize Shelley d'Eon from Woods Harbour, a founding member of the Rosalin Nickerson CARE Fund. Following the passing of her mother 18 years ago due to cancer, Shelley has worked diligently to keep this group active in supporting cancer patients in Shelburne County with travel expenses and emotional support. The group raised \$75,000 per year for a collective total of over \$1.4 million since the conception and to date has supported more than 400 people during their battle with cancer.

Madam Speaker, I respectfully ask that all members join me in congratulating Shelley d'Eon for her commitment to supporting people in our community in their time of need.



THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**J.L. ILSLEY SCHOOL COMM.:  
NEW J.L. ILSLEY HIGH SCHOOL OPENING - THANKS**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Madam Speaker, we can all agree that this coming school year will be difficult and different for staff and students, but 2021 is a moment to celebrate for the J.L. Ilesley High students. The brand new state-of-the-art high school opened this September.

Madam Speaker, the opening was a little rocky, but the incredible staff and students adjusted. I want to thank everyone involved in making this dream of a brand new high school possible, in particular the former Vice Principal Victoria Best, Rebecca DeCoste, the Ilesley SAC and the entire community who banded together to get a new school.

The school is a reflection of the world-class staff and students. Enjoy your new school. Go Jags.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**MACDONALD, HEATHER - MACPHEE CENTRE FOR CREATIVE  
LEARNING: SUPPORT OF YOUTH - THANKS**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Madam Speaker, today I rise to thank Dartmouth South constituent Heather MacDonald for her work as executive director of the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning. For six years Heather led this organization, which creates a safe space for youth to explore their creativity, leadership, and identity through the arts. Music, movement, writing, visual arts, and photography are at the core of their programming, but you'll also find homework and dinner drop-ins, a GSA club, and Dungeons and Dragons game night.

Heather has firmly held the organization's commitment to being a youth-led organization and she has supported youth as they support one another. As she steps away from this role, please join me in thanking Heather for her years with the MacPhee Centre and wishing her all the best in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

**FRIENDS & FAMILY OF KAREN REHBERG:  
KAREN KINDNESS DAY CREATION - RECOG.**

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Madam Speaker, I rise today to remember a loving constituent, Karen Rehberg. Karen's friends and family joined together to come up with an idea that would commemorate her. Considering Karen's joyful disposition and kind heart,

it didn't take long to create a social media page called Karen Kindness Day. September 22<sup>nd</sup> would be a day in the community and beyond that folk could participate in sharing a nice deed: paying a friend or a complete stranger a nice compliment, anything at all that would spread cheer or pick someone up.

I was very happy to have participated. The amount of support throughout our community was impressive and heartwarming.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in commemorating Karen Rehberg as we remember her smile that will continue to inspire kindness in all of us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**SELVIDGE, MARK/BUOTT, BETTY-ANN:  
AUTHORING MY JELLY BRAIN BOOK - CONGRATS.**

HON. KEITH IRVING: Madam Speaker, it is said that our brains are the most important organ in the human body. This highlights the need for us to learn how to protect it. Today I rise to share the accomplishment of Kings South constituents Mark Selvidge and M. Betty-Ann Buott. Together they co-authored the children's book, *My Jelly Brain*, which promotes safety, recovery and inclusion.

The book details Mark's childhood car accident and the experiences growing up with his brain injury. Selvidge and Buott also worked to prevent brain injuries from occurring in youth during activities like biking and skateboarding. They have been visiting Nova Scotia public schools and demonstrating the importance of wearing a helmet.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Mark Selvidge and M. Betty-Ann Buott on their new book and thanking them for their work to keep our children safe from brain injury.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**ORGANIZERS, VOLUNTEERS, PARTICIPANTS:  
NOVA SCOTIA 55+ GAMES - THANKS**

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mx. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the organizers, volunteers, and participants of the Nova Scotia 55+ Games, which took place throughout the three municipal units in Yarmouth County from September 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>.

The Games are held biannually on odd-numbered years. The mission of the Nova Scotia 55+ Games Society is to bring together individuals aged 55 and over from all across

the province to compete in games of both physical and mental challenges, centred around fun, fitness, and friends.

The Yarmouth & Acadian Shores Tourism Association won the bid to host the 2021 55+ Games which saw more than 700 participants take part in games ranging from card games to pickleball with lots in between. The event provided a boost to the local economy which was very welcomed following difficult times for the accommodations and service industries because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking all participants, organizers, and volunteers for their part in making this event a success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

**JAMIESON'S IRISH PUB:  
DONATION TO MI'KMAQ NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CENTRE - RECOG.**

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jamieson's Irish Pub in Cole Harbour and its owner, Crissy Robbins, for their donation made recently to the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre. In support of Truth and Reconciliation Day, on September 30, 2021, the Cole Harbour establishment donated a portion of their food sales from that day.

Jamieson's Irish Pub opened its doors over 21 years ago on Cumberland Drive in Cole Harbour. In 2019, the pub changed ownership to Crissy Robbins. She and her staff members at the restaurant for 12 years made the decision to purchase the well-established business. Not long after, Nova Scotia was hit by Hurricane Dorian, which we all remember. It rendered the pub without power and therefore created a disruption in business for this new owner.

Shortly thereafter, the pandemic struck and like so many other businesses, Jamieson's was forced to close their doors for some time. Crissy Robbins credits her devoted staff, as well as the support of the surrounding community, for helping her through the many challenges that she has encountered over a relatively short period of time.

In recognition of the importance of small business in all our communities, I would ask that the members of the House of Assembly join me in applauding Crissy Robbins for her perseverance and for her desire to give back to a fellow community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

**POSTCARDS FOR PEACE PROGRAM:  
HONOURING SERV. OF WAR VETERANS - RECOG.**

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, as the newly elected MLA for Digby-Annapolis, I intend to revive the Postcards for Peace program in our area. The program is a school-based activity that provides veterans with a commemorative card to honour their services for our country.

Working with materials produced by the federal government's Department of Veterans Affairs, elementary students will be provided with a postcard that can be mailed directly to a veteran. The program includes several curriculum-based activities that can be used to educate students about Canada's military experiences.

I ask all other MLAs consider participating in the program in the near future. It is important that we continue to recognize the veterans who have sacrificed and fought for our country.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**INDEP. LIVING N.S.:  
SUPP. OF NOVA SCOTIANS WITH DISABILITIES - RECOG.**

ALIDUALE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to highlight the work of Independent Living Nova Scotia. They are an organization that supports Nova Scotians with disabilities through programs and services that promote independent living, enabling them to live the way they want.

This group offers programs that include professional development training sessions, self-advocacy workshops, and a Registered Disability Savings Plan. This pilot project offers free presentation sessions that explain the benefits of having this type of long-term service plan as well as one-on-one support for helping to set it up. Currently only 24 per cent of Nova Scotians who are eligible for a Disability Tax Credit have a reduced rate disability savings plan.

Another initiative of theirs is the self-management attendant service, a pilot plan that has seen great success. When a person with a high level of physical disability is in full control and independently manages the service that an attendant will provide, from hiring to payroll to personal care routine.

Today I wanted to show my appreciation for Independent Living Nova Scotia and all they do for our community.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Statements by Members has expired.

[2:00 p.m.]

Before we go into the Orders of the Day, I want to just reference something. I kept track of how many - I mentioned earlier about trying to keep members' statements within a minute. I just want you to know that there were nine statements today that were over the minute. Please keep that in mind, because the longer you go on, it just makes it so another person can't make a statement. Please keep that in mind.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The time now is 2:01 p.m. We'll finish at 2:51 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **PREM.: DOCTOR FOR EVERY NOVA SCOTIAN - PROMISE**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, the government was elected largely on a promise to fix health care in this province. Obviously, a big part of our health care system is attachment to primary care and having doctors for Nova Scotians. It was certainly a topic over the last eight years of criticism from the Opposition, that we needed to find a doctor for every Nova Scotian.

I'd like to ask the Premier today: Is finding a doctor for every single Nova Scotian part of his promise to fix health care in the province?

THE PREMIER: People remember the famous phrase "a doctor for every Nova Scotian." They know exactly who to attribute that to, and it's the Liberal Party. It's certainly not something that anyone else campaigned on.

What's important to note is that we didn't get to a doctor for every Nova Scotian. In fact, we got to a place where over 78,000 Nova Scotians don't have access to primary care, and as that list went up and up and up and up, this government looked the other way year after year after year. We will not look the other way. We will make sure that Nova Scotians have access to primary care. We can't fix their eight years of neglect in eight weeks, but we're going to try, Mr. Speaker.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I just thought that since they were so critical about the doctor shortage in this province, they would be striving to find a doctor for every Nova Scotian in this province. But they are in government now, and there will be a limit to how much they're going to blame the last eight years and trying to find primary care for Nova Scotians. We know that there is a national shortage and the past government made significant efforts to bring doctors to the province.

There were bold promises in their platform. One of the promises that they made was to spend \$430 million in first year on the health care system. I'll table that from their platform.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Given that this matter is urgent, given that they say they have plans that we're still waiting to hear, built up over a year ago, how much of that \$430 million has been spent thus far?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question on an important topic. It's interesting that at one point just yesterday - just yesterday - at one point the member said, spend it faster, and then later on he said, hope they don't spend too much.

What I'll tell Nova Scotians is that we did make a commitment. We've been very, very honest with Nova Scotians about what is required to fix the health care system. It will take time. We're in an awful hole here. This hole has been dug over eight years. It will take time to dig our way out of this, and it will take money, but I want to assure Nova Scotians and I want to assure every member of this House that no expense will be spared in making sure that Nova Scotians have access to care.

We've seen what happens when people look the other way and pretend there's no crisis. There's a crisis in this province. We're committed to fixing it.

IAIN RANKIN: So we don't have a tally yet of how much of the \$430 million has been spent. We'll continue to press for those answers. We didn't hear about fiscal responsibility at all during the campaign from that party. With the new fiscal update, we heard that there might be some time before they look at fiscally, responsibly spending the money that they committed to.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Is he starting to walk back how much money he's willing to spend, and when are Nova Scotians going to see some significant changes in the system and new and improved outcomes? Are they going to have to wait until the budget to see some of their commitments, or are they going to start to take action now?

THE PREMIER: I just want to be perfectly clear, Mr. Speaker: We don't look the other way. We don't walk back. We say what we mean, and that's a new thing for the Liberal Party to try and understand, but we mean what we say.

We are focused on health care and we did something right away, which many paramedics and EHS and patients across this province noticed. We invested in a transfer system that sat on a corner of somebody's desk over there because they put politics in front of people. We won't put politics in front of people. We want to make sure people access health care, and we are focused on getting it done.

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

**PREM. - HIGH RENTS: HEALTH - NEG. EFFECTS**

GARY BURRILL: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the evidence is becoming more and more clear that addressing the housing crisis is so vital to improving, actually, the health care of the people of the province. Recently, writing about a comprehensive review of studies about how health is impacted by housing, the Mental Health Commission of Canada wrote this: "Spending a large proportion of income on housing affects health."

Will the Premier agree that having 20 per cent of our renters paying 50 per cent or more of their income for their shelter is simply having a very negative effect on the health and the health care of the people of our province?

THE PREMIER: The member raises an important issue. This is the determinants of health. We're all familiar with that. There are a number of them and they're all important, including access to shelter.

What I would say is if you look at the way we've structured this government - I'm very pleased - we have the first Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health. We're focused on addictions and mental health, we're focused on housing, we're focused on health care, we're focused on a number of things and we have a lot of work to do. There's no question about that.

I ask the member to join us in trying to get that work done in a productive way.

THE SPEAKER: I would ask the Leader of the New Democratic Party to table that quote that he provided before.

The Leader of the New Democratic Party on his final supplementary.

GARY BURRILL: I believe it's the first supplementary, perhaps, Mr. Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: First supplementary, I'm sorry.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, hundreds of individuals and dozens of organizations around the province have just lately written an open letter to the Premier under this heading. It's titled *Housing is Health*. This includes a wide variety of organizations: the Family Service Association of the western part of the province, the Community Health Board in Cape Breton, the Truro Homeless Outreach Society, the College of Social Workers for the whole province.

The letter asks, among other things, for the Premier to institute permanent rent control. The letter says, "We call on you to accept that housing is a human right and that housing is health."

Will the Premier agree with the hundreds of signatories to this letter that the government can't actually fix health care without protecting people's right to not be priced out of their homes? I will table that document.

THE PREMIER: There are lots of moving parts to this issue, there is no question. I have tremendous respect for the organizations that penned that letter. They do incredible work in their communities, and I thank them for that, and working with government. Our government will certainly work with them to get what we can do.

Certainly, there's no dispute on whether there's a housing crisis. There's no dispute that it's been brewing for quite some time. I also think there should be no dispute that there are multiple parts to solving the housing crisis. One of them is supply, for sure. We may not agree that more supply is necessary to fix the issue, but I certainly believe it is.

We'll put forward a plan in the coming days and it will include a number of things.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, this is the mother of all red herrings. There is not a single person in this House here that I know, in Halifax or Nova Scotia, who doesn't think that supply is important. Let's be clear about that.

The Affordable Housing Association, whose document I'll also table, conducted some time ago a survey of people experiencing homelessness in this city. They found that around three-quarters of the people they surveyed had in the recent past been to an emergency room, and about four in ten of them had been hospitalized during that same period.

Will the Premier acknowledge that the government can't effectively advance a health care agenda without seriously addressing homelessness in this province?

THE PREMIER: I agree that these things go hand in hand. There's no question about that. They certainly do go hand in hand. The determinants of health are something that we're very focused on and we remain focused on.

We'll put forward a plan. It will have many moving parts, because the issue is complex, for sure, but we understand that. We want to make sure that the plan we put forward works for Nova Scotians and actually makes sure that people can access the shelter that they need. That's what our focus is. That's what we're striving towards.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.



**PREM. - CLIMATE CHANGE: THREAT - ACKNOWLEDGE**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, another topic that's connected to health care, of course, is climate change. Just this last week, the WHO calls climate change the "single biggest health threat facing humanity." I'll table that.

During the campaign, the government was elected on a commitment - I mentioned spending of \$553 million in spending in their first year, with just \$7 million identified to tackle climate change.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he see climate change as one of the biggest threats facing Nova Scotia? Does he think \$7 million is enough to tackle this big issue?

THE PREMIER: Climate change is real. Climate change is a threat not only to Nova Scotia but the entirety of our planet. I would say to the member opposite and to members of this House that this government recognizes that. This government is serious about putting forward targets to help address it, just as we were when the PC Party was in government and introduced the EGSPA legislation - real targets, meaningful targets that actually led the province. Don't ask us if that legislation led the province - former Premier McNeil is the one who pointed to that legislation as having set a road map for Nova Scotians to follow.

I will tell the member that we take it just as seriously now as we did back in 2007 and they'll see legislation from our party that will remind Nova Scotians that this is the party that has led on the environment while others have not when they had their chance.

IAIN RANKIN: This is the same party that promotes fracking and wants us to open up to uranium mining, that had members in the House try to keep us on coal and argued the benefits of staying on coal for energy. I'll have to see how the government reacts. EGSPA was a good piece of legislation that all parties in the House supported, and we want to see those amendments in this session.

That party voted against our cap-and-trade system that remains in place today. There's a Green Fund associated with that that has more money in it than even that party committed to spending in this year.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he keep the Green Fund intact so that it separates money that is critical to spend on environmental initiatives to make sure that we have programs like electrifying vehicles, the things that he criticized when he was in opposition? Will he keep the Green Fund intact so that we can continue to fight climate change and be a leader?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I tell the member and the members of this House is that we will put forward legislation. We'll put forward goals that the Province can strive towards and be a leader.

In terms of specific - should we say "initiatives," with air quotes, that this government left, we're discovering a lot of them that need a lot of work. There were a lot of political moves that this government made, particularly in their last year or so in office, that aren't necessarily to the benefit of Nova Scotians.

We're focused on Nova Scotians. We're focused on legislation and initiatives that move this province forward, and that's what we'll continue to focus on.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**PREM. - L'NU AFFS.: RESPONSIBILITY - EXPLAIN**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the record and some of the achievements, and of course I am, over the last six months - and some of the changes that we did make, like the new Office of Mental Health and Addictions, where the member kept that in place and walked back his promise to create the new department of mental health.

Another department change we made that was reflecting the language of Mi'kmaq peoples was L'Nu Affairs. There was a tradition that was set by prior governments, two governments ago, that the Premier would be the Minister of L'nu Affairs. That's something that the chiefs asked for, personally, to me, and that's what I continued to have in place.

I'd like to ask the Premier why he made the decision to absolve himself from taking on that important nation-to-nation relationship and delegate it to his minister?

[2:15 p.m.]

THE PREMIER: I can assure the member - and I do appreciate the attempts to rewrite history - I know that's part of being in opposition and trying to get attention there - but we will not be walking anything back. We certainly made our commitments after doing our research. We don't just say things. We actually understand them.

So, we're not walking anything back, specifically on the question of L'nu Affairs. I will say we have a fantastic minister for L'nu Affairs, somebody who put their hand up and said, please, I would like to dedicate some of my attention and focus and energy to L'nu Affairs. I'm very proud that she did that. The member can try to undermine her efforts all he wants, but it doesn't make sense.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: That's classic sidestepping, Mr. Speaker. We all respect the member for Pictou West, and I do think she's going to do a great job in that role, but the point of the matter is that this was a tradition for the Premier to take on the role of all L'nu Affairs. That was the question and he sidestepped that.

I'd like to ask: Surely, he has some priorities with ensuring that we continue to move forward in reconciliation? Our government brought treaty education into schools, we closed Boat Harbour in that member's constituency, we worked hard to ensure that we had better representation in the judicial system from Mi'kmaw peoples, and I want to ask the Premier: Surely, he can come up to the microphone and tell us what his priorities are with Mi'kmaq in this House?

THE PREMIER: I can tell you. I can show you. First Premier to be at the flag raising. We instituted - first Premier, Mr. Speaker - not any of the Premiers over the last eight years, not any of the Premiers over the last 12 years - the first Premier there. We, of course, respected and acknowledged the holiday. We don't have to just say we're going to do things - we actually walk the walk.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

#### **DCS: HOMELESSNESS PLAN - LACK OF CONSULT**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: During last night's debate, I spoke on tent encampments and increases in homelessness. The Minister of Community Services' response - she stated that she and the department have been in contact with the homeless advocates and those living in tents, and that the minister and the department had heard from them and the stakeholders personally.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, my question is: What days did the minister personally visit the tent encampments? What days did the minister personally meet with the homelessness stakeholders? What did PADS, the frontline stakeholders, and the individuals in those tent communities tell the minister? And will the minister please table the dates and the times that she met and whom she met with?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I don't have anything here to table today. What I indicated last night during the debate is that our department has been on the ground and that I personally too have been on the ground. I can tell you that it was on a weekend, and I think it was a Sunday, and I was with my partner. We were in Halifax, and I didn't go in my role as minister, but I felt that I wanted to ensure that I could experience and see for myself.

I'll certainly try to track down - I'm pretty sure it was a Sunday, but I will get that to you for sure.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Today in an article in the *Chronicle Herald*, which I will table, it read, “Community organizations left in the dark on Halifax's modular housing plan for homeless.” The executive directors of both Adsum House and Out of the Cold shelter noted that neither of them had been approached by the Province and this minister regarding supports to the two sites. The councillor for the area, Wayne Mason, also just tweeted out directly to the minister that he needed an answer ASAP, and they had not been in contact with him either.

Also today, myself and the Leader of the Official Opposition met with the YWCA, and we were informed that there has been no official meeting with the minister and her department since they took power and the YWCA. The two largest female shelters in all of Nova Scotia have not been contacted by the minister.

My question to the minister is: Your government is about to release a homeless plan. How do you expect that plan to be accepted when the largest organizations for homelessness have not been consulted?

KARLA MACFARLANE: First, let's be clear here that our department is in constant dialogue with those service providers that the member has mentioned. We fund those service providers, so there's always , , , (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister for Community Services has the floor.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's always dialogue happening there. I have personally - and I didn't say yesterday that I had met them directly. I indicated that the Department of Community Services has been in conversations.

The other thing I want to make clear here: The mobile units that you speak about, that is an HRM initiative. We are in discussions - yes it is. HRM is purchasing those mobile units. We will be there, and we're in discussions on how we can provide wraparound services.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **DCS: MODULAR HOUSING PLAN - UPDATE**

SUZY HANSEN: Well, I would like to keep this going. (Laughter) This line of questioning is very, very, very intense.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. In the *Chronicle Herald* this morning, a spokesperson for the Department of Community Services said about modular housing units being built in Halifax that a plan is not ready yet because “the province is working

with HRM and community organizations ‘to ensure those experiencing homelessness have the supports they need.’”

But Sheri Lecker, executive director of Adsum for Women and Children, and Michelle Malette, executive director of Out of the Cold, say they have not heard anything at all, either from the Province or any other organization, about what the plan is to provide these services.

Mr. Speaker, my question is: Will the Premier table a list of community groups that his government is working with to get this moving?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I will inform the members here in this Chamber that conversations are happening as - well, just as recently as a few hours ago with Mayor Savage. We’re continuously discussing with them, and I’d be more than happy to go back to the Department of Community Services and make sure that the member for Halifax Needham is aware of what conversations have been happening with the different service providers. We have 80 in this province that we deal with, and there are conversations happening all the time.

SUZY HANSEN: On Tuesday, the Premier said that his government has a plan for the housing crisis and that he’s ready to release the plan as soon as he’s done consulting with stakeholders, but Nova Scotia ACORN, a large tenant advocacy group fighting for healthier homes and better communities, say they haven’t heard from anyone in government.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that he’s not actually consulting with community organizations about the housing crisis, just delaying much-needed action?

THE PREMIER: In fact, that’s not the case at all, Mr. Speaker. We’re very focused on the housing situation. All those voices of community organizations matter. I don’t want to minimize any one of them.

Let’s be realistic. We have a lot of people we’re consulting with. We want more housing supply. First and foremost, we are focusing on increasing the housing supply because the solution to a housing crisis is more supply. I fully understand that the NDP doesn’t respect the principles of supply and demand - and possibly, in some cases, doesn’t understand them - but the real answer is more housing supply and that’s the focus, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

**PREM.: COMMITMENT TO AFRICAN N.S. COMMUNITIES - CLARIFY**

ANGELA SIMMONDS: In 2014, our government began our healing journey with African Nova Scotian communities through the School for Coloured Children Inquiry, providing government with a stark reminder of the importance of leadership and accountability in both mending and building relationships.

I was disappointed to see that the Premier did not take the portfolios of African Nova Scotian Affairs and the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives since his caucus lacks the diversity to properly handle the file. My question is for the Premier: Does he regret not taking on this important file?

THE PREMIER: I thank the member for the question. It is an important file. It's an extremely important file, as is L'nu Affairs. These are important files because they're the voices of Nova Scotians and they're important to this government.

The reality is we have a great Cabinet. We have a lot of people to choose from. We are very focused on these issues. As Premier I kept basically one file - Intergovernmental Affairs - because we need support from Ottawa for environment, we need support for our Atlantic Loop, we need support from Ottawa on housing, we need support from Ottawa on health care.

Mr. Speaker, these are the types of issues. When you are in this chair, the responsibilities are big and some members over there realize that, but the focus is on that file. I will say this: I am very, very proud of the appointment of Dwayne Provo to represent that office. He will do tremendous things to make sure that the voices of the community are understood and respected and listened to, and that's our focus.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, you have to say what you mean and mean what you say. Those words are cold comfort to me. I would say that there has been official acknowledgement but not an apology - an apology is not an acknowledgement.

What I would say is that African Nova Scotian Affairs had a credible, qualified woman from the community and as soon as this government came into power, this woman of colour was swiftly removed. That was the first decision made.

While this government has found a replacement - not a qualified woman from community, but a male at a lower rank - as a woman of colour and knowing there are so far and few of us in leaderships in positions of power, I myself, as a member of this Assembly, am offended.

My question to the Premier: Why, once again, have you devalued our voice and position in government?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I didn't quite follow the part about the apology, but I've been very clear that decisions that I made - it was not my intention to offend anyone, and I apologize for that. That was not my intention and I apologize for that.

The reality is we made a number of decisions around deputy ministers. We also promoted a wonderful deputy minister in Fisheries and Aquaculture. There's very little talk about that, but she's an incredible person, an incredible candidate.

We've made a number of decisions. I don't mean to offend anyone. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. We'll continue to make personnel decisions in the government and that will be our focus, but they will always be made in the best interests of Nova Scotians and in the spirit of building - rebuilding in some cases - or building relationships with communities across L'Nu Affairs, across African Nova Scotia Affairs. These things are incredibly important to us. For anyone to suggest that they are not, it's just not accurate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

#### **LSI: IMMIGRANT RETENTION PLAN - EXPLAIN**

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, in their platform the new government talks a big game about bringing 25,000 new immigrants to Nova Scotia - and I table that - but speaks very little about integration and retention for this future of Nova Scotians.

Our government's focus on retention made our six-year retention rate of 71 per cent the highest retention rate in Atlantic Canada.

My question to the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration is: What is the minister doing to make sure these future newcomers are set up for success, and stay in Nova Scotia?

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. I just want to say that I am incredibly excited about the work the department is doing. We have pathways to bring newcomers to this province.

I myself have first-hand experience. I started my career working with the YMCA, which I have to commend. They are so passionate and doing such amazing work to support newcomers. I just want to give a shout-out to that organization. ISANS is another.

Our department is working very closely with these settlement agencies to make sure that folks who are coming here are supported and have what they need to call Nova Scotia home.

[2:30 p.m.]

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, it's not secret that our province has a housing supply shortage. That often becomes an added barrier to immigrants.

What measures are the ministers considering to ensure our immigrants and newcomers have a place to call home? And to call home is not giving somebody a roof. To call home, you open your arms. I'd really like to know what you have planned.

I'd really like to share for this House, just last week, for the long holiday, I met a new doctor who graduated and was educated in Great Britain and arrived in Nova Scotia in a very short time - never had a clue what Nova Scotia looked like. I took my own time to take him to beautiful Cape Breton. The amount of experience and welcome that he felt is unbelievable.

I'd really like to know what plan you have for newcomers for this province. Thank you.

JILL BALSER: Again, thank you to the member for the question. One thing that we know as Nova Scotians, we are a welcoming province, and so looking to the communities to be that welcoming voice is critical. I come from a rural riding, and I know that when the Digby area had sponsored a Syrian family, it was the local communities who opened their arms and were giving and making sure that the supports were there. Again, in collaboration with our support settlement services, we also know that it goes beyond. You're absolutely right, we have to extend our open arms in making sure that families feel supported.

I know that the department is doing such great work, and I really want to be able to strengthen that, and of course work with everyone here to ensure that we are a welcoming province for everyone.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

### **FTB: BETTER PAY CHEQUE GUARANTEE - DETAILS**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this government campaigned on a promise to introduce the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee - basically a plan to redistribute provincial corporate taxes to employees. I'll table their media release of July 12<sup>th</sup>.

My question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: What will he do to guarantee that Nova Scotians who are frequently underpaid - including women, African Nova Scotians, Indigenous persons, people of colour, and persons with disabilities - have equitable access to this guarantee?



HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the beautiful thing about the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee is that it's actually focused not on the boardrooms but everywhere else in the organization. What I will do to ensure that the people who can best benefit from this program receive it is simply carry it out.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, on July 12<sup>th</sup> at 12:08 p.m., at a campaign event, the Premier said his program will be implemented based on no more than an honour code, and I quote:

“So it's like the, it's like the tax system is based on an honour system with audits. So how I would see this working practically as in when a company applies under this program. The CEO or chairperson of the board would certify that they will abide by the terms and conditions of the program, and there probably [will] be some audits to make sure very stiff penalties for those... that try to game the system.”

I would note that we're all required to file income taxes with supporting documents. Yes, there are audits, but we actually have to provide supporting documents, proof, to prove our deductions.

So will the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board guarantee that this program will be implemented without compromising its intent and guarantee marginalized Nova Scotians will benefit from this program?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, since taking my place across the street at the Provincial Building, I've discovered that I have many, many people - over 200 people - helping me in the Department of Finance and Treasury Board: very capable people, very intelligent. I've never been so well supported in all of my life. I have no doubt that with their support and with their brainpower, we will carry through on this commitment and we will ensure that those who should benefit will benefit from it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

### **MA&H: SLUM LANDLORDS - ACTION**

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

This summer, Nova Scotia ACORN received over 100 nominations from tenants for the worst landlord in all of the Halifax Regional Municipality. They collected stories from across the city of landlords withholding repairs, failing to deal with pest issues, and harassing tenants. This year, a landlord in my constituency was bestowed the dubious honour of the 2021 Slumlord of the Year.

Mr. Speaker, acknowledging that there are many responsible and fair landlords out there, can the minister explain what exactly he is doing to protect people from those landlords who continue collecting rent while inflicting horrendous living conditions on tenants?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for that question. I can say that obviously the Residential Tenancies Act protects tenants and has aspects for landlords and tenants. Those provisions are in the Act and we expect that, on both sides, both parties will follow the Act.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Renters in Nova Scotia looking for a place to live face a market that has become ruthless. Landlords flooded with applications are known to turn tenants away for simply having children or pets.

Now there is another potential hurdle for someone looking for an apartment: Facebook groups where landlords share photos and personal information of tenants on so-called bad tenant lists with hundreds of names - and I will table an article about that. We all know that legal processes already exist that landlords can use, as the minister has just mentioned, if they are having problems with a tenant.

Mr. Speaker, what is this government doing to prevent tenants from being punished by vengeful landlords?

JOHN LOHR: I, again, would refer to the Residential Tenancies Act. I would say that I agree with the member that the issue is supply, both on the market side and the affordable housing side. We are working through the Quick Start program right now. We hope to have something to say about that soon. We will say something about that soon.

Supply issues are profoundly at the heart of this, and that needs to be increased.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

### **EECD: IPP REVIEW - TIMELINE**

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, we know that a disproportionate number of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students are on individual program plans, better known as IPPs.

African Nova Scotian students are 1.5 per cent more likely to be on a program plan or a subject, or in any of those types of issues. Our government launched a review to identify and remove the systemic barriers in education that affect these students, including consultations and focus groups over the Summer months and into the Fall.

To the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: What is the status of these consultations on IPPs with students, parents, teachers, and community groups, and at what time can we expect this review to be released to the public?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Thank you, member, for the question. It is a really important question, and a really important issue. We are committed to ensuring that all students feel safe, accepted, and valued. This is a priority for the government, and it is reflected in our inclusive education policy, which puts students first.

We have been recognized internationally for this policy. It involved consulting with over 500 first-person voices and it's a foundational policy. We are in the process of implementation, and that's really the key at this point.

We've done a lot of work to hire people to support the program - inclusive education hires like student support workers. We've been engaged with advisory councils like CASE on our inclusive education policies and we're continuing this work and will be doing so. It's really key and really important for inclusion in Nova Scotia education.

TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, reviews of this nature often identify changes and measures that can be acted upon immediately. From what you have learned over the summer months from these consultations, can you share with us in this House, please, what the government is doing and what actions the government is taking today to improve the well-being of the African Nova Scotian students? You mentioned all students, and often, when we stand up to talk about my community, everybody references everybody else. I want to hear about my community.

THE SPEAKER: I remind the member to please use "the minister," but not "you."

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

BECKY DRUHAN: I will say this: Black Lives Matter, so your question was about this. Your question was about Black students, and when I speak about all students, I recognize your question is about Black students. This policy focuses on all students, but it allows us to drill down specifically to students who are equity-seeking and students who have special needs and require special attention.

We are committed to making sure that we work collaboratively with the Black community to ensure that those students specifically are addressed and their needs are met.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

**PREM.: MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICT. - OFFICE/DEPARTMENT**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: We've heard a number of times today the Premier state, we walk the walk, we don't backtrack, we do what we say. I promise you, when I get that from Hansard, I will table all of those times.

This government made a promise to Nova Scotians to have a Department of Mental Health and Addictions with a dedicated minister. They scoffed at the Office of Mental Health and Addictions that had a dedicated minister with the member for Yarmouth, and said, and I quote, "Nova Scotians worry that an office will be more symbolism than results at a time when people need results. A Minister and Department would be accountable to helping people in the same way we see for Education or Health. I was hoping," said the then-Opposition Leader, "we'd see some actual leadership and acceptance that people are struggling." I will table that.

My question for the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions is: Do you agree with the office being enough, or do you agree with your Premier's sentiments that it's just symbolism?

THE PREMIER: I will take it because fair is fair. The commitment that we made was that there would be somebody at the highest levels of government who felt responsible and accountable for making sure that people can access addictions and mental health support. I referenced the department as well, but I referenced the minister.

We did create that ministry. It did not exist before. Right now, we have ministers focused on seniors in long-term care, we have ministers focused on addictions and mental health, we have a Minister of Health and Wellness. We have people at the highest levels of government.

Now the fair-is-fair part: When I got in the chair and I saw the good work the office was doing, I said, it's enough. We don't need a separate department. It was a good initiative. It's working. Now it has a minister focused exclusively on their work at the Cabinet table, and I personally think that's a very good thing.

PATRICIA ARAB: I feel very special. I appreciate the Premier's response to that question.

My question to the Minister responsible for Mental Health and Addictions is: We've talked a lot about Indigenous peoples, African Nova Scotians, marginalized groups that have underrepresentation, don't have access. What has your office done in order to make sure that these individuals are having their mental health and their mental wellness being focused on in a more prevalent manner?

HON. BRIAN COMER: I had the opportunity to visit Eskasoni a number of weeks back. They're doing some tremendous work out there. I was actually the first provincial

Cabinet minister to ever visit the Eskasoni Health Centre, so it was quite an honour to be there.

There are some exciting things going on across the province right now in partnership with the federal government, especially with access. I think the goal of the department is to have safe, reliable, publicly funded mental health care, which it was lacking for the last eight years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

[2:45 p.m.]

### **H&W: REFUGEE CLINIC CLOSURE - EXPLAIN**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I have worked with refugees as a medical interpreter for many years. In 2016, I had the privilege of working with a large number of Syrian refugees who arrived in Nova Scotia. What I witnessed was truly an amazing essential service that our refugees received and continued to receive at that refugee clinic.

The majority of these refugees had many complicated needs and had not seen a doctor for years before they arrived to Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, without the services they received at that refugee clinic, these refugees would have had thousands of visits to our emergency department because it is the only option where interpretation services are provided and that's really where they can communicate with a doctor or nurse.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: The government has outlined an ambitious immigration plan to increase our population. Is she aware that the refugee clinic has recently closed its doors to new refugees? Also, is she aware that Nova Scotia is expecting a large number of refugees from Afghanistan and other countries?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am very new in my role, 43 days, but I am aware of that. Through the stakeholder gatherings, I have been able to speak to a number of physicians and primary care providers who support that clinic. We did discuss at that time that they did have to close their doors to referrals.

There are a number of clinics - the North End clinic, as well - that we've been in contact with. I do recognize that there is a gap and we are committed to continuing those services. Again, with primary access, we do want people to get the care that they require in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I just want to highlight, before my next question, the importance of that clinic. I have worked there. We have no idea of the amount of money we are saving from emergency visits by having that clinic. Losing that clinic is going to be a tremendous loss for Nova Scotia in general and for the newcomers in particular.

The government has said they will expand virtual care for all Nova Scotians who are in need of primary care. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Will this investment include options for newcomers and those who require interpretation services? Also, will the minister commit to meeting with me and the representatives from the clinic to find solutions before we lose this important service?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I absolutely will commit to that. I do agree it's a very important service. It's not my understanding that the clinic is closed but rather, it is not able to take on any more referrals.

Of course, we want to have culturally sensitive care, we want to ensure that people are cared for in their own language, to ensure that things are communicated appropriately and they get the care that they need, so I would be very, very happy to meet with you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

### **LSI: AGENCY CLOSURE - PROTECT WORKERS**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I am going to get right to the question.

My question is to the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration: Wouldn't the minister agree that if a government finds fault with the management of an agency such as Island Employment, where 30 workers are going to lose their jobs, that they should deal with those problems directly with management, rather than punish the workers for delivering a valuable service to the community?

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, we do have a call for interest and to make sure that the folks in Cape Breton know that that service is staying and that when that new service provider is identified, that we encourage those employees to take their skills and talents to the new agency once it's in place.

KENDRA COOMBES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have two follow-ups to that, and one is: Are these employees going to have to reapply for their jobs? Second of all, will the minister ensure that these workers are able to continue offering these services rather than having to reapply for these jobs?

JILL BALSER: Again, we're going to have a new service provider in place. We know that the employment services are crucial for the area. We want to make sure that the clients know that the services are going to be up and running in the timeline that we have identified.

Again, to those 30 individuals who are employed, there will be positions and, again, we encourage you to look to the new service provider once it's in place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

### **H&W: C.F. DRUG APPROVAL - UPDATE**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Trikafta is a gamechanger for cystic fibrosis patients. During my time as Minister of Health and Wellness, we were getting close to approving that drug for access and availability here in Nova Scotia. The timeline was September. Since then, we have had four other provinces that have agreed to provide this lifesaving drug to individuals in their province.

Can the minister please provide the House with an update on Trikafta coverage?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: The Trikafta drug will be added to the Nova Scotia formulary. It was approved and will be added in. (Applause)

ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. That's great work on behalf of both parties, we can say at this point.

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

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

### **PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 1.

### **Bill No. 1 - Elections Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, amendments to the Elections Act, be read a second time.

As we all know in this Chamber, the issue of fixed election dates has been an important topic of debate for many, many years in our province. It's an issue that I personally felt very strongly about and that our Party has championed for the past decade - and I think others when they have been in other positions as well.

Every other Canadian province and territory, as well as the federal government, has election laws that have fixed election dates. Each of those jurisdictions understood the value of an election date that is predictable. They saw the benefits of a predictable election cycle. They saw the benefits that that provides to the electorate, to the independent agencies that run our elections, and to the potential candidates who run for elected office.

Nova Scotia had been the lone holdout. They had been the lone holdout until now. We're listening to Nova Scotians and we are keeping a campaign commitment that we made. The amendments to the Elections Act will establish fixed provincial general election dates every four years in this province. That's a good thing. It will bring predictability to our elections, and our elections, of course, are the cornerstone of our democracy.

Nova Scotians want to have confidence in their electoral system, Parties in opposition want a level playing field, and Elections Nova Scotia wants to be able to prepare as effectively and efficiently as they possibly can for general elections. In fact, Elections Nova Scotia has been recommending a fixed election date since at least 2009, and then they made that recommendation again in 2013. Former governments have chosen not to act upon the request of Elections Nova Scotia, but this government won't look the other way. We're going to walk the walk, Mr. Speaker. There will be fixed election dates in this province. (Interruptions)

One more. That's two now. Come on, now.

Elections Nova Scotia has been very, very clear on the need for certainty - the need for the certainty that comes with a regular election cycle. It's also going to save some money. It will save money, Mr. Speaker, to have a fixed election date - not to mention all the improvements in accessibility and those types of things.

It's just really important that we have fixed election dates for a lot of reasons. It will help candidates. It will certainly help support parents - parents of young children, who are considering putting their name forward for elected office. I know that even myself as a party leader recruiting candidates - and I was very proud of the slate of candidates that we ran in this general election. I know that when recruiting candidates, people often ask, when's the election? I don't know if I can meet certain child care needs or employment situations, or whatever.

We'll take that uncertainty out of it. It shouldn't be part of it. People should be able to say this is when the election is. You can plan for it - plan your personal life, plan your professional life. These are all important things.



Overriding all of that, what legislating a fixed election date will do is take away any perceived advantage by the government, that the government has in controlling the timing of the next election. We all know that governments sometimes pick a date that they think benefits them. Snap election, high in the polls, whatever the case may be, they know something bad is coming, whatever the case may be.

We want to be very fair with the opposition parties. That's why we're going to restore the Public Accounts Committee to what it was. We want to be very fair on knowing when the election is. I know there's been a little bit of debate over "we don't like the date that they've picked."

Well, I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker. If there's anyone in this House who thinks four years is not long enough to prepare for an election, they're in the wrong business. If there's anyone in this House who thinks four years is not long enough to engage voters and share a message with voters that might actually appeal to them, they're in the wrong business.

Four years is plenty of time to prepare a party. Four years is plenty of time to prepare a candidate for a general election. If the voter turnout doesn't improve - I think we had a high voter turnout for a Summer election. I think it was higher than the last one, higher relative to the last ones. Relative to the last elections, I think it was high. I wish it would have been higher. We'd probably have more seats if it would have been higher, so I wish it was higher. (Interruptions)

What I would say is we can haggle and critique the date that's picked, but for me - and I'm sure we will hear a bit of that - the reality is this province now has a fixed election date. That's a good thing. Let's not overlook that. This province can have - Nova Scotians can have some certainty, and every political party has time now to engage voters that may be interested in their message or, in the fullness of time, may not be interested in their message. Either way, that'll be for Nova Scotians to decide.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments we are proposing obviously set forward the next general election in this province as July 15, 2025, future elections falling on the third Tuesday of July every four years. My understanding is Elections Nova Scotia is pretty happy with the date. It allows them to plan for polling stations and these types of things which can be difficult, especially in rural, small communities. It can be difficult to find a place to have a polling station. Well, one of the points people made is that this opens up schools, makes them accessible.

I have heard some feedback about some of the democracy education that happens in our schools leading up to student votes and all these types of things. Don't forget, the campaign will be - you know, there's lots of time for that as well. I don't want people to indicate that that takes a tool away from educators. It does not. As a matter of fact, they have four years to talk about it.

We've also been very focused on the curriculum around democracy and stuff, so there'll be lots of opportunities for those that sincerely want to educate our youth in the democratic process. Lots of opportunities. I would suggest you should never wait for a 30-day writ period to do that, anyway.

I'm proud that this is the party that had the courage to put forward a fixed election date. There've been six private members' bills since 2010 aimed at establishing fixed election dates: four of them from my colleagues, the others from the other parties, so I'm sure they probably still think it's a good idea. Even a former premier had put one at a time. It's an honour. It is truly an honour to be able to stand here today as the party that finally is implementing fixed election dates.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I move the second reading of Bill No. 1 and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues as this bill moves through the legislative process.

[3:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill.

First, I think that it's important to acknowledge and recognize the privilege we all hold in this House. I would like to thank the thousands of Nova Scotians who showed up to cast their ballots in the 2021 general election. It is thanks to you, the voters, and your confidence in us that we stand here today.

Mr. Speaker, it's a long-standing tradition in this province to have an election every four years - one that every Premier has honoured and which has been legislated. Our caucus agrees that Nova Scotians deserve predictability in when an election is to be called, but we have some concerns about the lack of consultation that went into the creation of this bill and the rationale behind the July date.

It is important to know that there was no engagement or consultation with the opposition leaders and membership when the bill was created. This bill will impact us all - all parties, members, our volunteers, and our staff. Now that we have all experienced a Summer election and have our stories about knocking on the doors in the middle of a heat wave, there are many lessons to be learned. We have heard about numerous challenges like difficulty hiring and retaining staff, securing polling locations, success of mail-in ballots, and alternate voting options.

Elections Nova Scotia has not even produced the report on the outcomes of the 2021 election. We can not proclaim a new fixed date before Elections Nova Scotia has a chance to weigh in on any challenges that were faced during the Summer election. The last Summer election was in 2003 under Premier Hamm, when only 65 per cent of the eligible voters cast their ballots. This year, this election turnout was at its lowest, at 55 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be considering the unintended consequences of a Summer election, including turnout and voter disenfranchisement. Holding an election in July means a loss of teaching opportunities for elementary and high school students. Students often hold mock votes in classrooms during elections to learn more about them. We know this government wants to make civics a part of the school curriculum. Many high schools hold all-party forums so that all of the students can watch and decide how to vote.

We want young people to vote. I know I experienced it this Summer: Young people, in particular from marginalized communities, are not voting. We need to watch and decide how we can support young people to vote. We want young people to have practical hands-on experience in politics. Why are you taking the ability . . . (Interruption) Not you. Why is government taking the ability to participate in the electoral process away from them? Especially those students, as I mentioned, in racialized and marginalized communities where they do not feel seen, do not feel heard, and do not feel their government reflects them?

It will also mean university students will not be on campus, so there won't be on-campus polls. They are valuable to our communities, economy, and province. Mr. Speaker, their voices deserve to be heard.

I'd like to also note that in 2009, the Electoral Boundaries Commission was formed because the government arbitrarily made a decision that would impact all communities, in particular marginalized communities. There was a commission formed that rectified this.

I look forward to working with this government to make a better bill that is in the best interest of all voters and not just some. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise and speak to this bill. I know that the Premier is taking notes on what I'm saying and paying close attention. I will start by saying that we are in favour of fixed election dates.

Everyone in this House is in favour of fixed election dates. Stephen McNeil introduced several pieces of legislation arguing for fixed election dates. Those never came to pass, but it's true that this is an achievement: fixed election dates.

Yet it is profoundly frustrating that what should be an unadulterated piece of good news in fact feels like old-fashioned political trickery from the government that is pledging to do something different and be a new voice.

We are the last province to have fixed election dates in place. We've discussed that. We have several pieces of legislation on the order paper that would institute fixed election dates - all private members' bills. Do you know what all of those dates, all the dates in the legislation, all the dates in every other province have in common? They are not in the Summer: none of them, not a single one.

The reasons should be obvious but given this bill that we are debating, I will enumerate them, Mr. Speaker. The idea of having an election in the middle of the Summer, which surely this new government experienced on their own behalf, each of them, is that it suppresses voter turnout. It makes it difficult for young people to vote. It makes it difficult to connect with people. Many people are not in their home riding; they don't get information; they don't get their voter information card; and they may not be in the province. That's just the tip of the iceberg. These are the things that are so self-evident that no Legislature has tried to mandate fixed election dates in the middle of the Summer.

The most recent example I can give of how difficult it is to do a Summer election is the one, as I mentioned, that we just had. When we had this bill briefing, Mr. Speaker, and when the Premier spoke and we heard about the rationale, we heard, well, you can use schools for polling places. I don't know how many people in this Chamber had schools as polling places. It could have happened in rural Nova Scotia where there's more space in schools, but I will tell you that in HRM, where half of the residents of this province live, I would be surprised if there were more than a handful of school that had polls.

The reason for that is because maintenance happens during the Summer, Mr. Speaker. So, when schools are being maintained, you can't have a polling place in them, other than of course election day if it's on a weekend, which it clearly isn't.

The other challenge you have, Mr. Speaker, in terms of enfranchisement and people actually being able to vote is that one of the rationales given for this legislation was that people didn't feel comfortable with polling places and continuous polls and advance polls being held in places of worship. All I can tell you is that in my constituency I didn't have an advance poll. I didn't have a community poll because they could not find space. But the returning office was in a church because that was the only place they could find, because all of the community centres which had historically hosted those advance polls and those community polls were being used for summer camps, for programming.

Mr. Speaker, far from making it more accessible for people to be able to vote for Elections Nova Scotia, it makes it more difficult. Again, it is shocking to me that I even have to make any of these comments. These are things that as MLAs, the 55 people in this

Chamber know, the government knows it, the Official Opposition knows it, and we know it.

This brings me to why would we have dates in the Summer. Why would the government have chosen this? I mean I can only guess, Mr. Speaker, why the government would have done this. What I can tell you is a friend shared an anecdote with me the other day that the late, great John Buchanan said: “There’s nothing better than a Summer election.”

At the risk of stealing anyone’s thunder, I will just say that this is historically true for Progressive Conservative hearts. Why is that? Because the share of the vote of Progressive Conservative Parties is older, is whiter and is - sorry, no offence, Mr. Speaker - more likely to show up to the polls, is going to be committed to that because they have a family history, they have the privilege of coming from a place where people have always been able to exercise their right to vote, free from interference and with help. We know there are many, many people in this province for whom that is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, are fixed election dates good? Yes, we need fixed election dates. Are they the most important things in terms of democratic reform? Arguable. I mean we’ve put forth a whole suite of democratic reforms. Those include a sitting calendar, proportional representation for one. We know that the majority of Nova Scotians did not vote for this government, didn’t vote for our last government. That’s something we might want to remedy . . . (Interruption) We’re not going to go back that far, we’re just going to go with two, but point taken - or the government before, so there’s something wrong.

I think if you listened to the questions that we heard in Question Period today we heard a number of questions that say, you’re proposing this blanket policy - how are you going to ensure that people aren’t left behind? The response from the government has been it’s going to work.

You have said that you’re going to do this thing and we’re worried that some people might not benefit. The response from the government has been we’re going to do it and it’s going to be good.

You can’t blame me for being a little concerned when, in the name of democratic reform, the first bill that this government puts forward is a bill that very directly historically benefits their partisan interests in the name of democratic reform.

I think that’s very unfortunate. I have a lot more to say, not surprisingly, but I’m going to save it for third reading, because although the Premier said that we now have fixed election dates, I know he’s new in this job. He hasn’t been sitting in that chair for very long. He surely knows that we have a legislative process. We actually don’t have fixed election dates right now. We have a bill on the order paper that suggests fixed election

dates, and now we have a legislative process where we discuss whether that is something that will indeed happen.

I left out one thing which I think is important to mention. The Premier, in his remarks, said - we're now getting used to the Premier's particular way of just eliding people's concerns - they're concerned, it's going to be fine.

We'll see. Maybe it will all be fine. I hope that I am proven wrong, but one thing is not going to be fine: the democratic education of our students. The idea that a program like, for instance, the one the Premier raised - I think it was Student Vote - the idea that a program like that could happen independent of an actual election is absurd. That whole program is built around students actually participating in an election. They vote on Election Day.

I know that there are many members of this Chamber who have young children and children in school, and many of you will have stories about how your children think about Election Day. They watch their parents campaign. They talk about how many signs each team has. That's what my kids do. My kids even wrote a song, a little jingle . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Dartmouth South has the floor.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: My kids wrote a little jingle in 2017 called "We Have a Plan to Defeat the Liberals." Didn't work. I mean, it worked for me.

I raise that because we want to raise democratic citizens. The idea that a 53 per cent turnout in a provincial election is a good turnout - I think the Premier said we had a good turnout. It was about one per cent higher. I don't think one per cent is appreciably higher. Yes, technically 53 per cent is more than 52 per cent, but it's a lot less than 80 per cent. It's a lot less than 70 per cent, which any democratic body like ours that purports to represent the interests of Nova Scotia should be aiming for.

Instead, we're not aiming for the top. We're aiming straight at the middle. That middle is status quo. I don't know about my colleagues, and I don't know about the government, but I'm not here to maintain the status quo. It's not why my constituents elected me. It's not why I do this job. I'm here to increase the effectiveness and participation in the democratic process.

Unfortunately, I will conclude by saying that I don't know that this date the government has chosen does that. I will say that I think the way that we could see real leadership from this government right now, I think the way this government could really walk the talk . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Walk the walk.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I think it's walk the talk, actually. I'm going to say walk the talk and then we'll see who's right.

I think the way that this government could walk the talk is to show up to these debates, is to show up to Law Amendments Committee, with an open mind and to hear the concerns that people register about this. I will be the first in line to sing to the rooftops how happy I am that Nova Scotia finally has a fixed election date if it's not a date that falls in the middle of the Summer. I look forward to the Law Amendments Committee process.

[3:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

TOM TAGGART: It's a true pleasure for me to be able to rise today to speak to Bill No. 1, the Elections Act. I am especially proud that for the first time I join debate in this historic place, it is to speak in support of a bill that fulfills an election promise to set a fixed election date in Nova Scotia.

This is my first time to stand to speak in this House, and I am, quite honestly, excited about it. But I have to tell you I'm disappointed. I'm truly disappointed in the way that this conversation is, in my mind, somehow being discredited or whatever. The idea that a group of intelligent people that has been elected by their peers to sit in this House, all people who are politically motivated and have - for some of us, myself in particular - I have been involved in elections since I was 18 years old - would not be able to find a way to take advantage . . . (Interruption)

What was that? (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Colchester North has the floor.

TOM TAGGART: The idea that we're all politically motivated - we've all worked on election teams, and we can't find a way, we collectively as parties, as individuals trying to get elected, cannot find a way to take advantage, to get our supporters out to vote, when we've got four years to do it, it's just amazing to me. Then we're talking about, well, if we have it in the Summertime, we're not going to get that 80 per cent return. When did we have 80 per cent of the people in Nova Scotia vote in an election? Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue on with my original comments, but it is disappointing. We need to have - anyway.

As speakers before me have pointed out, Nova Scotia is the lone province in Canada to take this important step. I must add that this is not the first time a political party has promised to do this. It is just the first time a political party has followed through on that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that we should get used to with this government: that's following through on commitments. Fixed election dates were part of the 2009 Liberal election platform. In 2013, the Liberals said they envisioned fixed election dates could come as part of a legislative reform package in Spring 2014. If that commitment had been honoured, we wouldn't be holding this debate today.

Fixed election dates level the playing field for political Parties. That's what I tried to expound on earlier. Once Nova Scotia has a fixed election date, no government will be able to manipulate the timing of an election for partisan advantage. To that end, this bill is an important step in modernizing Nova Scotia's democracy. It's a measure that Elections Nova Scotia has been calling for since 2013. Every year in Elections Nova Scotia's annual report, the Chief Electoral Officer repeats why fixed elections would improve the administration of elections in our province.

Here's what the 2014 annual report said, and I have that here to be tabled: "I have made recommendations to the House of Assembly regarding new legislative changes. Chief among them is a call for fixed-date elections." Chief Electoral Officer's annual report, 2013.

The opening sentence of the 2015-16 report is "The primary mandate of Elections Nova Scotia is to conduct provincial elections; therefore, election preparedness is front and centre in our daily work. Because Nova Scotians do not have a fixed provincial election date, we must be prepared at all times to deliver a general election." I have that to be tabled too, Mr. Speaker.

A constant election readiness state is necessary. In the 2016-17 report of the Nova Scotia Election Commission, "A constant election state of readiness is necessary without a fixed election date. Elections Nova Scotia targeted interim readiness dates in March and September to help ensure election sub-projects are complete when an election is called. Election processes and materials must be in place and returning officers selected, trained and available for activation with little notice."

From 2017 to 2018 without fixed election dates, voting locations must be identified at least within a short period of time and consequently, locations which are wheelchair-accessible are not always available. Returning officers assess each location with a checklist and a wheelchair. I have that report to be tabled as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I well remember the day I went to the returning office to sign my papers. I was alarmed to be advised that in the large geographic area and predominantly rural riding of Colchester North, which traditionally had advance polls in west Colchester, central Colchester and north Colchester, the returning officer had chosen to eliminate the advanced poll in west Colchester.



I advised the returning officer at that time that this was not acceptable, that in a time when we were working hard to encourage residents to participate, some residents of west Colchester would have to travel well over an hour to continuous polls and the returning office in central Colchester.

I was told that it was only a short campaign - I believe it was 35 days, is that correct? - a short campaign in the middle of the Summer and they were having trouble securing locations that met the regulations and that they had to have the locations submitted within two to three days so the election cards could go to be printed.

I advised the returning officer that the municipality had a polling station just 10 months previous and that would be the place for them to have their advance polls. The problem was solved.

Mr. Speaker, the fixed election dates would eliminate these logistical challenges. Additionally, I am aware that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to identify poll workers. Advance notification, like a four-year or fixed election date, eliminates that problem.

I understand that the Chief Electoral Officer estimates that savings to taxpayers that come with fixed election dates is half a million dollars. That's a conservative estimate. I know some members have questioned the dates chosen for elections. Some say Summer elections will decrease the voter participation. Well, we had a Summer election and voter participation was up from the previous election. Personally, I much prefer the mid-July date even though we achieved resounding success in the recent August election. I would note it was right smack dab in the middle of blueberry harvest.

There is no doubt that we have a long way to go, but I believe that if we decrease the cynicism that comes with old-time political games, more Nova Scotians will become engaged in the process and more people will vote. This date ensures that provincial elections will not conflict with municipal elections or federal elections. It means that accessible school sites will be available for voting locations, and it means that Nova Scotians will know in advance and be able to plan to vote.

Fairer elections, more modern, democratic institutions, more savings, more access, less cynicism - these are only a few of the benefits of this bill.

I am very proud to support Bill No. 1, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing from Nova Scotians at a Standing Committee on Law Amendments.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that I'm very happy to be speaking to this bill as the first bill that I get a chance to speak to as a member here in the Assembly.

There are a whole bunch of different reasons, I think, why people run for office. One of the reasons why I ran is because I - call me old-fashioned or call me quaint, I don't really care - I really care about democracy. I think democracy is a precious and fragile thing.

Any time we do anything with our democracy, and of course the most significant thing we do as a democracy is elect members - the 55 of us who are lucky enough to be in the Chamber here. Every time we change the rules of how we choose members, every time we do anything with the electoral process, it's something that demands a lot of scrutiny. That's what we're here to do and that's what we will do on this important bill.

We talk in this Chamber very often about various crises that the province and its people are experiencing. They're all very real and happening. There's a health care crisis, there's a climate crisis, there's a housing crisis, and there's another crisis that we don't talk about very often: It's a crisis of democracy, and it has been happening for decades.

The member for Colchester North talked about voter turnout. It peaked at 82 per cent in 1960. He also talked about the fact that turnout was up in this election. It was the second-lowest on record from the lowest - I don't know if we should celebrate that so much.

What we need to do as members, and as government I hope we will take this seriously, is to do everything we can to encourage turnout and participation in elections. I listened very carefully to the member for Colchester North and to the Premier - I'm a nice guy, so I'll be charitable - and there's one of two interpretations of what they said.

They either misunderstand the issue that we in the Opposition have with this bill or they're misrepresenting the issue that we have. I don't think anybody here on this side of the House - and we've heard from a few already - will dispute the idea that fixed election dates make sense. I don't think anybody here is saying that that doesn't make sense.

What doesn't make sense, and honestly when I heard this yesterday I thought it was a joke, that we were going to have elections on July 15<sup>th</sup> the next time. Let's think for a second about what that means. Summer elections, in perpetuity forever. Why? I've heard no compelling reason from the Premier or from anybody else as to why a Summer election forever makes sense.

It tends to depress turnout. It tends to help the government in power. Again, that's a cynical interpretation but I'm left with nothing else that makes sense to me. I think for the 55 of us who just ran campaigns in the last couple of months, I think . . . (Interruption)

That is a good point, a good point. I will address that point. I do think that we had extremely unique circumstances in this past election - i.e., a once-in-a-century pandemic. We were in the middle of a third/fourth wave, so I think that was the reasonable and responsible thing to do.

I don't think anybody here, at least the people on this side of the Chamber, think that perpetual Summer elections are the way to go. I don't understand why that is the approach that the government has taken.

I am one of the younger members of the House here and I think a lot of younger people look at politics as something that is inaccessible, closed to them, that cares only about power and not necessarily the people. I think a bill like this and a choice to do this only reinforces that notion. That's something we need to be really aware of.

If somebody turns 18 and they don't vote, when they turn 22 they're probably not going to vote. Before you know it, they're 76 and they've never voted in their entire life. That's a shame because, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, democracy is a precious thing. We shouldn't take it for granted.

I represent an area that is one of the most diverse in Nova Scotia and there are many, many people in my constituency who come from parts of the world where being involved in politics is dangerous. It's not something you can do every day. They come to Nova Scotia and one of the things they're most excited about is voting, volunteering on campaigns, getting involved, putting a lawn sign up, doing whatever it is to participate in the democratic process. This bill makes it more difficult and makes it more likely that those people will not participate and they will feel excluded from the society to which they have moved. I think that's a very dangerous thing.

[3:30 p.m.]

If we just want to talk for a second about the next election in 2025 - if we're going to have an election day on July 15<sup>th</sup>, we're talking maybe June 15<sup>th</sup> as the beginning of the campaign. What's happening in the middle of that? There are graduations. Schools are getting out. Students are not students anymore. They're focused on Summer vacation. Parents are planning vacations, right? They want to go to the beach. They want to have a barbeque.

We have three months of good weather here in Nova Scotia and we want to waste one every four years on a campaign? I don't see why we would want to do that. (Applause) Yes, thank you. (Interruption) Yeah, I just spoke to that, thank you.

Again, I'm left scratching my head a little bit in terms of what the rationale is for the date of the elections. Not the concept of fixed election dates - that is a meaningful distinction that I think not just the members in this Chamber but the people of Nova Scotia

need to understand. There's no compelling rationale I've heard thus far as to why we need to have elections in July every four years.

I'm left to wonder, what is this bill about? There are a couple of things. Is this bill about voters? Is this bill about people? Or is it about power? (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

BRAEDON CLARK: Thank you. Or is it about people? I'm leaning toward the former, based on what I've read in the bill and what I've heard from the Premier today as well.

The member for Dartmouth South mentioned this as well, but in a lot of ways - and this is strong, but I believe it - I see this as a voter suppression bill masquerading as a fixed election date bill. That's something that we can't overlook, that we shouldn't accept because it's the first session of a new government and we can just kind of slide it in and not worry about it, because this is a really important thing. Elections are really, really important. They're a non-partisan issue, and they should be. I feel that that sense is being eroded by the bill that's put before the House now. I'm quite concerned about it.

I know there are other members who want to speak to the bill, but I wanted to express my serious concerns to it. I'm discouraged by this bill, but I'm not defeated, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the impact of the proposed timing of the fixed election date on the post-secondary sector in Nova Scotia.

I have always believed in the need to ensure that young people are engaged in the democratic process. In 1993, when we had a federal election, I was the vice-president external of the Dalhousie Student Union. During my campaign recently, a past student union colleague was able to find a *Dalhousie Gazette* article in which I spoke about the importance of engaging students and having students be a part of that process. It's often their first election. They often are just getting to know their new community, and they're also easily gathered and engaged - when you don't have the election during the Summer.

I've also been involved in national youth-led consultations about lowering the federal voting age to 16, and I can tell you . . . (Applause) Thank you. I can tell you that there are tons of mobilized and passionate young people across this country, and during those early years where they're able to be supported in school, in civics, in democratic education, they want the right to vote. They see it as something that they want to attain, that it is something valuable. We need to make pathways to take those young people who

are so eager and committed during those years into the voting age in our province. We need to support them walking the walk along the pathway to democratic engagement.

Summer elections put post-secondary students at a huge disadvantage. The timing means that many students are on their way to and from their family homes, or where they study, and they are also on the move for work.

We know that students and young people are not always aware of their voting rights or how or where to vote. If we are interested in amplifying the voices and views of young people, we need elections to occur during a time when students - in particular, post-secondary students - will benefit from institutional support and their post-secondary community that will tell them how they can vote, if they have the right to vote, where to vote, and often host polls on-site.

In Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, we are home to three universities and attract students from other institutions, too, who live in our neighbourhood. From door to door to door this past election, I spoke with students who had no idea if they had the right to vote. More times than not, in fact in the vast majority of situations, those students had a right to vote in Nova Scotia. They had been in Nova Scotia for two, three, four years. They were here over the Summer but they actually didn't know. So that valuable role that the institution of the university plays, and the student unions play, to let students know that they can vote, was lost. I really, truly feel that we actually lost a lot of voters in this past election.

We also need to consider the impact more broadly on the university community. There are a lot of faculty and staff that live in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island and often that Summer period is their only time to travel for research projects and conferences and engage in their academic work.

I am a strong supporter of the idea of fixed election dates, and I talked to a lot of people at the door about it. I don't know about you but often when the door opened, people were like, a Summer election? I'm like, I know, it's kind of weird, it won't happen again, and I really don't think anybody wants it to happen again.

Fixed elections are so important for equity for the reasons that a number of my colleagues have stated. The bill, as written, needs to be amended to follow what we see in other jurisdictions for Spring or Fall elections.

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

**HON. BECKY DRUHAN:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the proposed amendments to the Election Act that will set fixed election dates for Nova Scotia and specifically will set a fixed Summer election date in Nova Scotia.

I want to start by questioning the premise that a July 15th date will oppress or discourage voter turnout. I think the reality is that voter turnout in Nova Scotia has been diminishing for decades. The issue is not specific to Summer elections. This has been a challenge and I submit that the issue isn't about the timing of the election.

The members opposite have raised a number of concerns about accessibility and availability to vote. I would suggest as well that we have developments in our elections and democratic process that really mitigate and obviate many of those concerns. We have mail-in ballots, we have advance polling, we have continuous polling. We have multiple options that allow people access throughout the course of an election to be able to cast their vote, and for citizens who are away at the time or who may be out of town or who are travelling there are lots and lots of options available.

I would suggest that the timing of this will not discourage voter turnout whatsoever. I would suggest as well, as the members opposite have pointed out, many other jurisdictions have fixed election dates and most of them are not in the Summer. If we were to look at their turnouts, I suggest they would be equally unimpressive. The fact that they have fixed election dates, none of which are in the Summer, really doesn't warrant us following that model. I think we can do better.

I agree fully with the members opposite that a 53 per cent turnout is not high enough but it wasn't the Summer date that caused this and it's not ongoing Summer dates that will continue this issue. Our issues with democratic engagement go well beyond the date of our election.

Moving to that, Mr. Speaker, I think the establishment of fixed election dates in Nova Scotia will make our election process more fair for all parties and for all candidates. It will strengthen voter confidence in our election process and I submit it will support voter engagement and increase turnout. It will enable better advance planning by Elections Nova Scotia, resulting in cost savings to taxpayers.

What is the problem with our current state? What is the problem with fixed election dates? Why do we see such voter turnout? When election dates are left to the discretion of the government, the perception - rightly or wrongly - is that elections are called when they are politically advantageous to the party in power. At times, elections have been called on that basis. They have been called suddenly and unexpectedly to catch opponents off guard; they have been announced at times that challenge preparation by opponents or hinder the ability to provide comments to the media; and they have been timed to take advantage of changes in opposition leadership.

The repercussions of these practices go well beyond creating an advantage for the government or the incumbent. It is well-recognized by constitutional scholars and experts

on democracy that this abuse of discretionary election dates leads to voter cynicism over the fairness of our electoral process and the motives of our elected officials.

This, I submit, is what's causing the decrease and the unfortunate turnout that we see. These practices leave the public thinking that elections are not about good governance of the province or the needs of the electorate, and that cynicism is what's leading to low voter turnout. Fixed election dates will mean predictability and stability in the election process. They will make the playing field fairer for all candidates and parties, and it will instill confidence in our electoral system. These are the laudable principal reasons for this change, and I would argue that they're sufficient.

But, Mr. Speaker, these are not the only benefits to fixed election dates. These fixed election dates will also support operational efficiency for Elections Nova Scotia, which means cost savings for Nova Scotians. How is that?

Knowing the date in advance will better support Elections Nova Scotia to plan and deliver training, to recruit staffing, and to secure facilities. The July 15<sup>th</sup> date has been chosen to best avoid conflict with municipal and federal elections, which will reduce staffing challenges and competition for polling locations. Fixed election dates and particularly a July date will also allow Elections Nova Scotia and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to consider and expand on the use of school gymnasiums for polling stations, and provide students with the opportunity and availability to work at the polls.

I want to say a bit more about this. I can confirm that in fact we have used school gymnasiums for elections. When don't we use them? Well, at times the pandemic has prevented that use. Mr. Speaker, as well, we can't use them when school is in session. Summer dates allow much more access and availability . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has the floor.

BECKY DRUHAN: When elections are held in the school year as well, there are limited opportunities for students to volunteer, work, and participate in elections. Schools do an amazing job of providing engaged civic education, but of course you can't dismiss students all day long so that they can participate in elections. This timing provides the absolute best of both worlds. There is a full opportunity for students to participate in in-class learning and civic programming, but still be free and available to participate fully in the electoral process, whether they decide to work or volunteer or just experience.

I will say as well that the advance notice of election dates will promote more accessible elections, providing Elections Nova Scotia with more time to identify and secure more accessible voting locations, like schools, for example. The impact of these and other advance planning opportunities yields cost savings.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, fixed election dates will provide moral, operational, and fiscal benefits. They will strengthen voter confidence in our democratic and electoral processes as well as voter confidence in our electoral officials. They will support advance planning, allowing time to develop and deliver training, onboard staff and secure accessible facilities at the best price. They will yield cost savings, as advance notice of dates affords time to plan and procure the most cost-effective training, staffing, and polling stations that are available.

Ultimately, this bill is about improving and strengthening our democracy and public confidence in our democracy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm going to keep my comments somewhat brief, but I thought as the Education and Early Childhood Development Critic and after listening to the minister talk about supporting a fixed election date outside of the school year, I had to get on my feet.

I was the former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and we did whatever we could in the schools to promote democracy. We know, and everybody knows, and I'm sure all the educators in the room know that that is an important piece of what we do in the school system during the school year for our students. To hear the minister get up and support having fixed election dates outside of the school year absolutely suppresses student voting opportunities.

[3:45 p.m.]

Again, I'm going to keep my comments brief, but I had to say that because it's so important in our system. I've worked with many of you across the aisle, whether it was with the NDP caucus or with the PC caucus, as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and we were always open and transparent, working together with students to give them as many opportunities as possible. This piece of legislation absolutely, 1,000 per cent, suppresses student interest in politics and their opportunity to cast a ballot, whether it's in the school system, to have open debates, or to vote in an election.

In my former capacity of Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, if the government of the day would have come at me about this, I absolutely would have disagreed, because it's so obvious that it just destroys student participation. I had to get on my feet as a critic to say that and as the former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The other thing that I hear in this conversation is that this is the best date for Elections Nova Scotia. I have a great relationship - hey, we all ran in elections. This isn't about Elections Nova Scotia. Elections Nova Scotia serves the people. It's not the other



way around. Absolutely. We know, as we all know, it was very difficult to get volunteers. It was very difficult to secure locations, and as my colleagues have said, the report isn't even back yet on the last election; for us to make a decision right now on that would be irresponsible.

I wanted to make those two points, and I'm just so passionate about the opportunity and the privilege that I had to be the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and to hear the government, to hear the minister come out and say a Summer election is in the best interest of students, it is absolutely not. I guarantee the educators in this room would agree with my comments.

I'll leave this at this. There's one other piece of legislation that will probably be discussed, and that is around - because we all believe in fixed election dates, but it's around how you get to a point where there can be a change in that date. For me, if we ever have to change that date, and we're absolutely right, I was part of a lot of the conversations around this past Summer election, and it was because of COVID-19. We were in between a third and fourth wave, so when was the safest time, because we were at the four-year cycle. It's true. You can disagree.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou has the floor.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: It's all about learning. My colleague, she says it best when we have these conversations, is that regardless of whether you win or lose the election, there are a lot of learnings that come from it. There will be a lot of learnings that will come from the Summer election. All caucuses will go through that.

At the end of the day, the other piece, and I'll talk about this in third reading, is that if a decision ultimately has to be made to change that date from the 15<sup>th</sup> of July or whatever that second week of July is, it should be a decision of the Legislature. Then truly it is a fixed election date.

To have somebody, one person, whoever it is in that seat, arbitrarily be able to decide to change that date, that's not a true fixed election date. It should come back to the Legislature, and then the Legislature ratifies with unanimous consent, however that works out, that the election date needs to be changed. That's something that I noticed too, is that you can't say you're having a fixed election date and then have one person can go and so many days before and say, you know what, based on my decision I'm going to change that date. If we're going to change that date, it should come back here to change that date.

With those comments, I wasn't planning on getting up, but I had to after hearing the comments from the minister, so thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: I am going to keep my comments brief as well. I have supported fixed election dates for years. A majority of my political life, and although at 32 years old that may not seem long, I have been involved with politics since I was at least 10 years old if not earlier.

No one on this side of the House is against fixed election dates. In fact, this caucus has put forward many pieces of legislation on creating electoral reform, including fixed election dates. We are not against fixed election dates, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear on all of that.

What we are against is this Summer date because as we know, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you encountered it, but I know I did, and that was knocking on doors, no one's home. Knocking on doors, no one's home. I have never experienced, and I have been working elections for over 15 years - I have been involved in actually knocking and calling. I have never called so many numbers, I have never knocked on so many doors where nobody was home. Why were they not home? They were not home because it was the Summer, because they were on vacations, because they were gone away with their families, they were at the cottages, they were at their trailers, they took a family vacation across the country.

I had - there was a colleague from the government's side, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, who said that we have mail-in ballots when people are away. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if you're aware of the process, but I am and I'm going to tell you it's the most arbitrary process that you can go through. First you have to do a request, write in a request for the write-in ballot, then you have to receive the write-in ballot, and then you have to send the write-in ballot back.

By the time people in my constituency knew the process and were able to get their ballots, the election was almost over before they were aware of this. It is an arbitrary - it is unbelievable how the process worked. It was so cumbersome for people.

No one on the government side can deny that that process is great. Nobody can, Mr. Speaker. I know you probably agree with me. That process is cumbersome. From here in Nova Scotia to British Columbia, that first request has to - or, I should say from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, that process, that letter of request has to travel. Then it has to travel back to British Columbia, and then it has to travel from British Columbia back to Nova Scotia. To say a mail-in ballot is helpful in a Summer election - Mr. Speaker, I have many people in my constituency who would beg to differ.

We have so many people disengaged in the electoral process. We shouldn't disengage them further. We know in the Summer, people are not engaged. They are living their lives. Their kids are on Summer vacation. They are taking them to places. They are taking them to visit families. They are going about their Summer vacation. They are not

engaged in the political process. We know this. We say this as people who are running elections. We say this as MLAs.

My office is the most quiet in the Summer. My office is the most quiet in the Summer. Calls to my office and emails to my office, they pick up in the Fall, in September, when the kids are back to school. Also, the highest time is around the Spring.

In that, and I'm sure my colleagues have the same feeling when they're looking at their office. I'm sure their CAs will tell you the exact same thing. People are not engaged in politics during the Summer. Therefore, to call a Summer election, Mr. Speaker, is really disenfranchising so many people who are already disengaged, including the people that we need to be engaged in the system.

We need to make a time that will allow people to actually get engaged. I'm sorry, but 50-some per cent of people voting is not the number I want to see. I want to see the - I'd love to see 100 per cent voter turnout. I know that's not possible. I'd love to see a 90 per cent, an 80 per cent, but a 50-some percent voter turnout, that is not what democracy makes.

I implore my colleagues on the government side to take a look, to take a minute, to have an open mind and think about how we really engage the electorate in which we serve them. They voted for us, but you know what? They all didn't vote for us because so many stayed at home this Summer. This Summer, Mr. Speaker, they stayed at home because they were not engaged in the process. Why were they not? Because a Summer election was called.

Fall and Spring are great times. The electorate is engaged, and that's where we want them to be.

I want to speak to the student vote very quickly. I know I said my comments were going to be short, but apparently I have more to say. That is, I remember when I was running for municipal council. I had my cousins who came running home, and they said, "You won in our class. You won in our classroom." They were so excited. Why? Because we were the names. The names that were on there - there were two people while I was running for council, myself and another individual. They were so excited to say that my name was there. They were so excited to say that I won in their classroom vote. It was a great feeling.

The Premier has said that civics should be taught all the time. I agree. Civics can be taught all the time. But when kids can see someone in their communities' names on those ballots, it really energizes them. It allows them to really learn the process from start to finish.

The other thing I will say to this is there is a teacher in my community who - the students have to have so many hours of doing community services of some sort. This fantastic teacher, who really loves to engage students in politics, told them that when class is in and there's an election happening, if they participate in a campaign, that will go towards their - it will give them extra credit, Mr. Speaker. That is an amazing thing for students to be able to have. One, they're being asked to be part of the democratic process. Two, they're getting credit for it from their teacher.

Those teachers who are doing the student votes, who are asking the students to get engaged, that is civics. They are teaching their students civics. I had a teacher during my aforementioned really horrible experience during a Winter election - I had a teacher who wanted to bring their students down to my campaign office so that they could see what a campaign looked like. The same teacher, during a Spring election where I was working during a campaign, brought their students down to see how a campaign works. This is how teachers engage their students in the political process and to deny them that ability, Mr. Speaker, is in my opinion wrong and does a disservice to them.

With that, I will say this: We all agree about fixed election dates. I welcome fixed election dates. You don't know, Mr. Speaker, how excited I was about fixed election dates, how excited I was to see it. And then I saw Summer election, and I have to say I was saddened because I understood that would mean a lot of disenfranchisement of many people. I would hope and I implore my colleagues on the government side to look at this with open eyes, open ears, and open hearts, and change the date. That's all anyone's asking. Change a date that better suits the electorate.

[4:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Advanced Education.

HON. BRIAN WONG: I am an educator. I'll always consider myself an educator - 27 years, 14 years as an administrator. I don't know what students do in the other three years, how they learn or how they don't learn about elections in civics when there's not an election. Maybe it's the municipal vote, maybe it's the federal election, but they do learn. If our teachers can't figure out how to teach kids how to vote in the election process in a four-year period, I don't know what we're doing wrong.

I had more students involved in my campaign this year. I also ran in 2013. Unfortunately, I didn't win that election. I had very few students involved in that election. That was in October. Why didn't I get many students? Because they were busy in school, they were busy with sports, they were busy with all those things.

I had a big student team. I had students knocking on doors, I had them delivering flyers, I had them volunteer, I had them make phone calls. I had them driving around, for the ones who had licences. I had more students involved because it was a Summer election.

Now, I lost seven pounds, I had a great tan - my arms, the bottoms of my legs, I looked great from that part. But as far as the Summer election goes, I'm not sure if the date really matters that much because we have a lot of time. When we talk about people having accessibility to have the opportunity to vote, whether it's mail-in ballots, whether we're going to eventually vote - or advance to something that they can do it electronically, that would be great. But that's up to Elections Nova Scotia to try to figure out a better way to get more people engaged in voting.

Is 53 per cent or 54 per cent good? No, it absolutely sucks. However, if we go back in history, if we go back to 2003, that was an August election. There was 63 per cent of people who voted in 2003, so it's not necessarily the Summer date that is decreasing voter turnout. It's people's general attitude, that they are disengaged from politics and it's up to us to re-engage them. I do not believe that the Summer date has anything to do with that. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I will say to the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank that the thing that sucks is actually this bill. The fact of the matter is that we've heard a lot of things, a lot of misinformation, a lot of stuff being said here today that is simply not true.

To the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, who said that schools are not open for an election, it's flat out not true. In 2017, while the kids were in school, there was a polling station at J.L. Ilsley. In 2013, while the kids were in school, there was a polling station at J.L. Ilsley. People were coming in during school hours and voting.

How do I know that? My NDP candidate posted a picture of herself with the teachers - who for some reason didn't like us in 2017 - posted a picture of her with all the teachers at J.L. Ilsley, saying, just voted . . . (Interruption) Well, we could talk about that too, I don't mind.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care is continuously giving us input during all of this. She is somebody who is supposed to be looking out for seniors, should know that the reason we called the Summer election is to get between the third and the fourth waves, where seniors are most - and you can shake your head all you want - but our seniors are most vulnerable to COVID-19, so that is the reason.

If you want to continue to disagree, why don't you look at the case numbers then and look at the case numbers now? Look at the case numbers then and then look at the case numbers before that, and you'll see that it was lower during the election. That's what was tried to be done during this last election, provincially, to make sure there was more voter engagement because we knew that people would be scared to get to the polls, and we can all agree to that.

Mr. Speaker, this is the eighth or ninth time the Minister for Seniors and Long-Term Care has interrupted this side of the House when they're speaking. That's unparliamentary. Could we please have her refrain from making comments? Thank you.

Anyway, listen, they called us out on it, so. There are a few things I want to talk about on this one. The former Liberal government made changes to the Elections Act. Yes, they did. We were forced to make changes because of a little word called gerrymandering. There was a realignment of the constituencies in Nova Scotia that was challenged by the African Nova Scotian groups and individuals in Nova Scotia and the Acadians. It was determined that when a government makes changes, they tend to make changes that favour themselves. What happened was an all-party committee was created to redo the boundaries.

Some of the members across were actually on that. I can read the list. We had the Honourable Chris d'Entremont, who is probably one of the best Progressive Conservatives to come out of that side of the House in my time - I think we all can agree with that; Minister Gordon Wilson; the honourable member for Cole Harbour; the member for Dartmouth South, who herself is outstanding; the member for Fairview-Clayton Park; and the former member for Glace Bay. The new Attorney General was on that, I think, if I'm not incorrect. Another outstanding individual, the former member for Sackville-Cobequid. We had a mixture of NDP, Progressive Conservative, and Liberal.

What ended up coming out of that was a redrawing of the ridings that didn't really help anyone. Let's be honest. I'm looking across at members who won ridings that were not there before this was all redistributed.

That's the fair thing to do. The fair thing to do is to have all-party consultation. The new government has talked about being open and transparent. I don't think they said the most transparent government of all time. I think that was the previous government. (Interruptions) Hey, listen, that was a crack at our own self, okay? That's a little crack at ourselves. Come on. We can have fun at our own expense.

I think that the new Premier is absolutely trying hard to work with everybody - to work with all individuals. We saw that with African Nova Scotian Affairs and the member who was appointed. He was an outstanding individual. There was a little bit of controversy over that. The Premier met with African Nova Scotian groups and so did the minister. They are trying to come to a place where everybody's comfortable and where everybody's voices are being heard.

I look across at the Cabinet over there and the members across. I don't know a lot of you. I'm sure we'll all get to know each other quite well in the next four years - and there are some really outstanding individuals. Even though I'm the critic for Community Services, I think that was absolutely the right choice. I think the member is empathetic and caring. I think she'll do a really good job. And of course, the Minister of Public Works, whom I absolutely love. She would chirp me when I was in the Chair. Between her and Karen Casey, I was always kept in check. (Interruption) Listen, you can stand up afterward.

What I want to talk about - I've got a lot of paper here, so let me deal with this for a second here. We do see the outcome when one Party takes full responsibility. This election and the elections that we had won probably could have been, or would have been, very different if the previous-previous government had their way and had redistributed the boundaries the way they wanted to do it.

More importantly, we would not have had Acadian representation and African Nova Scotian representation solidified in our Legislature. That's an insane thing to think about, that in 2009 or 2010, when the Dexter government was in, that that thought process wasn't happening. It is really about - if we're going to be honest and frank with each other, I think a lot of this has to do with, we come into this Legislature, we get in here, we want to represent the people - our people - as best we can, but then, at the same time, you want to make sure that you maintain the power, that the party in power maintains the power. I would argue, and this is my own personal thought, I would argue that there are a lot more important things to do right now than setting - what are we talking about here? A what? (Interruption) A fixed election date, sorry. Listen, I eat at four o'clock, so I'm getting hungry here.

I would argue that this did not need to come through right now. We have four years to make this happen. I've studied all of the ministers' mandate letters and I've read your platform back and forth and front and back. There's some really good stuff in there.

There is also some stuff there that I would - I mean, we can debate that at a later date - but one of the things that I was really excited about, and I thought, you know what, that is absolutely great, is around fertility. We all know somebody who has had issues conceiving. I look at my partner, Rena. We're very lucky. Three children first three times. There were no problems, but we have some very close friends who have issues. Is that going to require a piece of legislation? Is that going to require a back and forth in conversation? Why was that not put forward first?

We have a housing crisis here in Nova Scotia and we've heard from the Premier. He has said it's coming, it's coming, days away. So why not bring the housing crisis and the solution to the housing crisis forward first? A fixed election date doesn't kill people. People aren't going to die in Nova Scotia because of a fixed election date. Homelessness

kills people. People die in the streets. Drug addictions, mental health, health care, twinning of highways, the environment, but this is the first bill. This is the bill to be brought forward.

I think it's being brought forward, and I'm sorry if I'm coming across as - I just think this bill is being brought forward because it's easy to slip it through now. It's easy to put it through. You're in your honeymoon stage. What's that? You're in your honeymoon stage. People aren't really paying attention. The government is saying all the right things. Actions are happening. I do think that this is happening because you want to show that you're getting in and you're doing things quickly. It's getting done. We made these promises, look how quick we are able to achieve our campaign promises. We've done this.

I remember for eight years it didn't matter if we decided - it didn't matter the decision. It didn't matter the amount of consultation that we did. All we kept hearing from that side was "Where's the consultation? Where's the consultation?" I ask you, where's the consultation? Which African Nova Scotian groups did you consult with? Which Indigenous groups did you consult with? Did you consult with youth? Did you consult with parents and families and friends? No. There was no consultation.

Somebody sat up on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor and said you know what? (Interruption) Seventh floor. Sorry, I don't know. Shows you how often I was invited up there, right? I'd say I want to meet with the Premier and they'd say, yeah, just go up to the 17<sup>th</sup> floor. He was never there. But this was a decision made on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, and we know that. We know that.

[4:15 p.m.]

Elections Nova Scotia did not ask for a specific date. They asked for fixed elections. Do you know what they asked for more than anything? Money. They need money.

I'll tell you how my election went. I came out of a seniors home in Herring Cove, which is probably one of the most densely populated parts of my community, and I'll be frank: 80 per cent of them vote for me, at least. It's one of my best polls - that and Sambro and another few areas. I walk out and who do I see? I see the Progressive Conservative candidate's campaign manager. I said, "What are you doing down here? You know you're not welcome." (Laughter) I didn't say that.

I asked, "What are you doing down here?" He said, "I'm looking for a polling station." "What do you mean," I asked. He said, "Elections Nova Scotia, the returning officer, called me up and asked me if I could find a polling station, a place to vote."

I said, "Okay," and I walked away, and it started to - this was after the election was called. So, I said, that's strange. First of all, I called my partner, I said, Rena, is this weird? Because she's much smarter, and she knows these things. I just asked, is that normal? She said no.



I said I will guarantee you, for the first time in the history of this riding, there will not be a polling station in Herring Cove. Was I incorrect? No. No polling station. When we called Elections Nova Scotia, we were told there's nobody working. It's the Summer. We have nobody. They literally said, don't call Summer elections if you are having problems with polling stations. Just don't call them. They knew that. We had several meetings with them. They were so low on resources, they were reaching out to campaigns.

So, I ask you - except for Colton who won by 98 per cent - sorry, except for the member for Argyle-Barrington. I knocked on doors once against him. It was just insane. I'll never do that again. It was like 98 per cent. Good on you. But there's a few of you around this table in this Legislature who barely won. (Interruptions) That was actually a really - I'm not going to say who it is, but the John versus John versus John battle is the greatest thing in Nova Scotia election history. I'm just saying that. That was incredible. You should get a shirt that says, I'm the John. (Interruptions) No, actually, no.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member is starting to get a little bit off topic here.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic speaking on second reading.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Oh, yeah, I'm all over the place. Well, that's still technically an election.

One of the things I wanted to get into here, before I'm given the hook, is we heard members across saying that, almost dismissive of Summer elections, saying like, well you know what? You're never going to get 80 per cent. Well, we have in the past. We have in the past because people were engaged. People wanted to vote.

I would say to the members opposite: if you're so concerned about election integrity and access to the polls, which I think you are, where is online voting? Where is it? You can do that. Bring it in. Where's online voting? Where is the funding to ensure that every single community has a poll? Where's the funding to make sure that every single community has returning officers who are experienced, who have staff who know what they're doing and are ready go?

You will all run into issues in the Summer of people not working the polling stations. Volunteers - think about your volunteers. Think about how many are returning or have run campaigns in the past, whose team - and I've heard it from some of you, you didn't have the volunteers that you had in the last election. Why is that? No, it's not just COVID-19, it is also Summer. People wanted to get away to the cottage.

It's common sense. People want to go away, they had a rough year. They wanted to go away to the cottage, spend time with the grandchildren, they want to spend time with

their family. Kids are just coming out of school, where do they want to go? Do the parents want to go and work in your office for five hours a day listening to phone calls, or do they want to take their kids to the playgrounds, or do they want to go anywhere else?

If this is truly about democracy, we're not telling you not to do it. Pause, you have four years. Pause, listen to the public. Form a committee. I don't care if it's six Progressive Conservatives and one on each side. Form a committee like we did, with boundary review, and go to the public, talk to the people. Talk to people in Cape Breton, talk to people from wherever these people are from. Talk to everyone and talk to the different disenfranchised groups. Talk to low-income people. What's their issue? Why aren't they voting? We know that.

I'm not going to be as cynical as some to say that this really helps the Progressive Conservative base. I will say that this probably hurts the NDP's base because, let's be honest, they have the universities wrapped up for the most part, especially in HRM. Those people are voting for the NDP, so I see why they're upset. I see why they don't like this, is what I'm saying. So that's all we're asking. We're not saying not to do this. Let's be honest, this should've been done a long time ago.

There are other ideas I have. I'm sick of election signs. We all call ourselves environmentalists. I had 800 signs out. Do you think I want to put 800 signs out?

Electoral reform: Let's talk about it. Let's talk about what elections look like in Nova Scotia. I heard the member for Halifax Needham talk about age limits. No, sorry, it was the Speaker who talked about 16-year-olds being able to vote. These are conversations. If you are opening up the Elections Act, let's have these conversations. Why can't a 16-year-old vote? They can drive a car. I know 16-year-olds who are a lot smarter than people in this room.

If we truly want these elections to engage the population, I just ask you. I know I asked the minister, I asked the Premier, you are going to get the credit for this. You're going to get the credit for it. You'll be able to say for the next 50, 60 years, we brought this in. We'll vote yes if it's done right. All we're saying is put a pause on it, get the buy-in of the general public.

I think from an election and a voter support standpoint, if you actually did that, if you actually paused and said, you know what, we're going to go out to some of these marginalized groups, maybe some of these groups that we've upset, we're going to go out to the youth, we're going to engage them, you are going to gain more than you lose. You really will.

It just makes sense to me to get out there, engage those people, and they'll say, you know what? It was the Progressive Conservative Party that did this, not the Conservative Party that's preventing us from voting in the Summer.

I just think this is a missed opportunity. I really do. I think this is something that you should all be looking at around voter engagement. How do we get people to the polls? There's a larger conversation that needs to be had in Nova Scotia and the conversation is: how do we go from 70 per cent, 80 per cent of the population voting to 53 per cent?

If you are going to open up the Election Act to make these changes, pause and say, do you know what? Let's fix this darn thing, let's fix it right, let's set an election date. Let's find ways to engage people, let's talk to the Indigenous community, the African Nova Scotian community, the LGBTQTI community. Let's talk to them.

Why are more white men - and I say this knowing that I'm a white man - running for position of MLA than anyone else? What's stopping more women, more African Nova Scotians, more Acadians, more Indigenous community members, more LGBTQTI community members - what is stopping them? These are the conversations that you could be having. That'll really put the "progressive" in the Progressive Conservative Party. It will. It really will.

All I ask is that you pause this, you stop, you live up to the term "progressive," you engage the community, and come back next session, slap it on the table: This is what we heard from Nova Scotians. This is what we're going to do. It will be probably one of the biggest wins, if you do it correctly, that that Party will ever have.

I'll also say in closing about the actual election date - if you look at the fixed election dates in Canada, the majority of them are in October. The majority of them - I think it's 10 - are in October. Why? What do they know that we don't? Again, there's more room there for consultation.

All I will say is, please pause it and engage. Do like your health care tour, but do one on voter and democratic policy. Do the same thing you did for health care. It's just as important to do it on democracy. I thank you for listening. I hope that you take some of that into consideration. I don't think there's anything nefarious going on. I just think that there has to be more engagement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I promise to get through this one without crying. I apologize for my last speech. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this chance to thank you and congratulate you on your position, as well. This is my first time standing in the House.

A lot of good points are raised here today. I'm so proud to be standing here speaking on my first bill, which happens to be Bill No. 1, so that's perfect. I don't have a long

campaign history, but I ran in the 2017 election. I ran in that election probably because the decisions made in this House do affect people.

It's a decision in this House that probably motivated me the most to question who is making these decisions and what are they doing. I came to this House today, and I'm proud to stand here because I'm standing up for the people outside who don't have a vote. That's who I'm here for.

You talk about engagement. I will tell you that engagement is drastic. What I know from knocking on doors is that people tell me it doesn't matter who they vote for because nothing changes. This government is showing you that things are changing. The member for Halifax Atlantic complimented our Premier on what we're doing and his intent. I think we're all on the same wavelength. I'm not here to throw stones. I'm telling you that I agree: We're on the same wavelength.

I am an educator. I was asked to speak as an educator. I will tell you that civics is dead in schools. It really is. We do have election day for the kids in school from elementary right through to high school. That's great, but it's not always on election day. It's usually earlier. This date - when we looked at this, July 15<sup>th</sup> gives us time at the end of the year to do that still.

If you look at the opposite of planning an election in the Fall, the kids are just getting into school. September is a crazy time in school. It's very, very busy. It's hard to get your head around an election coming too. Let's organize the kids. The students are barely getting ready to stand up and speak in class, much less get ready to campaign, which some of us do, so that doesn't work.

The 2017 election I ran in wasn't that fun. I live in Cape Breton - and I might as well live up North. The election in May 2017 was a disaster. We didn't have a single sign that stayed in the ground. The frost was still in the ground in some places, and what wasn't blew away anyhow. I lost election signs this time too, but for different reasons. That's another story.

[4:30 p.m.]

The signs I lost in May, we had a hard time finding them. I recall picking up signs that were all over the cliff sides. I think signs should be banned, to be honest with you. It's terrible. It didn't work. Advertising is certainly an issue.

In August, it was much better. We had longer daylight, so we could be out later. We were able to get out. We were able to engage many more people. There were a lot of doors that we knocked on and people didn't answer, I'll agree with that. But I think it's because of COVID-19. I really do believe in my heart that that was because of COVID-19.

People were still nervous about getting out, and they didn't want to be around the public, so they weren't coming out for that.

Disengagement in democracy, I believe, comes from the very fact that people feel that it doesn't matter. As a government, we are trying to change that. We respect people. We're trying to reach out to as many people as we can. We are doing this. We're holding to our word, and we're making decisions that are for the future, not necessarily in favour of our government, of our Party. Knowing there's an election in July 2025, I think it is, doesn't help me any more than it helps the other side. I think that's fair.

As far as how that election looks, all we know now is that there's a date. There's a date. The rest of that work can be done. That work can be done between now and then.

My campaign team was small but mighty. I want you to know that many of my students were involved. As a high school teacher, I can tell you I won this campaign because of high school students. (Interruption) Yes, you're right. Indeed.

The kids who were involved were mostly high school kids, but also we had adults, seniors, who would not have been out in the Winter or in the Spring. We had one lady who was in a wheelchair. She was able to fully be involved, riding up and down the streets with door knockers for us. She was engaged. You can't get that kind of engagement most of the year in Cape Breton. Most of the year you can't.

I'm happy with this time. I really am happy with July. It allows the students to be involved and to get involved in the campaign at school. Then they can come out in July and get involved in the full election, actually get their hands on it and get involved seriously. We had university students who were involved. They're up here in Halifax now, but they were engaged in the whole campaign with us.

The fixed election date for the Summer at first didn't make much sense to me. I questioned it, but I do believe it's a good idea now. I'm sold on it. I think it's a great idea. COVID-19 is not over and done with. We all know that. I think Dr. Strang is on record saying we have to learn to live with it.

I think having elections in the Summer is a great idea because it allows us to be outdoors more often. You can knock on a door, and they can open the door and you don't have to go inside the house. You don't have to question if the door is going to blow off the hinges. Many happened in 2017. I am happy with the time when I can actually step back from the step and speak to a person far enough away without having the wind blowing my voice around, or I can't hear them, or a senior trying to hold a door closed.

The time of year, I think, is actually perfect. For us folks who live in Cape Breton, I'm surprised more people aren't happy about it, because we seem to live in a microclimate, for sure.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I promise to just take a few minutes on this, because I would like to try to get us to regroup as to what's important and what I'm hearing from this conversation.

For starters, I don't like July 15<sup>th</sup>, but my opinion might not be the right opinion. You have reasons that you like July 15<sup>th</sup>, but maybe your opinion - those who pick that, maybe they're not right. We don't know. What I'm hearing in this debate on all sides - all I'm hearing is privilege and bias, reasons for and reasons against. Oh, I've got to go to the cottage or oh, I've got to work.

We sit here in a place of privilege, not just for the honour of having this job but because, statistically speaking, more of us who are privileged get elected as MLAs. So, we have a bias that we're not even aware of and we're talking about it in this Chamber because we are elected to represent the people.

I have lots of things I want to talk about. I want to talk about June being a bad time to hold an election as high school students only care about exams, only care about prom. I had lots of reasons.

I don't care about that any more because the bottom line is that the member for Halifax Atlantic talked about the need to engage the public and engage communities and have them pick. If they come back and say that July 15<sup>th</sup> is the right day, okay, because you have reached people who have given you reasons.

We can go on and on and debate about how democracy is broken and how people aren't engaged and all the reasons why we're not engaged. Everybody mentioned them. They're all true.

Can this bill fix it? Sure. Do you want to take that on right now? That's up to you. You are in power. This is in your hands. When I ask you why and you say why not? Because you're the government and you have to tell us why. If you can't tell us why and if you can't back it up - if it's Elections Nova Scotia who says it, I'm an electorate, I'm a member of this province, I want to know from Elections Nova Scotia why. Tell me why.

I promise you this is so not political, I promise you that my wanting to stand up on this and talk about this is because I want to work with you to make this better, to make our democracy better. I'm an educator, I want to work with the teachers to see how we can engage our youth. I want to work with our newcomer population to see how we can engage them. I want to work with our Indigenous and our African Nova Scotia communities, our Acadian communities.

We all learned a lesson from the boundary review. We learned a lesson that people's voices need to be heard and they might not tell us what I want to hear, and they might not tell you what you want to hear but it doesn't matter what we want to hear. What matters is what is going to be best, and this is one piece to get them engaged.

Honestly, I can't stress this enough: This is so not political. This is so not about a political move. This is about why we all ran. This why we have given so much of our lives since we've been elected, because we believe in this province, and we believe in democracy. Part of that now is having the responsibility to engage our communities and see what they think is best and what we can do to be better. I promise you that after that, if that is done, you will have my full support on this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I won't speak for too many more minutes. It has been a good discussion and I do have to say that many very good points have been made, particularly from this side of the House. I agree that this needs much further consideration and consultation.

I would be shot if I didn't stand and reflect the concerns of my campaign manager and campaign team. All of us have EDAs and volunteers and campaign managers who gave blood, sweat, and tears for us during our campaigns. My campaign manager celebrated - in fact I heard throughout the campaign, I want fixed election dates, I want fixed election dates, this is so tough. Then when she heard it was in July she was infuriated, absolutely infuriated and said, Keith, you've got to get up and speak to this bill.

I have been through three provincial elections now. I've been through four municipal elections, that's seven elections, and never in those seven elections have I experienced a chronic shortage of volunteers. When I asked why to my campaign team, they said it was because it was a Summer election and past volunteers had made other plans. In addition, new volunteers gave only limited hours because of other Summer commitments.

It was the first time in my election experience that we did not provide Elections Nova Scotia with a full complement of scrutineers on election night because we didn't have the volunteers. When I asked why, my campaign team said it was because it was a Summer election and volunteers had made other plans.

It was the first time my campaign team heard from Elections Nova Scotia that they were having a difficult time finding enough paid poll workers. When asked why, Elections Nova Scotia told my campaign team it was because it was a Summer election and workers had made other plans. The single and most-often reason given for not participating in Election 2021, when asked by my campaign team, is that it was a Summer election.

It's probably a well-known fact that Elections Nova Scotia knows that a Summer election adds to the challenges of holding successful elections. We have not heard from Elections Nova Scotia on the report of the first Summer election in 20 years. If we are not going to wait for that report, then it is absolutely imperative that Elections Nova Scotia comes to Law Amendments Committee, because they are non-partisan, and tell us about how this election went. Members of this House can question Elections Nova Scotia: Did they have problems finding workers?

I implore all of you in this House to respect the work that your campaign managers and EDAs give to you and ask them. Someone commented across the floor about his small and mighty team. I know that my NDP opponent in the election had an exhausted husband because he was the only volunteer she could find to put up election signs. I think we were all running on fumes. That's what a Summer election - lack of engagement, putting more pressure on our volunteers to do even more to try and help us get elected.

If we are going to change this election date to a second election, I request that you all talk to your campaign managers and your EDAs. They deserve that respect. They deserve that thanks, that they matter in this. This is important. There's nothing more exciting than getting young people engaged in an election. We need to look for ways to get more and more people engaged and young people engaged in elections, and a Summer election is not the way to do it.

We've got at least 165 EDAs and campaign managers who worked in this campaign. Have we heard from 165 campaign managers on the impact of a Summer election on our democracy, on the work that they had to do on our behalf? We need to talk to Nova Scotians. We need to talk to people who know the ins and outs of election campaigns and what it takes to find volunteers to support us in supporting this province. I can't understand why this bill is named Bill No. 1.

The ink is not even dry on a report on the election. We have four years until the next election. This should be Bill No. 250. We've got three years - two if you want to debate timelines and dates. Let's do this right. There have been impassioned voices in this House about democracy. Let's not lose sight of that, and let's respect our volunteers who helped us get here. Thank you.

[4:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I will make my remarks really short and quick.

We have heard a lot of opinions. We have heard a lot of points of view throughout the House today. The one thing, as my colleague had mentioned - the one thing I'd like us all to stop and take a pause to think about - again, we are here to represent Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians. While we are here speaking on behalf of Nova Scotians, Nova Scotians are



the ones from where I sit that should be telling us whether they agree to those dates or not. It is Nova Scotians, not us sitting in here. We can make the suggestions, we can throw those suggestions out, but it is Nova Scotians who should have the largest say in this.

With that, I will say it is imperative that we do consult and engage those Nova Scotians to see if they agree with all of us in here.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I certainly won't regurgitate a lot of very important arguments that were made on this. I will add a few additional thoughts to the debate.

This does remind me a little bit of the electoral boundaries situation that we dealt with under the previous NDP government whereby we did have a group - the Electoral Boundaries Commission - that was consulting Nova Scotians on a very important issue related to our democracy, the very seats that we hold today. The government at the time did take it upon themselves to make a decision that was not in line with the Electoral Boundaries Commission advice based on the consultation that they had. That resulted in a court case led by the Acadian community. The real lesson from that process was that you do need due process for a big parliamentary decision like this that is fundamental to our democracy.

I will say I do support a fixed election date. I do commend the government for bringing it forward. I don't know that it's - it certainly won't deal with all the issues that we face with decreased voter participation. There are broader conversations that we do need to have and be honest about the state of our democracy and what needs to happen to make it healthy and thriving again.

I do think the issue around due process here is very important. This is a decision - the date in particular - that does affect each and every one of us. It affects our constituents, it affects voters. I do believe that this will impact voter turnout for our young people.

However, we in our local campaign - I can say anecdotally - had a real challenge with senior participation in the Summer months because of the heat. As we know, our Summers are getting warmer and warmer, and that was a real issue for participation amongst seniors in our community who would otherwise participate. Availability of community halls was an issue because of events, and also because people were away for vacations.

I do think that this is - I understand the government's very ambitious on this, wants to get this done. We do have four years. This government does have a majority government. There's no risk of you falling, the government falling, in the next four years. I do think it would be prudent to take the next four months before our next Spring sitting, put together

either a non-partisan or a multi-partisan committee to engage Nova Scotians on the questions of the date, and come back with a recommendation that we can all feel really good about. I do think that will help with a perception issue that the government will have on this by picking a date without engaging in that sort of new process.

There will be folks who I think are rightly cynical about the way this is coming forward. I think there's logic behind the arguments that suggest voter turnout may be lower in the Summer. We all just experienced a Summer election and it was a very difficult election from a volunteering standpoint and from a voter engagement standpoint.

I think we owe it to this Chamber, to the parliamentary process, and to the voters to take some time and put together a process on this that we can all feel really good about at the end of the day. Again, I do think we have time. This government has four years to land this one. My suggestion is just to take the next four months.

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: I would add a quick anecdote as the critic for Advanced Education and one of the few members in the House who has had the unique experience of being a student leader during an election campaign. In 2012, when I was student president at Acadia, I had the unique opportunity, in terms of an election cycle, to be one of the student leaders who was driving an on-campus effort to enhance voter turnout, to educate young voters at the post-secondary level about their options in the democratic process. If you have not had an opportunity to do so - I expect that most of us have.

Being on campus during an election campaign is a really wonderful experience. One of the greatest sources of enthusiasm around changes in the world and one of the greatest sources of a desire to make a difference happens on our university campuses. It happens whether you are a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, or the NDP, and the list goes on. The point I'm trying to make is that I think that one of the pieces that hasn't been talked about to a specific extent is the consideration for when the academic calendar is, in terms of our post-secondary institutions, and how much of an opportunity there is to place an election campaign when there's an opportunity for students to get involved on their campuses.

I will say that so far I have had positive engagements with the new Minister of Advanced Education. I support what he is trying to do in his mandate letter so far. He has afforded me the opportunity to sit down with him, which I truly appreciate. I submit that given that he is new in his role - and that there are ministers across the floor who are new in their role - he has an opportunity to engage students from across the province in such a way that he gets to sit down and experience first-hand that enthusiasm around democratic reform, around what's important to students.

There's an opportunity here for the government to gain a lot of good favour, I think, with students throughout the province. I come to this with the intention not to dismiss fixed election dates. I do appreciate the value, from both an organizational and a fiscal perspective, in fixed election dates.

There have been a number of submissions from either side of the House that I believe can be positive supports for why we should move to fixed election dates. From my perspective as the Critic for Advanced Education, I believe if we move forward with this without taking the opportunity to engage our student associations and student bodies at a post-secondary level across the province - which we have the opportunity to do now that school is in session - we're missing a big voice from a big part of our province. I thank the government for their consideration.

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

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: I thank the members opposite for their spirited contributions to today's debate. It's a lot of opinions and perspectives on a fixed election date, which is a good thing. Consultation is a good thing, and maybe we'll see some agreement in the House on that. We haven't seen much consultation in this province over the last eight years, but certainly it's nice that there's a desire for some now.

What I would say is the main argument I've heard against the date is that it will impact voter engagement. I would suggest to the members opposite that if they think the impact of an election date has more of an impact on voter engagement than the work they can and should be doing, then they misunderstood. I'll tell you why there's a lot of cynicism in the voters. It's because they hear politicians campaign on things like a doctor for every Nova Scotian when there was no plan or intention to do that. When they hear politicians talk about campaign promises that just aren't made, no intention to make - that's what contributes to voter cynicism.

When people say to me it doesn't matter who we elect, they have good reason to say that. The way you combat that cynicism is you actually do what you say you're going to do. Now we are going to do something that we said we would do. We said we would implement fixed election dates. They heard that in the Liberal platform - I think my colleague said in 2009, and they heard it again in subsequent Liberal campaign documents. It never happened. That's why the voter turnout is down, because people say it doesn't matter.

Guess what? There's a new day. Now they have a government that actually said they're going to do something and they're doing it. That's how you improve voter engagement. That's how people say it does matter, and I will go vote, because it does

matter. When politicians start to do the things that they say they're going to do, that's how you impact voter engagement. If we put a bill in the Legislature, to quote my colleague who said, we would say that the sun would rise tomorrow morning, this Opposition would say they prefer sunsets. That's all that's happening here. Let's not lose sight of the fact.

They would say it with such conviction. I wish I heard that level of conviction against the date in favour of reforming health care over the last - I wish I saw that type of commitment from this Opposition. We haven't seen that, but we will have fixed election dates in this province. Yes, we will. It's my hope that they're July 15<sup>th</sup>, and it's my hope that everyone who is interested in politics, whether they be a teacher, whether they be a student, whether they be just a Nova Scotian who cares about what happens in their province, that they use the next four years to engage themselves on the issues, because if anyone thinks that engagement only happens in a 30-day period, that's a missed opportunity for everyone in this House.

We won't miss that opportunity. We are delivering on what we said to Nova Scotians, and that starts with a fixed election date. With those few words, I'm delighted to close second reading on Bill No. 1.

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

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 4.

**Bill No. 4 - Public Archives Act.**

[5:00 p.m.]

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

HON. PAT DUNN: I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the debate on this particular bill will probably not be as long as the previous one.

I move second reading of Bill No. 4 - An Act to Amend Chapter 24 of the Acts of 1998, the Public Archives Act.

This is a very minor change that will help the Nova Scotia Archives. This change simply reflects the modern functioning of the archives, similar to a change made to support the Nova Scotia Museum a few years ago.

This amendment to the Public Archives Act will give the Nova Scotia Archives corporate status, better reflecting the modern functioning of archives. This change will give the archives legal status to enter into agreements and partnerships and apply for federal and grant funding, similar to the Nova Scotia Museum.

I'm looking forward to comments from the colleagues on the others, Mr. Speaker.  
(Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'm pleased to rise today for the second reading of the Public Archives Act.

Along with museums and libraries, archives are an important part of preserving our history and our story as a province. It is important that we learn from the past and archives play a critical role by preserving documents, correspondence, images, and records in various forms. It informs current discussions and future direction by examining our past.

Archives, like museums and libraries, are community hubs that speak of transparency and openness, where learning is shared across time. By transitioning the Nova Scotia Archives from a central agency to a body corporate - I guess this is the difference in the wording - they will be able to apply for and access federal funds, putting them on a level field with our museums and libraries throughout the province. I believe this also will allow them to get funding for projects for transforming information into a virtual world as well.

The Liberal Party will be supporting this bill. I would like to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward for the consideration of the House. With those short remarks - much shorter than the bill before - I will take my seat and thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Just to stir things up a little bit, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say a few longer remarks than my colleague, although I appreciate everything she's just said about archives.

I appreciate this bill coming forward from the minister. I'm happy to speak and support this bill. It's a small but important change to allow the Nova Scotia Archives to access funding from the federal government. I look forward to hearing from archivists and the public in the coming days about how this will actually improve our public archives.

As the minister said, it's a housekeeping bill, like the one that came last year from CCH at the time. A housekeeping bill. Mr. Speaker, would that there were things other than housekeeping bills that came from the Department of Community, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. I am going to take a few minutes to talk a little bit about that department and what we in the NDP would like to be seeing coming out of the department.

I just want to take a minute to respond to the gaps that we've noted in the Progressive Conservative election platform and the minister's mandate letter. You'd be hard pressed to find much about culture in the Progressive Conservative platform for the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. A little bit about tourism, for sure. There's a commitment to rinks, which is awesome. I love rinks. Rinks are very important for big towns and small towns. They're very important for mental health, infrastructure, and physical health.

There is a little mention of our leveraging the film and television industry in relation to tourism, which is also a great idea. In fact, Netflix now has launched Netflix in Your Neighbourhood, spotlighting a couple of film locations in Nova Scotia, which is great. But doesn't it make sense to invest in the industry if we're going to leverage it to help our tourism industry?

For years, Screen Nova Scotia has been asking for the following key things: improvements to the funding system; implementation of the Nova Scotia content creator fund to support local filmmakers; support for a sound stage for Nova Scotia and international productions; investment in the training and rebuilding of a sustainable diverse and growing crew base. There was no mention of any of these items in the Progressive Conservative platform. It was obvious that there is an appreciation. . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask if the honourable member could speak to Bill No. 2.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm getting to the point of that, Mr. Speaker. I actually am getting to the point of it.

Public archives are a reflection and an account of what happens in a community or a province, a society, so I think it's really important if we're going to be investing in our public archives in this way and improving the way the public archives function that we also take note of the things that they are reflecting.

A province can only function . . . (Interruption) Pardon me? Thank you so much. A province can only function to its highest potential and ability if it invests properly in its arts and culture sector. (Interruption) Listen, I'll keep going until you stop me again, and then I'll get to my ending.

Just before the election, Arts Nova Scotia and the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council released a report which was called *Building Back Better*. Again, this does speak to the bill because we're talking about financial leadership and fiscal management of the public archives.

We also need to talk about fiscal management of the province. The fiscal management of the province will thrive if we make sure that we are acknowledging the importance of a creative economy to the province. *Building Back Better* was a vision for the cultural sector in COVID-19 recovery in Nova Scotia. Almost 200 stakeholders contributed their insights on rebuilding the sector and how to centre the sector as one of the drivers for economic recovery of Nova Scotia as a whole.

I do not see the six themes from this report reflected in anything from this government so far, and I'm really disappointed particularly to see a lack of support for increased operational funding for cultural organizations. There's also no mention of using the lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion to strengthen the sector.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, it's very good to see this change for the public archives. The public archives hold the memory of our province, much of which is a record of our culture. Let's ensure that the future record is vibrant and proud by supporting the recovery of our cultural sector.

THE SPEAKER: I'm certainly pleased you went to your closing because I was about to say something again.

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

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

HON. PAT DUNN: I want to thank the members opposite for the comments and the NDP member, how passionate she is about arts and culture. I think we have every member on this side just as passionate. Hopefully we can show that as the days and months and weeks go on.

Mr. Speaker, the department provided \$2.1 million in emergency supports earlier this year due to the pandemic crisis that we were going through which made it very difficult for operations in this particular sector. The operational support is provided to 153 not-for-profit artistic cultural and heritage organizations. I'll probably end by saying there will be regular engagement with this sector. It will be ongoing in the future weeks and months and years.

Mr. Speaker, I move to close second reading.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 4. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

### **GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I move that the adjourned debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be now resumed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise again to continue the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. As I was saying as the speech came out, there are a number of positive things. There always are in a Throne Speech on some of the things that the government is putting forward as a priority, and certainly they made clear that health care is a priority. But as was mentioned widely by a number of people, housing wasn't mentioned very much.

There were other issues that I think took a back seat to some of their priorities and should have been talked about more, but housing is what has stuck out the most, given the situation that we find ourselves in and given that housing is a human right. I think that should be acknowledged in this province, as it is by the United Nations and other organizations.

Why it is a human right is because it underpins everything that one does in life. Whether it's the quality of education that you are able to access or other social determinants of health, housing really is the foundation - to have not only a roof over your head but a safe, warm place to be.

As opposition parties, we are putting pressure on government to come up with some kind of a plan to deal with the immediate need so that people have that place to live or a place to be during the Winter months, which are upon us.



The housing crisis is driven by a number of factors. I know the Premier is quick to jump up and say that this didn't happen now, that it accumulated over the last eight years, or if the NDP asked the question, it accumulated over the last 12 years, but he won't go further than that.

The reality is that all levels of government and Parties had a stake in the planning of where we are today, to ensure that we had a sufficient affordable housing strategy. Then it's hard to predict something like COVID-19 happening and having that significant pressure on virtually all of the issues that are facing our province, exacerbating issues in the long-term care sector, issues around housing of course, affordable child care, health care - lots of issues. Nova Scotia is experiencing unprecedented population growth, which of course puts pressure on affordable housing and attainable housing.

Our economic growth and our response to the pandemic compounded this. There are developments across the province, certainly around my area and Halifax, where they weren't selling as many homes before the pandemic hit and now you can't find a home to buy in these areas. Across the province, a lot of homes were being bought sight unseen.

For the first time ever, we have more in-migration coming from different parts of the country that we never had before, so our vacancy rate is roughly 1 per cent, one of the lowest in the country. Housing prices are skyrocketing in the range of 30 per cent to 70 per cent across the province, from Cape Breton to the South Shore.

[5:15 p.m.]

It is also an economic barrier. That's why we need to take action, because there's such an opportunity to bring more people to this province. People want to be in Nova Scotia, so we need to make sure that we're taking advantage of that.

House prices go up and that means that rent goes up. The average rent prices now are in the range of \$1,400 a month. That's why it's important to look at some of the levers we have. Rent control - right now it's set to expire with the state of emergency ending, putting thousands of Nova Scotians at risk of massive rent increases and in danger of becoming homeless. Right now there are over 300 people still homeless in the City of Halifax. There are differences in numbers and trying to track where it is, but it was even higher than that if you go back to December, where there were 480 people.

I knew that after visiting a lot of the shelters when I was running in the leadership race and listening to people at Metro Turning Point, where it was full; the Association of Affordable Housing, doing their best to try to track where the numbers were going; and disproportionate impacts on communities that are vulnerable. Seventy per cent of public housing tenants and 60 per cent of rent supplement clients are women, people of African descent, Indigenous persons, or other racialized groups, and they all continue to face systemic barriers when they try to access affordable housing.

That speaks to a lot of the need to look at our policy from the provincial government - all governments, but the provincial government is the lead in this jurisdiction.

What kind of social workers do we have in the system? Are we targeting to make sure that we have dedicated space for social workers who are reflective of people that they serve in communities?

There are seniors living homeless, as has been reported recently. We need wraparound supports, and it is the jurisdiction of the province to provide those supports: mental health, addiction specialists, more social workers.

It was mentioned that HRM went ahead with the modular housing project, the 24 modular homes. That's not an answer of why we're not funding it. They're doing it in absence of funding from the Province. That is directly the provincial responsibility to provide those homes, so at the very least, why doesn't the government just provide some of the funding and cost share for those units?

The housing crisis has its roots in our economic success, and that's the reality of what we're facing today. It's no excuse not to take action, but Nova Scotia's population was stagnant for two decades. From the year 2000 to 2015 - this is an impressive number - how much did we grow in our population over that 15 years? Three thousand people. In the last five years, we've grown by 40,000 people. Back then, people were leaving our province, job prospects were less, and there were empty storefronts across the province. That's changed. We have net migration. We have tremendous success of the refugees coming in from Syria setting up businesses across the province. The very face of our population has changed, and that's a good thing.

Now the new government - which will celebrate when we hit the one million mark, largely because of the many policies and strategies that were come up with in collaboration with the federal government - they need to come up with a plan on how we build enough housing stock. We're going to need tens of thousands of units built and it's going to require all governments and organizations to work together to do that.

Halifax went from zero cranes in the air in 2010 to 39 this year. Up in Cape Breton, when we were visiting there recently, we were told there is actually zero commercial space to rent in the whole municipality. This is pressure. Sometimes success brings challenges, and all counties at one point over the last year have seen growth. It used to be that it was the Central Zone that was the only area of this province seeing growth. This was a major focus for the Stephen McNeil government - economic growth - and we succeeded in bringing growth after decades of stagnation.

The housing crisis was building before the pandemic with record growth, but the pandemic really had an impact. It impacted a lot of things: lumber prices skyrocketing,

people losing their jobs. Again, this is during the time where I was in the leadership trying to figure out solutions, and the government brought in rent control to protect tenants. They also formed the housing commission, the Affordable Housing Commission.

While I was in leadership, all of those things were happening, and now I want to talk about what our government did to try to help with this issue. I will note, while I was the Premier - the term was not a long one - but action was taken because this issue mattered to our government. Perhaps more was done in that time frame, that five months, than any five months in history on housing and I would ask the government to consider they've been in two months, so they have just a few months to go to match what we did or do better.

During that difficult time for Nova Scotians, in the middle of the pandemic, it was clear to me that something needed to be done right away, so I eagerly awaited the Affordable Housing Commission's report and recommendations to ensure that what we did aligned with what the experts were proposing, both short-term and long-term. They drew insights from 36 experts and more than 2,000 Nova Scotians through public consultation. They came out with a 61-page report with 17 recommendations rooted in evidence and best practices. Once it was completed and submitted, we accepted every single one of the recommendations.

At the time, rent control was already in place, and we were not prepared to remove it until our vacancy rate changed and tenants had choice in the market. We immediately invested \$25 million to ensure that they had 600 to 900 households built in the near term. If they had asked for more, we would have provided more. That was the request. I just want to table some quotes from some of the participants who were on that committee.

"The acceptance of our report and these first investments demonstrate the province's commitment to the task at hand." That was Jim Graham, member of the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission.

"It is an important first step that has the potential to set the province on a pathway to meaningfully addressing the housing crisis, especially through the development of more affordable community housing." That was Karen Brodeur, manager of Atlantic Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada.

I'll table that.

Those are important investments, but it didn't address the immediate need for permanent supportive housing for those people who need it on the street. We invested to the tune of \$7 million on permanent supportive housing - and I think the minister referenced some of this in debate - on Pepperell Street and the purchase of a Travelodge, to ensure that we had some place for people to go who need it immediately. I would encourage the government to look at this. Maybe they should put in another \$7 million, provide another 100 units for people, because there's 300 people on the street or couch surfing.

I believe, and I think the government ought to believe, that everyone has a right to adequate housing and that housing also is a critical sector of our economy and a social determinant of health. What is required is to work together, and we are going to make it clear in this session that we will put forward some ideas and try our best to work with the government.

With the current government's mandate clearly focused on health care, health care, health care, and with the Throne Speech and mandate letters having no emphasis on housing, by now I have lost count of the number of times I have heard the words "solutions" and "plan." Yet here we are two months in, and I have not heard what these solutions are, and we have yet to see any plans.

On housing, what has become abundantly clear is that this government wants to rely on market forces and that the market will solve this issue. But when push comes to shove, who is the government here to support? Market intervention is one of the few tools that government has. We need to protect people and tenants, often those who are most vulnerable. I sincerely hope the government considers our ideas around rent control tied to vacancy rates and on compensating renters. This is a balanced approach. It respects the need to invest while ensuring some protection for renters.

On top of that, we have seen the government come forward with a \$2.5 million marketing investment to attract newcomers from across the country. That's an ambitious target: 2,500 new immigrants per year. While we face a growing homelessness issue and have lower-income Nova Scotians pressured by housing prices, where are these newcomers going to go? This is a major issue for our growing economy. It's clear there's a need, and we're way past finger-pointing and a promise of a plan to build a plan. We need action. It's getting colder outside every day, and we hope the Progressive Conservatives will listen and partner with us and pass these crucial bills and make these urgent investments.

We have already tabled three pieces in this session. Attaching rent control in the Renter Protection Act to a 3 per cent vacancy rate - evidence-based. Inclusionary zoning for affordable and emergency housing, similar to bills that were brought forward in the Legislature before - it's time to pass that bill. The Renovation Eviction Protection Act, giving compensation when there's renovations happening up to six months. If they want more ideas than that, there was plenty in our platform to choose from, backed up by experts who attended our announcements during the campaign - or look through the 17 recommendations that we committed to previous to the election. Meet with the stakeholders. The ideas are out there with organizations, with partnerships.

This is just the beginning, and we'll do more to protect Nova Scotians. We need a long-term solution, and we need to build tens of thousands of units, some of them non-market, funded, affordable housing units, housing that is permanently affordable; and non-profit and co-op housing, with public-led approaches for everyone who needs it. This will

require collaboration between the province, municipalities, non-profit organizations, service providers, and developers.

We'll need houses to be built by the private sector, too. For that, we need to put incentives in place to make direct investments. Those incentives have many forms, such as tax credits for builders of affordable housing units, and the incentives need to be attached to a legal commitment to ensure that the prices remain at a reasonable rate.

As the Economic Growth Council that I put together highlighted, this is actually an opportunity in Nova Scotia. We have an opportunity to build houses and grow jobs at the same time and do better for the environment, make net zero buildings.

Housing outcomes have both social and economic impacts. When we put forward campaigns for immigrants to choose a place to live and work, the price, availability, and quality of our housing stock will affect our province's ability to compete for talent, grow sustainably, and provide an inclusive and high quality of life. When a new home is being built, rented, sold, or maintained, these activities require products and services and contribute to our overall economic well-being. This residential construction in Nova Scotia will create thousands of jobs and billions in wages, and generate significant tax revenues.

Housing is a human right and a strategic sector for our province. It is a driver and a condition for social equity, economic prosperity, and healthy communities. That's why I urge the government to sincerely consider legislation before this House. Let's address this housing crisis together by working together.

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

**GARY BURRILL:** Well, Mx. Speaker, let me say first - and I say not just on behalf of our own caucus, but, I'm sure, on behalf of all the members of the House - that it is a privilege for us to be able to gather to acknowledge the significance of your position in the Chair. (Applause) We welcome you to that position.

I'm happy to address a few comments to the Speech from the Throne as it was presented to us on Tuesday. To make a long story short, it is rather a strange document with so much absent from it that needs to be present and, at the same time, so much present in it that it would be better if it weren't.

The glaring absence, as has been noted, of course, is the housing crisis. My colleague the Leader of the Liberal Party, I thought, was excessively generous when commenting on the speech a couple of days ago. He said he found it light on housing - light, okay, for sure: one, poor little defenceless sentence on housing, on the subject, unsupported by any points, by any indication of a program, by any plans; and that sentence just a little secondary part of another paragraph that's on another subject altogether.

Any regular person who was following the speech being read on Tuesday, as they listened to it and they noted that it had plans and programs and purposes on environmental things, plans and purposes and programs on health care things, and plans and purposes and programs on things related to democratic accountability, and then they came to this measly, sad, single, lone, shivering housing sentence - why wouldn't they then conclude that the authors of this document were not people for whom housing was a great deal of priority? Why wouldn't they conclude that the authors of the document were not people for whom housing was something that was animating all their thinking about the future of Nova Scotia? It was not driving their energy. It was not, for them, a matter of priority. Of course, that's what they would conclude.

[5:30 p.m.]

As a matter of fact, I think it's a pretty reasonable conclusion, not just about the speech but also about the work to this point of the government that this speech stands for. Yes, this little shivering, isolated sentence on housing in the Speech from the Throne says something that is true. It says: "We are in a housing crisis."

One of that crisis's most sharp dimensions is, of course, the sudden arbitrary, dramatic, escalating rent. We know that 20 per cent of our province's renters are paying more than 50 per cent of their income for their shelter. We know that rent for a one-bedroom apartment in this city has gone up 20 per cent year over year here in Halifax.

We know that when people come to our constituency offices, as they do with notices of rent increases that are in the hundreds of dollars, they're in great dismay. In the course of talking to us, there's one thing they always say. They say: "They can't do that, can they?" We have to tell them that unless you have permanent rent control, at the end of the temporary rent cap, unfortunately, in fact they can.

I'm saying "unfortunately" because they can't do that in British Columbia. They can't do that in Ontario. It's illegal to do that in Manitoba. It's against the law to do that in Quebec. You can't do it in P.E.I. But landlords can do it in Nova Scotia. It is legal. It is a part of our system in our province because this government will not extend to the people of Nova Scotia the protections that are already today extended to a majority of the people in our country.

The sad little shivering isolated housing sentence in the Speech from the Throne reflects something very significant. It reflects a lack of commitment, focus, and priority on the housing crisis which is, in fact, the case. Wait, wait, wait - the government answers. Just hang on there. No, no, no, no, no, we have a plan. It's coming.

You will pardon me, Mx. Speaker, if I don't just take my leave hearing that and run up to Dublin and Chebucto and holler out, "Everybody gather 'round! Good news! It's all gonna be okay. The Progressive Conservatives say they have a plan - it's coming!" You'll

excuse me if I don't go back to all those doors I knocked on this Summer where the parent told me about the kids being in the basement a lot longer than they'd planned because the down payment keeps moving away from something they can grasp.

You'll excuse me if I don't go back to those homes, knock on the door, pop open a bottle of champagne, and say, "Good news! Guess what? The Progressive Conservatives have a plan! It's coming!" You'll let me off the hook, Mx. Speaker, if I don't send an email to every one of the constituents who has contacted me out of fear for their rental situations and say, "Oh, good news! The Progressive Conservatives have a plan! It's coming!"

I'm not going to do that because there is a place for a government's plan. There is a place for a government's program. There is a place for those things that a government is prepared to stand on and to bring forward and to set out. The name of that place is the Speech from the Throne. In this one, the housing crisis is in absence.

As I say, it's an odd document because some of what's present here - it's an odd, odd - Mx. Speaker, you will be good enough to reclaim the floor for me. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

GARY BURRILL: As I say, it's an odd document because some of what is present in the document, it would be better if it were absent. It is startling and disappointing to me that at this historic moment of post-COVID-19 economic recovery, where so much of our future depends on the effectiveness of the government's economic program. A centrepiece of that program, as laid out in this speech, is this very poorly thought through idea to boost consumer spending power by allowing business not to pay their taxes if they paid the savings on to their employees.

Mr. Speaker, I would call the so-called Better Pay Cheque Guarantee a hare-brained scheme, except for the fact that I have had, in the past, some quite intelligent rabbits for pets, and I don't want to insult the species.

There is a reason why other jurisdictions are not putting forward . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Madam Speaker, the reference to hare-brained schemes - I think Nova Scotians spoke very loudly and very clearly on Election Day when they made the determination as to what they thought of the validity.

THE SPEAKER: Do you have a point of order?

THE PREMIER: Yes, the point of order is that the antics and actions of the member, although very predictable with throwing stuff on the floor and using kind of elementary school language, it's not parliamentary. If he wants to have a serious discussion about the issues and he wants Nova Scotians to take him seriously, I would suggest that he act in such a way. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I would ask the honourable Leader to refrain from using the term "hare-brained."

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party, on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

GARY BURRILL: Thank you, Mx. Speaker, and I retract the term.

There is a good reason why other jurisdictions aren't putting forward schemes of this sort and that is that economics isn't magic. The government revenue that would be forgone by means of such a proposal - potentially up to \$200 million annually - is exactly the revenue that will be required to fund the programs and initiatives that are listed elsewhere in the Throne Speech. Every dollar businesses don't pay in taxes is a dollar that those initiatives will be deprived of. Period.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech appears at such an absolutely critical moment in the economic life of Nova Scotia, when the challenges of post-COVID-19 economic redevelopment are coming at the same time as the enormous opportunities presented by the economy of renewables and resilience.

This is why we in the NDP continue to call for the development of a multi-sector, all-party economic recovery task force to provide the necessary leadership in this critical moment. This is why it would be preferable if silly pseudo-solutions, such as the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee business that has been put forward in this Throne Speech, were simply absent from the economic development picture.

Of course, there is a great deal more present in this Throne Speech, which is quite literally awash in words. It reminds me of an old gospel hymn that some here may have heard, a hymn that keeps circling back to the refrain, wonderful words, beautiful words, wonderful words and so on, but it is not. It's wonderful words by which the measure of this government will be taken - certainly not in health where the government's measure will be taken on results in such areas as adequate pay for CCAs, reopening the doors to the attractiveness of the vocation; in such areas as advancing mental health appointment wait times to a same-day, next-day level, as with our provincial neighbours; in such areas as reversing the worsening trend of emergency room closures so that ambulances don't spend precious time driving across counties looking for an ER that's open.

Nor will the measure of the government be taken on its words when it comes to the environment, sustainability and climate. The Lahey review must simply be implemented,



and any delay must be accompanied by a moratorium on clear-cutting on Crown land until the full forestry triad model is brought into effect. Nova Scotia's environmental goals and targets must be consistent with the IPCC imperative to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees.

We will be weighing this government, Mr. Speaker, not according to the number of times you can cram the word "solutions" into a 40-minute Throne Speech discourse, rather we will be weighing it by the measure of its results.

Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is 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 do now rise to meet again on Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Government business will include second reading of Bill No. 13 and Bill No. 11, and time permitting, we will allow for Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Friday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 5:41 p.m.]

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**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 7**

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas marriages are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage is the celebration of love, trust and partnership; and

Whereas on September 18, 2021, a very special occasion occurred when Brandon Whynot and Hannah LeBlanc, of Liverpool celebrated their wedding; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Brandon and Hannah Whynot on their marriage and wish them a lifetime of health and happiness.

**RESOLUTION NO. 8**

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas marriages are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage is the celebration of love, trust and partnership; and

Whereas on September 12, 2021, a very special occasion took place when Ed Cassidy and Julie Dunbar of Queens County celebrated their wedding; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ed and Julie on their marriage and wish them a lifetime of health and happiness.

**RESOLUTION NO. 9**

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. Leshan wrote; and

Whereas on September 18, 2021, parents Joseph and Janessa Allison welcomed their daughter Indy Jeran Marie Allison into the world; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Joseph and Janessa on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.

**RESOLUTION NO. 10**

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road, where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas a new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities, author Eda J. Leshan wrote; and

Whereas on September 3, 2021, parents Marissa Robar and Robert Stuart welcomed their daughter Ivy Gail into the world; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Marissa and Robert on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.