



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2021

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 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. Before we begin our daily routine, under Rule 5(5), the topic for late debate was submitted by the honourable member for Dartmouth South:

Therefore be it resolved allowing people to present virtually to the Law Amendments Committee would improve public accessibility and government transparency.

Again, that will be brought up at the moment of interruption.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a petition entitled: “We the undersigned, as residents of Lingan Road, Sydney, N.S. (from Mary Jane Road to the Radar Base), respectfully request the Nova Scotia Government through the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure and Renewal (sic) reduce the speed and eliminate unsafe passing lanes to ensure the safety of residents living in the area and the children getting on and off school buses.”

Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 131 signatures and I have affixed my own, as per the Rules of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The petition will be taken under advisement and tabled at a later date.

The petition has been tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act Annual Report for 2020-21.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

As Speaker of the House of Assembly, and pursuant to Subsection 24(1) of the Ombudsman Act and Section 28 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act, I am tabling the Office of the Ombudsman's 2021 Annual Report.

The report is tabled.

Pursuant to Section 18(4) of the Auditor General Act, I am tabling the following reports of the Auditor General to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation - Phase II, May 2021; Follow-up of 2016, 2017, and 2018 Performance Audit Recommendations; and Planning and Implementation of the Pre-Primary Program.

The reports are tabled.

Pursuant to Section 33(7) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and Section 4(3) of the Privacy Review Officer Act, and Section 93(b) of the Personal Health Information Act, I am tabling the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Nova Scotia 2020-21 Annual Report.

The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

RESOLUTION NO. 17

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

Whereas the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal is awarded to members of a recognized Canadian fire service who have completed 20 years of service; and

Whereas 10 years of that service must have involved potential risks; and

Whereas members of the Canadian fire departments, Fire Marshals' Offices, Fire Commissioners' Offices, and Canadian Forces . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Minister, that would be a Government Notice of Motion, not a Statement by a Minister.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

RESOLUTION NO. 17

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'll start over again.

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

Whereas the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal is awarded to members of a recognized Canadian fire service who have completed 20 years of service; and

Whereas 10 years of that service must have involved potential risks; and

Whereas members of the Canadian fire departments, Fire Marshals' Offices, Fire Commissioners' Offices, and Canadian Forces Fire Services are eligible;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate Doug MacKenzie, Nova Scotia's Acting Fire Marshal, on receiving the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal, which I was pleased to present him with last month.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

RESOLUTION NO. 18

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

Whereas the Ecology Action Centre, one of our province's most important and influential environmental leadership organizations, is marking its 50th anniversary in 2021; and

Whereas for five decades, the board of directors, staff, and volunteers of the Ecology Action Centre have advanced critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice, and their work has helped to call attention to, or address, many key issues including recycling, banning of single-use plastics, land and coastal protection, sustainable transportation in communities, electricity generation and energy efficiency, protection of right whales, local food and food security, and climate goals; and

Whereas through its policy advocacy, community development and leadership, the Ecology Action Centre is helping create a just and sustainable future for our province while also serving as a watchdog that has helped hold governments accountable since 1971;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join me in thanking the Ecology Action Centre for their work in leadership over the past 50 years to make Nova Scotia a better place and we wish them success on another 50 years of leadership and advocacy.

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. 30 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, The Residential Tenancies Act. (Hon. Colton LeBlanc)

Bill No. 31 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 203 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, The Homes for Special Care Act, Respecting Staffing Levels. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 32 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998. The Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Inclusionary Zoning. (Hon. John Lohr)

Bill No. 33 - Entitled an Act Respecting Physician Assistants. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 34 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 2 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, The Adult Protection Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

[1:15 p.m.]

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

WEBB, BRENDA: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, on October 18th I had the honour of visiting Hillsvie Acres to deliver 70th birthday wishes to Brenda Webb.

Brenda is known to many as a caregiver. She started in this role an impressive 37 years ago, and in 1991 she opened Meadowbrook Manor, an 11-room senior care facility. Caring for approximately 125 seniors at Meadowbrook until its doors closed this year, she also employed dozens of local residents. It is worth noting that she did this in the early years, all while being a single mother.

In addition to her career, Brenda has also been involved in many different community organizations. She made it her mission to always do whatever she could for the South Brookfield Baptist Church, the South Brookfield Cemetery, and the North Queens Fire and Queens County Fair Associations.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize Brenda here today, to thank her for her many years of service in her community and to, again, wish her a very happy 70th birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

BAILEY, MARYANNE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge the lifelong dedication to raising funds and awareness for the Terry Fox Foundation by MaryAnne Bailey.

MaryAnne, while attending Duncan MacMillan High met and ran with Terry Fox during his Marathon of Hope in May 1980. MaryAnne loved her career as an elementary core French teacher. She taught in more than 25 schools with the Halifax County and Halifax Regional School Board, Grades 4 to 6 since 1988.

She was a passionate spokesperson for the Terry Fox Foundation in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. MaryAnne worked with the Terry Fox Foundation and has organized over 50 runs for schools and community.

MaryAnne closed her eyes to the world on October 18, 2020. This marked the end of her seventh courageous battle with cancer - she dealt with and challenged ovarian cancer for over 25 years.

I ask for members of this House of Assembly to join me in recognizing MaryAnne Bailey for her life filled with dedication and perseverance for a cause that has affected so many of us.

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

ST. MICHAEL'S POLISH BENEFIT SOCIETY: POLISH HERITAGE MONTH EVENTS - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Whitney Pier's St. Michael's Polish Benefit Society and its president, Tom Urbaniak, for hosting a variety of successful art, cultural, and educational events within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality and my riding of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier during Polish Heritage Month.

The suppers the society put on quickly sold out. The society and St. Mary's Polish Church hosted events displaying beautiful artwork and literature showcasing the stories of Polish immigration. The Beaton Institute held a free workshop on Documenting Immigration, using the Institute's extensive Polish Collection. The Cape Breton University

Tompkins Institute and the St. Michael's Polish Benefit hosted *Poletown Lives!* at the Boardmore Theatre.

Mr. Speaker, these are only a few events that took place during the month of September. Please join me in congratulating the hard-working individuals who made these events possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

**LONG ISLAND AND BRIER ISLAND:
RESILIENCY OF THESE SMALL COMS. - RECOG.**

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to share my experience as I travelled to Tiverton for my first town hall meeting on September 26, 2021. Residents and I discussed the challenges, concerns, ideas, and solutions regarding two very important topics: health care and employment.

Long Island and Brier Island are both small, strong, and beautiful communities. I look forward to continuing to work with the community members of Long Island and Brier Island in hopes to establish sustainable health care and employment for its citizens.

I would like to commend the resiliency of these communities, as for many years they have felt neglected but continued to thrive in many ways.

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

COVERT, ALLISON: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I rise today to acknowledge my friend first, and constituency assistant second, Allison Covert. Allison, for the past five years, has gone above and beyond in capacity of her role in my office and in my life. In fact, anyone who's ever met Allison knows that that's just who she is. She can, so she does, and if she can't, she figures it out.

Although there is a laundry list of members' statements I could write in her honour today, I'm focusing on a recent occurrence that truly sums up how amazing this woman is. A few weeks ago, constituents from a neighbouring constituency came into our office, referred by a newly elected MLA who hadn't set up their office yet. A woman, pregnant, vulnerable, someone who due to extreme circumstances had found themselves alone in the world, came into my office, and within a short amount of time went into labour.

Allison stayed by this woman's side at the office, in the ambulance, in the delivery room, coaching her, helping her, going above and beyond because, you know, it's what she does. Now godmother to a healthy baby, Allison will stay with this family and continue to

advocate for them, not because it's her job, but like with everything she does, because of her heart.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DAYE, MRS. LAURA: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today with great sadness to announce the passing of a community matriarch, Mrs. Laura Daye. Mrs. Daye passed away earlier this week, surrounded by the love of her family. She was a firm believer in family, education, and love for one another. She was a faithful servant who was no stranger to the power of prayer. She was a good and faithful servant who inspired and instilled in all of us in the community to get our education, respect our elders, and love one another.

My heart hurts today, as it will for a while as this news truly hits home, but I know that in her passing she had a long line of family to usher her into the kingdom of Heaven, led by the love of her life, Mr. Delmore "Buddy" Daye.

I ask the members of this House to stand with me for a moment of silence in remembrance of a matriarch in our community of Halifax Needham, Mrs. Laura Daye.

THE SPEAKER: Please stand for a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

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

**OUR HEALTH CENTRE:
THRIVE MENTAL HEALTH WALK-IN CLINIC - RECOG.**

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I rise today to acknowledge Our Health Centre in Chester, a not-for-profit community health care sector health and wellness hub serving Chester municipality and the South Shore area, owned and operated by the community for the community.

One new initiative to which I want to bring attention is their THRIVE mental health walk-in clinic, which provides free appointments with a mental health professional every Tuesday evening. Appointments are a supportive space in which individuals can discuss their concerns, learn strategies, and connect with community resources, services, and additional mental health supports best suited to provide support on an on-going basis.

This clinic has been fully booked the first weeks of its operation and I am thrilled that this much-needed resource is available to our constituents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**ST. JAMES UNITED CHURCH VOLUNTEERS:
FISH MEALS ORGANIZ. - THANKS**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I stand here today to recognize all the volunteers at St. James United Church in Sambro.

Several times a year, they put together some of the best meals in all of Nova Scotia, from a swordfish meal to halibut to lobster and so much more. Mr. Speaker, fresh fish is good for the belly and the soul.

Thank you all for the meals and the love you have for all of us, and thank you to all our local fishers for their donation of fresh fish. If you haven't tried the meals, you're missing out.

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

JANTZEN, ANDREW: ADVOCACY WORK FOR DISABLED - THANKS

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Halifax Citadel-Sable Island resident Andrew Jantzen. Andrew has been active in community building in our community for many years and worked extensively with youth, including in wilderness programming.

Andrew has a chronic illness called Ehlers Danlos-Syndrome (EDS), which impacts muscles and joints and creates chronic pain. Over time, he has progressively lost mobility and now uses a motorized wheelchair.

During the pandemic, Andrew, like so many others, felt abandoned by the Government of Nova Scotia. He was a strong advocate for the government to expand its COVID-19 response plan to take into account the needs of people with disabilities and compromised health. He shared his experiences on Facebook, creating a special advocacy page called Tales of a Homecare Castaway, where he chronicled his struggle to maintain daily home care support. Cancellations were common, leaving Andrew in or out of bed all day or without access to meals.

Andrew is also the Atlantic Region Coordinator for the Tetra Society of North America, which focuses on finding solutions to barriers faced by folks with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in thanking Andrew for the advocacy work that he does on behalf of all Nova Scotians with disabilities. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**PICTOU COUNTY TRAILS ASSOC.:
RECIP. OF MOST ACTIVE COUNTY AWARD - RECOG.**

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize and congratulate the Pictou County Trails Association on recently earning the 2021 Heartland Tour's Most Active County Award. The award, worth \$2,500, is given to the county with the most participation in the Heartland Tour, which encourages Nova Scotians of all ages and abilities to be more physically active to improve their health.

The funds were awarded to the association on Oct. 2nd at Smith Rock Lodge & Chalets and will be used to replace an important bridge that is part of the Fitzpatrick Mountain Trail network.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the members and volunteers of the Pictou County Trails Association for their hard work and dedication to leading and promoting physical activity in Pictou County, and I hope that they can retain their title in 2022. I challenge all your communities to beat us. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS MONTH:
ACCEPTANCE OF THOSE WITH DS - RECOG.**

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Down Syndrome Awareness Month internationally, I want to speak about Dr. John Langdon Down. "Down" has nothing to do with delays or disposition. It is rather named after an inspirational change-maker, Dr. John Langdon Down, a British physician who knew that, as a society, we could do better.

He wrote a prominent paper describing this genetic condition in the 1860s. Something about people with the genetic condition interested him, and he was infuriated by the way they were treated in institutions. He saw their value and their humanity. Dr. Down insisted on change.

We all have the pleasure of knowing people with Down syndrome. We can see their abilities. However, they still face stereotypes and myths. People with Down syndrome continue to show us that their condition does not define their abilities and that, in fact, they enrich our communities by their contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members to join me in spreading the message of acceptance, inclusion, and awareness for all Nova Scotians who have Down syndrome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**YOUNG, TIFFANI:
NATURAL BUTTER BAR'S SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge a Dartmouth North business - a new business - whose products both myself and my staff use: Natural Butter Bar.

[1:30 p.m.]

Tiffani Young launched Natural Butter Bar out of her home in Dartmouth North in December 2020. An African Nova Scotian woman who stopped chemically processing her hair, Tiffani had difficulty finding local products that worked for her natural hair.

Natural Butter Bar's oils and butters, which can be used in hair or on skin, include natural ingredients such as avocado, coconut, cocoa, shea, olive, and almond. Their products are available at fellow Dartmouth North business Flenjor Foods, as well as online and in various pop-up markets.

As part of their commitment to inclusion, diversity, and accessibility, Natural Butter Bar will also print braille labels upon request, and their packaging is 100 per cent recyclable in Nova Scotia.

This Small Business Week, please join me in congratulating Tiffani Young on her successful first year of business and wish her all the best in the years to come. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**MATTHEWS, DAVE:
CALLED TO PLAY FOR MONCTON WILDCATS - CONGRATS.**

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to recognize Dave Matthews, a young hockey player from Louisdale, Richmond County, who like many, has a dream of playing professional hockey.

Dave, who is a member of the Pictou County Crushers of the Maritime Junior A Hockey League, was recently called up to play for the Moncton Wildcats of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. Dave is from the same small village of Louisdale that I am, where I grew up playing hockey, and is the first hockey player from Louisdale to play in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

He has been extremely dedicated to crafting his skills and I want to congratulate Dave on his great success, which is also a big achievement for our small community of Louisdale. Well done, Dave. We are all very proud of you.

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

LUKE, GRACE: 100th BIRTHDAY - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize an outstanding Colby Village resident who celebrated her 100th birthday this year. Born in 1921 in Timmins, Ontario, Grace Luke was raised by Scottish parents who firmly believed that education for girls was a must. While music was her major, she also studied art at Sir Wilfred Laurier University and completed a term of art studies in Italy. Her artwork can be found throughout Canada in private collections. Her life career has been that of a teacher of piano, voice lessons, along with art classes as well.

Grace says that she tries to find joy in everything possible. Her family, friends and her acquaintances through music and art all contribute to her happiness. To quote Grace, a ray of sunshine streaming through a window brings her joy. Even saving a tiny house spider and setting it free makes her happy.

I ask members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Grace Luke for gracing us with her gifts of the arts and her amazing outlook on life over her 100 years.

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

**NEW WATERFORD LEGION BR. 15:
SENIOR BREAKFAST DELIV. PGM. - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the New Waterford Legion Branch 15's senior breakfast delivery program.

The members of Branch 15 are hard-working and dedicated community members. They strive to be active in the community, including during COVID-19, when they began the breakfast program at the suggestion of member Rick Hanes.

This is a wonderful program for seniors in the community. It allows for seniors, especially during COVID-19, to be able to connect with community members twice a month. During COVID-19, many seniors faced isolation and loneliness. The breakfast program provided seniors with much-needed social interaction to alleviate those feelings of loneliness and isolation. I thank them and I hope the House will join me in thanking them as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

**YOUNG, ADAM:
CANADIAN FOLK MUSIC AWARD NOMINATION - CONGRATS.**

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Adam Young of the small community of French Road, Cape Breton, who was nominated for the Canadian Folk Music Award in Instrumental Solo Artist category, for his release *Yearbook*. Adam is a sought-after pianist who created and directed the Louisbourg Playhouse's popular music and comedy revue *Cape Breton Lyrics & Laughter*, which has seen well over 350 performances since it began 18 years ago. The album is a collection of the best tunes Young wrote during a "tune-a-day" exercise from a few years ago.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Young on his nomination and wish him continued success in the music industry.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**PHARMACISTS AND PHARM. TECHNICIANS:
HEALTH SERVS. DURING PANDEMIC - THANKS**

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to celebrate a group of people who are health care professionals oftentimes we don't acknowledge. For that reason, I'd like to take this opportunity to celebrate all the pharmacists and pharmacist technicians in our community.

In the past, pharmacists have worked extremely hard to provide household necessities such as medical products or even cleaning supplies. They make sure we get medications we need, as well as provide counselling and treatment options we may need from doctors.

Over the course of the pandemic, however, pharmacists across the province have stepped up in our time of need. It is estimated that one in five Nova Scotians use their local pharmacists for health care service during the pandemic. With doctors in short supply, our pharmacists and pharmacist technicians have shown immense dedication to the welfare and support of all Nova Scotians. On top of all their prior duties and extra counselling they have provided during the pandemic, they have been at the forefront of the COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Over half of all vaccinations in Nova Scotia were administered by a pharmacist.

Mr. Speaker, I relied really heavily on them to get through these two years. I would like to voice my appreciation today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BLUE COLLAR BARBER SHOP: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Blue Collar Barbershop located on Gottingen Street in the North End of Halifax, registered in 2018.

Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, they have continued on and made a home in our community. The proprietor, Stuart Cochrane, has made it part of the mission to give back to the community quietly, knowing the dignity of individuals who come overrides the fanfare that could be used as advertising.

On Small Business Week, it is important for us to highlight those businesses that are making a difference, whether quietly or out loud. These local shops are a big part of what makes Halifax Needham such a wonderful community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**LABRADOR, TODD:
BUILDING TRAD. MI'KMAQ BIRCHBARK CANOE - CONGRATS.**

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Todd Labrador, a member of the Acadia First Nation, who shared with our community his traditional knowledge and skill by building a 16-foot traditional Mi'kmaq birchbark canoe at the Lunenburg School of the Arts this past September.

Made entirely from materials harvested by Todd and his family and covered in beautiful and deeply meaningful symbols from his culture, this canoe was then launched on the Lunenburg waterfront on Treaty Day, offering a meaningful symbol of education and connection for hundreds of onlookers.

I wish to congratulate and sincerely thank Todd and his entire family for their talent, generosity of spirit, teachings, and commitment to helping us on the path to reconciliation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

FIELD, RENEE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a wonderful constituent who works tirelessly to help my riding grow and flourish.

Renee Field is a mother of four children who's committed to giving back to our community. She's volunteered so many years at her children's elementary school and founded the Rockingham Residents Association, which raised funds for the redesign of the local playground.

I met Renee in 2017 while she was working so hard and attempted to establish the Clayton Park West Business Commission. She is also right now involved in the new adventure in our constituency, which is the Birdland Community Garden Society.

I want to acknowledge that Renee was a candidate for District 10 in the last municipal election. I commend her for putting her name forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the House to join me in thanking Renee for her work in Clayton Park West over the past two decades.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

GEO'S PIZZERIA: GRAND OPENING - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on October 9th, my family and I were lucky enough to attend the grand opening of Geo's Pizzeria in Burnside. Not much is better than a grand opening at a pizza place, if you ask me, especially when you have two hungry children.

Co-owned by siblings Susanna and Fayed Toulany, Geo's is more than a pizzeria. While we were there, we enjoyed a variety of appetizers and power bowls. There are also flatbreads on the menu and a full catering menu is available. The sit-down restaurant offers halal, gluten-free, lactose-free, and vegan options.

Susanna has been in the restaurant business for 16 years since the year she immigrated with her family from Lebanon. This is the third restaurant that she has owned, but the first that isn't a franchise. Sweetly, Geo's is named after Susanna's 5-year-old nephew, Geovanni.

Geo's officially opened in April, but due to the pandemic wasn't able to celebrate until this month. I'm thrilled that Geo's has joined the great roster of restaurants and other businesses in Burnside. I cannot wait to eat there again soon.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CAISSIE, ERICKA/MCCORMICK, TERRI - IN THE WORKS: SUPP. FOR YOUTH - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Ericka Caissie, as well as Terri McCormick. They're two moms who first approached me two years ago. They saw a need in the community for recovery services for youth suffering from addictions and mental illness. We first had our meeting two years ago, and we made an integral connection with a woman in the Department of Labour and Advanced

Education. Her name is Ann Leahy, and I want to give recognition to her today, as well as to the local credit union, which has been an integral partner.

These mothers have started something that will benefit many in the years to come. They started a social enterprise called In the Works, and I'm looking forward to seeing many youth being helped through this incredible service that they are starting.

I'm thankful to see the project gaining momentum, and I know that they will make a significant impact here in the community. Please join me today in thanking Ericka and Terri, as well as other team members for starting In the Works, a social enterprise.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**DOREY, CHRISTINA - SQUARE RTS. SACK.:
VEG. DELIVERY DURING PANDEMIC - THANKS**

HON. STEVE CRAIG: I rise today to thank Christina Dorey of Lower Sackville.

Christina Dorey, team lead volunteer of Square Roots Sackville, along with her wonderful team of volunteers have bundled and delivered approximately 44,000 pounds of vegetables since the onset of COVID-19 in March of last year.

Square Roots Sackville orders between 1,500 and 2,000 pounds of vegetables twice monthly from local farms. Once the order arrives, the team gets to work bundling the vegetables into 10-pound packages, and then they are delivered to needy families in the community. Any leftover produce is donated to local non-profit organizations, so nothing goes to waste.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking Christina and the wonderful volunteers with Square Roots Sackville for their efforts in addressing food insecurity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

ORGANIZERS OF INAUGURAL TERRA FONDO BIKE RIDE - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Monsieur le président, pour la deuxième année, les organisateurs du Gran Fondo Baie Sainte-Marie ont annulé leur randonnée cycloportive sur les routes de Clare, une réaction en raison du pandémie.

Le 2 Octobre, ce groupe a organisé le Terra Fondo, un trajet de 67,7 kilomètres en vélo de montagne sur les sentiers de Clare. Ce trajet comprenant des sections près de nos lacs et nos rivières ainsi que sur le sentier côtier à l'Anse-des-Belliveau. Sur les courtes sections de la route, les cyclistes ont passé devant la scierie historique de Bangor et ont

arrêté aux Marchés de la Baie. Le Terra Fondo s'est terminé à la Maison Richelieu, où les participants ont partagé un repas.

Je tiens à féliciter les organisateurs de cette randonnée automnale, et j'ai hâte du retour du Gran Fondo l'année prochaine après une pause de deux ans.

For the second year, the organizers of the Gran Fondo Baie Sainte-Marie have cancelled their very popular event due to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.

On October 2nd, they did organize a smaller event, a mountain bike ride called the Terra Fondo. This 67.7-kilometre ride was mainly on the trails around Clare, along our area's lakes and rivers, as well as the coastal trail in Belliveaus Cove. Though mainly off the main road, the bikers did go by the historic sawmill and stopped in Belliveaus Cove, the area's popular farm market. The ride ended at the Richelieu in Meteghan River, where the participants rested a bit and enjoyed a meal.

I want to commend the organizers for hosting this autumnal ride and hope for the successful return of the Gran Fondo next year after a two-year hiatus.

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

**DOWNTOWN HFX. BUS. ASSOC.:
INNOV. WORK TO SUPP. NEIGHBOURHOOD - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: As part of Small Business Week, I would like to recognize the Downtown Halifax Business Association.

The Downtown Halifax Business Association is the voice and resource for businesses located in the central business district of Halifax. They are a not-for-profit organization running programs, events, and marketing initiatives to make downtown Halifax a better place to live, work, and play.

Downtown Halifax changed during the pandemic, and small businesses struggled without tourists and workers. The association launched creative programming to bring people downtown, such as the Grand Oasis Summer Stage that hosted diverse programming and musical events during the Summer months.

Please join me in recognizing the innovative work of the Downtown Halifax Business Association to celebrate and support this neighbourhood.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

[1:45 p.m.]

**HENRY, MRS. MARY:
TEACHING FOR EQUEST. FED. IN HANTS WEST - RECOG.**

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I rise today to commend a lady who has been involved with the local Equestrian Federation in Hants West for more than five decades.

Mrs. Mary Henry began helping to form a pony club for the Annapolis and Fundy region in 1963. She was recently featured in *Hoofprints*, the official magazine of the Nova Scotia Equestrian Federation.

Mrs. Henry has a caring and sympathetic teaching method. She always instills in her students the importance of riding several times a week so that horses are fit and ready for the show ring. Another instrumental lesson she teaches her students is that they must know how to fall so that they are willing to get back on their ponies to ride again.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mary Henry, who, despite suffering some vision loss, is still passing on skills for the next generation of students at the pony club.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**NORTH SYDNEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY:
BANNER DISPLAY PROJECT - CONGRATS.**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the North Sydney Historical Society, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 19, and the North Sydney Volunteer Fire Department.

The Historical Society came up with an idea to display banners to honour veterans of North Sydney, past and present. The project was sponsored by the North Sydney Volunteer Fire Department and Branch 19 Legion in North Sydney.

Congratulations to Chairman Joe Meaney and Treasurer Harry Taylor, who are spearheading the project. Congratulations also to Robert Hillman, who is the building manager at the Historical Society in North Sydney.

I encourage all residents of the Northside to take a drive or walk through North Sydney and check out these wonderful banners in the near future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**BAM BAM BAGELS:
OPENING OF DARTMOUTH EAST STOREFRONT LOCATION - RECOG.**

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Sandy and Glen from Bam Bam Bagels, a local baked goods and eatery that recently opened in Dartmouth East.

Located on Tacoma Drive, Bam Bam Bagels has a lot to offer its customers. With Montreal-style bagels, homemade specialty cream cheeses, baked treats, and a salad bar, Bam Bam's is certainly the new spot to check out in Dartmouth.

Mr. Speaker, Sandy and Glen have the ability to make you feel like a family member when you walk into their shop. I know when my children and I went in there, the kids had no problem spending my money buying bagels and all the goodies. As their business grows, I look forward to seeing how they grow with it.

I ask that all members of the House join me in recognizing Sandy and Glen for opening their storefront location of Bam Bam Bagels.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

MATHNASIUM: GRAND OPENING - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the opening of Mathnasium, a math learning centre in my riding of Bedford South, and its owner and director, Rosalie Mendiola, on its grand opening this Saturday, October 23rd.

I am excited for the success of this small business, not only as an MLA but also as a father of two children and a lifelong learner. I recognize and value a business that focuses on improving learning experiences for our youth. This math-only learning concept has been shown to transform lives every day, helping children of all skill levels to understand and master math.

I encourage people to reach out and support Mathnasium, and congratulate Rosalie for the foresight and courage to start this great business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**MACMASTER, SARAH:
WORK ON CUMB. COUNTY YOUTH DEV. CTR. - THANKS**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today, I'd again like to recognize Sarah MacMaster and her team at Maggie's Place, a resource centre for families, as they take on the Cumberland Community Youth Development Centre. The centre is a collaborative project of the Cumberland Partners group, with supports from the Town of

Amherst and the Youth Mental Health Foundation. The centre is a safe place for youth to develop their full potential as they have a safe place to eat and build relationships with supportive adults and have some fun.

Youth in our community have not had a place to call their own, but they will in the days to come. This project has already shown significant engagement with our vulnerable youth. Today, I thank Sarah and her team at Maggie's Place, and all who have supported this incredible project, for their work and commitment to supporting our youth.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

LEBLANC, ALCIDE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Alcide LeBlanc, a Second World War veteran who passed away on September 3, 2021, at the age of 101 years old.

Mr. LeBlanc enlisted in June 1941. After being based in Sydney, Nova Scotia, for two years, he was transferred to Aldershot, where he trained for three months. He was trained as a military police officer before joining the 4th Field Regiment as an artillery gunner, spending ten and a half months on the front lines in Berlin until the end of the war. He continued on a peacekeeping mission for six months before being discharged in January 1946 and returning home after being away for four and a half years.

Mr. LeBlanc was the only surviving founder of the Wedgeport Legion and is its oldest Second World War veteran and member. I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in extending sincere condolences to his friends and family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

GOUCHER'S FARM MARKET: RECIP. OF BEST AGRIC. BUS. AWARD - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to recognize the Best Agriculture Business winner at the recent Valley's Best Awards - Goucher's Farm Market.

Valley's Best is an initiative of the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce and the winners are selected by the residents. Recipients can take great pride in knowing that their efforts are appreciated by so many in their community. This family business offers customers a variety of items, including fresh baked goods, local produce, free range chickens, turkey and local beef. They also provide U-Pick options, including some of the best and earliest strawberries around.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the entire Goucher's Farm Market team on being named best agriculture business at the recent Valley's Best Awards and thank them for the tremendous contribution to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**SPINAZOLA, MADONNA:
ORGANIZ. OF 1st ANNUAL KIDTREPREENEUR BUS. FAIR - RECOG.**

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Madonna Spinazola, organizer of the first annual Kidtrepreneur Business Fair in the community of Halls Harbour.

The Kidtrepreneur Business Fair showcased young entrepreneur art-related crafts and provided the children with the opportunity to market their projects. This type of activity encourages, inspires, and builds confidence and self-esteem in our youth.

Madonna believes that the children are society's greatest asset and our society needs to nurture, encourage, educate, invest in, respect, and listen to our youth. Please join me today to recognize Madonna Spinazola as organizer of the inaugural Halls Harbour Kidtrepreneur Business Fair.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

CHRISTIE, PETER GORDON: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share some sad news about the passing of a former member of this Assembly.

Peter Gordon Christie was a Progressive Conservative member of this House for two terms, beginning in 1999, representing Bedford-Fall River and then the new riding Bedford-Birch Cove. He was a member of the Executive Council, serving as minister of several portfolios, including Finance, Community Services, and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Affairs. Previously he served two terms as councillor and one as Mayor of the Town of Bedford.

Peter died on May 31st of this year. He was a booster of all things Bedford. He was deeply involved in the Bedford United Church, the Bedford Basin Yacht Club and Bedford minor hockey. Peter was a co-founder of many events and organizations, everything from Light Up Bedford, the Light Up Bedford Parade, to the 100 Men Who Care.

Peter was married to the former Joan Wilson for 57 years. They did everything together. They raised two sons, Scott and Matthew, and were blessed with two

grandchildren. Peter Christie was devoted to his family, friends, and community. I honour his care for the people he represented. We are poorer for his passing.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members to please join me and rise in a moment of silence for Peter Christie.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

**STRICKLAND, ROBIN - CORRIDOR COM. OPTIONS SOC.:
JOB TRAINING FOR DISABLED - THANKS**

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Robin Strickland, Executive Director of Corridor Community Options for Adults of Enfield, or as we call it in East Hants, CCOA.

CCOA is an organization in Enfield that provides employment and job training for adults with intellectual disabilities. They operate three social enterprises: a café, a thrift shop, and a woodworking shop.

For the past 43 years, Robin has worked diligently, starting out as a support worker, and with his dedication in the field became the executive director of CCOA.

On behalf of the communities of East Hants and the many participants, co-workers, and families who have supported CCOA, I'd like to thank Robin for his contribution, kindness, and compassion over the years and wish him all the best in his much-deserved retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

C.B. DOWN SYNDROME SOC.: ZOOMTIMERS INIT. - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to recognize my wonderful friends at the Cape Breton Down Syndrome Society.

There are a number of kids in the community, as the Speaker would be very aware of this group. They started out with ZoomTimers. They met with a few politicians: They met with the former Premier McNeil, they met with the former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. They're just a really wonderful group within our community who are always doing their best to support one another.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do a member statement individually for them in the next couple of days so they can have it as a keepsake. I always joke that the toughest question I

ever got in politics was from my buddy Owen when he asked me if I fight with my wife. I said no, Owen, I don't, because she always wins.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to also recognize Lynn LeVatte who is a huge champion for our communities, supporting our kids with Down Syndrome. Again, I want to recognize the kids for everything they do in the community and congratulate them on such a great initiative with ZoomTimers. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

**ROCHON, LISA:
EASTERN PASSAGE CONSTITUENCY ASSISTANT WORK - RECOG.**

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely happy today to rise to recognize my wonderful constituency assistant and now dearest friend, Lisa Rochon. Lisa has worked long hours, coming in early and leaving late, in our Eastern Passage constituency office since 2017, when I was blessed to begin working with her.

Lisa is friendly and kind, welcoming all constituents and their families to our office. She works tirelessly to find solutions to the issues and challenges facing those in our communities of South Woodside, Shearwater, Eastern Passage, and Cow Bay. She's been extremely busy these past few weeks printing off and laminating vaccination cards for hundreds of residents.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in celebrating the wonderful work of my constituency assistant, Lisa Rochon, and all constituency assistants in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**SIMMONDS, CST. JUSTIN:
COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER WORK WITH RCMP - THANKS**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Constable Justin Simmonds for his appointment as the Community Liaison Officer in our community. Constable Simmonds has served for 14 years with the RCMP and is excited to promote the community policing, and to have positive interactions between the RCMP and community.

Constable Simmonds was born in North Preston and grew up in Windsor, Ontario. Partway through a degree in Ontario, he decided to apply for the RCMP in Nova Scotia. After serving in Guysborough, Canso, and Sackville, Constable Simmonds was posted to North Preston and became the first constable from North Preston to serve that community.

As the organizer of an annual charity hockey game to support Feed Nova Scotia, Constable Simmonds believes that getting involved with community events is an excellent opportunity for people to connect with police in a positive way. One of Constable Simmonds's first assignments in this role was a presentation to seniors at the Bay Seniors Association to discuss fraud prevention.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the members of the House to join me in thanking Constable Simmonds for his work to bring the community together in harmony.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

**HART, AMBER: WALK YOUR WAY AUTISM AWARENESS WALK
FUNDRAISING - CONGRATS.**

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mrs. Amber Hart of Boylston, Guysborough County. Amber has been a huge part of the fundraising efforts for Autism Nova Scotia.

Since her daughter Elieve's diagnosis in December 2020, she has been a volunteer with the Strait Area Chapter of Autism Nova Scotia. The Walk YOUR Way Autism awareness walk was virtual this year and Amber committed to walking 100 kms to raise money awareness for "Team Elieve Has our Hart". Since that commitment, Amber has pushed her children in a stroller for over 400 kilometres, all while engaging with her community and encouraging conversation and awareness about autism.

In September "Team Elieve", along with "Team Walk This Way for Carson", "Team Walking for Jay" and a large group of community members were able to gather safely outside to enjoy Walk YOUR Way around the park event. This group was the single largest fundraiser for Autism Nova Scotia, raising just over \$9,700.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer applause to congratulate Amber on her dedication to the autism community, and of course to her daughter Elieve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**WHITE, SARA:
RECIP. OF TOWN OF BERWICK VOLUN. OF YEAR AWARD - CONGRATS.**

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure I rise this afternoon to honour a hard-working and very dedicated volunteer from the Town of Berwick.

Sara White was recently named the Town of Berwick's 2021 Volunteer of the Year. Whether it is with Girl Guides, Hardwood Lake Camp, Valley Thunder Lacrosse, or various community events, Sara is there and giving 100 per cent.

Over the past 20 years, Sara has impacted countless lives. She is the current President of Valley Thunder Lacrosse, leader and champion of Berwick Girl Guides, Chair of the Central Kings Advisory Council, Co- Chair . . .

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

Just one thing before we move on to the Orders of the Day. There were still a number of member statements that went over the minute. I just want to put that back in everybody's mind again. Please try your best to keep it within the time limit.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is now two o'clock. We will finish at 2:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: ABANDONING COAL - COMMIT

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, we're seeing coal prices escalate across the globe. We know there's tremendous social costs to having coal in our province as part of our electricity grid, but now, economically, we're seeing them increasing at an all-time high globally.

I note in the ministerial mandate letter to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change that they are mandated now to get to 80 per cent, a reaffirmation of the 80 per cent target we had in place. The Premier would know that we also committed in the previous Throne Speech in government to getting off coal by 2030.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Yes or no, is he committed firmly to getting off coal by 2030?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): I think what we laid out in our election platform, which was very consistent with what the members opposite had put in their platform, we're committed to that as well. We know Nova Scotians want to green the grid. We want that as well. As a matter of fact, there are a number of initiatives that can help us get there, and we're optimistic to see the support from the members opposite on projects like the Atlantic Loop, which, of course, we're going to need some federal support for.

But we're committed to greening the grid in this province. That's what Nova Scotians want, that's what we want.

IAIN RANKIN: I appreciate the answer. We are continuously spending over \$100 million a year for coal from other places of the world - importing coal in for our electricity - and the Atlantic Loop is a potential way that we will be able to provide clean power from other provinces into the grid. Former Premier McNeil had recently highlighted this potential as well as I, and I want to see some action on this file, obviously.

I'd like to ask the Premier: For a project of this type of scale, will he ensure that it goes through the regulatory process at the UARB before a project like this is approved?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The UARB plays an important role in oversight, in the process, and of course we respect the role that the UARB plays in all projects related to energy, for sure.

IAIN RANKIN: I appreciate the answer, Mr. Speaker. As we continue to look at how we get off coal, there are many ways that we can start to look at that. Atlantic Loop is a project that we support as long as it goes through the right process and we get best value for ratepayers.

We have carbon pricing in this province, likewise across the country. We have a cap and trade system that expires at the end of 2022, the current deal on the table.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Does he have any projections of what the impact on power rates will be if he has coal plants continuing to operate by the end of 2022, or if they're all still open?

THE PREMIER: I do thank the member for his passion on these issues. It's been clear through his time in government how important they are to him, and to us as well.

There are a number of initiatives in the works, for sure, and we're all concerned about ratepayers and the pressure on Nova Scotia ratepayers. That's obviously a primary consideration of ours, and there are lots of moving parts with the expiration of cap and trade and other issues as well.

We're focused on greening the grid. We're focused on protecting the ratepayers of this province, and we'll continue to do that.

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

PREM.: IMPROVE CCA WAGES - COMMIT

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, of all the components that are needed for us to be able to make the improvements in long-term care that the people of the province are looking for, surely there are not very many any more important than that we increase the numbers of constituency assistants - pardon, of continuing care assistants. Both would be an

improvement, but far more important would be that we have the right numbers of continuing care assistants, CCAs, across the province.

Of course, we can't do this without drawing a lot more people to this vocation. This is very hard to do when we're in a situation where so many CCA jobs are advertised for \$13, \$14, \$15.5, or \$16 an hour.

THE SPEAKER: Does the member have a question?

GARY BURRILL: Yes, I certainly do, thanks. Will the Premier make the commitment that within the first 12 months of this mandate, every CCA in Nova Scotia will be paid a living wage?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question on this topic and I agree with him. We do need more constituency assistants and we also need more CCAs in this province.

Let's consider the work that is done by CCAs - we just had CCA Week - but it is physically draining work, emotionally draining work and working in very stressful situations, and they deserve to be supported, to be able to have a break at work, maybe even a vacation. These are things that are elusive to many CCAs right now and that is what makes it hard to retain them and, of course, attract them.

We have great respect for what the CCAs do and the important role they play in our society. Compensation is certainly part of the equation and is something we are going to work on with them.

GARY BURRILL: The dimension I wish to ask about, Mr. Speaker, is the dimension of urgency and immediacy about this. We know that the government has plans to speak about hiring a great many more CCAs. It's simply not just a matter of having the right plans but also having the right urgency with those plans. This is what was written about by the Minister's Expert Panel on Long-term Care: "Staff are in need of immediate support to alleviate an overstressed workforce . . ." Key word there, I think, is "immediate."

Mr. Speaker, how are we going to be able to recruit the CCAs we need without immediate, dramatic, urgent increases in compensation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is a government that feels the urgency. I think it would be hard to accuse this government of moving slowly when you look at the steps we are taking in health care and today in housing. (Applause)

We feel the urgency. We feel the urgency across the great number of issues facing this province. Of course, we have also inherited something just a few short weeks ago, but we are moving quickly on a number of these issues including the establishment of an office

making somebody completely responsible and accountable for recruiting health care professionals. I am very proud of the work the minister is doing in making sure that we can attract those health care professionals, like CCAs, that we know are necessary in the system because of the deterioration of the system that was allowed to happen over the last number of years.

We will do the best we can to recruit them and we'll definitely treat them with respect, and they know that.

GARY BURRILL: But it actually is not a matter of doing the best the government can, Mr. Speaker. It is actually a matter of addressing the very serious situation of CCAs, who today are in the position that so many of them find themselves in of getting hurt, because they are undertaking to carry out responsibilities that can't be carried out safely with the numbers of people who are presently on the floors.

For this reason, the Premier's commitment to institute the new minimum standards of care - of 4.1 hours of care per day per resident - is extremely welcome. But the matter of urgency, the matter of immediacy, the matter of time - these are also pressing matters.

I would like to ask the Premier: When can the CCAs of the province and the residents of long-term care across Nova Scotia expect to see the minimum standards of care 4.1 instituted across the province?

THE PREMIER: As soon as possible. I mean, it is a matter of doing the best we can because that is all we can do, but I think our focus cannot be questioned. It was only over the last few days we had a lot of questions about what are we going to do about housing? What are we going to do about housing? We put out a very comprehensive plan on housing today. We are getting to work on that. (Applause)

We've toured the province meeting with health care professionals. We have met with long-term care associations. We have met with CCAs. There is a lot that is happening and we know that we can't go fast enough, but when you inherit eight years of neglect it takes a little bit of time to clean it up. We will do the best we can and we will clean it up because that is where our focus is.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - RENEWABLE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT - CONFIRM

HON. IAIN RANKIN: So, with our shared priority of getting off coal, there are a number of opportunities that are presented for our province, for our independent renewable energy companies, for municipalities. Before this new government came in, there was the largest renewable energy contract started in our history - 350 megawatts. My understanding is the power and purchase agreements were sent out to prospective bidders.

I want to ask the Premier: When will this process continue and the tender finally be released?

THE PREMIER: That is an initiative that the government started on the eve of an election. It's ambitious and it's admirable, but it wasn't necessarily complete.

What I would say as we collect these files and work our way through them - we have a little bit of work to do to clean them up and push them forward. I will say this: our commitment is to green the grid through whatever way is possible. Always with respecting the UARB of course. Always with respecting the ratepayers of this province who have paid a lot - in the range of \$5.5 billion through their monthly power bills - to green this grid.

We are committed as Nova Scotians, and this government is committed. We have to do things right, and that's what we'll do.

IAIN RANKIN: There is some urgency in the matter, because for every day that we continue to burn coal, it's going to have an impact on our power rates. Right now, wind is the cheapest form of electricity in the province, so we need to get those tenders out. All the due diligence was done to ensure that the process was correct, through an independent procurement administrator.

I want to ask the Premier: Is he committed to that non-political process to ensure that we continue to have competition in our renewable sector the way that all three stripes of political parties have supported in the past? Can the Premier confirm that it will be released soon, without alterations, and that it will remain non-political through the independent procurement administrator?

THE PREMIER: What I can confirm is we will do what's in the best interest of the ratepayers of this province, and there are issues with many files that we've inherited. We'll say that. There are issues with many files we've inherited, but we're always focused on moving forward in the best way that's possible in support of Nova Scotians. The energy file is no different, the same as health care, the same as housing. We are here to stand up for Nova Scotians and we'll continue to do that every single day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on a new question.

PREM.: ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION - PRIORITIZE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Active transportation is a big part of how we're going to continue to do our best for the environment. Different modes of transportation will be important. We went through all the mandate letters in all the various departments, and we don't see any mention of this priority. We used to have a department with the name of active transit embedded in it.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Is this a priority, and what department does this fall in? Is the new Department of Public Works - now an older name - is there somewhere in this department where they have a priority for active transit?

THE PREMIER: What I would say to the member is health care is a priority. There are lots of priorities. Health care is our number one priority. Preventive care is important, the determinants of health, all these things are important. Active transportation - keeping people active helps keep them healthy. Therefore, it's a priority of ours.

We're working on a lot of things on this side, and we're moving fast because that's what Nova Scotia needs at this point in time. They need a government that is action-based. They've seen enough of governments that look the other way. Now they need a government that actually walks the walk, because we're interested in active transportation, and walking is important to us.

[2:15 p.m.]

IAIN RANKIN: A lot of action is waited on right now. If there's urgency around renewable energy, there's no reason why those contracts can't be out. There are hundreds of companies waiting to see that competition in the renewable sector.

On active transportation, I'd like to ask the Premier: Does he have any specific priorities? Can he commit to continue to work on the Blue Route and all the initiatives that the previous government was working on to ensure that we have these capabilities? I'll reference the new regional transition group as part of the announcement today has no mention of active transit, but this is an important and growing part to ensure that we have those healthy communities, which I know is a priority for this government.

I'd like to ask the Premier: What are his specifics around active transit?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're big fans of the Blue Route. We'll continue in that. It's not just because of the way it's named that we're fans of it, either, but we do like the Blue Route. We will continue that.

I'll remind the member that it was a PC government that started the actual Office of Health Promotion - a former minister of the Office of Health Promotion. This government has always been focused on healthy living. This government has always been focused on physical activity, and we will remain so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on a new question. (Interruptions)

According to the order for the questions, it is the Leader of the Official Opposition who's up.

PREM.: NORTHERN PULP FUND REQUEST - CLARIFY

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Northern Pulp is claiming that they are owed hundreds of millions of dollars because of the Boat Harbour Act deadline and their inability to pass their environmental assessment to see a project through to completion.

Our government was not prepared to pursue settlement negotiations. Now we're hearing that the new Premier has said that he wants to see their business case.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is he prepared to consider giving Northern Pulp \$100 million when they owe the Province of Nova Scotia over \$85 million?

THE PREMIER: There are actually a couple of inaccuracies in the way the member has presented it. I take him at good faith that it has just been presented to him in an inaccurate manner.

We have not asked for a business case. Northern Pulp has approached the province to have what they called "settlement discussions." What we have instructed Northern Pulp is that we're not interested in settlement discussions. We have asked them to file their case before the court. If they have a case, they should present it and put all the information on the table.

I think that's in the best interests of Nova Scotians, that if they have a case to present, they should present that. That's the only thing we've asked them to do.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, that was more similar to what I was saying: if they are prepared to go to court, we would see them in court. We certainly don't want to see any negotiations. There is an environmental committee in the area that has said that they should not go forward with challenging the decision made by the government.

We have the Chief for the area as well, Chief Andrea Paul, who has said that they should be removing any intention to challenge in court and litigate the proposal, which was widely unpopular in their community.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Does he agree with the position of all three party leaders - including himself, during the campaign - that the Province of Nova Scotia should not be putting any public funds into the new proposal of Northern Pulp?

THE PREMIER: Just to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, our position is that, in terms of - if Northern Pulp believes they have a case against the province, they should file that case. We've encouraged Northern Pulp to work on an environmental submission to the province, but we haven't had any discussions with them other than that.

If they have a case, they should file it. If they want to pursue an environmental application, they should do that. Both those things are with the company, not with the government.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH: AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUNDING - CLARIFY

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

What is needed is a significant increase in the number of affordable housing units, particularly public, non-profit, and co-op options. About 20 per cent of rental housing in the province is owned by real estate investment trusts, which are focused on generating profits for the shareholders. Government needs to be focused on ensuring that everyone has access to safe, affordable housing.

Can the minister table for the House how much of the public funding announced today will be funnelled into increased profits for private landlords and large developers?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for that question. I can say that the quick start program was a \$20 million envelope - \$25 million, really - but \$20 million was the project part, and we've increased that spending to \$34.4 million for affordable units.

I'm very proud of that action, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to our commitment to dealing with the problem.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, the current housing crisis did not develop overnight. For eight years, the Liberals relied heavily on rent supplements, which don't work when hundreds of people are applying for single apartments. Now the Progressive Conservatives' plan is to add 425 new rent supplements while building just 675 new units of affordable housing.

Why is the minister doubling down on rent supplements that don't work in the current rental environment?

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. I think there's four and a half thousand people in Nova Scotia, four and a half thousand families, who would say rent supplements work pretty good and they are happy to have them.

We are increasing the supply of affordable housing units. As I've said, we put a substantial increase in the quick start program. I'm very proud of that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

ECC: RECENT PUBLIC CONSULTS - RELEASE RESULTS

HON. KEITH IRVING: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the new Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The minister has a very important job for the province in addressing the climate crisis, which is the challenge of our generation.

My question relates to public consultation. Prior to the election, two months of public consultations on the Sustainable Development Goals Act and the Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth were being completed by the Clean Foundation on behalf of the department. These consultations were comprehensive and used new outreach tools to reach communities that don't usually participate in public consultations.

Will the minister be releasing the results of these consultations before introducing any new environmental goals legislation? If so, when?

HON. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable colleague for the question and for his service to Nova Scotia in the previous government, and of course his continuing service as a representative for his local area.

The answer is yes. Those consultations, which I am fully aware of, facilitated by the Clean Foundation between May and July of this year - the results of that will be released.

KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, this is good news from the minister. I appreciate hearing that, as environmental issues are extremely important to Nova Scotians in our day-to-day lives and one of the most important steps in consultation is that we reflect back to Nova Scotians on what we heard.

The other initiative in progress at the time of the election was the consultation around the Coastal Protection Act, another important piece of legislation. Nova Scotians were invited to contribute their comments and ideas.

When will Nova Scotians hear from the minister a timeline on when the coastal protection consultation report will be released and the development of the regulations? If we could have a timeline, please.

TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. Climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation are a priority to this government. It is the intention of this government in the days ahead to be tabling a new piece of legislation. Of course, along with that I just want to reiterate that the results of those consultations will be coming forward sooner rather than later.

With respect to the Coastal Protection Act, we know how important protecting our coastline is to Nova Scotia. While in opposition, this government supported the Coastal Protection Act. The work continues to finalize the Coastal Protection Act regulations that, as the honourable member knows, will guide the new development and protect future construction along our coasts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South on a new question.

ECC: OTTER LAKE POSITION - REAFFIRM

HON. KEITH IRVING: My question is again for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Resolution No. 794, introduced by the Progressive Conservative caucus, which passed unanimously in the Legislature on April 24, 2013 - and I will table that - directs the Minister of Environment, “to reject any requested changes to the Otter Lake Waste Management Facility operating permit that would remove the requirement of front-end separation and waste stabilization.”

My question is: Will the minister stand by that commitment?

HON. TIM HALMAN: Certainly, I’m fully aware of the situation with Otter Lake, and I’m certainly aware that there are many people in the community who have concerns about the changes the municipality is considering regarding Otter Lake.

Mr. Speaker, we have been clear with the municipality that, as the owner of the landfill, they must consult with the local community before asking the Department of Environment and Climate Change to approve any changes to that landfill. That is the key point, that those consultations need to take place.

KEITH IRVING: It’s also indicated in the letter that a PC government would use its power to enforce the original Otter Lake commitments. Again, can we have a commitment from the minister and the Progressive Conservative government that they will enforce the original Otter Lake letter? We have a letter here from Jamie Baillie, and a press release from the former Progressive Conservative MLA, Chris d’Entremont, stating:

In the meantime, the people of Timberlea-Prospect should rest assured that a Progressive Conservative MLA stands with them and we’ll do everything in our power to keep the pressure on the provincial government to just say no to changes in Otter Lake.

Again, will the minister commit that the Progressive Conservative government will enforce the original Otter Lake commitments, yes or no?

TIM HALMAN: We haven't made a decision as it pertains to Otter Lake. We all recognize in this House how important process is, and that process needs to unfold. The municipality sent us an application for changes. However, at this point it's incomplete, and they have not completed public consultation, and that public consultation is required.

THE SPEAKER: I will now ask that the member for Kings South table the quotes that he presented.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MAH: CBRM STUDENT RESIDENCE CRUNCH - ADDRESS

FRED TILLEY: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today, it was announced that new residences would be opened for the Nova Scotia Community College campuses of Akerley, Ivany, and Pictou. This is a positive initiative. Thank you for that. (Applause)

However, absent from the announcement are student residences for Cape Breton. CBRM has experienced an explosion of international students in recent years. In my own experience, many students are unable to find housing. (Interruption) I would be quicker, but they interrupted me.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is: What is the rationale for choosing the areas in which new campus residences will be placed?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'm very proud of the announcement we made today. We have committed to three campuses, and at this time, we're not ready to commit to more. I will remind the member that we are, as a government, making massive investments in CBRM now, in that campus. We're very proud of that too.

FRED TILLEY: We'll beg to differ on that one.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, there's an explosion of international students. There's a major housing issue in CBRM. The minister brings forward a great point: a brand new, state-of-the-art campus to be built on the waterfront in Sydney. It's going to attract a lot of students from outside the area.

My question to the minister is: When can students in CBRM expect to get some relief from this government?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I would like to commend CBRM. I think they've been a model, internationally and nationally - certainly for international students - and we realize the tremendous positive effect that that's having on the community. We're very proud of what's happening there.

[2:30 p.m.]

In terms of when, at this moment I can't make a commitment to that. We're certainly aware of the issue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PREM.: LA COMM. - ACCESSIBILITY

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. On October 7th, the Premier was asked by a journalist if the option for virtual presentations for members to the Law Amendments Committee would continue. At that time, the Premier - much to our enjoyment and happiness - said yes, they would continue. He said that people who couldn't get to Halifax would have their voices heard by the committee.

Yesterday, after his caucus voted down our motion for virtual presentations, when he was asked again, the Premier said that if people have something to say, they can just come here and say it.

My question is: Will the Premier explain why he's already walked back his promise to make the Law Amendments Committee more accessible to the many - most - Nova Scotians who don't live in Halifax?

THE PREMIER: The Law Amendments Committee is a very unique part of the law-making process here in this province. Certainly, we're doing a lot to make sure that this government is held accountable by the Opposition - changes to the Public Accounts Committee back to what it should be - and by the people.

We're open to the idea. I think there are some questions around the ability to flip back to in-person and the technology on the virtual stuff. We'll have those discussions. What I would say is this: I haven't heard from a whole series of people who were not able to make their voices heard on Bill No. 1 or other bills in this province.

This government is moving forward on a number of initiatives. The people of this province will have plenty of ways to have their say on the legislation before this House. That's what we're committed to.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We'd be happy to forward the correspondence we've received to the Premier's Office. We'll be doing that. I want to make clear that when I say, "adding the virtual capability," in fact what this government has done is removed the virtual capability that existed throughout the pandemic. We have taken a step backwards.

Mr. Speaker, this is important because in 2017, this House passed landmark accessibility legislation, legislation which came about in no small part because of the Law

Amendments Committee and which established the Accessibility Directorate, which then launched a series of consultations toward the goal of making Nova Scotia completely accessible by 2030.

Last session, after several requests and motions, the Law Amendments Committee finally introduced CART services . . .

THE SPEAKER: Your question, please.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: . . . and real-time video. The ability to make presentations virtually is a way to make the people's House accessible to all people. I will ask the Premier again: Why did your caucus vote against a motion to keep the Law Amendments Committee accessible to all people?

THE PREMIER: I think what we saw was a return to normal of the Law Amendments Committee with people actually having their say in a society where we're trying to return to normal.

So, look, we had a Law Amendments Committee. It was very well . . . (Interruption)

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

THE PREMIER: It was very well attended. We heard the voices of Nova Scotians on the issues they wanted to raise.

We're concerned about making sure that this province and this House is accessible. We're going to continue to look at what's possible to make sure that it's truly accessible to Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians should know, despite the efforts of the Opposition to whip a frenzy up another way, that they have every opportunity to be heard by this government. Every single opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

MAH - HOUSING: C.B. ISLAND - PLANS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: My question can either go to the Premier or the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

In listening to today's announcement, I was left to wonder: What investments are there for Cape Breton? There are a lot of great organizations around Nova Scotia that are going to be a big part of the story of helping support our most vulnerable, but I was looking particularly for the amazing organizations that help battle homelessness and support our

most vulnerable on the Island, and I never heard much about that in the announcement today.

My question for the Premier or the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is: What are the plans moving forward for this new announcement for Cape Breton Island?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to say that there's much in this for the entire province. There's the 1,100 new units. Some of them are all over the province. Some of them are in HRM. There's the inclusionary zoning, which is for the municipalities, for CBRM, if they so choose to use it.

We're looking at freeing up government land all over the province, Mr. Speaker, to use that. There's the apprenticeship ratio if there's a shortage of labour. We promised that we would increase that apprenticeship ratio. That affects the entire province.

Obviously, the rent cap is available for the entire province. Changes to the Residential Tenancies Act are available throughout the entire province. There's much in that for the entire province.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important because CBRM is the largest population base outside of HRM, and the shelter's full. We just had a situation where one of the hotels just changed hands and people were forced to leave. We'll be watching this very closely.

My next question, actually, is for the Minister of Community Services. It's around the conversation of public transportation. This was something that I heard today as well. In the last year, we've been working closely with the department - myself as the MLA on the ground - to develop a pass similar to the HRM for the CBRM to help our most vulnerable families with access to transportation around the CBRM. We're in the pilot phase now. We've made investments. The United Way on the ground is really supporting that.

My question to the minister: CBRM needs support to help expand their transit. We gave them the money with the student boom, but now they need the support to get this pass going to make sure the over 7,000 families that access income assistance can use it. Through you, Mr. Speaker, will the minister and the department not only continue to support the pilot project but also expand it to all the families within the CBRM?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. What I want to reassure is that, out of the \$10 million that Department of Community Services announced today, over \$4 million is going toward service providers, and a number of them are in the Cape Breton area.

To answer your question about transportation, the United Way and our department worked very well on a pilot project with 100 individuals on transportation. We all know everyone needs transportation.

I would say stay tuned. It looks like we will be expanding that project next month.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DOJ - STREET CHECKS: LOOPHOLES - CLOSE

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, we know that Black Nova Scotians are six times more likely to be street-checked. Despite being banned, street checks are still used as a tool of law enforcement and it's up to the discretion of the officer what they deem to be suspicious activity. The Minister of Justice has said he will close this loophole. I'll table that.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: How does the minister intend to close the street check loophole?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the honourable member, at this particular point in time, I can't answer that question directly for you. What I will tell you is I do recognize from people in my own community, including my CA, how important it is to address, through the Wortley report, the end of street checks.

I do recognize that there is that loophole there. I am committed to closing that. I made that commitment my very first day, and I stand by that commitment now, as well as all the Wortley report, which is highlighted in my minister's letter. I'm committed to doing that.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I thank the minister for acknowledging his education, and being well-versed in his communications around him and in the constituency, but my question, Mr. Speaker: In 2020, Kayla Borden was driving home to Dartmouth when she was pulled over and swarmed by police officers, handcuffed, and then placed under arrest. When she was asked for what, the police officer responded with, "We will see in a minute."

My question, Mr. Speaker: This is an example of an all-too-real incident for many Black Nova Scotians, and so to the Minister of Justice, if street checks are indeed illegal and banned, and from what the minister is hearing in particular areas within Halifax Regional Municipality, why is Ms. Kayla Borden now fundraising for \$25,000 to cover her legal fees?

BRAD JOHNS: I reiterate what I just said. I do recognize, unfortunately, that police are still conducting those through that loophole. I do feel it is unacceptable. I've talked to many people within my constituency, like I said, and I am committed to addressing that.

I don't know why she is committed to having to do a GoFundMe page, which I saw, but I will look into it and get back to the honourable member. I will say I am very committed in this House right now to getting through that Wortley report, checking it off, and making sure street checks stop within the province of Nova Scotia. I commit that to her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ADULT PROT.: PROG. PROTOCOLS - EXPLAIN

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think everyone in this House would agree that protecting people at risk is a top priority, especially in times like this. As MLAs, it is our job to ensure that government programs are working, and when they are not, we bring attention to them.

What I have been hearing from police officers, physicians, and frontline workers is that when they make a report to Adult Protection, often they are not listened to or an assessment is not completed. This seems to be the norm. The minister had these shortfalls brought to her attention recently with the tragic case written about by Dr. Joan Harbison. I will table this article.

My question to the Minister of Community Services: Since the issues were brought to the minister's attention, can she explain to us here in the House whether the problem lies within the program's protocols? Or is there a lack of needed human resources?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, the reason I am responding to this is that Adult Protection falls under my portfolio now.

This is a very serious issue, and I certainly had experience as an MLA trying to get help for those who are in need of protection. It is the number one urgent issue. There is legislation that crosses over between Community Services as well as my department, so we're going to be working together to make sure that that's there. The issue is the amount of resources that are there for them to respond, but the ability to do things about the issues such as homelessness, such as addictions and mental health issues - those are challenges that we are facing all across the province. We are committed to working on those issues.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: So it sounds like what the minister is saying is that there is a lack of human resources in order to follow through. I will say what I have experienced even as an MLA, as well as police officers' positions, frontline workers, is that often when we do report that there is an adult at risk, there is not even an assessment done. We're told that it doesn't meet the requirements of Adult Protection even following up.

My question is: Are there changes needed in legislation to ensure that adults are given the protection needed, and can the minister commit to us here that changes will be in place to protect adults, even by the end of this year?

BARBARA ADAMS: It is a very important question and we are already reviewing that legislation. I have meetings set up with all of the staff who work in that department to find out what the barriers were. I am aware of the number of reports that come through, and certainly in the media there were issues that were raised.

I can reassure the member and I have already reached out to her to have her work with us, as well as the other Party members, to look at that legislation and all the other legislation that falls under my portfolio so that we can work together to close those gaps.

[2:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

NR&R: MINE CLEANUP - COMMIT

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, successive governments ignored mine cleanup for decades until the recent Liberal government introduced \$48 million for two goldmine remediations. I will table that document.

My question to the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables: Will this government commit to continuing the cleanup of mines in our province?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: It's a very simple answer: yes. We're committed. I know it's something new for the Opposition, but that's how you answer questions in Question Period.

In all seriousness, yes, we're committed. There has been work done, there is much more work to be done. I can be very honest. Looking at the list of mines that do need to be remediated, the lands that need to be done, and the work, I don't know that the first mandate from this government will be successful, but the second and third certainly will be.

CARMAN KERR: My second question for the minister is: Speaking about lists, have the next mining locations to be remediated been identified and if so, the number of sites to be looked at?

TORY RUSHTON: The quick answer on this one is the list does exist and I'll certainly reach out to the member opposite with that list and have a collaboration with them on that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

PUBLIC WORKS: BEDFORD FERRY PROJECT - SUPPORT

BRAEDON CLARK: The dream of a Bedford-to-downtown-Halifax ferry has been around for a long time, many decades. Back in June, all three levels of government committed \$3 million for planning for that ferry. My question to the Minister of Public Works is very simple: Does this government support the Bedford ferries project?

HON. KIM MASLAND: I know this project is very near and dear to his heart. The Nova Scotia government is investing \$1.1 million into the initial planning phase for the commuter ferry that will travel from the new terminal in Bedford-Mill Cove to Halifax downtown. We also have announced today that we're putting forward a regional transportation group that will look forward at addressing population growth and making sure people and goods are getting in and out of the HRM effectively.

BRAEDON CLARK: I do look forward to seeing the work of that working group. As the minister is well aware, \$1.1 million is a good start for planning, but it's going to cost much, much more to get that ferry up and running, and it will make a huge difference for not just Bedford, for Fall River, for Sackville, for Clayton Park, some of the fastest-growing parts of this province. My question to the minister is: Will she commit to funding the construction and operation of these ferries as well?

KIM MASLAND: As he is fully aware, the planning phase report and a concept design of a new Bedford terminal is well under way. It's expected in winter of 2022. What I will tell the member across is I know this is important to him. I know it is important to the residents in Bedford. It's important to us too.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

H&W: CBRM CAPITAL PROJECTS - COMMIT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The previous government committed to the largest capital expense when it comes to health care in this province's history with the Cape Breton redevelopment, capital projects that go all the way down to the new emergency department in Yarmouth. Is the Minister of Health and Wellness committed to continuing on with those capital projects that have been promised to communities from one end of the province to the other?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, we are committed to continuing with the expansions that he discussed, yes.

ZACH CHURCHILL: These projects were listed in a budget that was voted against by the governing party when they were in opposition, so there are some concerns in communities that this government will not follow through on this list of projects.

I'm going to table the list of projects for the minister's attention and ask again: Can she commit to ensuring that every single capital project that has been promised to communities across this province will be followed through on by this government?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I think before I commit to anything, I'd like to see the list.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 12.

Bill No. 12 - Dismantling Racism and Hate Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the importance and necessity of this bill, Dismantling Racism and Hate. Sometimes when people hear the word "racism" they get nervous, they get uncomfortable and maybe it's because they don't know what it means or maybe because it invokes a stigma. Maybe it's because they've experienced it themselves but for whatever reason, I would say that in order for us to do good work, in order for this government to be transparent, we have to be able to embrace conversations and embrace difficult conversations.

One of the things I would say is that we have to begin to feel uncomfortable with this feeling of discomfort and get this idea that it's a conversation that we should not be talking about but actually addressing. In order to do that we have to get comfortable in uncomfortable situations. It's important to define things like hate and racism. You can't live in the abstract when it happens to real, lived experiences, within real, lived communities.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is the first of its kind in Nova Scotia history that attempts to do that, that attempts to define and also expand on what hate and racism is in this province. If you come from a community with a lived experience, you know that systemic racism and hate exist. It exists in many ways, some obvious and some not so obvious. For example, I would say an obvious way is what I posed to the Minister of Justice: street checks. Another area I would say - I spoke about this yesterday in the House - the Land Titles Clarification Act.

One of the ways that maybe it is not so obvious is within the Halifax school system and within IPPs or maybe the high rates of suspension, or if we think about our community and where we live, sometimes the missed stereotypes that happen when we think about addresses. So we have to think about employment and sometimes those aren't in obvious ways.

What I would say, Mr. Speaker, is that government has an opportunity and must play a critical role in helping to dismantle racism and hate. One of the ways I believe would be important is why the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives could take this lead. It's an important addition to the government and it's one that I'm proud to say the past Liberal government introduced.

What I would say is there's a real opportunity for change. This office is already equipped with staff. I'd say for example - I speak about the Land Titles Initiative - Lauren Grant and her staff from there are experts in this area. Also, the addition of DeRico Symonds, who is an expert in community knowledge-based systemic racism and does consulting.

I would say that in the work they are currently doing and which I am looking forward to, the report on IPPs within African Nova Scotians and Indigenous, we have the leads of Frances Waterman-O'Connell and also Nadine Bernard. So I'm hoping and I do believe that this is the office - if it continues to grow and add some diversity and ethnic backgrounds - it has a real opportunity.

Also, this bill includes expanding on the race-based data collection initiative beyond the health care system. This bill will create an ongoing dialogue with discriminated communities so that their voices are consistently considered by our province's most senior decision-makers, based on those discussions and titles that the government parties and Crown corporations will have to develop action plans to remove those discriminatory barriers within the organization. Again, this is a real opportunity for this government to show that it values diversity and it values all people in Nova Scotia.

Lastly I would say, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a reactionary bill. This is about defining and addressing racism and discrimination in this province, no matter who is in government. This is about ensuring that all Nova Scotians have an equal and equitable opportunity in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to rise and take a moment to speak to this bill. Dismantling systemic racism and battling hate in our province is at the very top of the list of urgent and entrenched issues. As the member just said, sometimes we need to be comfortable in uncomfortable conversations.

I'd like to see our government undertake a public consultation process with communities to define anti-African Nova Scotian racism, anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Semitism, gender-based discrimination, homophobia, Islamophobia, and transphobia, and to identify barriers to all of those services.

As the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank and as the member for Preston spoke yesterday of their experiences, as an African Nova Scotian - and other members who are of African Nova Scotian descent and of other cultures - I am also aware of the effects of this experience. It is very valuable to debate on how to go about doing that, so I'm grateful to the Liberals for putting forward this bill, as it is a necessity.

I am also grateful to the communities that have already given us decades of very clear and loud instructions and ideas for how to do this work. They and we and I will be explaining for a long time that we must ban street checks permanently; build an education system that is truly inclusive; maintain community representation in the school boards - we should never silence the voice that instructs our work; and address the over-representation of Black and Indigenous people in our justice system. We need to ask these questions. Why are they there? We need to examine the justice system because sometimes it doesn't always work for us who are people of colour.

We also need to implement a community-based strategy for collecting race-based demographic data in health care, education, and corrections. We need to assemble a panel on environmental racism with representatives from impacted communities to report to the Legislature on recommendations and compensation. Who better to give us the accurate information but the ones who are living the experience?

We need to end the practice of birth alerts that disproportionately impact BIPOC parents, notifying the Department of Community Services when an at-risk person gives birth. We need to improve procurement processes to favour businesses owned by African Nova Scotians and other equity-seeking groups. We need to put in place supports for African Nova Scotian people to participate in democratic processes, such as agency, board, and commission governance, seeking elected office, and so much more.

In order for this to work, the members of this House have to listen to the ideas of how to do these things and truly understand what is being said. We also need to implement that. I was glad to see that the Liberals got around to a few of these pieces near the end of

their mandate but certainly not all of them and only after governing over many years of precious lost time.

Since we are speaking of listening to communities and being heard, it is also important to take this opportunity to register some of what I heard from the Black community members about the first few weeks of this Progressive Conservative government, because listening to Black voices is at the root of addressing racism. These first few weeks of this government's mandate were rocky on that front, to say the least. I was a bit shook up. I couldn't process the information that was being put forward. I was kind of feeling let down, but I was being optimistic.

The Black community was dismayed at the appointment of a white man to the post of the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs position, with no explanation or discussion with the African Nova Scotian community. Dr. OmiSoore Dryden, the first Black member of the Nova Scotia Health board of directors, and an accomplished expert on racism in health care, was stunned by her removal from the board. Deputy Minister Dr. Késa Munroe-Anderson, an extremely qualified and experienced Black woman, was also dismissed.

We have a Premier who did not appear to understand the gravity and significance of these changes. Some of the most powerful words were said by the Black family. We, as African Nova Scotians, did not need a white government to speak for our African Nova Scotian community.

I heard anxiety from the community, Mr. Speaker, that we are at risk of going backwards, of regressing in the progresses that we have been able to make. We cannot let that happen, and I'm going to tell you really straight: I will not let that happen. While strategies and definitions are important, it's real action rooted in listening and understanding that is going to be what moves us forward.

The NDP caucus is ready to do the work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

HON. PAT DUNN: I thank the opposite members for their comments and for bringing this legislation forward.

It is very important that the province's African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities feel their voices are heard and their government is working for them. African Nova Scotian Affairs will continue to work closely with community members and organizations across this province and with other government departments to support African Nova Scotian communities.

[3:00 p.m.]

Government is committed to important initiatives, like collecting racial identity for health data and working with partners and communities to lead and support government's anti-racism initiatives and promote equity. The work of addressing systemic racism and inequity remains a priority for this government.

The Count Us In action plan, which aims to reduce barriers, attitudinal, and discriminatory practices that African Nova Scotians face, calls on all Nova Scotians to work together to build a more inclusive, welcoming province which improves social well-being. Government is taking a collaborative approach to implementing Count Us In, with the deputy ministers meeting on a regular basis and monitoring the progress of this plan. Community involvement is also critical and vital to the success of this action plan.

Many key actions of the plan are under way, including development of an African Nova Scotian justice strategy; working with communities on data collection standards to help identify and address gaps in barriers, beginning in the health care system; and advancing the Land Titles Initiative to help historic African Nova Scotia communities gain clear title to their land.

The actions in Count Us In are grouped under three pillars identified by the United Nations: Recognition, Justice, and Development. Nova Scotia is the first jurisdiction in North America to create, proclaim, and launch an action plan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward. I want to say the first meeting that I held since the election in Cumberland North was with members of our African Nova Scotian community that live in my constituency. They were angry with the lack of representation of their community, and I did make a call to the minister responsible for that department and we had a very good conversation, and he assured me that the minister will work with the members of our African Nova Scotian community in Cumberland North.

I want to just stand today and make sure that the members opposite know how deeply angered the members of the African Nova Scotian community were in my constituency, and they communicated very clearly that they were upset and they expected an African Nova Scotian minister to be responsible for African Nova Scotian Affairs.

On their behalf, I did send a letter to the Premier on that behalf, and to this day I've not received a response to the concerns voiced to me by these important members of my community. It's not showing disrespect to me, it's showing disrespect to the members of the African Nova Scotians of my community. (Applause)

They deserved a response to my letter to the Premier on this very important issue. Actions speak louder than words, and I hope the Premier will look at this bill, and I hope that the government will consider putting this into legislation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: This bill is home for me. It's personal for me and I'm speaking my heart. This bill is one of the reasons why I put my name forward to be in this Legislature.

For those of you who are not familiar, there were four members from London, Ontario, last Summer who were killed in daylight. Four generations. There was a 9-year-old child left behind with no family. No single member of his family has been left behind.

As a member of this community who's been active and has been active for diversity and inclusion, has been active for a just society - what I can tell you is I have crossed two oceans on this Earth. I have one more left. I have crossed the Indian Ocean for fear. I've crossed the Atlantic Ocean for fear. The only ocean left for me is the Pacific and I'm not ready to cross. (Laughter) I'm not willing to cross and that's why I put my name to be here with you. I'm honoured and I'm grateful to be a member of this Legislature. (Applause)

I know in my heart that you're going to do the right thing because each one of you has the passion and the courage to serve your community. That's why you are here. This has nothing to do with colour. It has nothing to do with what region you live in or what your background is. It's humanity. I urge you to take this bill seriously.

As much as I'm a proud Nova Scotian and call here home, I am ashamed as a person of colour. I'm ashamed of the history of this province and this nation. Whether it's Indigenous people, or African Nova Scotians, women - all those people in many communities have been disadvantaged and neglected. Over the years, this issue has been raised, debated, and discussed with nothing coming out.

It doesn't matter what you do today. What matters is what you left behind. What matters in this Legislature is what we left behind that will guide the next generation, that will make us a better society. I'm asking you, every single member of this Legislature, to support this bill.

I am a very lucky individual, and I can say that in a very honest way. Before I decided to put my name in this caucus, with the Liberal Party, I'd been approached by every single party that exists in this province, and I was asked to run. That's a privilege and I'm grateful for that. Also, I take that honour. I'm not a Liberal, I'm not a Progressive Conservative, I'm not NDP, I'm not a Green. I'm a Nova Scotian, and I'm proud of that. (Applause) I do have core values that guide who I am, and that's why I made that decision to join the Liberal Party under the leadership of the former Premier.

We had a vigil as a community for this incident, and I was not expecting him to come, but he was there, as well as the current Premier, as well as the Opposition Leader. I was happy to see Haligonians come together for one purpose: to care and love. After the ceremony, we had a discussion, me and the former Premier, and he challenged me. One of the questions he asked me was, “If you care about this stuff, you need to put your name in.”

I was not able to sleep that night because that’s the truth. Next morning, I put my name on. Didn’t have a clue what I was signing. (Laughter) But I’m here with these wonderful people, leaders who care about this community, and whatever happens to me, I’m not alone. I know that. I know that.

[3:15 p.m.]

I could be here all day and address this issue for you, but I will remind you: This is your community. We all take oaths in front of the camera. This and the oath that we take for our community, to care and to serve and to protect them. Even though sometimes with how we conduct ourselves in this House, I feel I might be in the wrong business.

What I mean by that is, I come from a profession where you count on the guy behind you. As a professional firefighter of 17 years, that’s what made me sleep at night. I know the guy behind me is going to pull me out no matter what happens. I want to see this House and this Legislature with real things happening, pulling out each other, especially things that touch peoples’ lives.

What I’m speaking about today is not that somebody was harassed, was discriminated. It is somebody was killed, and for what? None of us can answer that question. Even the person who commits that, if you ask, I don’t think he can answer that question. That is the reality. That is the fact.

Mr. Speaker, members of this Legislature, I urge you without hesitation to support this Act. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I’d like to thank my colleagues who have spoken on this bill. It’s an extremely important, delicate, sensitive bill that I must say I did feel that maybe there would be more involvement in speaking towards it. But I’m not here to judge the amount of time that individuals took to speak on it and I didn’t even think I was going to get up to speak.

My words will not be nearly as eloquent or perhaps as meaningful as the individuals who have already spoken on it. What I do want to say is that I just have some information and some thoughts that I wanted to share, because we’re definitely all learning. One of the

things that we're all guilty of, whether sometimes we know it or not - I was privileged to have the opportunity of being the Interim Leader to have consultants come in and speak about sensitivity training and what exactly - you know, sometimes we're putting up blinders that we really don't realize are there.

One of the things that the Department of Community Services took an initiative to produce is an anti-Black racism policy. It is my goal, while I'm in government, to ensure that policy exists throughout all the government departments. It's truly necessary.

We know that for hundreds of years, African Nova Scotians have experienced discrimination, racism and oppression. At the Department of Community Services, we have acknowledged that our clients and colleagues of African descent have experienced anti-Black racism in many forms in the workplace and many experiences that they go through while they are working. Our systems have embedded anti-Black racism which disproportionately impacts people of African descent. We are all part of and contribute to a racist system.

I'm not proud of that. We need to change that, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that African Nova Scotians face racial challenges and are absolutely subjected to acts of racial discrimination every single day but we don't see them, but they see them, they hear them and they feel it. It is emotionally exhausting on them.

We must recognize how our actions contribute to this inequity and do the work required to eliminate anti-Black racist practices. I want to know that at the Department of Community Services, we are public servants working for the people of Nova Scotia and the respectful workplace policy and our code of conduct - values, ethics and conduct - guide and govern our behaviours at the Department of Community Services. We are very cognizant of all of our behaviours in that department and in our branches across this province. We have approximately 1,700 employees at a time and this policy is within all those departments.

I truly stand here today and express that it is my sincere interest and my sincere goal that this policy will be across government. The Department of Community Services absolutely will not tolerate anti-Black racism in the workplace. It is a corporate requirement that infractions will be addressed in clear and intentional action. A commitment has been established to eliminate anti-Black racist behaviours among employees towards clients and by clients. It requires that those in managerial roles are accountable for taking action when issues are brought forward and that individuals are held accountable for their behaviours. The corporate goal is to eliminate anti-Black racist behaviours, and we all need to be part of that.

For everyone's information, because I don't think sometimes we all realize how things change, I'm just going to admit something here today that happened about two years ago. My daughter and I were going kayaking. We were having a great day. I said, "I can

do a better Eskimo roll than you.” Well, she was stunned. I couldn’t figure it out. She was just like, “What are you saying, Mom?” I said, “I can do a better Eskimo roll than you.” She’s like, “Don’t you dare say that.”

I didn’t realize that you don’t say that anymore, right? Growing up, that’s what we said. I had always been very conscientious of the things I say and do. “No,” she says, “you just say that you can do a better roll than me.” Which I can.

These are things that happen that you don’t intentionally put out there to hurt anyone. I do want to give a few examples because I think it is a reminder of what we have to pay attention to. We have witnessed - we all have - and they have felt it - African Nova Scotian staff have been excluded from team gatherings; comments on touching the hair of African Nova Scotians because of their hairstyle or texture; racially-based jokes or jokes that had historical or cultural impact; comments that condone that “all lives matter” sentiment.

When an African Nova Scotian colleague’s input on cultural impact of a decision or policy is provided but not considered and essentially ignored - not fair - and various forms of racial microaggressions - verbal and behavioural exchanges, sometimes subtle and covert, that sends disparaging messages to African Nova Scotians that happen between individuals. “You are a credit to your race,” someone may say. “When I look at you, I don’t see colour.” A white person waits to ride the next elevator when a Black person is in it, making comments such as gangster, raptor, or other words that we all know are not appropriate. But sometimes people don’t know.

What I want to share with you today is that you have my commitment in ensuring that there’s one step closer from our party, that I will certainly be working hard to make sure that this policy is addressed and adopted through the other government departments.

I just want to say thank you again to the speakers. We’re learning. It is always through the spirit of conversation that we’re learning and gaining information.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: Thank you to everyone in here today for having this discussion finally. Thank you to all of you, especially to the member who raised some real important points.

We are in a phase in our lives where things are changing, and it’s our young people, our children, who are making us reassess everything. They have friends from many different backgrounds and cultures. It’s unfortunate that we who have raised them had no real part in that change. It was society that had that change in them.

I'm a little disappointed because those of you who sat in this House with me for the past eight years know, and especially those who were my critics know, that I've offered. African Nova Scotian Affairs has an office that teaches about the historical perspectives and the historical background. This is not directed at the member, but I see heads shaking, and when I was minister, I offered that to the Opposition, both Oppositions by the way, to say, if you're going to be a critic of me, then you'd better have a bit of an understanding, a bit of a background. To this day, nobody took us up on that.

So, I stand today to say that I'm glad we're having this conversation now. I am impressed that you - sorry, it's not even the member. We - I'm impressed that we are finally beginning to have these conversations.

I said I wasn't going to speak long, and I won't speak long, but I will say that I'm open. I'm truly excited and willing to work with anybody in this House on these issues that affect my community. I will stand here, make a couple more statements, then I will sit.

First, I want to apologize to this member, who I used the word "you," and it wasn't towards the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. It's what she had said that sparked my reaction - 400 years I've been hearing that, and it just caused me to react that day. The member spoke about, she didn't hear many people speak too much on this. I'm sorry, member, we've been saying it for 400 years. We've been speaking it, there are reports, and I can go on and on.

I'm hoping that today there is a step forward and that the Premier first recognizes his big misstep - he stands up and speaks about it - because if you can't do that, then there's really no genuine, real intent on working with my community. People won't often remember what you said, but we will remember how you made us feel.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: That concludes debate on that particular bill. I want to thank all of the comments from all members of the House. We will now move on to our next bill . . .

THE SPEAKER: Before we go forward on that, can we have a motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 12?

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 12.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 12. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

[3:30 p.m.]

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBUORQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 22.

Bill No. 22 - Redress of Harm and Environmental Racism Act

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, this is a very good day to debate some important bills that our caucus has brought forward to the Legislature. It's really good to see the elevation of debate and more participation from African Nova Scotians.

I want to congratulate my friend who's been in this House for eight years, the member for Cole Harbour, whom we've all learned a lot from, being the only African Nova Scotian member in this House over the last four years. I want to start that way. (Applause)

Our new members in my own caucus, Madam Speaker - the member for Preston and the member for Halifax Armdale - and the new member for Halifax Needham. It's really, really great to see more diversity in this Chamber. I'm sure Nova Scotians across the province are able to see more inclusion and better ideas and some lived experience that we were missing in this House on some really important matters.

I introduced this bill. I hope the government acknowledges the work that has gone into the previous bill, as well, which goes beyond government policies defining what racism is in all its various forms. This bill is important, too, and a real opportunity for the government.

This is an Act to Redress Harm and Environmental Racism in the Province of Nova Scotia. Previously, under my short tenure as Premier, we put together an Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives. This is a perfect bill to support, as was the last one, to ensure that this office expands and works on some issues that have been holding back people in this province for generations - for 400 years, as my colleague has mentioned.

It's important that we acknowledge that, and today is the first time I'm really hearing about the language of systemic racism from the government side. I do believe we are starting to get somewhere. It was problematic to see in the Throne Speech that our system is fair and equitable. Nothing can be further from the truth. My colleague for Preston mentioned that in her maiden speech.

We have so much work to do on our systems that have been set up. Yes, we were in government for eight years. We did try to take on some real, important issues to

communities. One of them is environmental racism. What I've said in the past, even against the advice of public officials, calling Boat Harbour an example of environmental racism.

That's what it was and it was promised by the Province of Nova Scotia to close that in 1991, in 1995, 1997, and 2008 by all parties and then again by Stephen McNeil. We closed Boat Harbour. This is an opportunity to redress what has happened to Pictou Landing First Nations. That's a step in the right direction but there are more examples across this province of where landfills are sited and where toxic waste facilities are sited.

There are many examples the members can look at in the Whereas sections of this bill. Look at all the examples of the types of facilities that were placed in Africville: a cotton factory, a prison, an open-pit dump. So much so that they had to remove people against their will and not work with the community. We have African Nova Scotians who don't have title to their land in 2021. People are going to look back and say, what was going on?

This is our opportunity because African Nova Scotians are a founding culture of Nova Scotia. This is not just present in Nova Scotia. This is across our country and beyond. Why not give Nova Scotia a chance to be a leader in these areas and acknowledge the harm we've done that will endure for generations - the intergenerational trauma that happens within families?

The Pictou Landing First Nation was in the media a lot over the whole tenure of our being in government and will continue as Northern Pulp looks to bring forward another project and the cleanup takes place. Communities like Shelburne, that I mentioned in this bill as well. Landfills close - that doesn't mean that the results from having the landfill in that area for decades have been dealt with. There's a landfill right now in Lincolnville. It was there since 2006. Previously a first-generation landfill in the '70s, and then a closure. So just 2006, 15 years ago, they decided that was the appropriate place to site another landfill, and I think members know why.

There was a study done by Dalhousie that said 30 per cent of African Nova Scotians are living within five kilometres of a landfill. That's intention. That's systematic, and environmental racism is just one part of systemic racism. We could talk a lot about this issue, and I'm sure we will, in the days ahead. This bill, I believe, is an opportunity to look at how we can work with communities, embed consultation into a requirement any time that a new site is looked at, any time that an extension of an approval at a landfill or any other type of operation, that you ensure that there is that communication with communities - African Nova Scotian communities, Indigenous communities.

This is one thing that government can do, and with the economic opportunities for communities. We've started some of this work with the sustainable revolution and the opportunities of building solar gardens. We can turn some of these brown sites across the

province into bright sites: solar gardens owned by communities so that they get a share of ownership and they can benefit from assets.

We can provide job opportunities. A lot of what we ran on in the last election was skill trade opportunities for communities with an equitable lens. Why not give them tuition relief and ensure that they have space in our growing economy so that they're not held back anymore? (Applause)

These are difficult conversations, and look, I'm white. I recognize my white privilege. I rely on the strength of my team and the people around me to ensure that I get good advice, and that's how I was able to make, I think, some key decisions. I'm happy that the new government kept in place the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism. We want to work with you to provide you ideas to add to the things that we're working on. Whether that's reviewing the IPPs, whether that's looking at the race-based data in health and expanding that out, whether that's moving forward with getting the clear title for those five African Nova Scotian communities and beyond - this is what Opposition does.

We will continue to hold your feet to the fire, because we're starting to hear some good words on the other side of the House, but what we need to see is action in these areas. The sad reality is if you haven't been oppressed in this province, that means you've benefited from the oppression of others. I think that's a hard thing for people to acknowledge, but if you start to learn as I have over my time in politics, I think that you'll recognize some of the privileges you have actually harmed others - the things that you don't see, where your waste goes, where these operations are sited.

We can do better in the province. We can do as the Human Rights Commission said in '92, no more landfill sites within a certain radius of African Nova Scotian communities and Indigenous communities. We can do that. This government can support the bill today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Madam Speaker, it's my first time speaking with you in the Chair, so it's really an honour. Thank you.

I am pleased to stand up and speak on this bill today. I had some prepared notes, but I also wanted to respond a little bit to what my colleague has just said. Absolutely, first off, there's no question that our caucus supports this legislation. We believe and know that it's needed to create a process to address environmental racism in Nova Scotia, absolutely 100 per cent - just to get that out of the way.

I was going to tell this little anecdote, and then the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned if you haven't been oppressed in this province, then you have benefited from the oppression of others - that fits perfectly with what I was about to say.

When I was young, we used to travel, I think on Highway No. 101, out towards Sackville or Mount Uniacke - for some reason. I don't know why we would go out there. At the time - and this was a long time ago, Madam Speaker - there was some kind of dump out there, and the stench from it was really awful. I remember when we would drive out there, and we would get to that certain point on the highway where we would smell that dump. I would think, oh thank God I don't live here. That is exactly what I think the member is talking about.

I didn't live near that dump. I don't know what communities lived near that dump. I was seven. We would get home to Prospect Bay, where everyone is white. There's lots of problems, but people did not have to deal with environmental racism where I grew up. I just wanted to start by also acknowledging my privilege in being white and not experiencing these kinds of issues, and that I benefit from the oppression of others.

To the bill, I think there's some really good things in this bill. I especially want to point out a couple of things. Subclause 4(b): "consulting with Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, Black and other racialized communities towards developing a reconciliation process to acknowledge and redress the harms and negative health outcomes caused by environmental racism" - I think this clause gets right to the point.

The subclause before, which talks about consultation, is important obviously, but let's face it, there has been a lot of consultation. We have heard from many groups in this province, and to ask folks to tell stories again and again about the oppression and the racism that they have faced - I think we have done it. I think we're there. Now let's just get to the reconciliation and the redress.

I also wanted to point out Subclause 4(e), "working with staff in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to ensure that traditional knowledge, oral stories and the impacts of environmental racism are integrated into the environmental stewardship curriculum."

I think this is really important, in the same way that we're talking about treaty education, Madam Speaker, and in the same way that we are making sure that in our school curriculums we are actually hearing the real history of Nova Scotia, or we're trying to make that happen. I think that is a really great place for there to be some work on environmental racism, so I wanted to applaud my colleagues for that clause.

We know the practice of disproportionate siting of landfills, waste dumps, polluting industries, and other environmentally hazardous activities near racialized communities has been a long history in Nova Scotia. The legislation notes Africville and Boat Harbour. Again, I want to say that it was a very good moment in this province when Boat Harbour was closed, and I do think that the Liberals need to be applauded for that action. Of course, it was because they were listening to the voices of the people of Pictou Landing First

Nation. Yes, it was a great day when that was closed. Other examples are the south end of Shelburne and, of course, the Sydney tar ponds in Cape Breton.

While I am excited and happy to see the Liberals taking an initiative on this, I have to say that there was an opportunity for the Liberal government to act on some of these issues when they were in power, Madam Speaker. Again, I don't want to play politics. I don't want to pump the political football around the room here, but let's face it: There was time. It's true that this is what Opposition does. That's what I was doing for the last four years, when the Leader of the Official Opposition was standing over on that side. There was no action - well Boat Harbour, yes, but there was no other action.

There was a bill presented to the Liberal government . . . (Interruption) there was a bill presented to the Liberal government in 2015 and many times after that that was tabled by the former member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River and then re-tabled. (Interruption)

[3:45 p.m.]

Madam Speaker, I beg my honourable colleagues to let me get through these notes. It is an important issue.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The member for Dartmouth North has the floor.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Dr. Lynn Jones and Dr. Ingrid Waldron were instrumental in helping the NDP caucus and helping all of us, in this House and in the province, recognize the importance of the issue and helped draft legislation. Their work on this issue must be acknowledged in this House. (Applause)

The legislation would have established a panel to investigate environmental racism throughout the province and make recommendations for redress. The thing that I'm happy about with this legislation and this bill here that we're talking about is that it would address historical instances of environment racism, but also it would provide the backbone for being aware of new instances. One would hope that other environmental consultations that are in place in the province would protect against new instances of environmental racism happening, but just in case there would be this panel that could investigate new instances.

I just wanted to also acknowledge the work of Louise Delisle from south end Shelburne. On one of the occasions that the NDP caucus reintroduced the bill on environmental racism, Ms. Delisle came to the Legislature to talk about the effect of the Shelburne landfill on the health of her community. I also had an opportunity to visit Ms. Delisle in Shelburne and heard some of the horrific stories of cancer in the community and about how the community didn't have clean drinking water.

Ms. Delisle simply wanted to know and be assured that her community had clean drinking water and to know whether the water was contaminated from the nearby dump. We heard from Ms. Delisle about how stressful it was to get information, testing, and any kind of support for people who were dealing with illness in the community and the toll it was taking on people's physical and mental health.

I would just also like to point out that at the time, when our Leader of the NDP, the member for Halifax Chebucto, asked a question of former Premier McNeil, about water issues in south end Shelburne a year later, Premier McNeil said he had never heard of the issue. So, it's really great to see that south end Shelburne is recognized in this current bill in the preamble. I think it's really important, and it's very welcome.

I also wanted to point out, Madam Speaker, that when we were debating the Sustainable Development Goals Act, we in the NDP caucus put forward an amendment to the Sustainable Development Goals Act that would have stipulated that the sustainable communities challenge fund would prioritize communities that were disproportionately impacted by climate change, environmental racism, and environmental injustices. At the time, the Liberal government was not open to amendments on the Sustainable Development Goals Act. I put this in front of the House, especially given that our new Minister of Environment and Climate Change is here, and hopefully we might see something about this in the new act that's coming forward.

We have also in the NDP caucus, multiple times, introduced legislation entitled Local Action on Racism to equip municipalities to do more anti-racism work. I also think that is still a very important bill that should be looked at.

I just wanted to put those ideas forward. Again, I am extremely supportive of this legislation, Madam Speaker. It is time. It is past. I would hate to see in four years when the present government is no longer the government for them to be in Opposition again and to be saying, oh, we should really table a bill on environmental racism and try to get some work done on environment racism. I would hate to see that happen in another four years. I think the time is now. I think this bill should be passed, and I think we should have all-party unanimous support for it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. TIM HALMAN: I want to thank my colleagues for their remarks. I want to thank everyone for speaking from their lived experience.

Before I even begin, Madam Speaker, I, too, want to acknowledge the place of privilege which I come from, knowing full well often the views that I articulate or espouse sometimes - a lot of times - they come from that place of privilege. I truly believe as a former educator, especially the next generation of Nova Scotians, understand that in a more profound way than the previous generations do.

I do want to thank my colleagues for the remarks that they've made. I think we've got some important points that have been made. Nova Scotia has a long history of environmental racism that has caused great harm and trauma. The Leader of the Opposition talked about the intergenerational trauma that has impacted racialized communities, especially with the Mi'kmaq, with our African Nova Scotian communities, and others who are experiencing poverty and whose voices are often not heard or listened to.

I truly believe in my heart we must all work together to ensure that Nova Scotians have an equitable access to healthy, safe, and sustainable environment, as well as equal protection from environmental harm. I want to signal to the House that it is the intention of this government in the days ahead to table legislation that I believe will guide Nova Scotia in a way that is focused on ensuring equity while building on strong environmental regulations that already exist.

It is the intention of this government that we will not leave anyone behind. Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that past practices resulted in environmental racism in this province. That was wrong. We know we need to build trust. We know we need to build relationships.

I believe we have strong regulations in place to protect the environment for Nova Scotians. The staff at the Department of Environment and Climate Change make their decisions based on science, based on evidence. We are committed to an effective, consistent, and fair approach to environmental regulations.

We consult regularly with Nova Scotians on environmental issues and programs. This includes formal consultation and regular engagement or conversation. Nova Scotians also have input on decisions about industrial developments and other projects through the environmental assessment process.

As the regulator, the Department of Environment and Climate Change must work to ensure every Nova Scotian has equitable access to a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment, as well as equal protection from environmental harm. A thriving today and a just future. We must treat all Nova Scotians fairly and in an equitable manner so that Nova Scotia does not repeat the mistakes of our past.

We must hold polluters accountable and put the responsibility on them for the cleanup. Madam Speaker, our decisions are focussed on environmental protection for all Nova Scotians. Wherever environmental impacts occur in Nova Scotia, we need to ensure that we have a consistent, equitable, and effective approach to upholding our regulatory responsibilities.

When we look at applications for environmental approval, we focus on science and fact-based decision-making to ensure our processes are equitable for all Nova Scotians.

Regulatory changes, environmental assessments, industrial approvals - all these activities can involve extensive public consultation. We understand challenges exist, however.

We do need to hear from communities that feel they don't have a strong enough voice. That needs to improve. We need to do better and work with these communities to change this. We want to make sure meaningful engagement takes place so that our staff can use the information for decision-making, and so that proponents can do their work to gain the social licence for their projects.

Our job at the Department of Environment and Climate Change is to work with businesses and industry to make sure they've had meaningful dialogue with those who will be affected. As I indicated, Madam Speaker, it is the intention of the government to introduce new legislation shortly that I believe will guide Nova Scotia forward to a healthier, cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future for all Nova Scotians.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to say that this legislation will be informed by conversations we had with Nova Scotians. They told us they want the well-being of people and the planet to come first. They want to break down systemic racism and discrimination. Nova Scotians wish to reduce income inequality and ensure that no one is left behind. They also want swift, tangible action.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change has provided over \$20,000 in micro-grants to support community conversations, voices that are generally underrepresented. Twelve groups and individuals received funding to host conversations on developing goals and a climate change plan. Representation included Mi'kmaw and Indigenous people, newcomers and immigrants, African Nova Scotians, racialized Nova Scotians, youth, LGBTQ community, people living with disabilities, and people experiencing low income.

I believe we have listened. I believe we will be setting ambitious new targets, including the strongest greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets in Canada. A climate change plan with additional measures on climate change will follow in the Spring.

Going forward, I will also examine the department's legislation, regulations, and decision-making processes to ensure equitable treatment of all communities and ensure consultation opportunities are available to all Nova Scotians. We are taking action to create a cleaner, healthier, and more just environment that will benefit all Nova Scotians and won't leave anyone behind. We know we need to make space for community leaders and follow their input to guide us all forward. Working together, Madam Speaker, I believe we can ensure project decisions that affect communities are fair and are equitable.

We know we need to build trust. We know we need to build relationships. This is the foundation from which we will start. Equity will guide us every step of the way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: Madam Speaker, let me just say, you look good up there. It's the first time I get to acknowledge that.

Well, folks, I never thought I'd be standing up talking about a bill on environmental racism. It's not something that, quite honestly for this House, that I had given any real, deep thought about. In hindsight, when I look back, and I look back over my life, I would probably say that there are few people in this House who grew up and lived near two places that were very toxic. One was Africville and the other was in Sydney. My grandmother's house was right in the back of the steel plant.

Let me start with Africville. Going back, thinking as a young man, growing up in Mulgrave Park - let me back up for a minute here, because I want to make this clear for everybody right now. A lot of people think, and I'm not going to get too serious on this, but a lot of people think I'm from Cape Breton. No, I'm not. My family is from Cape Breton. I spent a lot of time there, but I was growing up in the North End of Halifax - Maynard St. and then Mulgrave Park. I am a Halifax North End boy.

[4:00 p.m.]

In growing up in Mulgrave Park, we didn't have too many areas to play in. We would venture, and quite surprisingly, the area we would venture to when we were hanging out and playing was to go and hang out with our friends in Africville. Of course, you've got to cross the tracks, pass through the dumps to get to your friend's house.

The last couple of days, I thought about all of this, and I thought, hold on a minute. For me, that was normal, living near a toxic site. For me, that was normal, Madam Speaker, hunting rats at the dumps. For me, it was normal, crossing the tracks. Now, when I go to Cape Breton - for me it was normal.

As a matter of fact, I said this to somebody the other day. I said, my memories of Cape Breton and why I think Sydney is home to me - when I think back as a young child and all the trips that I've taken to Sydney, and the one thing that made me feel as though it was home, Madam Speaker, was when we got to Cape Breton and we started to travel over that bridge to the Pier. Travelling over that bridge, the overpass. Travelling over the overpass, I was home because I smelled the sulphur from the plant. Is that what a young child should be remembering?

Then the areas for us to play in, because we weren't allowed to go over town. You're Black, don't go over town. The area we would play in, play hockey on, do everything, was the tar pond. I recall an individual - an adult, by the way - when a bunch of us were down there playing hockey. Of course, you're playing on the tar pond and there's all kinds of residual pieces of coal and tar, stuff laying all over the place.

This one individual looked at us all, and by my statement, you'll get a sense. He looked at us all - and we were playing hockey and having a good time - and he came by and he said, "You young guys, you know what you should do to keep your teeth white?" We weren't looking at him. We don't know. We're little kids. I would say ten and under. He said, "See that piece of tar up there? You pick it up, you chew on it. It helps keep your teeth white." There were many of us who did that, because we're listening to somebody. We don't know. We're kids. Think of that.

So we're playing on the tar ponds. We've got the trains travelling through with all the coal. In Africville, you had a lot of the trucks coming there, dispensing of many toxins in the dump. Also for us, being in a marginalized community, the dump was also a place of value. We got lots of stuff out of the dump that we could sell, do all kinds of things with.

The interesting thing a lot of people don't know about Africville - and I know I'm jumping all over the place, sorry - but I would say almost 90 per cent of those homes in Africville in the early 1960s were all owned by those folks. They didn't have anything on them. It was a self-sustaining community. It was a community that was self-sustaining, albeit they had to pay extra for the water and all the other services, if they could get it.

Also, one of the other playgrounds was the old prison which, by the way, if you look at the old maps of Africville, went from under the bridge all the way up to Robie Street by the prison, all the way around Bedford, probably, and I'm trying to remember exactly - before Chinatown - that was all Africville.

So, the container pier took away property. The bridge took away property. Actually, the building of the bridge dismantled the community. I recall seeing those trucks moving in, at a young age.

We have to do better, folks. I'm a little all over the place with some of my memories but I know one thing for sure, not too many people grew up on toxic areas like I did. Not too many people grew up hanging around and being in places like that.

Actually, up until probably the last 15, 20 years of my life, I started to reflect more on those things. I stand in a place of privilege, I do. We have to do better. We have to be considerate.

Let me back up for a minute and I'm going to finish with this statement. I'm going to give you something. Madam Speaker, I'm going to offer that if the current government is truly intent on correcting environmental racism, if they are truly intent on dealing with this particular issue - now that's just my community. I also had the opportunity when I was younger, to be in some of the Indigenous communities, which were a lot worse than my community, in some cases.

So, if you are really intent on doing something about it, when you are moving forward and looking at addressing environmental racism, then I would encourage you to connect with the Indigenous, which you've already done, but with the African Nova Scotian community. Give some of those young people an opportunity to look at the environment, the racism, the acts, legislation, whatever it is, but give the young people an opportunity to work within that, to find a way out and hopefully you'll give them a future with a career, or you give them a future with life because they're going to be living in a better area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Madam Chair, I'll just say this about my friend and colleague: I always think he's from the Pier and I always will - and I'll tell you why. It's amazing to hear your story of growing up in the community, but when Chester Borden needed help to give the kids of the Pier an opportunity for a new facility where they could be safe and learn from him, he didn't help them once, he didn't help them twice, he helped them three times, and hundreds of kids have a new place because of you. So, to hear your story, my man, you'll always be from the Pier to me.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on Bill No. 22.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned. Oh, no? Okay. Debate is adjourned.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Again, Madam Speaker, thanks to everybody for the great conversations and your feedback today.

That concludes Opposition Business for today. I am going to pass it over to the Government House Leader to announce the hours of business for tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, that concludes business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Thursday, October 21st between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Government business will include the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, Bill No.1, Bill No. 4, Bill No. 11, and Bill No. 13; Second Reading of Bill No. 24, Bill No. 27, Bill No. 30, and Bill No. 32; and, time permitting, we will allow for Address in Reply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House will rise and meet again on Thursday, October 21st between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until Thursday, October 21st at 1:00 p.m.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The adjournment notice was submitted by the member for Dartmouth South and reads:

“Therefore be it resolved that allowing people to present virtually to the Law Amendments Committee would improve public accessibility and government transparency.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

GOVT. (N.S.): VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS TO LAW AMENDMENTS COM. - ACCESSIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Madam Speaker, I am very glad to have this timely opportunity to speak to an issue that our caucus has been speaking to in one way or another since I was elected over four years ago and that is the issue of the accessibility and utility, really, of our committee structure.

Here in Nova Scotia, we have a unique legislative committee, and that is the Law Amendments Committee. That committee gives this House the unbelievably important opportunity to hear representations from the public on the bills that are before us.

Madam Speaker, I have to say that I was reflecting today - someone said to me yesterday, wow, I didn't know the Legislature was going to be like this - I didn't know we were going to hear stories and that there were going to be so many tears and so much thoughtfulness. And that has changed. That is new, I would say, even since I've been elected.

I think, as we have more diversity in this Chamber, we have more opportunity to hear people's stories and those stories reflect different life experiences and those stories move us in different ways because they are stories that many of us may not have heard or experienced before, as the member for Cole Harbour just mentioned. We have these unique

life experiences, but notwithstanding, I would submit that we still don't have a fraction of the representation in this Chamber alone that would allow us to truly understand the impact of the legislation that moves through this House - the People's House - on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia, which the Premier just today said is the goal of the Progressive Conservative government, to be able to properly understand its impact.

So, for that reason, the Law Amendments Committee is not just unique but, I would argue, of singular importance in our legislative process. This brings me to the text of our motion, which is to allow virtual presentations to the Law Amendments Committee.

[4:15 p.m.]

I will frame this by saying that when I was elected, Madam Speaker, there was no capacity - the technological capacity of this House, of this Chamber, of our legislative structure, was out of date.

I think if you talk to Legislative Television, they'll probably still tell you they would love a serious infusion of capital that would allow them to continue to update. We know even in our constituency offices that updating technology and updating computers is very expensive.

But the House staff and Legislative TV in particular, really underwent a pretty Herculean feat when the pandemic hit. When we were allowed to convene as committees again - which we were prevented from doing for quite some time, I should say - they made it possible that we could do that in a safe way.

As with everything else we have learned to do over the last couple of years of COVID-19, almost, it was to meet virtually. We can see each other's faces. We can hear each other's voices. We can experience a presentation from someone in as close as possible to a simulation of them being in the room.

That was a huge leap forward, the accessibility of that committee, in two ways. One, it allowed everyone who doesn't live in HRM to actually present to that committee. As we saw just the other day, but which has been the pattern for at least a decade - I'm sure beyond - there is not proper, - well there is proper but there is not particularly sufficient notice given, usually, for the convening of that committee.

In this case, we are given an announcement that a committee is going to meet on a Friday evening, and that committee is going to meet on a Monday night. That's not a lot of time. Sometimes it's even less notice than that. The reality of that, Madam Speaker, is that realistically only people in HRM with no work conflicts, babysitters, who are able-bodied, I should say, or not without barriers to transportation or mobility, can actually come into this House and present.

We were able to overcome all those barriers in a fell swoop by allowing people to make virtual presentations. On October 7th, the Premier told reporters he wanted that to continue. As someone who has spoken out about and sits on many committees in my time in this House, I have to say, I was thrilled because it's the right thing to do.

We spent a lot of time even getting to the place where we could have CART services, where people could watch video. Previously there was only an audio stream that was available at those committees, or Hansard much, much, much later. The first step in that accessibility was those CART services, the video stream, which airs live on YouTube. This was the next step.

There are these two streams. There is creating accessibility for people in rural Nova Scotia, which I would suggest is the vast majority of the constituents of the governing party, and there is also creating accessibility for those who are mobility-impaired or who otherwise would have challenges in presenting to this House.

To that end, I will say, in 2018, I think it was, or 2017 - just before I was elected, this House passed an incredible piece of accessibility legislation. Number one, that bill would not have been passed if it wasn't for the Law Amendments Committee, the amazing advocacy that took place in that committee. What came out of that was the Accessibility Directorate and consultations, which all are aimed at creating an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.

This is really low-hanging fruit. We need to be leaders in this effort. The fact that the Premier would walk back a commitment, not to creating but to maintaining accessible access to the Law Amendments Committee for everyone in Nova Scotia - for people in rural Nova Scotia, for people with mobility issues - is really strange. That's the only word I can think of.

Again, we are left to wonder, why would that happen? The only thing we can think of is that we want to hear from people, but not too much. We want the public to have input but not that much input, just a little bit of input, particularly if it's input that we know is not going to be favourable to the government.

The students and teachers and educators of this province have a long history, which has been exercised pretty recently, of showing up in big numbers when they don't like a piece of legislation. They have indicated in no uncertain terms that they are not fans of the Elections Act amendment that the government introduced, Bill No. 1. What did they do? They started to organize, and they wanted to present. A teacher can't drive here from Pictou County, can't drive here from Shelburne, can't drive here from any number of other places for a Monday night meeting that goes until 11 o'clock at night. They can't do it.

We're going to hear, Madam Speaker, from the governing party that they can still write a letter. Again, I would ask the members of this Chamber to think about how many

letters they get. While it is important that we read the correspondence that comes to our office, there is a different level of persuasion and a different level of access that is allowed when you can be in dialogue with a person, when a person can present to you in person, when they can ask a question, and when you can respond to that question.

Madam Speaker, it feels a little bit like Groundhog Day. We had this conversation a lot when we were locked out of this Legislature for almost a year. We heard from a different government, “We can’t do it, it’s not going to work” when everyone we knew was working from home with Zoom, when all of our children were going to school virtually. This is the same conversation again. My eight-year-old knows how to have a Google Meet. Anybody in this province at this point knows how to do this, how to videoconference.

We have the capacity, we have the will, and we have the ability. The only thing stopping us from making this important crown jewel of a committee accessible to all Nova Scotians, regardless of disability, regardless of the place that they live, is the Premier deciding he doesn’t want it to be accessible.

I invite the Premier to change that decision. He said they’re looking at it. I hope he continues to look at it. I really hope, for all the people who aren’t able to voice their concerns on a piece of legislation, that they change this decision. (Applause)

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Y’all better cheer for me like that.

The member for Dartmouth South asked a very poignant question in her remarks, and that is, why? I will tell you why. It’s because Law Amendments Committee is hard when you’re in government.

When I was re-elected this last time and realized that I would be in Opposition, the first thing that came to my mind was, oh, Law Amendments Committee isn’t going to be so bad anymore. The one thing that stuck with me when I was elected and put onto the committee in 2017 was how difficult it was to sit there as a government member and listen, quite frankly, to people who generally aren’t happy with legislation that is coming forward.

We know this as MLAs, and we know this as representatives. The people on social media who are most vocal are not usually the ones who are happy with what you’re doing. It’s those who see faults in what you are doing and want to try and engage in debate. It is an uncomfortable committee to sit on when you are in government.

One of my first experiences with the Law Amendments Committee was the former member for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg, who along with a passion for the New Boston Road, had a passion to remind the people in this Legislature of whose House we are in, and

that is the people's House. He reminded us constantly on the floor of the Legislature. He reminded us in the Law Amendments Committee. He was still a member, I believe, when the McNeil government made the Law Amendments Committee accessible, having that being livestreamed, having there be interpretative services.

He was not here, but I'm sure he was smiling and happy when we made the move in the one and only session that the member had as Premier to allow for virtual access, that wasn't tied to the pandemic, that didn't have a statute of limitations on it. That was a change that was made to Law Amendments Committee to allow for virtual submissions.

So, when I sat at Law Amendments Committee on Monday, I was very surprised to hear that this wasn't something that was continuing, and surprised that the premise - what the Premier said was that we will look into it, as if this is a transient thing that wasn't already established. It was established. It's there. There's no need to change it. I will concur with the member for Dartmouth South. I'm sure Legislative Services wants more money for their technology, but it doesn't require more money. We were able to do this. We did this in the last House session and, as I pointed out, the only thing that changed since that last session is the government.

Again, I feel for the government. I understand. The member from Halifax Chebucto, I believe, understands. The member from Inverness, the member possibly from Pictou Centre - all of us who have been in some iteration of government before and have had to sit as a government member on this committee know how difficult it is.

The point of being a Legislature and the point of being in government isn't for things to be fun. It is not for things to be easy. It is to do the right thing and to do right by the people of the province. (Applause) And although maybe some of those virtual submissions aren't going to be something that they want to hear, or maybe it's something that they'll like to hear, it doesn't matter because it's the right thing. It's what needs to be heard.

I appreciate the member from Dartmouth South making this our topic for late debate. I look forward to hearing what our government - the government speaker - has to say on it, but more importantly, again, this is the People's House and they deserve to be heard, not just if they live in Halifax, but if they live throughout. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Madam Speaker, I do have a few comments in reply to this conversation that we're leading in. As a member of that Law Amendments Committee, I sat there and I did listen to the public that came in, and also, as my other colleague mentioned, that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments is a unique feature that is a legislative process here in Nova Scotia. We are proud of that.

I also understand that last sitting it was virtual versus being in person. We're asking for this to be a hybrid. We have not had any conversations with how that might look or how that might work.

Giving people a say in the laws that will guide them in life is important in a meaningful way for our democratic society. As a rural MLA - as was said, we have a lot of rural MLAs on our side. We're quite used to travelling into HRM for many reasons, and we're in constant conversations with our constituents.

The ability to be able to look your elected representative in the eye and give them your opinion in exchange for questions is the definition of grassroots politics. Being able to look in those peoples' eyes as they present it to us that night, Madam Speaker, I could not only look into their eyes, I could feel their passion, I could feel the reasons why they came, and we listened. A lot of those presentations that were given in person by the people speaking were verbatim of what they had already emailed to the committee. We were able to follow along and, if not, they handed out copies there that night.

We also have been receiving numerous emails and concerns on both sides of that bill that this brought out. It was especially impressive, having children of the age of some of those university students, that they presented and their presentations were poised and quite remarkable, to be honest. This whole process is empowering for not only the citizens and constituents of our province, but it also helps MLAs to get helpful insight and important perspectives on how they feel about certain bills that we're discussing. That is very important and we don't take that lightly.

[4:30 p.m.]

Currently there are two ways, as you know, that Nova Scotians can be heard through Law Amendments. One is to attend in person and two, like I mentioned already, is to submit online - email or presentations or considerations that they would like the committee to take into account, which we have ample time to review and read during the night, and even as they come in we were handed out some late submissions. Both of these methods do require the onus, in part, to be on the individual. It is also a good thing that it is important and that the people coming have good reason to be there speaking on certain bills.

Law Amendments is certainly not a social media forum. Law Amendments, as we all know, is broadcast live that evening through Legislative Television for full transparency. As well, if you missed it, you can always tune in at a later time and find it in their archives. Anybody is able to watch it while it happens, send in their submissions, and be prepared. The House is sitting. It's not a secret to the province that we are sitting and going over bills that are being introduced.

During the pandemic, it did necessitate that Law Amendments meetings - in order to ensure that Nova Scotians could still participate in it was why it went virtual in the first place. It wasn't to replace the way Law Amendments was. It was to accommodate the situation at the time. This province has moved forward since then and we are back to more normalcy where we can sit in person in this House, which makes a huge difference. Same in the Law Amendments Committee. It makes a huge difference for the person to come in and speak in person.

Now that we're moving to normalcy - and this isn't saying that - it doesn't mean that we're not looking to modernize the situation. It is not to say that we aren't going to work at creating better access for those with disabilities. We certainly would like to have that conversation, allowing an easier path maybe for one area or another. I think, yes, we probably could improve on that. Technology can help with that. They're conversations that we need to have. We need to explore what is possible and balance that with the intent of the committee to have meaningful feedback and meaningful dialogue with Nova Scotians.

However, any conversations about a hybrid model, we would need to talk to Legislative Television to see if that was something we can do. We would also want to have conversations with the staff, with my colleagues in this Legislature, to see about when we think it may be a model that we would follow and what that model may look like. We've never had a hybrid sitting before. We don't know how that will work. (Interruptions)

I will correct that. We had virtual last session. I don't believe there was any hybrid going on. (Interruptions) I am a new MLA, but I do recall the last sitting. I followed it quite closely since I was already going to be running for the next election. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: We'll have order while the member for Hants West is speaking.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: There are a lot of different things. We want to get back. We're making modern changes to this Legislature. We're working with things. We can't make a decision on the fly to switch things without talking to who that is mostly going to impact. Why is the reason for that? Is it because most of the teachers who came are from HRM? I can't say that.

Somebody commented that they drove two hours to speak at Law Amendments. That, to me, is important. It showed me - it pointed out to me - that they were willing to take that time to drive that distance to speak to us. I did not take that lightly. I took that quite seriously. I saw compassion, I heard compassion. Those are things that I would not necessarily have heard or seen on a virtual presentation. Again, I will reiterate that most of the presentations that occurred in Law Amendments that night were handed out to us, we could follow along, and they were read to us. They were beautiful presentations. They came and read them in person, but we still got the same information and the same message was conveyed.

When I feel that constituents are concerned about a bill that matters to them, then I think that we are quite capable of reading the emails that come through to us. We take them all into account. I had a lot of positive emails for that bill. From what I heard from the bill that is in question, that brought this up, is that most people want to have a fixed election date. That is the root of why we are here today.

The one person who did speak, who worked for Elections Nova Scotia, who appeared there that night was in favour of our plan. I noted that some teachers and universities said May isn't a good month. Other people said that June isn't a good month. July isn't a good month. August isn't a good month. September isn't a good month, but at least we can plan and we can look at these things and we can take them into account. I listened to the people that I heard there, but it was the same message being heard over and over again.

I also am not sometimes sure that the intentions of why some of the speakers were in droves were from HRM. Representation in HRM is, as you said, more rural, not to our Party, more local, but I will think of something to say in my last 20 seconds, because I feel that we are very capable MLAs to listen to our constituents all the time, not just on Law Amendments night, all the time, and I feel that it's very important to meet in person, as important as it is to sit in this Chamber and to ...

THE SPEAKER: Order. I wish to thank all of the members who participated in the adjournment debate this evening.

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

Do we have unanimous consent to hear from one more speaker for the last five minutes? My apologies, the House has been adjourned. There was time and as Speaker I adjourned the House. Now I'm asking for unanimous decision to continue for one more speaker.

For the record, the Speaker apologizes that it was in Madam's error that the House was adjourned. There has been unanimous decision to not allow for one more speaker, so the House is adjourned.

[The House adjourned at 4:39 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 19**

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas Lynn and Rod Eisener of the Village of Canning purchased the Farmhouse Inn B&B in 2016 to pursue their dream of living in a beautiful country setting in a historical area of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Farmhouse Inn was constructed in 1861 and is located at the foot of the North Mountain, overlooking the dykes of the Minas Basin and within minutes of the Cape Split Hiking Trail, Blomidon Provincial Park, and Grand Pré Historical Site; and

Whereas the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce is a strong united voice for business and works to ensure that business thrives in the Annapolis Valley;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lynn and Rod Eisener of the Village of Canning as the Chamber of Commerce Valley's Best 2021 winner in the category of Best Accommodation for their Farmhouse Inn Bed & Breakfast.

RESOLUTION NO. 20

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Portal Youth Outreach Association is an integral part of helping young people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness; and

Whereas transitional houses will play a key role in a supportive living program for young people within their communities by providing a comfortable, safe place where young people in need can stay and feel a sense of respect and trust; and

Whereas The Portal's Homeless No More Strategy goal is to eliminate homelessness in the Valley within 10 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate The Portal Youth Outreach Association on the grand opening for the association's

transitional house on Church Avenue in Kentville and encourage their continuing efforts of The Portal's Homeless no More Strategy.