



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Quotations from Audre Lorde/Maya Angelou/James Baldwin/Frederick Douglass, Angela Simmonds	447
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
Paul, Leonard/Francis, Blair: Deaths of Former Eskasoni First Nation	
Chiefs - Condolences, (Moment of Silence) Hon. Karla MacFarlane	448
Hon. Iain Rankin	448
Lisa Lachance	448
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 21, Mi’kmaq History Month: Growing Understanding of Mi’kmaq	
Teaching - Recog., Hon. Becky Druhan	449
Vote - Affirmative	450
Res. 22, Harvesters of Lobster Fishing Area 35: Contrib. to Economy -	
Thanks, Hon. Steve Craig	450
Vote - Affirmative	450
Res. 23, World Teachers Day: Highlighting Commitment of Teachers -	

Thanks, Hon. Becky Druhan.....	450
Vote - Affirmative.....	451
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 35, An Act to Require Daily Reporting on Wait-times for Surgeries, Hon. Zach Churchill.....	451
No. 36, An Act to Amend Chapter 494 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Vital Statistics Act, Lisa Lachance	451
No. 37, An Act to Amend Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2008, the Fair Registration Practices Act, Hon. Jill Balsler.....	451
No. 38, An Act to Continue the New Minas Water Commission, Hon. Keith Irving	451
No. 39, An Act Respecting an Advocate for Children and Youth, Kendra Coombes.....	451
No. 40, An Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Workers’ Compensation Act, Respecting Underground Coal Miners, Kendra Coombes.....	452
No. 41, An Act to Establish a Coordinated Maritime Pandemic Health Strategy, Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin.....	452
No. 42, An Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Workers’ Compensation Act, Respecting Front-line or Emergency-response Workers, Kendra Coombes.....	452
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Harrett, Wayne: Death of - Tribute, Hon. Barbara Adams.....	452
Durkee, Dave & Judy - The Music Room: Lending Musical Instruments - Thanks, Hon. Zach Churchill.....	452
Intl. Down Syndrome Awareness Mo.: Learning of Systemic Barriers: Recog., Kendra Coombes	453
Flemming, Donald: Death of - Tribute, Hon. Brad Johns.....	453
Adams, Wayne: Contrib. to Province - Recog., Angela Simmonds.....	454
Italian Market: 30 th Anniv. of Opening - Congrats., Suzy Hansen.....	454
White, Sara: Town of Berwick 2021 Volun. of Yr. - Recog., Chris Palmer.....	455
Volunteers: Cole Hbr. Her. Farm: Pres. Agric. Past - Recog., Hon. Tony Ince	455
FANE: Promotion of Acad. & Franc. Coms. - Recog., Lisa Lachance	456
Queens Manor: 40 th Birthday Celebration - Congrats., Hon. Kim Masland.....	456
Volunteers - 14 th Ann. Lebanese Cedar Festival: Celeb. of Leb. Culture - Thanks, Hon. Patricia Arab.....	457

McCullough Family & Organizers: Walk Against Violence - Thanks, Susan Leblanc	457
Nicholson, Borden: Winner of Regional Golf Competition - Congrats., Hon. Karla MacFarlane.....	458
Houston, Prem. Tim: Upp. Hammonds Plains Housing Project Supp. - Thanks, Hon. Ben Jessome	458
Grandmother, Winnifred: 97 th Birthday - Best Wishes, Kendra Coombes.....	459
MacKinnon, Glenn: Advocacy for Physically Active Lifestyle - Congrats., Dave Ritcey.....	459
Sambro Loop Bus Route: Efforts to Bring Back - Recog., Hon. Brendan Maguire.....	460
Strum, Michelle - Alteregos Café & Halifax Backpackers Hostel: Com. Serv. - Recog., Suzy Hansen	460
Primeau, Reade: Oxford Boxing Club Asset - Recog., Hon. Tory Rushton.....	460
Antoinette's Cheesecakes: Opening - Thanks, Lorelei Nicoll	461
Brown, Pam: Death of - Tribute, Lisa Lachance	462
NSTU: Creation of Exec. Staff Officer to Combat Racism - Recog., John White	462
Heppy's Pie Lady: Prom. of Acad. Culture - Recog., Ali Duale.....	463
N.S. ACORN: Rent Control Extension Efforts - Congrats., Susan Leblanc	463
Eastern Shore Constituents: Head of Chezz. Office Open House Attend. - Thanks, Kent Smith	464
Allt, Jane/Poirier, Angela: <i>How Government Really Works</i> Book Published - Congrats., Rafah DiCostanzo.....	464
Corbett, Stanley: Death of - Tribute, Tom Taggart.....	465
Wilson, Deborah/Rudd, Steven: Snacks on Shore Opening - Congrats., Ronnie LeBlanc	465
Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation: Opening of Paqtnkek Educ. Ctr. - Recog., Hon. Michelle Thompson	466
The Circle: 10 th Anniv. as Music Venue - Congrats., Fred Tilley.....	466
Souls Harbour Rescue Mission: Com. Serv. - Congrats., Hon. Becky Druhan	466
Nwachukwu Family: Becoming Cdn. Citizens - Congrats., Braedon Clark	467
Austin, DeeDee: Release of New Song "Buried Truth" - Congrats., Hon. Brian Wong.....	467
Asiedu Family: Arrival in Middleton - Welcome, Carman Kerr.....	468

CBSRC: Attraction & Retention of Health Care Professionals - Thanks, Trevor Boudreau	468
Furlong, Ron/Dowe, Bill - Amherst & Area COC: Prom. of Local Bus. - Recog., Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin.....	469
Persaud, Kamla: Volunteering in Elections - Thanks, Hon. Iain Rankin.....	469
Hellstrom, Sheila Anne: Death of - Tribute, Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek.....	470
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 81, Prem.: Employee Vaccinations - Update, Hon. Iain Rankin.....	471
No. 82, Prem.: LAC Virtual Presentations - Reconsider, Gary Burrill.....	472
No. 83, Prem. - NSCC: Health Prof. - Increase Seats, Hon. Iain Rankin.....	474
No. 84, Prem.: Cost of Living Increases - Action, Hon. Iain Rankin.....	475
No. 85, Prem. - Health Care: VAC. - Report, Hon. Zach Churchill.....	476
No. 86, MAH - Dart. N.: Afford. Housing Units - Action, Susan Leblanc	477
No. 87, SLTC: CCA Reg. - Update, Hon. Kelly Regan.....	478
No. 88, SLTC: CCA Training Grant - Students, Hon. Kelly Regan.....	479
No. 89, SLTC: Contact Tracing Tech. - Explain, Hon. Kelly Regan.....	480
No. 90, FTB: Online Casino - Safeguards, Lisa Lachance	481
No. 91, Justice: RCMP Policing - Review, Angela Simmonds.....	483
No. 92, Prem.: CBRM Container Port - Discuss, Hon. Derek Mombourquette	484
No. 93, LAE: LPN Education Requirements - Examine, Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin.....	485
No. 94, DCS: Risk Assessments - Clear Protocols, Kendra Coombes.....	486
No. 95, MAH - Housing Task Force: HRM Strategy - Follow, Lorelei Nicoll	487
No. 96, Econ. Dev.: High Speed Internet Coverage - Update, Fred Tilley.....	488
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 24, Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act (amended) Hon. Steve Craig.....	490
Ronnie LeBlanc	491

Claudia Chender.....	492
Brendan Maguire	493
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek.....	507
Hon. Steve Craig.....	507
Vote - Affirmative.....	509
No. 27, Collection and Debt Management Agencies Act (amended)	
Hon. Colton LeBlanc	509
Hon. Patricia Arab	510
Suzy Hansen.....	511
Hon. Colton LeBlanc	512
Vote - Affirmative.....	513
No. 32, Municipal Government Act (amended) and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended)	
Hon. John Lohr	513
Lorelei Nicoll	514
Kendra Coombes.....	514
Susan Leblanc	515
John A. MacDonald	516
Hon. Brendan Maguire.....	516
Claudia Chender.....	522
Hon. John Lohr	525
Vote - Affirmative.....	525
No. 30, Residential Tenancies Act (amended)	
Hon. Colton LeBlanc	526
Lorelei Nicoll	527
Suzy Hansen.....	528
Danielle Barkhouse.....	529
Hon. Patricia Arab	530
Susan Leblanc	532
Hon. Brendan Maguire.....	534
Hon. Colton LeBlanc	536
Vote - Affirmative.....	537
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., Oct. 22 nd at 9:00 a.m.	538



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2021

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday I directly quoted a few articles that I said I would bring in and table them, so I just want to table them. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I am saddened to share with the House the passing of former Eskasoni First Nation Chief Leonard Paul earlier this week. Chief Paul served as Chief during the 1990s and was a well-known long-time community leader.

I am also sad to share today that this is the second former Eskasoni First Nation Chief to pass away this month. In early October, former Chief Blair Francis passed away. Chief Francis served as chief from 2000 to 2006.

Both Chief Paul and Chief Francis were successful leaders who served the largest Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia. Their contributions to the advancement of Eskasoni will be missed by all who knew them.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this House of Assembly join me in offering our sincere and deepest sympathy to their families, friends and the Eskasoni First Nation community.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps after the Opposition responds to this statement, we could have a moment of silence, please.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, as the Critic of L'nu Affairs and on behalf of the Liberal caucus, our condolences go out to the family and friends of both former Chief Paul and Chief Francis and current Chief Leroy, a friend of ours, and the whole community of Eskasoni.

We know both these chiefs have been pillars in the community for decades: councillors before being chiefs, as well as being captains of commerce, contributing a lot to the local economy and to the economy broadly in Nova Scotia and Mi'kma'ki. Chief Paul was involved in furnace oil and owned a lot of apartments, and Chief Blair Francis was involved in home construction. They contributed a lot to their communities, and of course, sadly, Chief Paul lost his wife just a few months ago - Josephine.

Our thoughts and condolences are with the families impacted by this and the Liberal caucus certainly stands with them.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise today to echo the condolences to the Eskasoni First Nation and community on the passing of former Chief Leonard Paul and also in the wake of the sudden and tragic loss of former Chief Blair Francis.

Loss of any community member is a cause for sorrow and reflection. This reflection takes an added dimension when the loss is that of a community leader.

Our caucus shares in this feeling and this reflection together with the Eskasoni First Nation community and offers our sincerest sympathy to all those who knew Chief Paul and Chief Blair.

THE SPEAKER: I ask that everybody stand for a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 21

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

Whereas October is Mi'kmaq History Month in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas educating students about Mi'kmaw history is part of our commitment to reconciliation and treaty education; and

Whereas through professional learning and respectful conversations schoolteachers, staff, and students continue to grow their knowledge and understanding of Mi'kmaw teachings, culture, and ways of being and knowing; treaty education; and of our shared history of the Peace and Friendship Treaties;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize October as Mi'kmaq History Month in our schools and recognize the efforts of the Mi'kmaq Services branch and teachers, students, and staff to advance reconciliation efforts and ensure treaty education is included in Nova Scotia's curriculum from Primary to Grade 12.

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 SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 22

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

Whereas the lobster harvesting industry in Nova Scotia is of great economic importance to the province, attaining an export value of \$1.19 billion in 2019; and

Whereas Lobster Fishing Area No. 35, located in the eastern end and upper basins of the Bay of Fundy, opened on October 15th with the setting of traps; and

Whereas LFA No. 35 will be the only active lobster fishery in Nova Scotia until the end of November;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House wish the harvesters of LFA No. 35 a most successful and safe fishing season and thank them for their contribution to the economy of rural Nova Scotia.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 23

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

Whereas World Teachers' Day, a global event that highlights the key responsibilities, rights, and values of teachers was celebrated on October 5th; and

Whereas World Teachers' Day is also an opportunity to recognize and thank teachers for their commitment to ensure students receive a quality education that is inclusive and equitable for all; and

Whereas our educators inspire students to believe in themselves and to never stop reaching for their goals;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the value and work of our teachers in Nova Scotia and join me in thanking Nova Scotia's educators for the important work they do to support our youth and shape our future leaders.

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. 35 - Entitled an Act to Require Daily Reporting on Wait-times for Surgery. (Hon. Zach Churchill)

Bill No. 36 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 494 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Vital Statistics Act. (Lisa Lachance)

Bill No. 37 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2008, the Fair Registration Practices Act. (Hon. Jill Balser)

Bill No. 38 - Entitled an Act to Continue the New Minas Water Commission. (Hon. Keith Irving)

Bill No. 39 - Entitled an Act Respecting an Advocate for Children and Youth. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 40 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Workers' Compensation Act, Respecting Underground Coal Miners. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 41 - Entitled an Act to Establish a Coordinated Maritime Pandemic Health Strategy. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 42 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Workers' Compensation Act, Respecting Front-line or Emergency-response Workers. (Kendra Coombes)

[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 Eastern Passage.

HARRETT, WAYNE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today remembering a long-time Eastern Passage community hero, Wayne Harrett. Sadly, Wayne lost his battle with cancer on August 14, 2021.

He was known to fill the air with excitement at so many community events, representing the radio station he started right here in our community of Eastern Passage back in 1998 from a room in his home with a low-wattage transmitter. Seaside FM, a full-time community radio station, was a dream of Wayne's that he brought to reality.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in remembering Wayne Harrett. His kind heart and dedication to his community will not be forgotten, nor will that of his sister Sharon, also of Eastern Passage, who recently passed away as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

DURKEE, DAVE & JUDY - THE MUSIC ROOM: LENDING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We all recognize the importance that music has in our lives. In fact, there are studies that demonstrate that listening and playing music can have a positive impact on memory, productivity, and overall happiness. Unfortunately for some,

the cost of accessing musical instruments can be prohibitive, which is why I'd like to recognize The Music Room in Yarmouth, owned and operated by Dave and Judy Durkee.

The Music Room is a musical instrument lending library and is completely free of charge for users. Their mission is to put musical instruments into the hands of children and adults alike.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Yarmouth's Dave and Judy Durkee of The Music Room for their kindness and generosity in providing those in our community with the wonderful and valuable opportunity to pursue the learning and playing of music, which we know has the power to impact our lives in a positive way.

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

**INTL. DOWN SYNDROME AWARENESS MO.:
LEARNING OF SYSTEMIC BARRIERS: RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to mark International Down Syndrome Awareness Month.

First, I want to thank the members for Kings South and Sydney-Membertou for their kind words yesterday recognizing this month. Thirty-two years ago, our family received the gift of my cousin Barbara, a beautiful baby who happened to have Down syndrome. Thirty years ago, our family received another gift: my brother Adam, a beautiful and strong baby born with many health challenges, who also had Down syndrome.

Our family considers itself blessed to have these two beautiful human beings in our lives. Adam and Barbara have taught us more about love, kindness, patience, and acceptance than anyone else. We have also learned through experience the systemic barriers people living with disabilities face.

Through encounters with others, we've also learned how cruel people can be, but I feel for them, as they will never get the chance to experience the love and acceptance that we have.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

FLEMMING, DONALD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I rise today to pay tribute to a good friend of mine, Don Fleming, who passed away unexpectedly on October 12th.

Don was known for living an extraordinary life and left a significant mark on the community programs he was a part of. He was president of the Cobequid Cultural Society

and one of the main driving forces behind the performing arts centre planned for Middle Sackville. Upon its completion, this centre would have been part of a long list of accomplishments that Don left behind.

In his younger years Don developed a love of sports which followed him throughout his life, from hockey, golf, curling, and coaching his own children in their sport games as well. Don also had a lifelong passion for music, whether he was on stage performing with his beloved Corvettes or donating his time to host CIOE 95.7 Memories.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to ask the members in joining me in recognizing a life well led.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ADAMS, WAYNE: CONTRIB. TO PROVINCE - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge Wayne Adams. I think of so many firsts for him. He was a great role model in all communities. As a leader, Wayne encourages many generations after him to dream bigger and strive higher.

Wayne Adams has been an entrepreneur, a broadcast journalist, a municipal councillor, an MLA, and an environment activist. He was the first Black Canadian elected to the Nova Scotia Legislature and to serve in its Cabinet. He was a member of the Order of Canada and has received the Order of Nova Scotia.

Among many of these, today I want to also acknowledge that he and his wife Nina are celebrating their wedding anniversary and celebrating 54 years of marriage. I would ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing his outstanding contributions and also the two of them to have a happy anniversary.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

ITALIAN MARKET: 30th ANNIV. OF OPENING - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to acknowledge a market that's in our riding of Halifax Needham.

On September 17th this year, the Italian Market on Young Street celebrated 30 years in business. This small business founded by Gus Abato offers Italian foods to go or to cook, oils, pasta, espresso, and many, many more products to make traditional Italian foods. They are directly across from my actual office, so I get lunch there often and I am happy to say that I am very pleased every time I have something to eat there.

I ask all the members to join me in congratulating the Italian Market, the staff, and management on thirty years in business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

WHITE, SARA: TOWN OF BERWICK 2021 VOLUN. OF YR. - RECOG.

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 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 of the 100+ Who Care Giving Group from the Annapolis Valley, and the community correspondent on CBC Information Morning.

As well, Sara is the vice-president of sales and marketing for Lacrosse Nova Scotia. She oversees bookings for the South Berwick Community Hall, and she volunteers at Hardwood Lake Camp.

We all need volunteers giving back to their communities, and Sara White is an excellent example. I ask all members of the House to thank her and all volunteers in our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

VOLUNTEERS - COLE HBR. HER. FARM: PRES. AGRIC. PAST - RECOG.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring knowledge to the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm. The Cole Harbour Heritage Farm is a community farming museum dedicated to preserving Cole Harbour's agricultural past.

The farm is not owned by any level of government, but relies completely on community support, visitor donations, and many volunteers, as they have been doing since 1976. The farm museum is definitely a hub in our community. They support culture, youth, farmers, and community service groups when possible. They hold daily, weekly, and monthly events, such as crafting workshops and pop-up outdoor markets. They support programs for seniors, children, veterans, and new immigrants.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to applaud all those volunteers who work so tirelessly to keep the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm a major member of our community.

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

FANE: PROMOTION OF ACAD. & FRANC. COMS. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: M. le président, je voudrais reconnaître la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse en face à leur assemblée générale, qui aura lieu les 22, 23 et 24 octobre.

Fondée en 1968, la Fédération acadienne est une organisation à but non-lucratif qui promeut la vitalité et le développement des communautés acadiennes et francophones en Nouvelle-Ecosse. En ce moment, la Fédération compte 28 organismes régionaux, provinciaux et institutionnels.

Cette année, le thème de leur Assemblée est « Pour une inclusion réussie des personnes issues de l'immigration. »

M. le président, je demande à toutes les membres de me joindre en félicitant la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse et en leur donnant nos meilleurs vœux pour leur assemblée générale.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, who will be having their Annual General Meeting on October 22nd, 23rd, and 24th.

Founded in 1968, the Fédération is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the vitality and overall development of Nova Scotia's Acadian and Francophone communities. The theme of this Annual Meeting this year will be focused on making Nova Scotia more inclusive for Francophone immigrants.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me to thank the Fédération for their work and send our best wishes for the AGM.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

QUEENS MANOR: 40th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, on September 24th residents, staff, the Board of Directors, and volunteers gathered with invited guests to celebrate the 40th birthday of Queens Manor in Liverpool.

Since 1981, people who have worked within the walls of this facility have provided exceptional and compassionate care to its residents and their families. The diversity and the uniqueness of each resident is valued and they are provided with an incredible variety of experiences and adventures in their home away from home and out in their communities.

During these challenging times, we in Queens are so fortunate to have the bar set high for the level of care offered to those who need it.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure and pride that I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in congratulating Queens Manor on this impressive milestone.

[1:30 p.m.]

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

**VOLUNTEERS - 14th ANN. LEBANESE CEDAR FESTIVAL:
CELEB. OF LEB. CULTURE - THANKS**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank and celebrate an amazing group of dedicated volunteers who ensured that the 14th Annual Lebanese Cedar Festival was once again an incredibly successful event not to be missed.

Begun in 2007, the Lebanese Cedar Festival is an annual tradition celebrating Lebanese culture with a Canadian twist. It started under the auspices of Monseigneur Pierre Azzi when he first arrived as pastor of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Church as a means to bring all the generations of the church together in one shared activity to share our culture and give back to the church, which has been a beacon for many as they settled here in Halifax.

After a one-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Our Lady of Lebanon hosted this year's offerings, something that could never had been done without the absolute tireless efforts of a huge number of volunteers. From spending hours chopping parsley for tabouli or the close to 100,000 cloves and garlics minced and pressed, to the logistics and organization of an event this size, especially during COVID-19, to those who worked security and sold tickets, none of it could have been done without you.

With our new pastor, Father Nahmatallah Eid, at the helm, the parish is looking forward to showcasing their beautiful new church and events centre at the corner of Clayton Park Drive and Dunbrack for the 15th anniversary event in 2022. We are all looking forward to being there with them. Mabrouk and thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**MCCULLOUGH FAMILY & ORGANIZERS:
WALK AGAINST VIOLENCE - THANKS**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, last night residents of Dartmouth North took part in the annual Walk Against Violence, to remember 19-year-old Jason McCullough, who was murdered in what was then the Pinecrest Park, as he was walking home 21 years

ago. Jason's death left his family and the entire community reeling in disbelief and sorrow. At the time, and every year since, the community came together to rally around the McCullough family and to make an unmistakable statement: We will not fall victim, we stand tall, we stand together, and we will walk through our streets with pride and dignity.

Last night, with a beautiful moon guiding the walk, about 200 people gathered at the Boys and Girls Club and walked through the community. We stopped at Jason McCullough Park, where we heard from Reverend Marion Lucas-Jefferies, who focused on peace as a response to violence and then we returned to the club for a candle-lighting ceremony.

The fact that this walk happens each year has two essential and lasting impacts: It honours Jason and keeps his memory close for those who love him and miss him, and it invites our community to gather in an incredible display of friendship, support, peace and resilience. I am grateful to the McCullough family and the organizing team for their efforts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**NICHOLSON, BORDEN:
WINNER OF REGIONAL GOLF COMPETITION - CONGRATS.**

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge one of our younger constituents in Pictou West. Borden Nicholson of Caribou recently won a regional drive, chip and putt competition at Brule Point golf course, earning him a trip to Ontario to the national Junior Skills Challenge hosted by Golf Canada. I am happy to say that he ended up ranking third in Canada for his age group.

Borden, a natural golfer, just began his golf career this past Summer. One could say that golf is in his blood, as his father is also an avid golfer and his great grandfather was a well-known golfer in his time. Borden says that golfing is fun and enjoys practicing on his practice green in his backyard.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate him on his recent win and wish him luck in future competitions.

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

**HOUSTON, PREM. TIM:
UPP. HAMMONDS PLAINS HOUSING PROJECT SUPP. - THANKS**

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, while I am not counting my chickens just yet, I did want to give some credit where credit is due. I'd like to thank the Premier for standing up and agreeing to provide the support to the community of Upper Hammonds Plains for their housing project.

I would note that Curtis Whiley, Gina Jones-Wilson, Ariel Goff, Pastor Lennett Anderson, and the team at Housing Nova Scotia have been working hard to stand up this project and work together for solutions that work for the community in Upper Hammonds Plains.

I'll note the question in Question Period came from the member for Timberlea-Prospect, the Leader of the Official Opposition, but I did want to acknowledge and say thank you to the Premier for committing those funds and supporting the community of Upper Hammonds Plains.

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

GRANDMOTHER, WINNIFRED: 97th BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish my granny, Winnifred Coombes, a happy 97th birthday. My grandmother raised 12 children, worked and even took care of us grandkids. Granny is the matriarch of our family, the calm and steady hand and the peacemaker. When you walk into granny's, the coffee and the tea are on and there is always a baked good to enjoy.

Although I may not be there today to celebrate with the family, I want to wish her a happy birthday. I ask the House to join me in wishing Winnifred Coombes, my granny, a happy 97th birthday. (Applause)

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

**MACKINNON, GLENN:
ADVOCACY FOR PHYSICALLY ACTIVE LIFESTYLE - CONGRATS.**

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a tireless advocate for an active lifestyle and the Town of Truro's Provincial Volunteer Representative, Mr. Glenn MacKinnon.

Since his retirement as a long-time educator, Mr. MacKinnon has dedicated his time to providing accessible opportunities for physical activity throughout the community, including the organization of open gym nights, family archery, snowshoeing, and many, many more. These not only encourage but facilitate families to spend quality time together while trying something new and being active.

His enthusiasm and generosity are truly inspiring, and his commitment is certainly worthy of recognition today. Congratulations, Mr. MacKinnon.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

SAMBRO LOOP BUS ROUTE: EFFORTS TO BRING BACK - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government announced their new housing plan, and along with that came a renewed focus on public transportation within HRM.

For years, the residents of the Sambro Loop, along with myself, have advocated to bring back the Sambro Loop bus, but to no avail. HRM cut the bus route years ago with no plans to bring it back. The government has indicated that they will be making some of these local decisions for municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with the new government to secure the funding needed to bring back this route that will be effective and based on community needs so that it will be sustainable for decades to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**STRUM, MICHELLE - ALTEREGOS CAFÉ & HALIFAX BACKPACKERS
HOSTEL: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an amazing community space in Halifax Needham: Alteregos Cafe & Catering and Halifax Backpackers Hostel on Gottingen Street. It has been in operation for more than 20 years.

Aside from offering short-term accommodations and great coffee and food, proprietor Michelle Strum has been an active community member, featuring local bands, supporting local artists, honouring Indigenous, Black, and Mi'kmaq communities, offering a safe space for LGBTQ2S+, and more.

Michelle offers a living wage to employees and she is an excellent businesswoman and mentor and supporter of entrepreneurs, and she's passionate about them finding their own potential. Michelle is a founding member of the NEST program and the Halifax Community Investment Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members help me celebrate a person I call a friend, and ask you to join me in recognizing her and her long-standing business in Halifax Needham.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

PRIMEAU, READE: OXFORD BOXING CLUB ASSET - RECOG.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Reade Primeau, a 19-year-old up-and-coming boxer and mentor from Oxford. Reade has been a

member of the Oxford Boxing Club since it opened in 2018 and has participated in exhibition matches and five competitive matches.

Reade was initially drawn to the boxing program because he and his friends like to “roughhouse,” as they called it, and he decided he might benefit from learning some proper techniques. Once he started, he was hooked. He hopes to one day become a professional boxer. Meanwhile, he works two jobs on top of the rigorous training schedule.

Reade is always quick to stop his own training to help other members, always motivating and pushing others to work harder and give their best.

Please join me in recognizing Reade Primeau and all the organizers and members of the Oxford Boxing Club.

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

ANTOINETTE’S CHEESECAKES: OPENING - THANKS

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize one of the many outstanding small businesses in our community - there are many. Antoinette’s Cheesecakes opened its doors in November 2020 on Baker Dr. in Dartmouth after several years of providing these delectable desserts to various area businesses. I know the Leader of the Opposition and myself can attest to their deliciousness.

Antoinette always dreamed of creating one-of-a-kind traditional New York-style cheesecakes. The award-winning cheesecakes, made on site, also offer keto, dairy-free, vegan, and gluten-free varieties. As business owner Antoinette likes to say, there are no excuses not to eat cheesecake.

Despite opening a business in the midst of a pandemic and with restrictions in place, Antoinette’s strong commitment to supporting multiple charities was not hindered. Portions of sales on specific dates were received with gratitude by such charities as the Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation Fund, to purchase a new ultrasound machine, and the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia, to name a few.

I ask that members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing Antoinette’s Cheesecakes for their contribution to the community.

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

BROWN, PAM: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the life of Pam Brown. Pam was a resident of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island and a beloved partner, mother, sister, grandmother, auntie, friend, physician, advocate, and ally.

Pam attended the University College London Medical School. She and her husband Doug moved to Halifax in the 1960s to build their family. As a doctor, she was concerned about the lack of reproductive health support in Nova Scotia when she arrived.

Upon legalization of family planning clinics in Canada, she oversaw the inaugural Family Planning Association of Nova Scotia and remained a committed physician throughout its evolutions to the current Halifax Sexual Health Centre until her retirement at age 75. The resource library there bears her name.

Her speaking engagements at Halifax high schools over the years contributed greatly to the integration of sexual education in schools, including the establishment of teen health centres.

Pam was an active member of the United Church of Canada and in her 80s was dedicated to promoting the TRC Calls to Action relevant to the United Church. She was honoured with the Nova Scotia Human Rights Award last year and passed away at the age of 88.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask all members to join me in remembering Pam's legacy.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the next speaker, there's a lot of idle chatter in the House. I will just ask that if you want to talk to someone, please do it outside the Chamber. Thank you.

The honourable member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

**NSTU: CREATION OF EXEC. STAFF OFFICER
TO COMBAT RACISM - RECOG.**

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, which earlier this month wrapped up their 100th annual council.

I want to congratulate the NSTU on the creation of a new executive staff officer position specifically designed to combat systemic racism and to meet the unique and complex needs of its visible minority members. The resolution was drafted following extensive consultation with, and led by, African Nova Scotian and Indigenous teachers and specialists.

By increasing diversity, Nova Scotia's teachers are ensuring their decisions will reflect the lived reality of members in these groups. They are making the organization a more inclusive workplace for all.

The creation of this position is just one example of the ways we can begin to dismantle systemic racism and is one of the ways in which teachers empower us through their lessons each day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

HEPPY'S PIE LADY: PROM. OF ACAD. CULTURE - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, I stand today during Small Business Week to congratulate Heppy's Pie Lady on Herring Cove Road for over 25 years of excellent service.

Heppy's Pie Lady is a local small business with a rich Acadian history. For over 25 years, they have been making pies of all shapes, sizes, and content from Acadian recipes passed down through family generations. With these trusted recipes, we are given a taste of Acadian culture and family values right here in this city.

This pie shop has become well-known around Halifax Armdale as a healthy fast food alternative where people know they can sit down and be treated like family and where authentic Acadian taste can be explored. Recently, the pie shop has come under new ownership, and I wish another 25 years of success for Heppy's Pie Lady.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize this small business that has become an integral part of the Halifax Armdale community by providing culture, history, as well as great food.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

N.S. ACORN: RENT CONTROL EXTENSION EFFORTS - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Nova Scotia ACORN. ACORN is a multi-issue, membership-based community union of low- and moderate-income people that believe that social and economic justice can be best achieved by building community power for change.

ACORN runs campaigns on issues such as landlord licensing, a living wage, and affordable access to the internet. I am particularly happy to recognize ACORN's role in building public awareness and support for rent control, a feat that they were so successful at that in the last 12 months, two premiers who campaigned against the policy saw no alternative but to introduce it. This was a major victory for ACORN and their allies, and, of course, tenants across the province.

I encourage everyone in this House to join me in congratulating Nova Scotia ACORN and their role in the extension of rent control in Nova Scotia.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

**EASTERN SHORE CONSTITUENTS:
HEAD OF CHEZZ. OFFICE OPEN HOUSE ATTEND. - THANKS**

KENT SMITH: I rise today to thank constituents of the Eastern Shore for attending the first open house at our new constituency office located in 6321 Highway No. 7, Head of Chezzetcook.

The newly renovated office provides a welcoming space for residents to meet with their MLA and constituency associate to discuss their ideas and needs. It also offers a fully accessible and comfortable meeting area for residents of the Eastern Shore communities.

I ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing the building owner and local contractor, Craig Brown, for his efforts in creating this spectacular environment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**ALLT, JANE/POIRIER, ANGELA: *HOW GOVERNMENT REALLY WORKS*
BOOK PUBLISHED - CONGRATS.**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise to recognize Jane Allt, a constituent of mine, and Angela Poirier on writing a wonderful book entitled *How Government Really Works*. This page-turner offers first-hand information regarding the complexities of government offices and environments and provides an insight to assist readers in understanding the dynamics of provincial governments in Canada.

Jane and Angela are well-respected civil servants who have shared more than 60 years of service between them. The information provided in the book comes from their personal experience, as well as from senior civil servants and academics. I recently met with the two authors at my Coffee & Conversation, and I look forward to continuing reading this book myself.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Jane Allt and Angela Poirier on co-authoring such an interesting book, and I hope all my colleagues will get the chance to read it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

CORBETT, STANLEY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

TOM TAGGART: I rise today to recognize, honour, and pay tribute to a long-time community member of Bass River who passed away in December 2019, but not without leaving behind a legacy in the community: Mr. Stanley Corbett.

The Dominion Chair factory in Bass River was Eastern Canada's oldest furniture maker. The company put Bass River on the map and is a piece of our history. Many years ago, the Bass River Heritage Society was formed, and they were very fortunate to have Stan join. He assisted in starting the Heritage Museum, kiosk, fundraisers, and most importantly, creating the Loggers Memorial Park.

Being a woodsman his entire life came from his heart. Recently, his mother added a new addition to the park: a wooden log carefully carved out as a woodsman, in memory of Stan, for his passion in life and the history of his hometown.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in remembering the life of Stanley Corbett for his passion and dedication to his family and community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

**WILSON, DEBORAH/RUDD, STEVEN:
SNACKS ON SHORE OPENING - CONGRATS.**

RONNIE LEBLANC: Every year, many of our visitors come for a vacation and decide to make Nova Scotia their home. That was Deborah Wilson and Steven Rodd's plan when they spent a weekend at Mavillette Beach last Spring and noticed a cabin cruiser near the beach. For Deborah, who had opened cafes in Port Elgin and Belize, this was an "aha" moment.

She loves cooking and baking and could envision their future business. They would open a takeout and offer reasonably priced homemade comfort foods that could easily be carried back to the beach. They were able to lease the property and quickly complete the renovations on the cruiser to open Snacks on Shore by August 1st.

Congratulations to Deborah and Steven on finding your new home and opening this year for your first full season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**PAQTNKEK MI'KMAW NATION:
OPENING OF PAQTNKEK EDUC. CTR. - RECOG.**

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I rise today to bring recognition to and send my best wishes to Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation as they celebrated the official opening of the new Paqtnkek Education Centre on Friday, October 15th.

It has taken many years and much hard work to see this project to fruition. Students in Grade Primary to Grade 3 are now able to receive an education in their community with Mi'kmaq teachers.

I wish to congratulate Tanya Francis, the community's education director, for her dedication to the project. When interviewed by CBC, she commended the leadership of their community for making this project a reality and said that the school provides a welcoming and empathetic environment and staff who want the best for students.

I ask all members to join me in sending best wishes to the Paqtnkek community as they provide a culturally relevant education to their children and realize their dream of having their own school.

THE SPEAKER: I recognize the honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

THE CIRCLE: 10th ANNIV. AS MUSIC VENUE - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 10th anniversary of the Circle at Legion Branch 83 in Florence. The Circle was created as a home for amateur musicians to play, learn, and entertain.

The Circle was founded 10 years ago by Greg "Bowser" MacRae and some of his friends. Sadly, Greg passed away two years ago this month. Greg was a huge personality who was loved by all. Greg spent many years on the lake boats, and as a matter of fact, Canadian singer-songwriter David Francey wrote a song about Bowser's life called "The Ballad of Bowser MacRae." I recommend all of you take a listen. It's an amazing song.

Mr. Speaker, the Circle carries on in Greg's memory under the current direction of Long Bob Finney. Please join me in congratulating the Circle on their 10th anniversary on Saturday night.

THE SPEAKER: I recognize the honourable member for Lunenburg West.

SOULS HARBOUR RESCUE MISSION: COM. SERV. - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Souls Harbour Rescue Mission in Bridgewater. The mission welcomes men and women facing the

challenges of hunger, homelessness, poverty, abuse, and addiction, as well as neighbouring seniors residing in affordable housing.

Souls Harbour offers free meals throughout the week and much-needed clothing, toiletries, and household items, as well as providing free local calling, daily newspapers, magazines, access to computers, and free income tax returns for clients.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and extend our gratitude to Souls Harbour Rescue Mission and their dedicated and compassionate volunteers for helping to bring hope and help to individuals and families in need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

NWACHUKWU FAMILY: BECOMING CDN. CITIZENS - CONGRATS.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my constituents Charles and Oge Nwachukwu and their three children aged eight, five, and three, on becoming Canadian citizens on July 28th of this year. (Applause)

Originally from Lagos, Nigeria, the family arrived in Canada in 2018 and eventually settled in Bedford South, where they bought a home in March 2019. Charles, a strategic sourcing coordinator with the IWK Children's Hospital, and his wife Oge, a business analyst and product manager with the NSCC, are very thoughtful and, I know, very proud Canadians.

I would like to thank them for their kindness and generosity and for all they do for our community by way of volunteering and actively participating to make life better for everyone.

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

**AUSTIN, DEEDEE:
RELEASE OF NEW SONG "BURIED TRUTH" - CONGRATS.**

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young, talented singer-songwriter from Fall River, DeeDee Austin. She is 15 years old and a Grade 10 student at Lockview High School.

DeeDee is a rising artist and member of the East Coast Music Association who has just released a new song, "Buried Truth." DeeDee wrote this song as a beautiful tribute to her great-grandmother, who was a residential school survivor. The song is written from a child's point of view and is based on the stories her mother has shared with her about her grandmother's experiences at the residential school.

We have just celebrated our first Truth and Reconciliation Day and DeeDee's song "Buried Truth" gives us an opportunity to reflect on the ongoing legacy of residential schools.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating DeeDee Austin for her touching song and wishing her continued success as she pursues her musical career. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

ASIEDU FAMILY: ARRIVAL IN MIDDLETON - WELCOME

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to welcome Doctor Jerry Asiedu and his family to our community. Last month, Dr. Asiedu joined the team at the Middleton Collaborative Practice as a full-service family doctor. He also serves as staff physician at Soldiers Memorial Hospital in Middleton.

Like many rural communities in our province, the Middleton area desperately needs physicians. The addition of Dr. Asiedu will have a tremendous positive impact on the health and well-being of so many area residents.

The Asiedus moved to Canada from Ghana, where both Jerry and his wife, Ama, were practising physicians. I'm so proud of the efforts of the community over the past number of months to welcome and support this family. It has highlighted to me the critical role that communities play in recruitment and retention of health professionals in our province.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in welcoming Dr. Asiedu, his wife Ama, and children Adwoa and Kwabena, and thank them for choosing to make Nova Scotia their home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

CBSRC: ATTRACTION & RETENTION OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS - THANKS

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, the attraction and retention of health care professionals to many regions of our province has required the support of local community groups. The Cape Breton South Recruiting for Health committee supports that mandate for the Strait-Richmond region.

The organization developed out of the need for physicians in our region and has branched out to support all local health care practitioners. Recently, Cape Breton South Recruiting for Health hosted a series of health care appreciation barbecues at our local

hospital and community health centres to show the appreciation our region has for the local health care practitioners, while supporting the attraction of new practitioners to our area.

I want to ask the members of this House to join me in thanking our many community volunteers throughout Nova Scotia, like those at Cape Breton South Recruiting for Health, for supporting the attraction and retention of health care practitioners to our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**FURLONG, RON/DOWE, BILL - AMHERST & AREA COC:
PROM. OF LOCAL BUS. - RECOG.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, during Small Business Week, today I'd like to recognize the Executive Director of the Amherst & Area Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Ron Furlong. Ron has worked tirelessly, especially over the last 19 months, with our business community in our border town hit extra hard by this global pandemic.

I also want to recognize President Bill Dowe, who has worked tirelessly to help our governments recognize the unique needs of our businesses in our border town as well. He has also worked to try to stop the Cobequid Pass tolls before they were even built in 1996 and has fought ever since to have them removed, as they place an extra business expense on our businesses exporting and our businesses bringing inventory in. He will soon be celebrating as they are finally removed.

On Small Business Week, I honour our Amherst & Area Chamber of Commerce, their leadership, and the important work they do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

PERSAUD, KAMLA: VOLUNTEERING IN ELECTIONS - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kamla Persaud of Timberlea for her outstanding work as a volunteer and responsible citizen to promote democratic governance and social participation.

As politicians, we all know the value of volunteers and that they are the heart of every campaign. Participating in elections is one of the key freedoms we all value as Canadians. This past year, Kamla volunteered for both the provincial and federal elections to connect with her community and encouraged friends and neighbours to exercise their right to vote.

Kamla was a dedicated team member and her positive, energetic, and friendly personality helped to create and foster a team spirit among all the members of the group to enable everyone to work well together and to bond in friendship.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the members of the House to join me in thanking Kamla for the endless hours of work and a commitment as volunteer. Her time, talent, energy, and infectious smile made her a valued member of the team.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HELLSTROM, SHEILA ANNE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I ask today that we remember Sheila Anne Hellstrom, a proud Royal Canadian Air Force veteran and the first Canadian woman to reach the military rank of Brigadier-General, who passed away in Ottawa on December 20, 2020, and whose ashes were interred at Hillcrest Cemetery last weekend.

Born in Lunenburg, it was Sheila's dream to pursue a military career after hearing many stories from the Norwegian sailors based at Camp Norway, a training base in Lunenburg during the Second World War. As Canada's first female Brigadier-General, Sheila bravely and boldly cut a thorny path for all women who followed her footsteps in the Armed Forces.

I wish to ask all members of the Legislature to join me in celebrating Sheila's remarkable life and her unwavering commitment to transformation, diversity, and inclusivity in the Canadian Armed Forces.

THE SPEAKER: Before we move into Orders of the Day, I just want to make the members aware that the use of electronics while Question Period is going on is prohibited. No electronics during Question Period.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is 2:00 p.m. We will finish at 2:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: EMPLOYEE VACCINATIONS - UPDATE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, we commend the government's decision to implement mandatory vaccinations in our health care and education institutions. We are seeing that other provinces have deadlines that are similar to ours. Our deadline for November 30th is similar to the New Brunswick deadline of the 19th.

There are unions asking for extensions in New Brunswick. Other provinces are tracking how many employees are not yet fully vaccinated - and I'll table the article from New Brunswick.

I'd like to ask the Premier: How many employees in health care are not vaccinated in the province?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): I don't have a number for the member today, but I will tell the member that we're proud of the vaccination rates across the province. Nova Scotians are going out and getting vaccinated. I commend the Opposition for their efforts on that when they were in government. It's been fruitful.

It's my understanding that the vaccination rates in health care and in education of our professionals working in those fields are higher than in the general population, so that's a good thing, but I don't have an actual number for the member today.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: It's hard to attack when you get that, Mr. Speaker.

Nova Scotia's doing well with vaccinations, but we do have that November 30th date. It's coming soon - that's five weeks and we want to see a plan.

Ten per cent of the population of the workers in New Brunswick are not vaccinated. We need to see a plan. If they don't have the number soon, do they have a plan to look at what they're going to do to ensure - I don't have to tell the member the staffing challenges in health care - what's the plan for those who are not vaccinated? What are they going to do to ensure that there are employees in our health care system working?

THE PREMIER: I thank the member for the question. It is important. We know the challenges we have in health care and the challenges we have in many industries. It would be a shame to lose any single health care professional.

What I can tell the member and the House is this: The number of health care professionals in particular that we hear from who thank us for putting this mandate in place is completely overwhelming. They don't want to work with colleagues who are not vaccinated. We haven't had an ask for any exemptions, but that's not something that I believe we would be willing to entertain even if there were.

IAIN RANKIN: We are five weeks away. I implore the government to have a plan in place. We're not advocating for an exemption, to be clear, but we need a plan, given if you look at other provinces that are tracking in advance. We know British Columbia knows exactly how many workers don't have vaccinations. That's the ask from the Opposition.

With respect to schools and vaccines that are available in schools, part of our success in Nova Scotia is the testing. We know that's provided to students, but we still have teachers, presumably, who aren't fully vaccinated. I would ask the Premier: Would you make testing more widely available so that all teachers have access to tests, especially before November 30th, given that that's the deadline?

THE PREMIER: Nova Scotia has led the way on testing. Again - where credit is due - I do commend the efforts of the prior government and, of course, Dr. Strang and Public Health. We've been leaders in testing. I personally believe that the more testing we can do, the better. The member's point is duly noted and we'll do as much testing as we can because it's completely necessary. I thank the member for the question.

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

PREM.: LAC VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS - RECONSIDER

GARY BURRILL: My question is for the Premier.

On the 7th of October, the Premier was asked if the option for virtual presentations from members of the public to Law Amendments would continue now that Public Health guidelines were allowing public meetings to take place. The Premier said that they would so that people who can't get to Halifax would be able to have their voices heard in that forum. However, when asked on Tuesday, the Premier said that if people had something to say, they would "just have to come here and say it."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide the Premier with an opportunity to explain why he went back on his word.

THE PREMIER: The Law Amendments Committee is incredibly important. It is where people can have their say. I think it's incredibly powerful when people can appear in person and have their say in person, but it's more powerful and more important that they have a chance to have their say.

What I can tell the member is the way I felt on I think it was the 7th of October, I still feel that way. We'll look for ways to make sure that Law Amendments Committee is accessible to all those who want to have their say on legislation that's before this House. It's important and we're going to work to make sure we find a way to do it most effectively.

GARY BURRILL: This is a welcome word, but it's quite a distance from the word that we heard yesterday. Yesterday, when the member for Dartmouth South asked about this matter, there was not this kind of a commitment. Instead, the Premier said this: We had a Law Amendments Committee. It was very well attended.

I think that the many people in Nova Scotia who live in a situation where it's not very easy on short notice to get to Hollis Street to present to a committee deserve more respect than that.

I want to ask the Premier: Will he admit that opposing virtual presentations in the past has provided the impression that his government was trying to evade its critics?

THE PREMIER: Using the expression couldn't be further away from the actual words. I think this government has been very clear with Nova Scotians on our intents and the opportunities that they will have to provide feedback to us.

I also believe that we've also shown that we'll be responsive to that feedback that we receive, because we're confident enough as a government to acknowledge we don't know what we don't know. When we learn something new, we will act on it. I think the members opposite know that very well.

GARY BURRILL: I do want to draw the attention of the House to a statement issued yesterday by Gerry Post, a respected municipal planner and advocate for persons with disabilities and the first director of the Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate. He wrote this: "It's unfortunate the @nsgov will not permit remote presentations during Law Amendments Hearing. Many with Persons with Disabilities have trouble traveling to Halifax and this essentially freezes them out of the Law amendments process. I hope @TimHoustonNS will reconsider."

I want to know, then, in light of the statement that the Premier has made now, if he will undertake to commit to persons with disabilities that this statement of the capacity to appear virtually is something that will be done with immediacy and with urgency, and he will commit to them that they will not be frozen out from this process in the future.

THE PREMIER: Yes, we will. I have great respect for Mr. Post, and I will tell this House that his words made an impression upon me. We want to make sure that this House - in particular, in this case, the Law Amendments Committee - is accessible to everyone. Yes, we will do all that we can to make sure, and Mr. Post can rest assured we will reconsider.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NSCC: HEALTH PROF. - INCREASE SEATS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: We appreciate the Premier's commitment to increasing pay for continuing care assistants and bringing in more standards of care. On that commitment to increase these types of professions in the health care field, the 2,000 new net positions for CCAs and nurses in this field, obviously for them to meet this very bold commitment in this mandate, they are going to need seats at our post-secondary.

We noted in the announcement yesterday that they will be creating student housing at Nova Scotia Community Colleges. We propose increasing the seats, especially LPNs, hundreds of new seats for LPNs. There's no question that we need more seats in our community college and in other post-secondary.

I want to ask the Premier: Will he commit to more seats for nurses, CCAs, LPNs and other health care professionals?

THE PREMIER: Yes, we will, and as a matter of fact . . . (Interruption). This is much more fun today. I can tell the member that, look, we understand the challenge and the goal of 2,000, and the goal of fixing our health care. It's tough. It's a challenge. We understand the challenge. We're taking . . . (Interruption) No, no, we're not backpedalling. We're taking it on head-on. We are taking it on head-on, and I will tell the member that we are already working with the post-secondary institutions on that exact question.

IAIN RANKIN: I'll take the Premier at his word that he's looking at this. There are wait-lists for a lot of these fields for health care professions, and we can certainly get to work right away, because they are two- and four-year programs much of the time.

We are waiting for operating rooms to start opening up beyond the banking hours that the member committed to, and the assumption is that he would be able to get over 100 - 140 - surgeons. These surgeons will need support staff, they'll need more nurses, and they'll need other staff. We need these seats in the schools.

I want to ask the Premier: Did they calculate how many more than the 2,000 they committed to, to ensure that they have more operating rooms operating beyond the 9 to 5 hours?

THE PREMIER: Yes, we did. We did extensive work, and as I've told the House before and will reiterate again today, we understand full well what we committed to. We did it with our eyes wide open. We did it following research, and we stand by every word of our platform. We will take it on.

I understand the reluctance to believe that it's possible, but I believe there's a lot possible for this province. I believe very strongly in this province, and I believe that the potential of this province will finally now be unleashed now that we have a government

that says we have the courage to tackle the challenges that lie before us, no matter how big or small they are. We are willing to take them on where other governments have not been willing to.

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

PREM.: COST OF LIVING INCREASES - ACTION

HON. IAIN RANKIN: There are certainly a lot of criticisms you could bring from the past government. Courage is definitely not one of them, Mr. Speaker.

There was lots in the announcement yesterday to do with helping affordability with housing. They're looking at the supply issue, and we commend a lot of those investments and adopting some of the measures that we proposed early in the session, but the only part of that that helps with affordability is extending the rent caps. There is an increase in the cost of living in this province, more than any other parts of the country right now. Inflation is over 5 per cent.

When it comes to the increasing cost of housing, when it comes to the increasing cost of fuel, power rates, food, all of these things, I want to ask the Premier: What is he going to do to ease the burden for the cost of living in this province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're all concerned about inflation. The member knows that many of those things are outside of the control of what a province can do.

What I would tell the member is that what we can do, we will. I think evidence of that is the housing announcement we made yesterday, which we're very proud of. (Applause)

IAIN RANKIN: There is plenty that all levels can do, especially the Province, in easing the burden of the cost of fuel increasing and home heating, Mr. Speaker. The Heating Assistance Rebate Program is one of those programs.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he expand some of these existing programs? Will he expand efficiency programs to ease the burden on the issue of energy poverty in the province? Will he commit to any of these things?

We have a budget coming up in less than a year. I want to ask the Premier: What programs, specifically, will he introduce or expand to ease the burden on Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: The member's right - there are a number of programs that help Nova Scotians. We believe in those programs. We'll continue to review those programs and see if we can add to them. We also are already adding a new one, and that's the seniors'

grant, which will help many, many seniors. It's an investment on behalf of government to help Nova Scotians.

Where we can do things, we will do them. I believe Nova Scotians are seeing that we are a government of action, and I believe they are responding very positively to it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PREM. - HEALTH CARE: VAC. - REPORT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on very big promises when it comes to health care - recruiting 300 doctors a year, 2,000 nurses - and while this government did not pass or bring forward for third reading our bill to report on recruitment and vacancy numbers, the Minister of Health and Wellness did commit to report, saying, "We want to be transparent with Nova Scotians as we move forward. . . . We continue to look at how best to report that back to Nova Scotians." I'll table that.

[2:15 p.m.]

My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier commit today to the House to ensure that there is regular reporting on the recruitment numbers and on vacancies in our health care system.

THE PREMIER: I think what I'm willing to confirm to the House is we were left an awful big hole to climb out of. The day that I look forward to is the day that I'm walking down a street in Yarmouth, or some other town around this beautiful province, and somebody walks up to me and says, thank you, I now have a doctor because I haven't had one for six years. That's the reporting that I'm most interested in, Mr. Speaker, and I will tell you we are very focused on making that happen.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this government has talked about being accountable and transparent to the public, yet will not commit to reporting on their recruitment numbers. Even further than that, our government was reporting monthly on doctor recruitment figures and vacancies in patient attachment.

Since August 31st, the monthly reporting that was happening from the health authority on doctor recruitment and vacancies has stopped since the day that this government was sworn into office. I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Premier is: Can the Premier please explain why his government has chosen to actually stop reporting on doctor recruitment numbers and vacancies?

THE PREMIER: I reject the complete notion of the question, Mr. Speaker. We are working hard. We've established an office. If this government was so open and transparent,

we'd be a lot further ahead than we are right now in this province, if they had been open and transparent about what was really happening.

What I will say to this House is that government knows full well the mess that it left Nova Scotia in and I am very focused on digging out of that mess and getting doctors to this province and that government will know about it when we do because Nova Scotians will tell them loud and clear.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MAH - DART. N.: AFFORD. HOUSING UNITS - ACTION

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Acquiring buildings that are already built to prevent them from being lost as affordable rentals is an important strategy to maintain and increase affordable housing supply. Ocean Breeze Village in Dartmouth North has 397 units spread over townhouses and apartments. These units are some of the few affordable options in my community that are appropriate for families. Now the property is up for sale.

My question to the minister is: Is the minister willing to take action to prevent these affordable units in Dartmouth North from being sold off and potentially demolished for more high-end condo development?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, through you I'd like to thank the member for the question. I do want to point out that the member may know that the province owns, through Housing Nova Scotia, 10,300 units, and that's all affordable housing.

I'm not aware personally of what's happening in her constituency but I'm certainly willing to meet with her and discuss it after the sitting. Thank you.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I will definitely take the minister up on that offer. The announcement was made in *allNovaScotia* the other day. I can table that if I can get that article printed. I don't know if that's allowed with *allNovaScotia*.

Mr. Speaker, in the Halifax Regional Municipality, 96 per cent of housing is owned by private landlords. We know that increasing truly affordable supply means providing more public, not-for-profit, and co-op options. The minister has referenced the housing that the province owns but we need more and we need better.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: If the minister isn't willing to take action when affordable units are being sold off, how does he plan to ensure that we don't lose affordable housing units as private landlords and big developers take advantage of opportunities for profit?

JOHN LOHR: I'm very proud of the actions that our government is taking. One example would be inclusionary zoning. Another example would be the quick start program, which was recommended by the Affordable Housing Commission. We've topped that up by another \$14.4 million when they recommended 20.

We will do more if necessary. We know that more is necessary and there are actually a slew of other programs within the envelope of Housing Nova Scotia, which we look forward to announcing projects as time goes on.

I think we've done a lot and we're doing a lot more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

SLTC: CCA REG. - UPDATE

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care about the instructions in her mandate letter. As I explained the other day, a number of the items in her mandate letter have already been completed. In this letter, the minister is directed to make the CCA registry mandatory, and I will table that.

I would like to ask the minister: Could the minister please update the House on the progress of that particular item?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member, doing a little bit of something is not completing a project, in my view. So, as you can imagine, the registry was something that I had wanted for a long time because if you don't know how many you have of a particular profession, it is hard to do strategic planning.

The update is that the department, once that Act was passed, already started working on it, as the member would probably know. They had already started working on that even before I took my position, so they are working on making sure that that registry is in place in the timeline that the previous government had set for it.

KELLY REGAN: So, would doing a little bit of something be like tabling a bill that never gets passed and claiming credit for it?

Mr. Speaker, in fact, my colleague, the former Minister of Health and Wellness, introduced legislation to create a new mandatory registry for continuing care assistants on April 7th of this year. Bill No. 92, the Continuing Care Assistants Registry Act, passed Second Reading the following day. It was reported back from Law Amendments Committee on April 12th, the Committee of the Whole House on April 14th, Third Reading on April 15th, Royal Assent on April 19th - and I will table that, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, members of the Liberal Party stand at the ready to assist the minister in completing her mandate letter. All that remains to do on this item is to finalize the regulations and then to proclaim the Act. Since work has been under way since April 19th - six months - my question to the minister is: What's the holdup?

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, we'll avoid getting into the back and forth on someone taking legislation that someone else introduced and passing it under their own name. We will move on from that.

This government previous to us had eight years to pass the CCA registry and in eight years they did not get it done. The previous government is well aware that there are steps to be taken and I think we are on Day 51 here. We have accomplished a great deal in that time frame and the department that this government previous used to respond to knows full well exactly the timeline and it will be done exactly when it was supposed to happen.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

SLTC: CCA TRAINING GRANT - STUDENTS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care about the status of the reinstatement of the CCA training grant, as directed by the Premier in her mandate letter.

The minister responded that "this House will be the first ones to know." I will table that, but as it turned out, that grant was actually reinstated two Premiers ago and then expanded in number and included private career colleges. I will table those two particular releases.

Mr. Speaker, the minister then responded that our bursary program was not for enough seats and was therefore "a drop in the bucket" - and I have already tabled her remarks. I would like to ask the minister: Does the minister understand those bursaries already go unfilled? Where does the minister think she is going to get the students from to fill these seats?

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, through you, I understand that her previous government strategies did not fill those seats but ours will.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, the minister claims she is going to "bring it back in a much bigger way," and I've already tabled those remarks. The minister likes to tout the many bills that she has written. She introduced one of those bills - the Long-term Care Support Act - on the 30th of March earlier this year, and that was nearly two years after the bursary was reintroduced and six months after it was expanded.

Section 5 of her tabled bill indicates that “the Minister may provide a bursary for up to 50 per cent of the student’s tuition in the continuing care program, to a maximum of \$2,000, and a further amount of up to \$500 to cover the costs of textbooks and other expenses.” To be clear, hers is \$2,000 plus another \$500. Ours covers their tuition, which is \$4,000. That means our so-called drop in the bucket. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister: Does the minister understand her bill would represent a significant cut to the bursary available to individual students, and does she think she will attract more students with a lower bursary?

BARBARA ADAMS: I thank the member for bringing this forward. We had no idea that the recruitment issues for that profession were in such disrepair. Of course, I recognize that that was a lower amount. That is not what we intend to do moving forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin on another question.

SLTC: CONTACT TRACING TECH. - EXPLAIN

HON. KELLY REGAN: In the Progressive Conservative election platform, there’s a section devoted to seniors. The Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care says she read it - and I will table that.

The platform talks about the contact tracing software and notes that it can track not just contacts, but also whether residents take their medication, where they are, and who they interact with. It says: “The PC Government will embrace technology and, specifically, champion contact tracing technology for long-term care properties.” I would note that “champion contact tracing technology” is bolded - and I will table that.

Since the minister spent a whole page discussing it in her 11-page seniors’ platform, could she please explain why this item is not in her mandate letter?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: There are so many things I plan to accomplish that you would have needed a whole binder to keep track of them all.

KELLY REGAN: I would point out that nowhere in the document is there any indication what the hardware costs are.

When the cost for this item is discussed, the platform indicates software costs would be \$3 million to \$4 million and that the government had already “made a funding commitment of approximately \$3.5 million to modernize technology in our long-term care properties”. Then it says: “These costs are already accounted for. Our intention is to ensure

they are put to use on our recommended technologies. Therefore, there is no new cost to modernization” That has already been tabled.

Mr. Speaker, sure enough, it is not included in the costing for their seniors’ platform, which I will table. So, no costs for hardware, no understanding that there might be other technologies . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

KELLY REGAN: . . . for long-term care homes not in the mandate letter. It’s just a sort of promise with no price tag attached.

My question is to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board: Is this the kind of shoddy accounting we can expect from this government?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I thought the member was going back there to the other minister. I do apologize. I tuned out a bit there.

I will say this: With the help of one of my colleagues, the platform that we put forth was fully costed. We wouldn’t put something forward unless it was fully costed.

There’s no point in putting forward claims in this Legislature or elsewhere unless you’re going to back it up. What I saw with the previous government were a couple of things: a doctor for every Nova Scotian, and let’s break the monopoly of Nova Scotia Power.

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

FTB: ONLINE CASINO - SAFEGUARDS

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

Last Spring, the Liberal Cabinet paved the way for an online casino in Nova Scotia. During the pandemic, New Brunswick residents lost \$7.3 million to the Atlantic Lottery Corporation’s new online casino.

With many of the province’s gambling safeguards dismantled, advocates have been sounding the alarm about what an online casino could mean for people in Nova Scotia living with problematic gaming habits.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that this government is going ahead with an online casino and explain what safeguards will be in place to ensure user safety?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. The fact that we have not jumped forward with this, I think, is an indication that our mandate was to fix health care and housing. We've seen announcements on that. That has been the focus.

Online gaming is an issue. We're seeing more and more people moving to online gaming. At this point in our mandate, it has not been something I have been focused on as minister responsible because our government has been focused elsewhere.

[2:30 p.m.]

LISA LACHANCE: The minister says they're not focused on it, but gambling revenues are . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island has the floor.

LISA LACHANCE: The minister says they're not focused on it, but gambling revenues are an important source of revenue for the province, and they are also an acute source of harm for many people in Nova Scotia. The last eight years saw the previous government remove the My-Play system from all VLTs, dissolve funding to Gambling Awareness Nova Scotia, abandon the Responsible Gaming Strategy, and then shield itself from liability for the impacts of its own gambling policies.

Will the minister commit to updating the Responsible Gaming Strategy and reinstating funding to Gambling Awareness Nova Scotia?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Those issues the member raises are all very important. They affect people in real ways. I think we all know people in our communities who have been affected with problem gambling.

I would like to also acknowledge that our government has started an Office of Mental Health and Addictions. In fact, the name was just changed recently. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has the floor. Order.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

ALLAN MACMASTER: We have a dedicated minister responsible for Mental Health and Addictions. I see my time is up, but I want the member to be assured that what they're raising here are things we will be thinking about.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DOJ: RCMP POLICING - REVIEW

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I just wanted to pick up on a conversation we started earlier this week about the RCMP. This Spring, the House of Commons released a report on RCMP policing. One of the recommendations was to end contract policing in provinces and municipalities. I'll table that.

Earlier this year, the former Minister of Justice said there was a process under way to assess policing in Nova Scotia, and I'll table that. We also know it is not within the mandate of the Mass Casualty Commission to discuss the costing models, competency and skills training, and operational boots-on-the-ground aspects of policing in this province. I will also table that.

Knowing all these things, I find it perplexing why the Minister of Justice is not actively assessing the cost. My question to the minister is: Why is there no review under way?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: As I've said in the past, I'm not prepared to start a review of policing until after the inquiry into the mass casualty comes forward. As I've said publicly, I know - and the member being new to this House, perhaps that member isn't aware of this - that's a very broad mandate. It will be looking at a variety of different things in regard to policing in this province, and it will be coming back with . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Justice has the floor.

BRAD JOHNS: It will be coming back with recommendations to this House. Until that time, we'll wait and see what the report says.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Thank you for congratulating me on being new to the House. Again, as I already tabled, the mandate of the Mass Casualty Commission is actually not about all of the operational or competency skills.

The Halifax Board of Police Commissioners met this week to discuss the possibility of an independent review of the police actions that took place on August 18th. At this time, it is not within the jurisdiction of the municipality to request such a review, but under Section 7 of the Police Act, the Minister of Justice can call an independent review if, and I quote, the Minister of Justice has any concerns about policing. I will table that.

My question is: Why are we still comfortable waiting two years for a report that will not address the immediate costing and conduct concerns being raised by municipalities?

BRAD JOHNS: Once again, I do recognize the member is new to the House. Perhaps that's why the member doesn't recognize that the Mass Casualty Commission report is scheduled to come back a year from now - actually November 2022 - at that time.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, I feel very heavily for the families and the victims, the neighbours, everybody who was impacted by those unfortunate events that occurred April 18 and 19, 2020. Once again, although some may not, I'm not prepared to do anything that will jeopardize or impact what comes out of that review.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

PREM.: CBRM CONTAINER PORT - DISCUSS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier and it's in regard to home.

We have seen generational investments led by our doctors on the ground - also at the time, Dr. Kevil Orrell. We've seen the construction of the Community College, we've seen construction of many social programs in our community, and we've seen hundreds of jobs in construction, but my question is around the port.

My question to the Premier is: Has the Premier had any conversations with the CBRM government, or any stakeholders, in regard to a container pier in the CBRM?

THE PREMIER: Ever? No.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The reason I ask this question - and I'll table the bill - Bill No. 85 was introduced two years ago and in that bill it was the first time I ever saw in this House that members of the CBRM MLAs broke ranks with their Leader because what we were asking for was the exact same thing that was in the HRM Charter - the ability to sell land. That was the only time I've ever seen that happen in the House, where the sitting members of MLAs went against their Leader.

My question for the Premier is: Will he commit to supporting a container pier in the CBRM?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think there are lots of issues where a confident Leader will give a free vote to their membership and that's the way this House works best. Certainly, I'll have that confidence to allow free votes as well.

But to the member's question about the port, I am willing to have discussions. I haven't had any recently, but I am willing to see a business case for any issue facing this province that anyone brings to me.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

LAE: LPN EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS - EXAMINE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I can't let that pass without saying I really look forward to seeing the day when I see a free vote across the way there. (Applause)

My question is to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education and it's about practical nurses, so it's a little of a low-hanging fruit that we could look at right away, very quickly, to help address our shortage of registered nurses.

LPNs in this country all go through national licensing exams, and here in Nova Scotia if you go to NSCC it qualifies you for a bridging two-year program. However, if you study outside of NSCC you don't qualify, and regardless of how many years of experience you have, you have to start at ground zero.

My question to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education is: Will the minister agree that we're losing opportunities to both educate and retain more nurses by not recognizing LPNs that all pass the exact same national licensing exam?

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that question. I also thank you for the heads-up about something that I was unaware of. Of course, health care is our government's number-one priority right across the spectrum, LPNs form a vital role throughout that continuum. By looking at some of the documentation that we've been able to look at so far - of course, there are other departments that are going to be involved in the decision-making there, but I absolutely agree in theory that it's something that we will absolutely look at and try to move forward.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to see that and I hope we can make some moves on this very fast. The previous member, who is now the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, and I had a couple of meetings with the previous government so there has been some talk on this.

I'm also hoping the Minister of Advanced Education can help us look at the fact that there's no registered nursing training in northern Nova Scotia. We have Dal, we have St. F.X., CBU, and even a satellite training centre in Yarmouth, but no training for registered nurses in northern Nova Scotia.

My question to the minister is: Would the minister commit to making changes to that immediately to help address the registered nursing shortage in northern Nova Scotia?

BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for that follow-up question. Once again, registered nurses right across the spectrum - we are looking at all

options. Everything is on the table. I look forward to having more conversations and whatnot with our other departments, as well, and perhaps yourself, to move things forward.

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

DCS: RISK ASSESSMENTS - CLEAR PROTOCOLS

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. Case aides working for the department have reported serious concerns about their safety and the safety of children who are in their care. A report compiled by NSGEU - and I will table that - notes that VON, health authorities, and even cable companies have established rules and procedures to ensure employees are safe during home visits.

However, the Department of Community Services does not have a consistent practice of sharing risk information with case aides who are responsible for transporting and supporting children, youth, and parents for family access visits.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree to immediately begin a consistent practice of completing risk assessments for all case aides when clients are assigned?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: This is an important question. I want to reassure that the Department of Community Services does everything to protect our employees, but more importantly, to protect the children.

I am aware of some issues that have come forward and I'm happy to say that we are addressing those issues. Stay tuned. We will be making sure that that information that has come forward is addressed as soon as possible.

KENDRA COOMBES: The report compiled by the union points out that case aides have no formal check in process at the end of the day or when client visits are completed, and no one to contact if a visit in a client's home turns dangerous.

One worker described a visit in their office in which a grandparent became angry and aggressive. The worker emailed and texted her supervisor, two team leads, and a social worker during the incident and no one replied or came to help.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree to immediately establish clear protocols for case aides in the event visits become unsafe?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: The Department of Community Services takes safety and security very seriously. If anyone is ever in immediate danger, call 911.

I do want to acknowledge that we do have a management committee, a safety and security, management put together. We are addressing this situation. There will probably have to be changes made.

We will certainly take it and look at it and see where we can make improvements. I will commit to that to ensure that every child and every case worker who is taking children and parents and driving them back and forth are safe under my care.

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

MAH - HOUSING TASK FORCE: HRM STRATEGY - FOLLOW

LORELIE NICOLL: I've heard a lot of words today about "accomplished" and "time" and "up for the challenge" and "up for consultation." But maybe because I'm also new, I like to give credit where credit is due.

The Halifax Regional Municipality has a planning strategy affectionately known as the Regional Plan that was adopted in 2006. You're looking at a person who spent many years and many hours in the review when it first came up. It's reviewed every five years. The plan includes directing and managing growth from 2006 to 2031.

In the government's new housing plan that was released yesterday, they announced that they would be creating a planning task force to focus on faster planning and development approvals for large residential projects in HRM. When asked about the provincial housing plan announcement, Mayor Savage said that the municipality's Regional Plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, Centre Plan, and Rapid Transit Strategy . . .

[2:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

LORELEI NICOLL: My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Is the task force intended to follow the growth considerations and plans of the Halifax Regional Municipal Planning Strategy? Yes, or no? I'm only asking for that.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I recognize the member's role as a former councillor. I certainly respect that. I think what I can say about this is that we realize that the situation has changed considerably since the time that those plans were made.

We're now looking at a crisis that nobody could have expected happen in our province and really a good one. We want to see the province grow and prosper and having more people is part of that, but how do we address that going forward? This is where we're coming from. We're not saying that this is HRM's problem. We're saying that this is our

problem, and this commission is intending to work on both sides of that and have powers on both sides to look both at what the Province needs to do and what HRM needs to do.

I see it in a very collaborative way, not to diminish any of the plans that have been made and even the Centre Plan - which we have not yet seen - but to understand that it's nearly ready. I don't believe it has been approved by the council either, but that is where we're at on this. We want to see this as working together.

LORELEI NICOLL: I do admit that I have more information on this subject but at the end of the day my next question is: In the newly announced provincial housing plan, the Progressive Conservative government said that they will create a regional transportation group to create a master transportation plan for HRM.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if this government realizes that I chaired the Transportation Standing Committee of HRM council, and this exact plan already exists. It is called the Integrated Mobility Plan, which included a lot of public consultation.

My question to the minister is: Why does this government feel the need to create a new transportation group when there is one that already exists and was approved by Halifax Regional Council?

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, through you I'd like to thank the member for that question and say that the answer is also very similar. We are seeing a very dynamic time in our province and there's massive changes in the numbers of people who we're going to have and there's going to be new developments.

The province has certain responsibilities, HRM has certain responsibilities. I know there has always been a conversation going on, but this is formalizing that conversation in a way with a commission that has a power to act on it and I look forward to that. I know that it is the responsibility of my colleague in Public Works, and I believe it is something that we can see in a positive light. This is working on our problems together.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

ECON. DEV.: HIGH SPEED INTERNET COVERAGE - UPDATE

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, all Nova Scotians deserve access to reliable, high-speed internet. The previous government made a commitment to expand high-speed internet coverage to 94 per cent by the end of 2021 and 99 per cent by 2023.

My question to the Minister of Economic Development possibilities is: When will these numbers be upheld by her government?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I rather like that, Mr. Speaker. I may get the cards changed. I appreciate the question.

We recognize the fine work that has been done to date on the Internet for Nova Scotia project led by Develop Nova Scotia. The targets to date are well-known and also the fact that, very admirably, the project has continued to operate on budget and on time.

We also recognize that for many Nova Scotians, even those targets deemed reasonable take too long - that in the meantime, they are cut off. So we are currently looking at ways that we can perhaps move up the timelines for many Nova Scotians.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, the minister's mandate letter, which I will table, says that for those households left behind, they will support the installation of satellite.

My question for the minister is: What does this support entail? Can Nova Scotians expect to see financial supports from this government to help with these costs?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member. One of the things that is due on my desk later this month is relevant to exactly this question, looking at the costs of satellite so that we can move up the ability - even as we build out the hard network - so that we can get more Nova Scotians access to internet so that they can enjoy the connectivity and the economic opportunities that it brings.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development - I'll ask you tomorrow. Thank you.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 24, the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

Bill No. 24 - Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 24 - An Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 1996, the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act.

This bill proposes amendments that will provide efficiencies for the operations of the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review Board. For those members unfamiliar with the board, it is an independent, adjudicative, decision-making body with a mandate to decide on aquaculture applications for new sites in marine areas, physical expansions to existing sites, and the addition of finfish species to sites not currently approved to produce finfish.

The aquaculture industry is a key economic driver in coastal communities, and as minister responsible, I am interested to see coastal communities learning more about aquaculture and the positive impact it can have on our rural economy.

The Doelle-Lahey report of 2014 recommended important regulatory changes which the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture began to implement in 2015. As a government, we are committed to reviewing our existing framework to ensure that the right pieces are in place to support the key recommendations that are still relevant and will support a sustainable industry.

The proposed changes introduced with this bill would increase the size of the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review Board from the current three members to up to 10 members to ensure availability of board members in attendance for meetings and hearings. It will provide new language to implement a vice-chair position. It will clarify that hearings could be heard by a panel consisting of one or more members of the review board and clarify the decision of the board is based on a majority.

Mr. Speaker, these changes will ensure that this is a sufficient roster of board members to preside at hearings in order that hearings can occur in a timely manner. The amendments will also address a recommendation of the current board to increase the membership.

Having the option of up to 10 members allows for more stability and confidence in the process by ensuring sufficient members are available to preside at hearings. It will also allow for multiple hearings to be held at once, ensuring that timelines associated with the decision-making process are met.

With our commitment to continually improving our approach to regulating this industry, we are ensuring that aquaculture can develop, while at the same time protecting the environment for our coastal communities. Aquaculture is an exciting industry that can

be grown and expanded in our province responsibly and sustainably, offering great opportunities.

Our government, through the efforts of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, is working to build confidence and community acceptance through better communication and education.

With these few words, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues on this bill as it moves through the legislative process. Mr. Speaker, I would move second reading of Bill No. 24. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I'll be speaking on this bill, but a very short amount of time.

As the minister mentioned, it does increase the size of the Aquaculture Review Board from three members to 10. The amendment also clarifies implementation of a vice-chair position. Reviews could be heard by a panel consisting of one or more board members, and the decision of the board is based on the majority. Clearly, what it does is it allows the possibility for a single-member panel making decisions.

As in my past role as warden and as a fisherman for 31 years, I've attended a lot of public consultation meetings when it comes to aquaculture. We all know how angry and upset people get, and there's a lot of back and forth. It's a balance between the environment and the economy. I believe there is a role for aquaculture in this province, but there has to be confidence that the process is fair, that it's open and transparent.

Often at these meetings - I've spoken to MLAs and chairs of those meetings - they always refer to the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia board as a non-political independent body. What is concerning me right now is the idea that a company goes through this entire process and then finds itself in front of a one-person board to make that final decision. I feel that this has the opportunity to hurt the industry rather than to enforce it, and I think that the government - I'd ask the minister to carefully take this into consideration, because once the public loses confidence in that board, they lose confidence in the entire process.

I look forward to seeing what the stakeholders have to say at the Law Amendments Committee, but again, I'd ask the minister to really take that into consideration. It could play an immense role in the economy of Nova Scotia, but I believe one bad decision on a one-member panel could essentially destroy that industry.

With that, I cede the floor.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm glad to hear my new colleague, who speaks from experience, voice his concerns. We also have some concerns about this bill, and part of what I want to start with is the ways in which these amendments do not address what we saw the Progressive Conservatives campaign on in the recent election. What I'm broadly referring to here is the recognition by the Progressive Conservatives on the campaign trail that in many places in Nova Scotia there is a limited social licence for open-net pen fish farms.

My colleague expressed the contentiousness at these hearings and the big feelings on both sides of this, but again, on the campaign trail, this government promised to review licensing and even led the public to believe that a moratorium on new open-net pen fish farming licences was a possibility. I'll table that document where that's laid out.

What we have here is a significant first step, I believe, in the opposite direction. We all know in this House that often if you're around for a little while, you'll talk to a minister and say - this would often happen in the now-Department of Public Works - I really want changes to this Act, and they'll say, wait until the Act is opened up, and once the Act is opened up, maybe we can fix it.

The Act is opened up here, and yet we see nothing either that the Progressive Conservatives campaigned on or that people have expressed interest to us about with this particular legislation. The goal of these amendments, far from a thoughtful consideration around this social licence piece, is to speed up the process. We realize there are all kinds of applications that will come, but again, as my colleague from the Liberal Party just spoke to, the minister must realize that this is a big red flag for communities that are going to be attending these more contentious hearings and who are opposed, in particular, to siting open-net pen fish farms in their waters.

While it makes sense to enlarge the board, we share the concern around single-member hearings. It doesn't seem to make any sense, particularly when the minister himself, when he just started this second reading, mentioned the notion of enlarging the board so there are sufficient members for hearings. It is our opinion that one does not seem to be a sufficient number of members for a hearing.

The Progressive Conservatives themselves have frequently said that the amount of influence and power the minister has in the approval process has been a long-term concern of the PC Party. That's also in the document I just tabled, but again, that concern is not reflected here, because it is the minister who is in charge of appointing board members, term limits, the chair. That chair will be authorized to decide on the composition of panels and the outcomes of the applications. Again, I would reiterate the concern about the appearance - not the actual, but possible appearance of undue influence on a board that must steadfastly remain non-political in order to be effective.

[3:00 p.m.]

The Progressive Conservatives have also frequently stated, as we heard today, that the recommendations of the Doelle-Lahey Report were insufficiently implemented. One of the key recommendations of that report, Mr. Speaker, was that every five years there should be an independent review of aquaculture regulations in this province. That review is written into the terms of reference of the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Regulatory Advisory Committee - and I'll table that. The committee has not been meeting regularly. There have been three meetings since 2018. In the last available minutes from May 2021, the minister acknowledged that the five-year review was needed, but as of now there is no information available about a timeline, how it will be structured, or whether the public will in fact be able to provide input as the Doelle- Lahey Report envisioned.

From our perspective, it is troubling to see this push to get applications for new licences processed sometimes with potentially a single member without a similar urgency around the review of regulations, which is what we heard about most during the campaign.

Those are a few of the concerns that we move into this legislative process with. With those few remarks, I look forward to hearing from folks at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I wasn't going to stand up and speak on this, but I just want to say a few things. The former Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and I actually worked closely together to review and upgrade and implement the new aquaculture legislation. That legislation was seen as a huge success not just here in Nova Scotia but right around the world. There was consultation right across the world where we looked at what was successful and what wasn't successful in aquaculture industries.

I use two examples. One would be Scotland, which has one of the biggest aquaculture industries in the entire world. The reason why they were so successful is because they had buy-in from the community. When they did reviews, when they looked at spots where they were going to set up new farm fish spots, they would set up boards with members from the community - local fishers, the Indigenous community, experts - and they would have conversations on what was needed, where it was needed, and how it was needed. They had buy-in. They had buy-in, and that industry has been extremely successful and, in fact, is one of the most profitable industries in Scotland.

We heard from the individuals who helped set this up. When we were speaking to them, we asked them what the magic elixir for all this was, and they said "voices - the more voices the better." You can't have one or two people making a decision about something that is so controversial. It is controversial. We have seen in the past in different jurisdictions where, when it comes to farm fishing, the whole thing has gone haywire.

This is about - and both of the members who stood up here today - it is social buy-in. This is an extremely lucrative industry for Nova Scotia. I don't think the minister fully comprehends yet, because he hasn't been in there long enough, how lucrative this is. When we were doing consultation and we were speaking to players, there were players from all around the world who wanted to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in Nova Scotia's aquaculture industry. They had estimated that we were at 15 per cent capacity - 15 per cent capacity - for our aquaculture industry.

The issue we had was public trust and buy-in. If you're going to set up a salmon farm fishing spot, will there be consultation with the Indigenous community? Will there be consultation with the local fishers? Will there be any of this consultation. I would argue, with what we're seeing here, if there's a one-person review panel, that's a big no. That's a big no when issues arise, when we have problems with locations, when we have problems with funding.

Another barrier to some of this, while we're talking about aquaculture and opening this up, is one of the biggest barriers is access to the industry. It's very expensive. I don't know if anyone here has been down on an oyster farm, but it is very expensive to set them up and the return isn't immediate. It takes years to get that money that you invested. There are a lot of people who could use and have the ambition to set up an oyster farm, but I can talk from my own experience.

I had a gentleman from my community reach out. His father is actually one of the largest oyster fishermen in P.E.I., and he said, you know I want to set something up here in Nova Scotia. They looked at getting licences, they looked at the process of finding where it would be best to set it up, and also the funding. No phone calls back. Zero. Didn't receive any consultation, no phone calls; but when a larger industry moves in, like a Cooke or one of the other larger ones, I can bet you when they make phone calls, those are answered.

The concern is that when you set up a one-person review, you are not getting those community buy-ins. Again, I will say that as our population increases - this government wants to have two million people living in Nova Scotia over the next decade - we know that the world population is increasing at a faster rate than it has ever in history, and these are industries that we are going to have to rely on. These are industries that we are going to have to do in a correct way that doesn't impact our natural waterways, that doesn't impact our natural fish, our natural ecosystems.

You can have a salmon farm that is run perfectly well, that has little to no environmental impact over here, but if one over there isn't done correctly, the whole industry is done. We've seen that. We've seen a big reset. It wasn't too long ago if you said you went to the grocery store, I bet you the majority of people here, you looked at your salmon. Is it farmed? Does it have worms in it? I think everybody remembers that, where it was the big controversy.

There are a lot of people who are invested in this. There are a lot of people that if done correctly, this could be a fantastic industry. I think of Brian Blanchard from Herring Cove. Brian is one of the foremost experts on aquaculture in the world and he left Nova Scotia because he was tired. He was tired of the phone calls not being answered. He was tired of not having the support and, I'll be honest, some of the rhetoric - he said it was difficult to have these conversations. He is in New Zealand now, where they farm bluefin tuna and that tuna is sold on the Japanese fish market, as valuable as, we'll say, natural fish.

We are seeing this all around the world now, where, if done correctly, these industries - these resource industries - can be a big boom.

I looked across at the government of the day for four years: good-looking bunch over there, some of you, yeah. No, you all are, but what I'll say is that most of you sitting over there are rural MLAs and, what . . . (Interruption). Most of the members for the government are rural MLAs and we know that a lot of our rural communities are resource-based, to be honest.

Jobs can be difficult compared to some of the urban cores, you know. When we see large corporations, and I hope that changes, I think, you know, the Minister of Possibilities today talked about - the question that was given to the Minister of Possibilities today was around high-speed internet and we know that that will help expand . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Would the honourable member please retract his statement and call the minister by her correct title?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, what is it?

THE SPEAKER: Economic Development.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Economic Development? Sorry. I apologize. It wasn't meant as an insult.

THE SPEAKER: Will you withdraw what you said previously?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I withdraw the Minister of Possibilities. Maybe that's the next position created. You never know. It could be.

Mr. Speaker, we did hear from the Minister of Economic Development. We heard her talk about high-speed internet and how valuable that is. We do know that as the high-speed internet structure expands, this will create more opportunities.

This is an investment of hundreds of millions of dollars from the previous - some would say all-time great - government, and obviously from the current government it will be a substantial investment of public dollars, let's be honest.

When it comes to aquaculture, though, that's new money into your economy. It's private money that's being invested. Yes, a lot of them will get loans, but they pay it back. It creates valuable jobs in all of your community.

I think that even though this seems like, for some, a very small bill, a bill that is inconsequential compared to, let's say, Bill No. 1 or other bills that will come before this House, it's actually a big bill when it comes to the economy of rural Nova Scotia. If aquaculture is done correctly, it will supply your communities with thousands - the member's community - with thousands and thousands of jobs.

I heard someone say, no, it won't. I would advise them to look at New Zealand, look at Scotland, look at Ireland, our backyard - look at Newfoundland. It has provided lots of jobs in Newfoundland. If - whoever that member was - if you don't agree with that, I would gladly sit down with you and give you some of the names of some of the companies that...

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Would the member use "the member" in his statement and not "you."

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I would give the members a list of companies that are there, in other jurisdictions. It's not just about the farm, it's about the processing plants, it's about the local spinoffs.

I'm not saying that it's the golden egg that was laid by the goose but I'm also saying that we just can't be - if we're going to move forward with things like land-based aquaculture, we have to do it correctly. We have to make sure that the communities that these are done in have the confidence in the individuals who are making the decisions.

I don't know, in the history of humankind, how many decisions that were made by a single person for the entirety of a large group of people or a population or a civilization - I don't know how many times that turned out to be something that was widely accepted.

I just don't want to see it fail. I'll say it again: Good governance is a good thing for all Nova Scotians. I think part of that is we have a lot of experts when it comes to the environment. The Ecology Action Centre the other day just celebrated, I think it was 25 years, was it? Thirty? Fifty years. I'm going to take heat for that at home. Sorry, Ecology Action Centre, if you're listening. Fifty years: That's five decades of experience in this field, Mr. Speaker. Aquaculture did not just spring out of the water yesterday. You talk to my friend Brian and they were doing aquaculture in B.C. 35 years ago.

[3:15 p.m.]

We have individuals who have been doing oyster farms for 20 years. The former member Chris d'Entremont - am I allowed to say that? - my friend Chris d'Entremont, my friend Chris - I was in his community years ago. My phone's vibrating. I wonder if that's him. They have some very successful oyster farms in their community. These individuals who started the oyster farm were - correct me if I'm wrong - former fishers. Some of them still fish.

It shows that we can do this correctly. We went out on the boat. We took a tour. In that community was a perfect example of community buy-in, of individuals from an industry that sometimes is in conflict with the aquaculture industry working together. Then you see a blossoming of runoffs and spinoffs.

I think we need to press pause on this for a moment and talk to the experts. I will say to the member that he has a very, very knowledgeable department. I know some of those guys personally. We've been on some seafood trips together. They worked day and night - 24/7 - on the Fisheries and Aquaculture file in the hopes that they would create an industry that would have acceptance and buy-in.

I think of walking into the hotel - I think it was at the Marriott - for the aquaculture AGM. There were hundreds and hundreds of people there. There were experts from all around the world who show up every year. I'm sure the member will attend these events and he'll get to know those people who are the true experts on this industry. They'll talk about how we need to continue to move this forward in a safe way.

We do have a resource and food issue. I think the light was shined on us Nova Scotians and all the jurisdictions in the world during COVID-19 when the supply chain was interrupted. Food started to go up. Some of the things that we are used to getting were not in the grocery store - not because people rushed out to buy as much toilet paper as they could. It became an issue where, if we're depending on others all the time in this global market - and we know that it has done great things for us. It's opened up the world and cultures and food and all kinds of different things for us.

There is an opportunity to do this correctly and do it right and have another resource in our backyard. I would like to see land-based aquaculture all over the place. I think it's great, done correctly. It would be nice not to have to rely on the States, B.C., and other areas to get our salmon, nice to be able to grow enough mussels here in - sorry, oysters, here in Nova Scotia that our communities can turn a healthy profit and, at the same time, keep a supply in our communities to feed each other.

The supply is one of the issues that really worries me when it comes to aquaculture. I think once the genie's out of the bottle again - and it was kind of out of the bottle over a decade ago, it was kind of out of the bottle, and people were getting nervous. Drive down

North Street in Halifax and you would see the big signs. People were nervous, and if you talked to any of the fishers, if you talked to any small business owner or producer or those who buy and sell fish, and you ask them what it was like then, they'll tell you it was difficult. It was difficult to sell salmon. It was difficult to sell our Nova Scotia products.

I think you don't have to look very far to see what happens when consumers lose faith. You think of mad cow disease with beef and how devastating that was to the beef industry, to the British beef industry in particular. They are still recovering from that. It's going to take a while. It took a lot of great people.

One of the things that I remember as - I don't know if you'd call me the assistant or whatever for Fisheries and Aquaculture, the former ministerial assistant to Keith Colwell. Growing up around fishers and representing one of the few real fishing villages left in Nova Scotia, I know some of the members, definitely in HRM - they're not like they used to be, is what I'm trying to say.

When I grew up, Herring Cove was a working fishing village. There was only one left - Mr. Dempsey, who finally retired, was 98. There are no active fishers left in Herring Cove, no active fishers left in Portuguese Cove, Ketch Harbour. There are no active fishers left at Purcells Cove. All these places were active fishing villages. Sambro is in the Pennants, which is essentially one large community - the only active fishing village left in my community which was basically all a fishing village.

If you talk to the fishers, they'll tell you it's becoming more and more difficult to find and to get people - young people - to work in that industry because it's so difficult. It's tough to get up at four in the morning, get out on your boat. I did it once and I threw up the entire time. (Laughter) But I did bait trawl. We baited a lot of trawl when we were younger. Make a few dollars, go down to Sambro Fisheries and B&J Fisheries and bait some trawl for the fishermen.

It's an industry that more and more we are seeing people leaving it. I just was down at Sambro Fisheries last week talking to Elliot Givner, who now runs Sambro Fisheries. It used to be run by Doug Garrison, but Doug's retired for a few years now. Elliot and I were speaking about the industry and how difficult it is to even get people to work as a fish broker. These are things that are going the way of the dodo bird. (Interruption) It's extinct. That means it's extinct.

If we're seeing less and less people go into the industry - and it's probably more lucrative than it has ever been. My buddy Hally's been in forever. I think Hally started fishing when he was about seven years old, going out on his granddad's boat. Really, if you look at those fishing villages, that's kind of what it is. They start at a young age, and they go till they drop. They live forever - that's one thing for sure. They live hard, but they live forever, and they work hard.

It's a lucrative industry now. We see where it used to be \$2, \$3, or \$4 a pound for lobster. I think the consumer now is paying about \$18 a pound is what I saw. I would like to take a moment to really thank former minister Keith Colwell for all his hard work on that. Some people may not recognize that when we first came in as government, it was \$4 or \$5 a pound for lobster. They worked with NSCC in Truro side by side to figure out how we get more money and maybe catch less, make sure the resource is there for the next generation, but make more money with what we catch. Part of that was advertising and opening people's eyes to Nova Scotia lobster.

I have had the privilege to travel a little bit in my lifetime. I did the backpacking Europe thing, and I have travelled a little bit since then. When you talk about seafood, and when you talk about food, lobster in particular - it was always Maine lobster. It was always Maine lobster. When we first got elected it was Maine lobster, the soft shell, all that stuff.

Minister Colwell, God love him, he worked day and night, travelled the world, made connections. In fact, I remember members opposite, when they were in Opposition, critiquing his travel, taking little pokes and digs at him about where he had been, why he had been travelling - his expenses. I can tell you, if it wasn't for his hard work, if it wasn't for his dedication, and if it wasn't for his connections that he made, we would not be getting the prices that we're getting now.

To bring that back to aquaculture, the market is huge. It's huge. We can't produce enough now, and that's a good thing for Nova Scotia. I think now we might be the largest supplier of lobster in Canada. It's a multi-billion-dollar industry, and how important that is to each and every one of you, whether you represent a working fishing community or not. People who buy trucks and cars, build homes, buy clothes, groceries, support the local hockey team, ringette, basketball, baseball.

I would argue that fishers are some of the kindest if not the kindest people in the world. I go to Hally or Patty or Todd or Troy - any of them - and say, listen, we need \$100, we need \$1,000, we need \$5,000 for this - the money is there.

When I take it back to when I went down and saw Elliott, we talked about what's next and what it looks like. If we're having more and more difficulties finding people to work on boats, to work in processing plants - these are good-paying jobs: Putting an elastic band on a lobster in the lobster season will probably net you \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 just doing that.

We're not able to attract the workforce that is needed, so what are they doing? Looking for foreign workers is what's happening. We know with COVID-19 it's very difficult to bring people in. Logically, if we have a worker shortage - and what I'll say about the worker shortage is this isn't like a trade where we have a plumber shortage and we can indenture people into the trade, or they can go to NSCC. What can government do? Well, we know that this new government is collaborative. They've told us they're open to

ideas. They're up for the challenge and they're going to walk the walk, and talk the talk, and sit the sit, and all the other stuff that goes along with it. Sleep the sleep.

[3:30 p.m.]

What I would say to all of you, the rule-makers, the decision-makers ...

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. To all the members, please.

The member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll just take a little bit of water. I'm just getting started. Mr. Speaker, what I'll say is when we have shortages of skilled labour, you as government have the ability to really do something about that. I would ask the members opposite to take a little boo, take a little gander, a little peek at the Liberal platform and the expansion of the Nova Scotia Community College, the biggest expansion in the college's history. That would be something that we could do when we have labour shortages. We can train more people. I suspect the new government will be going into overdrive, what with 3,000 or 4,000 new LPNs and nurses and health care practitioners and workers.

The ambitious plan that we saw yesterday, when it comes to housing, that's going to need - that was something I would have liked to see in the details, is it took me 11 weeks to get two windows replaced in my home because of the shortage of supplies, the shortage of skilled tradespeople, but we're going to build a lot. What I would say to the members opposite is, what you're going to run into is a lack of workers for this. I mean, my golly, if it takes 11 weeks to put in a window, one window - and I'm speaking to friends who own companies ... (Interruption) I'm going back to aquaculture, don't worry. It's all connected.

The ocean is the window to the world, okay, a window of possibilities to energy and food. There's so much that the ocean can provide us with.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry, I was just coughing there, if anyone saw that on TV. I was just coughing.

We have to be able to look at these issues and say, if we have a work shortage in the fishing industry, we are going to be producing less and less fish. I don't know about any of you over there, but we eat fish probably four times a week at our house. We had halibut last night, had it the night before, salmon, kippers once in a while. We eat everything. If it swims, I'll eat it. What am I having tonight? Fish tacos tonight, actually. You're all invited. I'll take that, member. We go with soft tacos, hard just falls apart, it makes too much of a mess. I've got three kids under seven. Listen, soft tacos it is. Sorry, Madam Speaker.

If the industry on one side is having problems and we know that we're having issues with foreign workers and new immigrants because of COVID-19 and the restrictions, logically you are going to have to rely on something else or somewhere else to get what many consider the healthiest food on earth. So that will be - oh, we get into blueberries, too. I eat a lot of blueberries, too. Blueberry tacos.

What we need to do is we really need to get it right. We need to talk the talk, walk the walk, and listen and have that consultation and say, listen, we don't want this industry to fail. Aquaculture is already kind of there. If this is a 12-round fight, it's had it rough for 11 rounds. The way to do this is to have that large group of people there to approve.

I would say what happens if you get somebody on this side who is applying for a licence or a review and the person who is sitting there, the one person that you put them in the room with, they have some kind of bias toward them. Maybe they dated their sister or brother in junior high and they're still mad at him. I don't know, maybe they live next door and they play their music too loud. There are all kinds of reasons why people get annoyed with one another. They have to rely on that person to be unbiased.

On a serious note, most people are biased, Mx. Speaker, we agree to that. You have your bias, you have your opinions on things. So, having one person make a decision on someone's livelihood, on someone's ability to pay their mortgage, feed their children, it's a little risky. I don't think that's walking the walk . . . (Interruption) walk the talk. I think that . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor. No more interjections, please.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Mx. Speaker. I think this government wants to be seen as a government that consults and I would just ask you: If this was your livelihood - in all fairness, we've all had other jobs outside of politics - and this was your livelihood and you had a disagreement, or you had an issue that needed to be resolved, and you walked into a room and there was one person, and that person made the decision. That's all I'm asking. We're not asking you to change the bill. You know, look at it a little bit.

The other thing is representation. If you're somebody of a different background or a different culture or a different race and you walk in, and it's somebody that has nothing in common with you and they're making the decision for your livelihood, it would be a little tricky.

I know that some people over there have a lot of resources in their communities. I asked those that - we'll use the forest industry, for example. You have your foresters and they had to expand their mill, or they were looking to purchase some land, or expand to different markets around the world. If they had to walk into a room and talk to one person

to plead their case and that person made that decision, I think you'd be a little annoyed about that.

To the member opposite, if we could have a little more clarification on this bill, also. If a decision is made that a fisher doesn't agree with, someone in the aquaculture industry doesn't agree with, maybe we enshrine it in the legislation that there's an appeal process, there's a way for them to have that there. Maybe they're an Indigenous aquaculture fisher and they feel like their culture, their beliefs, or their Nation isn't fully represented by that individual. What's the recourse? There should be something there for them to say, wait a second, I don't want just John over there, I want John, Tim, and Suzy making these decisions. We need more people to make these decisions.

I just worry that as small of a bill as this may seem, this could be one that comes back and bites you in the - whatever part you want to say. It could be really one of those ones where you turn on the news, you flip open the paper - if people still do that - and you look online and you see somebody who had a decision go against them and their livelihood is destroyed, their family is destroyed.

We want to be an open and welcoming province. Part of the way we are open and welcoming is when decisions are made in industries like aquaculture, they're made by experienced and educated people of different backgrounds that can look into these issues and put a lens on it, put a real lens on this one. You're not reinventing the wheel here. You're really not.

I don't know if the minister has any plans to travel. If the member is travelling on behalf of the province to expand our fishing markets and our aquaculture markets, I'll be the first to not criticize him, like our former minister was criticized for doing that. I'll be the first to say, good on ya.

I'm not in any position to advise the member, but just from my own personal experience - the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture has been near and dear to my heart. Like I said, I have a lot of close friends who - I know some people in passing, but I do have a lot of close friends who make a living in that industry. It's a very dangerous industry. Even aquaculture can be very dangerous. I think that we just have to make sure that this is something that doesn't blow back on you and that people are given a fair shake and a fair say. I think that's what makes good legislation.

I know that this first session for the new government has been pretty light in legislation, pretty light. I think there's more stuff coming. I would hope there's more stuff coming. It has been pretty light . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Would the member talk to the bill we are debating?

[3:45 p.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I know that this session, their first session, just getting their feet under them, has been pretty light on legislation, but this piece isn't one that should slip through under the other pieces. It's one where we need to take a close look. We really need to have the consultation.

Mr. Speaker, I would be really interested to find out where these numbers have come from, the committees have come from, who is advising the minister on this? I know that some other pieces of legislation have come before the House. I have had stakeholders say, I didn't hear about that until it was in the media. I didn't know about that.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the member could do us all a favour and maybe table some information. Which groups did he consult with? Who did he speak with?

Talking is one thing. I like to walk the walk on this one, Mr. Speaker. I want to walk the walk on this one. I'll say this: I'm going to take that line and run with it. (Interruption) Walk the talk or talk the walk.

I had the pleasure the other day of listening to an announcement from that government. There's something I have been saying in the House - and I'll tie it back - when it comes to homelessness, I would say, Winter is coming. We have to do something. I was really proud to hear the member for Pictou East, the honourable Premier, say Winter is coming. So, what I'm going to do is, I'm going to steal a couple of lines from him too if they're good. Be prepared for that one.

I think the government needs to walk the walk on this one, walk the talk on this one and instead of just telling us - sometimes it goes in one ear and out the other. We have a lot on our minds. I have three kids who are in elementary. I'm not going to lie, it's a bit of a madhouse sometimes. Thank God for my beautiful partner, Rena, who does an incredible job and loves aquaculture. She really loves aquaculture. She's a big fan of oyster and salmon. She really is.

I would like to see the minister table the decision-makers on this one. I don't think this was a decision that was made lightly. I don't think it was a decision that was made on the 7th floor, 14th floor, 8th floor - whatever it is now. I don't think it was a decision made out of the member's office. I think it was a decision that they collaborated on, and they brought experts from around Canada and the province and the world.

Listen, at the snap of a finger, I know the minister can pick up the phone and talk to some of the foremost experts on aquaculture. I know his Rolodex on this - his department's Rolodex on this - runs thick. For those of you who are a little younger than us, Google Rolodex.

You don't want to waste that knowledge, Mr. Speaker. It took years of my life working with the former Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture on that aquaculture stuff. Moments away from the family, you know. (Laughter) I'm reminiscing about the knowledge and the expertise . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Maybe instead of reminiscing, the member could talk about the bill?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Well, you know, the reason I'm reminiscing - can I have my mic back? (Laughter)

THE SPEAKER: I'll give it consideration.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry. You know, Mr. Speaker, reminiscing is a good thing. It's where we learn, and so what I'm really reminiscing about is the experts on aquaculture around that table. On a serious note, it's their life work. They have worked hard, and they believe - I mean, they really do. The minister should know this and will know this, they truly believe in that industry. They feel that the industry's gotten a bad rap - and it has. It has had some good players and some bad players, but if done correctly, if done environmentally sound, and if done with, by, and from, the communities and the fishers, this is a gold mine. It really is.

There is a lineup out the door of international players in this industry who don't want government money. They don't want a cent from us. We've spoken to them. They said, just allow us to come in, allow us to sit down. We'll follow your rules, we'll invest.

Listen, there are all kinds of different industries, and I think back, I think the last time there was a Progressive Conservative government, there were investments in call centres at the time - I think I worked at the call centre there for a moment, too. I was just young. It was called Convergys. (Interruption) Hey, there you go, there you go. I probably worked there with the member. I mean, I was pretty high up, so I might have trained the member.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the member for the final time to move his topic to the bill that's up for second reading.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Listen, you've got to give me a little rope here, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter) What I was trying to say was we had these aquaculture giants that have an amazing history of being great stewards of the environment - not all of them, but the ones that we had spoken to and met with.

The reason I brought up other industries is because we know that if some of these industries are built on government money and government grants and that's what they're depending on, a lot of times when there is a cheaper workforce over here or there's better funding over here, they'll pick up and leave. That's always been an issue. With the aquaculture industry, with these aquaculture giants that want to come in, they spoke of spending their own money, millions and millions and millions of dollars, to build onshore fishing.

What I would say is if you're willing to spend that kind of money, even if you're a multi-billion-dollar company, you're willing to spend millions of dollars, the chances of you leaving are very slim. There's an opportunity to, when you bring them in, to have a real conversation around wages, to ensure that we have living wages from one corner to the next, to the next, to the next, that when they set up in Meat Cove, people are making enough money to support their family. (Interruptions) Right. I know, that's why I said it. You like that? (Interruptions) Learn from the best.

So would the government, would the member consider some Indigenous and African Nova Scotian representation in this board? I know that you're going to 10 members - I see some head-nodding, which is good - but also make sure that these appeals and these decision-making individuals, when it's one-on-one, that minutes are kept. That's a great idea. Let's keep minutes of these meetings. Let's make sure that these meetings are open and transparent so that the public - and I'll say it again. I think that this industry - and we've heard it from the experts - that we are at 15 per cent capacity here in Nova Scotia, right around there. It's a multi-billion-dollar industry that could potentially happen here, but it's hanging on by a thread. Any more bad publicity, any more adversity, and you are probably going to see people either pick up and leave or decide to go somewhere else.

Again, if Scotland can do it, if New Zealand and Australia and those areas could do it, I would argue that our people are just as good, if not better. We can do it.

The single-person meetings that are happening will destroy credibility. It's only going to take one person to say, "I didn't get a fair shake." Once that happens, the whole kit and caboodle is gone. It's out the door, it's gone, and it's going to be very hard to recover.

I would argue that the minister, the member opposite - when all is said and done, Mr. Speaker, I think he wants to be known and seen as someone who is fair and gave everybody a chance, that he helped create something prosperous and beautiful for Nova Scotians, and that he changed the tone, that he changed the conversation. The member will find out that there are exterior forces that you are going to have to work against.

What helps me sleep well at night is that the hard work that I and Minister Colwell did on those regulations - I would say Minister Colwell did about 99 per cent of them - but to the government of the day and to the members across, some light reading. You could go

through those regulations and you will see that - all jokes aside - they are considered world-class. We have the best aquaculture restrictions and regulations in the world, period.

Why do we have that? Well, let me tell you why. It is because we learned from others' mistakes. We called them up and we said, let's have a conversation about what happened for you in Vancouver. What happened in Alaska and different parts of the world? Why are you successful? Was it an overnight thing? No, we came into the communities, we spoke to the individuals, and we said, listen, this is what we want to accomplish, you know. We heard stories of - which I thought was really interesting and this goes to show you what happens when everybody works together - two industries at a time have butted heads. They have butted heads.

[4:00 p.m.]

They would talk to us and say, you know, the aquaculture folks would say, we leave our heavy machinery, and we leave all of our equipment in the community over here and it is open to the community and the fishers. They will come and they'll use our Bobcats and they will use our different boats and all that stuff when they need it.

If somebody needs to do a driveway, they'd come and they'd grab - this is in Scotland - they'd grab the Bobcat and they'd go do it, because they had such community buy-in, Mr. Speaker. Part of that buy-in will be where you move with this board and where you move with issues.

I will go back to one of my original points that I spoke about five minutes ago which was (Interruption) if this industry is going to be successful for all Nova Scotians it can't just be about big industry.

You have got to let the little guys, the little girls, the little people - it's got to be a process where they have access to funding, and they don't have to wait for years and years and years. When it comes to the oyster farming, they are not seeing profits immediately. We have to help them.

We have to help them, but ultimately what they are telling us is they are not being denied licences, they are not even able to apply for licences. They are not getting any phone calls back. They are not getting their emails answered, so don't be shellfish. Don't be shellfish. (Laughter) This has to be about all Nova Scotia, not just the big boys and the big companies. It has to be for everyone.

So, with that Mr. Speaker, what I will say is it is an absolute pleasure to stand here today for our local fishermen . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, dare I extend this, but my original idea was to stand and express my regrets that the member opposite was sanctioned for only carrying on my joke, but that was 45 minutes ago and I am no longer feeling as badly as I did originally.

Mr. Speaker, there is mansplaining and there is citysplaining and it was pointed out by the honourable member that many of . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. When a member is not here, that is not to be mentioned. Okay?

The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: It was pointed out that a great number on our side of the House represent rural communities and while any one of us is very, very proud of our traditional industries, including fishing and farming and forestry, we are also home to manufacturing and IT and innovation.

We are not blind to the issues inherent in any development, much less those proposed within the aquaculture industry. Mr. Speaker, it is our residents who are packing those meetings and those hearings. It is our residents, as well as the advocates of these developments from the very large multi-million-dollar companies to the small guys, that deserve to be able to expect hearings and decisions on applications in a reasonable amount of time, which is much the point of the bill that is on the floor here.

They deserve reasonable timelines and the very size of the investment that has been spoken of here today can be kneecapped if we cannot deal with those applications reviewed by independent and qualified jurors.

Finally, for any of you who have become confused today, no, lobsters are not farmed. They take too long.

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

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: I just have a few comments. I thank the MLA for Lunenburg for her comments. Being somebody who's been around for a bit, I appreciate the experiences of those of this Chamber who live in and represent rural fishing communities throughout all of this great province of ours.

To the member for Halifax Atlantic: In my 51 days, I have learned a lot of what you spoke of. I understand why it took two of you to work together, and I appreciate the foundation that was laid for this department. One of my goals was to be the chief marketer and advocate for fisheries and aquaculture in this province. I've expressed that to the many organizations I've already met with and to my staff and now to you, all my colleagues.

One of the goals I had was to educate Nova Scotians and this Legislature on the importance and the great fishery that goes back hundreds of years that we have here in Nova Scotia. I used to look at the map of Nova Scotia and see the outline in the land. Now when I look at a map of Nova Scotia, I see the outline in the water, the bays, the tributaries. It's one of those things where I go and - actually, my deputy minister and I both commented, how did we not know that Nova Scotia is Canada's number one producer of seafood, and that it is the number one export of this province?

One of my goals was to educate the members here. I'm thankful to the member for Halifax Atlantic for starting that, because I had no freaking idea how I was going to do it, talking about this particular bill. I often say, does it need to be said? Does it need to be said now? Does it need to be said by me? I want to thank the member for explaining and providing some of the history and the importance of the fishery and aquaculture to this province.

I will tell him I was actually in Sambro on Sunday. (Interruption) I'm sorry, did I have to get a visa? (Laughter) It's one of those things where I am learning. I've met with many, many organizations. When the member for Halifax Atlantic talked about Truro and Perennia - an allusion to that - and CMAR, I've been there. I've been to Dartmouth Cove.

The deputy minister and I have a thirst for knowledge in this very complex department. It touches every part of Nova Scotia, horizontally and vertically. In innovation and trade, it's just absolutely phenomenal when you take a look at the impact that the fishery sector has on this province. It's one of those things that you will continually hear me - you've already heard me in ministers' statements and notices of motion making comments around the fisheries. There's a thread there.

To the member for Dartmouth South: I am a big believer in process improvement. I practise it and it's been my career. Yes, I do know what a Rolodex is, and I know what a rotary phone is, and I actually know what a plug-in telephone and network is.

There is a comprehensive review of the aquaculture regulations. In 2015 the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Regulatory Advisory Committee was struck. I have instructed my office to set up meetings, and those are being done. The terms of reference for that committee state that the regulations should be reviewed comprehensively in five-year increments - operative words "should be" and my words "will be." The five-year comprehensive review of the regulations through the regulatory advisory committee will

provide an excellent opportunity to begin to meet the mandate commitments. In fact, the comprehensive review is already being planned.

The comment about a one-member panel is something that I have given consideration to before having this bill brought here. I certainly look forward to commentary through the Law Amendments Committee and future conversations. It's one of those things where it gives you something to talk about sometimes, and it gives you the opportunity to listen and to act on the feedback that you do get. I welcome the comments of all the speakers here today.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move closure of second reading of Bill No. 24.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 24. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 27.

Bill No. 27 - Collection and Debt Management Agencies Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I do hope, with the time remaining today, that we can get through this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 27 be read for a second time. In March 2020, temporary pandemic measures were put in place to allow debt collection activity to be done remotely. This meant collectors and debt management agents working from within and outside of the province could work safely from home when contacting people living in Nova Scotia.

During this time, industry showed that they could work responsibly and effectively outside the office space. Companies have invested in their employees to work remotely, and we want to support their investments. Those working in the collections and debt management industry have called on government to allow them to permanently work remotely, which is currently a common practice in all other jurisdictions other than Quebec and our province.

[4:15 p.m.]

The industry has shown a great level of professionalism and focus on consumer privacy and protection. We are pleased, Mr. Speaker, to agree with their request and would like to amend the Collection and Debt Management Agencies Act.

We license over 60 collection and debt management agencies conducting business in our province and about 2,000 individual collectors and debt management agents. These agencies are hired by credit card companies and others to collect money owed or to help people manage their debt. Some agencies are here in Nova Scotia, while most operate in other parts of the country. Agencies both within our province and in other jurisdictions need to operate in accordance with the Collection and Debt Management Agencies Act when collecting debt from Nova Scotians

The amendments we are introducing to this Act will allow collectors and debt management agents to continue working remotely and will give government new regulation-making authority to prescribe privacy and other requirements that they must follow.

Mr. Speaker, we'll also support economic growth and encourage industry to continue doing business in our province. With those few short words, I conclude my remarks and I look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues opposite.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, through you, I'd like to thank the minister for the changes that were made through this bill. Having been in that member's position during the pandemic, or at the start of the pandemic, I feel I can speak on behalf of that department of how much anxiety and how much stress there was in terms of being a front-facing agency and trying to deliver services during a pandemic, figuring out how we can be virtual, what regulations, what things can we change, how can we manoeuvre.

The staff of his department did such a remarkable job in handling that. They were definitely the front line. They might not have been, like, the sexy, everybody-knows-what-they're-doing Department of Health and Wellness or Public Health people, but they were the ones who were behind the scenes and were making sure that phones were being answered and online requests were being answered and that there was somebody to talk to. It was such a privilege to be part of that team.

Bill No. 27 is really a very thoughtful and practical response to this, in terms of debt management and collection, allowing that virtual capacity to continue. I think we've all realized that we live in a world where virtual access is definitely the way to go. It makes things easier, it makes them more efficient and allows us to be in a safer space, no matter what gets thrown at us.

One of the aspects I want to talk to also are the working conditions for our employees. Again, because they are not necessarily professions that we know of or that we think of, we forget that these were individuals who had to come in to work and were very unsure as to how this virus was transmitted, what risks they were going to be at, and still came and still delivered those services. Again, this is a piece that will allow that protection. Allow those individuals to come in to work or to work remotely in a way that keeps them safe and keeps them focused on delivering the services to Nova Scotians.

My favourite part of Bill No. 27 is the removal of the gendered language from this Act. Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services - Service Nova Scotia is nefarious, if that's the word, for having very gendered, antiquated language in their bills. It's something that I have spoken to the minister about and have encouraged the minister to continue on and to look at some of these antiquated Acts.

The Vital Statistics Act is a bill that was put forward by the NDP this morning and, again, it is getting rid of that gendered language, the language referring to parents as male and female parents, mothers and fathers. There were references to spinsters in the Vital Statistics Act. I guess I'm a spinster, but I don't want the Vital Statistics Act to classify me as that. I prefer an independent woman, a childless woman, I don't know - whatever.

So, having the minister look at the gendered language and removing that, ensuring that our laws and our bills reflect the diversity of our society. It's easy to not prioritize these things, but when we talk about an equitable society and people being reflected in what their province stands for, changing our legislation to reflect that is important. Even if it's just deemed housekeeping.

Our caucus does support the amendments to this Act in Bill No. 27, and we hope to be able to work collaboratively with the government on future bills that help facilitate things a bit more practically. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to this bill, the Collection and Debt Management Agencies Act, introduced by the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

This bill allows employees of collection and debt management agencies to work remotely from home. It makes it easier and more efficient and keeps our Nova Scotian employees safe. As we continue with the phases of COVID-19, governments and businesses are still practising social distancing. As recommended by Public Health authorities, we will continue to do that. A component to that social distancing is allowing employees to work from home where appropriate.

Aside from Quebec, no other Canadian jurisdiction has a prohibition on the debt collection industry from working remotely. This change brings Nova Scotia law into alignment with the current practice. I understand that this is an amendment that has been requested by the industry to bring Nova Scotia in line with other jurisdictions, and I look forward to hearing more from the people of Nova Scotia in the Law Amendments Committee.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for the member for Halifax Atlantic to provide a few comments, but I do want to thank my predecessor for her role as Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. It is a very vast department that has many fingers in different departments. I guess that's something we share, the member and I, so I'm sure we'll have many positive discussions as I embark on this journey.

I do agree with the member. There are tremendous staff. Great staff within the department have been very supportive. They are public-facing in all corners of our province, and as the member had noted, sometimes they do not get the recognition for their efforts during the pandemic. So, in this Legislature, I do want to commend the staff of my department, as well as the other departments I'm responsible for as well.

I do want to reassure members of this House that within the industry that I'm bringing amendments to today, there's a high level of professionalism within the industry. Essentially, this Act will be aligning ourselves, as I've mentioned before, with all other jurisdictions as the continuation of a policy that has existed at the start of our pandemic. This will be just legislating a practice that's been in place. There have been zero complaints with the practices that have been ongoing for the last 19 months. I think we're month number 19.

To the member for Halifax Fairview-Clayton Park, I agree: there are a number of antiquated bills. Some that, I believe, reference alcohol prohibition. It's very dated.

A part of our government's modernization, and I do want to acknowledge the bill that was introduced today by my colleague from Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, there is a need to modernize the Vital Statistics Act.

We must ensure that the Acts that we have today reflect the diversity of our communities, of our province, the families of our province, and the different means of how we're living our days.

When we look at registering births that use assisted human reproductive technology, surrogacy, I think we need to look at the modernization to remove gendered references, the elimination of differential treatment for married and unmarried families. Perhaps this is a conversation that the members and I could continue at a later date, but I'm happy to hear the support on this bill.

I look forward to hearing from members of the public during Law Amendments Committee and seeing this bill passed through the legislative process.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 27. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 32.

Bill No. 32 - Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: It is a pleasure to move that Bill No. 32 be now read a second time.

Today, I am pleased to talk about changes to the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter that will provide municipalities with more planning powers to address affordable housing in their communities. These changes will give municipalities the ability to require inclusionary zoning within municipal boundaries to support the development of affordable housing units in new development. If the developer does not provide affordable units, they may be required to provide cash in lieu to the municipality.

Inclusionary zoning allows for policies and programs that encourage development to include affordable housing units. It's used in cities across Canada and in the United States. It's something that the HRM and other municipalities have been asking for. Mr. Speaker, I encourage municipalities to work with developers to make policies and programs for inclusionary zoning cost-effective.

Nova Scotians want strong, vibrant communities that offer housing and services that they need. Our government recognizes that finding affordable housing is a challenge

for many Nova Scotians. That's why we're making this change. It's one of the items included in our recent housing plan and it is a recommendation of the Affordable Housing Commission. It allows municipalities to create more strategic, efficient sustainable neighbourhoods that could include more affordable housing and other features.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing comments from the other side of the House.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill. Mr. Minister, thank you for listening to municipalities. Thank you for listening to the immediacy that I put forward last week. This is why we tabled the exact bill last week and asked for action now. My only concern is that the bill we tabled last week included legislation to respond to emergency circumstances, allowing for and regulating temporary or emergency housing units in the zone to provide relief in an emergency in housing conditions.

Given the climate crisis taking place, which I spoke on, there's a need to identify and zone land specifically for emergency responses. Some of these circumstances can include coastal erosion or forest fires, instances we are seeing all too much. Any of us in Nova Scotia could be at risk for being displaced from our homes, so it's important to have these spaces zoned and identified in case this happens.

Emergency zoning also includes offering spaces to those at immediate risk of being homeless. Given the homelessness crisis, this is an extra piece of legislation that will help municipalities address the need for the use of modular housing or other shelters that would help keep people safe and warm. I'm not sure if this has been addressed, and I notice that in the Affordable Housing Commission report, it includes emergency shelters as a key part of the housing spectrum. I just wondered if the minister could easily include that in the emergency zoning as part of this bill.

Would the minister give consideration to that? It would be greatly appreciated.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm happy to rise today to speak to inclusionary zoning, as I did on the first day of this sitting. As I had said previously, Mr. Speaker, inclusionary zoning promotes diverse, healthy communities, where people with a range of incomes can afford to live.

Again, I'll note that we have introduced similar legislation multiple times over the last five years without support from either the Liberals or the Progressive Conservatives. I take this time to call out and do some ribbing of my colleagues here with regard to the Liberals. HRM first made a formal request for this legislation in 2016. It is shameful that

the Liberals went a whole mandate without making this amendment possible, but I digress. I digress.

[4:30 p.m.]

Inclusionary zoning alone will not solve the housing crisis. We know this. There is no one key thing that will help solve this crisis, but it is a critical tool for municipalities. This land use planning tool would allow the municipalities to mandate a certain percentage of affordable housing to new developments. This is great news for municipalities that have asked for this and that are waiting to see this happen. Speaking as a former municipal councillor, it is an important toolbox for municipalities that want to see affordable housing in their communities.

Again, I welcome this. To see the Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals follow the lead of the municipalities and our party on this issue, again is very welcome. Inclusionary zoning is a part of a series of approaches needed to solve the lack of affordable housing in Nova Scotia. I'd like the government to know that it doesn't stop with inclusionary zoning. So much more is needed - so much more time and money is needed to solve this crisis. That includes not just inclusionary zoning, but affordable, public, not-for-profit housing is very much needed.

I look forward to hearing more about this bill at Law Amendments Committee, particularly from municipal units and affordable housing experts and their advocates. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. I will not go the whole hour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I just want to express my support for this bill. I introduced a very similar bill in 2018, I believe. It's great that this is finally coming to the floor of the Legislature.

I would say that in my constituency of Dartmouth North, we have an area I'm sure most people will be familiar with - the Shannon Park area which was military housing down along the waterfront that has been plowed over and has been waiting for some kind of development to happen on it.

When the initial consultations took place several years ago before I was elected - when Canada Lands was in charge of most of the land - the community's response was overwhelmingly for affordable housing and no stadium, by the way, which we've also already talked about in this House. It's a good thing that the stadium idea has gone away.

Now, back to the housing situation, Mr. Speaker. The community wanted affordable housing. This past Summer, when there were consultations with the developers and the land use developers, again it was brought up that folks - obviously, three years

longer into the housing crisis - that affordable housing was even more important to see in Shannon Park and that area.

At the time, the developers' hands were tied. They could not specify that an area of Shannon Park be zoned specifically for affordable housing. That would have to be left up to developers. This obviously was discouraging to hear. There were discussions about zoning for not-for-profit, for instance. Maybe that was a way around it.

In any case, I'm pretty sure that this bill will allow for affordable housing to be zoned in Shannon Park, which is very welcome news. I hope it's not too late because I'm not sure where they are with their development plan. Let us hope that it's not too late for that area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: It's a pleasure to rise to speak on Bill 32 today. This is a great bill, and it's an important part of this government's comprehensive interest in how to plan. I was involved in municipal politics for nine years, and I know that municipalities want to be able to support their citizens. This legislation gives them a tool to do that.

As the minister has said, this legislation gives municipalities the ability to oblige developers to include affordable housing. This bill will help municipalities create more strategic, efficient, and sustainable neighbourhoods. Nova Scotians want strong, vibrant communities that offer the housing and services they need. Inclusionary zoning was first introduced in the '70s in the U.S. and has a proven track record of providing affordable housing in that country. Here in Canada, three major cities - Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver - all have enacted inclusionary housing policies that are making changes in those cities.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments are enabling. If municipalities want to implement inclusionary zoning, they can. If not, there is no obligation. This is an innovative public policy that's good on its own. As a part of this government's housing policy, it will provide peace of mind and safe, affordable homes for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: It's a pleasure to finally stand today and speak on a topic - this one here is a good one. Mr. Speaker, what is affordable housing? (Interruptions) That is one of the questions that I think we need to have addressed, and I don't say that to be funny. When you speak to advocates of affordable housing, they will say: What is affordable housing? I think - and it's absolutely true - 30 per cent is what it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be 30 per cent of your income. We know that the majority of Nova Scotians right now are paying above 30 per cent of their income.

I'm really glad to see the minister bring forward inclusionary zoning. I think it's something that municipalities really want. I will caution that it's not the be-all and end-all. But the thing about affordable housing is - and I've heard the Premier say this is all about stock and supply and demand. Well, new apartment buildings are being built in Spryfield and have been built in Spryfield over the last couple of years. There are some being built as we speak.

Spryfield and Herring Cove Road used to be very affordable, and by affordable I mean \$300 to \$400 a month for a single-bedroom, \$500 to \$600 a month for a two-bedroom. It was the area that if you were low-income or on a fixed income, you saw a lot of those individuals living in that area.

We have seen more growth - in fact, the communities that I represent are the fastest-growing community in all of Nova Scotia. That was actually quoted in the *Chronicle Herald* a while back, that there is no area growing faster than Spryfield, Herring Cove, and those areas, because there are places to build. So we're seeing not dozens, not hundreds, we're seeing thousands and thousands of homes being built. In fact, the plan that I was recently shown by the municipality was there are close to eight or nine thousand homes going to be built in the next few years.

We've seen the area explode, and I would say that with the argument around supply and demand, the price in the area has not gone down. It has actually gone up. The price for a one-, two-, three-bedroom apartment in Spryfield has gone up. I'll use another example of affordability.

When I was younger, I attended several high schools, but one of the high schools that I attended was St. Pat's High. I spent a lot of time in the north end of Halifax down by The Pit and that area and in the Hydrostone, in that area. The Hydrostone was a completely different area when I was young. People would say, you can't walk in the North End at night. It's bad. It wasn't bad, it was just that's the stigma that comes along with low-income, unfortunately, and affordable housing sometimes.

Families used to be able to afford a place on the peninsula. The north end of Halifax, no offence to my colleague, is a perfect example of gentrification. When people move into those areas, and they're building and they're paying exorbitant prices, they're pushing everybody out. We're starting to see this in all corners of Nova Scotia, including my community.

I'll be honest with you, there are five of us living - my partner and my three kids. We have a decent yard, a decent house big enough for all of us. What we paid for that house then to what it is now is three and a half times the price of what we paid for it just nine years ago.

A lot of development is happening in the community. I'll use Governor's Brook as a good example. This is a community that when it first opened up was \$250,000 for homes. They're now \$800,000 to \$900,000. The yards haven't gotten bigger, homes haven't gotten bigger, but the prices are sure rising.

Inclusionary zoning - we need to be careful with that because we need to define affordability and what is affordable. There are different layers of housing. I think that when we talk about housing, the buzzwords are affordability and affordable housing. We know that public housing, social housing, low-income housing are different from affordable housing. What housing developments and affordable housing do is they push those out of the community.

I look in my own backyard and I see a beautiful co-op that's right by the new high school. I spent a lot of time there as a kid playing with the Spicers and the Johnsons and all of them. We're all still close friends. There's a group of us who still play cards together every couple of weeks. A lot of them grew up in the co-op and are now raising their own children in that co-op, because that's home and it's affordable.

I would love to take the minister out there. The minister and I know each other well. I consider the minister a really good person and we've had lots of private conversations together. I would love to take the minister out and show him what's happening. That's what we're afraid of. Those people are afraid that they're going to be pushed out of those communities.

[4:45 p.m.]

I would like to see a little bit of a definition of affordability. If we could almost enshrine 30 per cent into a bill like this, I think it would go a long way. There are some apartments in my community that were recently purchased and we're seeing rent increases now by four or five times what they were.

Obviously, the minister is new to the portfolio, so I'm not putting the blame at his feet, obviously, but I feel he's a solutionist. (Applause) I didn't say they were all solutionists. Don't misquote me there. I feel that there are some really good things that could be done. I look at things like Regent Park in Toronto, Ontario and that area - what they were able to do. They did an exceptional job there.

Mixed housing, I think, does work. I shouldn't say "I think" - it does work. It does work. We want to bring different people of different backgrounds and different experiences together. I think that is what builds a vibrant community of different cultures, different races, and religions. That's what builds beautiful communities and that is what Nova Scotia is all about. I just think we can't take our eye off the ball when it comes to what is affordability.

There was a very ambitious plan that was put forward around housing, and inclusionary zoning was part of that. I wonder what happens if the market doesn't respond in the way the government thinks it will. Just a quick Google search will show you, and I know that some of the jurisdictions - I think the member for Hants East had spoken about some areas where inclusionary zoning works and works well, and I agree, but there are some areas where it has caused problems in the past. I know that we're not putting all our eggs in one basket, and I just think that we need to be able to realize that.

The other thing about mixed housing that nobody talks about is that a lot of times when we have affordable housing - and I will use my community for an example, the community of Spryfield. The resources are built up around those communities. YWCA, Chebucto Family Centre, Family SOS - these are all amazing organizations that support the families and the children of those areas.

I hope that if this massive development that is going on, that the government is predicting is going to happen under all of this new legislation - inclusionary zoning - that you leave space for the non-profits. Leave space for the stakeholders and those who will help.

I truly believe that everybody deserves a roof over their head. It is called dignity. But just having a roof over your head will not solve all your problems. If we take this affordable housing, I've got a feeling that a lot of properties are going to be sold off to developers and individuals to build. Pennies on the dollar. Maybe that's the solution, I don't know, but that is my gut feeling.

Part of what you need to remember is that an organization like the Chebucto Family Centre can't afford \$4,000 and \$5,000 rent per month. Well, they can, actually, if the Department of Community Services coughs it up. The local food banks cannot afford an increase in their lease and their rent. If we get this development that the government is predicting, you may be pushing these organizations out and it is going to do a lot of damage.

It is not easy for a single parent of multiple children, some with disability, some with - I mean, I know my three children. It's a pain in the backside just to get them into the vehicle to go somewhere, so imagine having to pile all your kids onto public transit that runs every hour in the rain, the cold, the heat - all the different weather that Nova Scotia brings, and having to take them to a food bank and wait an hour in a lineup.

When you are looking at reprogramming the landscape of Nova Scotia and creating all of this housing, think of the people that need it, the shelters. Inclusionary zoning - I will say to the minister, I'm glad that he brought this forward. I'm glad that it's here, but there's more to it.

What I wonder is who is going to decide where the zones are and what incentives are going to be given to the developers to build. They are going to need incentives, we

know that. So it's going to be density bonusing. Is it going to be something like CMHC does, which is - I think it's \$50,000 a unit? That's another thing we need to speak about. If you're going to build affordable housing in Nova Scotia, you can go to the federal government right now - that great, Liberal federal government that just got re-elected - and they'll give you money per unit. But there's not a lot of uptick in that program.

Why is that? It's free money - \$50,000 a unit to get in there and build. I wonder if we had a conversation with AHANS, we had a conversation with the YW and Phoenix, we had a conversation with the largest non-profit housing providers in Nova Scotia, Adsum House, I wonder how many of them were consulted on this housing plan. How many of them found out about it in the media? How many of them got a phone call after the decisions were made? How many of the developers - who this government is going to rely on heavily, as we hear the Premier say over and over, this is a demand, this is a stock problem, we don't have enough.

I don't think the government is going to be building. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe the government is going to build 10,000 new units. I heard some chirping over there, maybe they are. It would be great, but I don't think they're going to. I don't think they're going to spend hundreds of millions of dollars. They are going to go to the developers and they're going to say, we need you, we need your help. I think a lot of them are going to turn around and say, why didn't you call? Why didn't you consult? Why didn't you talk to us?

I see some funny looks over there, but some of the biggest developers in this province didn't get a call until after the fact. Some of the biggest not-for-profits in this province found out in the media what was happening. If we're going to solve these issues, if we're going to solve these problems, we've got to bring these experts along with us.

I'll tell you, one of the lessons you learn from being in government is you don't have all the answers. The smartest people aren't always on that side of the room. There's experience outside of the Legislature. Well, you forget I've been here eight years, but - fifty minutes? Okay - so we need to realize that. Again, it was talking about the previous bill. This is about consultation and it's about bringing people in and it's about getting buy-in. You can't just throw money at the problem and expect it to be solved, and I think that's a lesson you're going to learn very quickly about health care, too. You can't just throw money - it's people, it's resources, it's expertise, and it's consultation.

When we hear people say, "Yeah, this is good, we like it, but why didn't you call? Why didn't you tell us?" or "We would have tweaked this a little bit" - one of the things that really struck me as I went through it and I digested it and I listened was the thought that we are going to find a partner that does X-Y-Z. What do you mean? You're throwing a plan out there. You don't have partners yet? You don't have the partners to provide roofs over peoples' heads? You don't have the hotels yet? I know they will, I assume they will, but I would think a real plan, a true plan that puts people first would have the meat and potatoes in it already. It's like throwing a plate on my table and saying, "There's supper,"

but there's nothing on it. "Don't worry, just wait a little bit. We'll cook the potatoes and we'll make the meat, the fish. We'll put the fish on there soon." Well, I'm hungry now.

What I hope is that you're able to really define what affordable is, and I can say to the minister and the members opposite, that is the number one thing you hear and will hear around housing - your definition of "affordable" and other people's definition of affordable. There are people living in public housing right now who are paying \$75 a month for a two-and three-bedroom home because that's all they can afford to pay.

Now, as I come to a close, I want to recognize the importance and the expertise of our bureaucrats and of the individuals working in the Department of Housing and Community Services. I have gotten to know individuals in housing very, very, very well - I see my friend, Mr. d'Entremont, is in the House. See, Mr. Speaker, if you say Chris d'Entremont's name three times, he appears. (Applause) It's all it takes. What I will say for all the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, what you're seeing today is my inner Chris d'Entremont. I watched it for seven years.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Let's get back to the topic at hand. The member for Halifax Atlantic is wrapping up. (Laughter)

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Well, if you call 38 minutes wrapping up, I guess.

Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that that department has decades and decades and decades of experience in it - the staff that have given their heart and soul to solving the housing crisis, to put roofs over peoples' heads, to fix issues, systemic issues in public housing, on decades and decades and decades worth of shoestring budgets. When we turn our gaze to how to fix this and how to give Nova Scotians the dignity they deserve, remember that those who are working in those departments deserve dignity too, and I know you do. This is not their fault. This is all of our faults, collectively.

Remember that asking a citizen of Nova Scotia to pay more than 30 per cent for their housing is taking food out of their mouths, clothes off their backs. Their children are unable to participate in hockey, skating, basketball, baseball - all the things that we now take for granted.

When we ask them to pay just a little more, it's coming from somewhere because, as we see, inflation is going up, the cost of living is going up, food, power bills, but paycheques aren't going up. We all know first-hand - MLAs haven't had a raise in 10 years. All jokes aside, we know that. We know that when we ask them to pay more, it's coming from essential services. It's coming from things that are essential to them.

I have a lot of respect for the member opposite. I think he's going to do the best he can do, and I think he's going to do a great job, but we're here to keep an eye on him. Winter is here. The discussion now is not Winter is coming, it's Winter is here. People are

living on streets. People are making the decision right now not to buy food for their children, not to put gas in their vehicles, not to get Winter tires. So, make sure that when you enter into these contracts, when you're speaking to the developers, the not-for-profits . . .

[5:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the member to use the word "minister" or "department."

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: When the minister meets with those individuals, and the minister ultimately signs those contracts, that affordability is defined, and it's defined to give people the dignity and their children the head start and the level playing field that they deserve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I will actually be brief, but I would like to say a few words about inclusionary zoning. I appreciate the sentiment of the remarks from the member for Halifax Atlantic, but I do want to say that we unequivocally support inclusionary zoning.

I'm a little bit puzzled at some of the cautions I heard. Gentrification is real. Housing insecurity is real. All of this is true. I think I can speak with some authority on that, because despite many assertions over the last few days in this House that this is a new or unforeseen issue, in fact, the record will show that we in the NDP caucus have been talking about this for years. I didn't rise to talk about that. It's neither here nor there at this point. We are glad that this change is happening.

I want to just take a minute, I think it's important in light of this conversation - this will go through the Law Amendments Committee and we'll have a chance at third reading - to just say that inclusionary zoning is, as the minister said, enabling. It allows the municipality to do what I hope in the first instance is define affordable housing. They can do that. They will do that. In fact, that is why the municipality, in particular HRM, has been asking for this power.

I'll tell you that I say that as context for what inclusionary zoning isn't. What we've seen at regional council for quite some time now is developers coming forward and saying, we want to build this and if you give us some special allowances, we'll include affordable housing. But in the absence of the ability to enforce or define affordable housing, quite simply, developers can lie.

Now, I wouldn't say that any developers have lied but what I will say is that many developments that have come forward as affordable housing projects don't get built that way in the final instance. Either the property gets flipped with the development agreement

attached that at one point was approved because of some promise of affordable housing that then doesn't get included in the final one, and because the municipality doesn't have this enabling power, there is no recourse. There is no penalty, there is no way to enforce that.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that is what this piece of legislation will do. I know from speaking with my own municipal councillor, from speaking with many members of regional council, how important this is, particularly as people look more and more to the municipality around housing issues. We do have this strange dichotomy, here in the HRM in particular, where we have a very large municipality with hundreds of thousands of people and many, many staff that oversee the planning process, but we sit here a few blocks away and we essentially - as we say, the whole municipality is a creature of the Province, so there are lots of ways in which the municipality's hands are tied because of the legislation that we have here.

Again, I will say that this is good legislation. This allows the HRM in particular, which I know will take the Province up on this offer, to do some of the work that it needs to do. I say all of that because I also want to say that this was a change that I believe was responsive, was made quickly. The bill already existed - don't care if it's our bill, don't care if it's your bill, let it pass, glad it's going to pass. I hope.

I would set that against this idea, which one of my colleagues brought up earlier today in Question Period, of these task forces on transportation and planning, because there again - at least in the HRM, which is the area of which I represent a part - we know that the Regional Plan exists. We know that the Integrated Mobility Plan exists.

I want to just take a little bit of issue with the minister's comments earlier today that, well, you know those plans were written but times have changed, circumstances have changed.

I would submit again that everything that is occurring today was foreseeable years ago, and it wasn't just foreseeable, it was foreseen. I believe - I mean I wouldn't say I've read the Regional Plan back to back, nor the Integrated Mobility Plan, but I have read the plans, I am familiar with them, I have talked to my local councillor, I have talked to others. They are good plans, they make a lot of sense, they are the product of a lot of work by a lot of people, a great deal of consultation.

I would say that I would just encourage the minister and the government to really think carefully as the minister treads into those conversations about these new task forces, and I know the Minister of Public Works would also be involved, but as some other folks have pointed out, we didn't see anything about active transit in the Throne Speech. We didn't see it in the mandate letters.

I am encouraged that there does seem to be a nod to it in this piece of the plan, but I would say that we have a very progressive and robust Integrated Mobility Plan. We're seeing work on complete streets happening all across the HRM. I have seen in my time here how sometimes quick, decisive action is really good and sometimes it sets us back years.

I think this is a place where that could happen and it concerns me because, again, my constituency is in the HRM. I see this work, I am impacted by this work, my constituents are, and it really is under way. I just want to voice that caution, because those are not plans that are going to come to the floor of this House. But against the backdrop of this, which I think is such a good move, I have some reservations about this.

I also want to say to the point that there seemed to be some assertion earlier in the conversation that maybe this is a giveaway to developers or there's going to be some backroom dealings, I can't speak to that. Again, this is enabling legislation. HRM will work out the details and introduce the bylaws and all that.

I will say that we have a massive, massive deficit of housing units at every part of the spectrum. We have heard that. From single-family homes to rooming houses to apartments and everything in between, we need housing. As I speak to housing advocates but also as I speak to folks at Develop Nova Scotia or folks focused on immigration or economic development, everyone points to this. This housing plan, I believe, is a really good start, most of it.

But I think even the government would acknowledge it's probably not enough, and to that point, supply: Yes, we need supply. The reality is that we have said for a long time that we need more co-operative and non-market housing. Absolutely we need more investment in that. Ideally, we need more public housing. The number of units that the minister mentioned earlier today is great except that I know that everyone who comes to my office is put on a years-long waiting list to access one, and that waiting list just gets longer and longer and longer because we know even as that supply turns over, what was affordable housing ceases to be so, often.

The reality is, and this isn't going to sound very socially democratic of me, but it is: Who can best bear the cost of that massive number of units that we need?

We need to invest in co-ops. We need to invest in non-market housing, but we need to - a nice way of saying it would be incent, a stronger way of saying it would be force developers to build affordable housing. Developers know how to develop. That's their business. They know how to build housing. We need to make sure that when they build that housing, they are including affordable units. I believe that that is a really important part of the puzzle, and the devil is in the details. It's in the definitions.

I think HRM can get this right. I hope they get it right. I'm glad to see the Province putting forward this legislation today.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made on Bill No. 32, inclusionary zoning, from all sides of the House. I do want to say that the process for consultation was extensive, and I will give credit to the previous government for having the Affordable Housing Commission, which is really where this bill comes from. I do recognize the comments from the member for Halifax Atlantic and do note that he was the previous Minister of Municipal Affairs - I don't know if it was called Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but he was the previous minister. (Interruptions) Not housing.

I appreciate that all-Party support I think that I hear is there for this bill. I tell my friends back at home who say that everything in the Legislature is always combative, I say, no, I really believe there are more times we agree than don't agree and more things we vote all in favour of than not. This, I think, will be one, so I appreciate that. I do think it is one tool in the tool kit. The housing crisis is profound. No one tool is going to solve it. We will do more. We are working on more. I appreciate all the comments.

[5:15 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 32.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 30.

Bill No. 30 - Residential Tenancies Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I move that Bill No. 30, An Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Residential Tenancies Act, be read for a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the Residential Tenancies Act plays an integral role in protecting the rights of both tenants and landlords. Many of the amendments we are proposing are in direct response to the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission report's Recommendation No. 3, which is to modernize provincial legislation to enhance renter protections. The amendments will enhance protections for tenants against evictions due to renovations and provide other tenant protections and create internal and administrative efficiencies.

In November 2020, the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission was established to examine the current state of affordable housing and to recommend actions to ensure better affordable housing options. In May 2021, the commission released 17 recommendations, one of which called on government to modernize provincial legislation to enhance tenant protection and to specifically address evictions due to renovations.

Many of today's proposed amendments increase protection for renters in situations where landlords require an eviction to do major renovations, which is also known as renoviction. Additional amendments are being proposed based on previous stakeholder consultations from 2018 to 2021. They address stakeholder concerns including tenant protections and improved administration and efficiency of the Residential Tenancies Program.

We hear a lot about renovictions specifically in the news, renovictions that are unfair to tenants. It's safe to say that we appreciate the need for landlords to do renovations. Every building, throughout its lifespan, requires significant upgrades. The upgrades are important for tenants to live in a safe and healthy environment.

The issue is that not all landlords treat their tenants fairly. The majority, though, are fair, reasonable, and respectful - but not all. The amendments we're introducing will clarify the rules for both tenants and landlords and provide greater protections for tenants overall. Specifically, the proposed amendments that strengthen protections for tenants against renovation evictions include requiring landlords to make an application under the province's Residential Tenancies Program for an eviction order if a tenant does not agree to terminate the tenancy, giving tenants a minimum of three months' notice before they can be evicted due to renovations, requiring that mutual agreements that terminate a lease between tenants and landlords be in writing, and finally, requiring landlords to give the tenant between one and three months' rent as compensation for the eviction.

Mr. Speaker, landlord violations of the new protections can lead to additional compensation for tenants, such as covering moving expenses and paying the difference between the tenant's new unit and the rent paid for their former unit for up to one year.

Further amendments are being proposed based on previous stakeholder consultations. These amendments include clarifying that rental increase notices can only contain one amount, regardless of whether the tenant decides to renew their tenancy as a month-to-month or yearly lease; not allowing landlords to charge different rental rates for different lease terms; making the process easier for tenants to get their security deposit; and finally, giving landlords and tenants clear rules regarding what must be done before the landlord enters a unit, including requiring landlords to give 24 hours' written notice unless the tenant gives permission or there is an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, we are also introducing a number of amendments to increase program efficiencies and administrative changes, which include more flexibility for giving an annual rental increase, with the requirement that such notices are limited to once a year, and allowing for an eviction order to be issued when a tenant's dispute of an unpaid rent eviction notice is dismissed at a Residential Tenancies hearing.

Some amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, such as protections against renovation evictions and some administrative and efficiency amendments, will come into force upon Royal Assent. The others will come into force upon proclamation to allow time to amend the Residential Tenancies regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I've been asked in recent days why we have not introduced penalties for landlords who don't follow the rules outlined in the Residential Tenancies Act. This question is an excellent example of why we are continuing our work to modernize this Act, an excellent example as to why we will continue to consult, and an excellent example as to why we will continue to listen to both tenants and landlords. I could go on probably for the hour, Mr. Speaker.

The changes we have proposed are part of our government's larger efforts to address the housing challenges in the province. Our work is just beginning. I look forward to bringing more changes to the floor of the Legislature. With those few short words, I look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues opposite.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, the Residential Tenancies Act is a good piece of legislation and it will protect Nova Scotians from unfair rental practices. Protecting renters is something that's important to us, which is why we tabled legislation to protect renters from unfair rent increases.

The Liberal government created the Affordable Housing Commission, which recommended the modernization of provincial legislation to enhance renter protections against evictions due to renovations. This bill addresses many of the recommendations that were in that Commission report, and I thank the member for identifying how it is going to impact and improve their lives.

I hope that all the amendments made are going to actually be enforced. Laws are great, but enforcement is what matters and what will ultimately protect renters. I am looking forward to hearing about how all these necessary laws will be enforced, how this will be streamlined into the Residential Tenancies Program, and how landlords will be accountable if they do not implement these new terms and conditions.

I can tell you that as a councillor I received many calls on a weekly basis from various people who are renting, especially in regard to - I will call them land-lease communities, better known as mobile home parks. As you consult, I would like to make sure that you actually engage with the people in land-lease communities to understand that grey area where the Residential Tenancies Act does not address their concerns. I would like to bring that to light.

I know that there is a tool that I would like. I know I asked a question to the former minister on the other bill with regard to emergency shelters that was not responded to, so I'm hoping that you will actually take consideration as to what I am bringing forward.

THE SPEAKER: Again, I just want to remind everybody not to use the word "you."

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start off with saying that our caucus certainly agrees there are many changes needed to this particular Residential Tenancies Act. I want to firmly state that there are some amazing landlords who are very respectful and honest to their tenants, and there are a few who spoil it for those good ones, so I'm really glad to see this coming forward.

There is a clear power imbalance between tenants and landlords that requires safeguards to address and protect those tenants. We, as a caucus, have put forward a bill that would require publicly-available and searchable reports on the presence of vermin, bedbugs, lice, mould, ants, or cockroaches in rental properties in order to hold landlords more accountable, which is the Tenants' Right to Know about Human Health Hazards bill.

There are way too many residents with rentals that have harmful and hazardous living conditions, families with rodents and bedbugs with no relief from those landlords who could have disclosed this information when they moved in. As we know, we are in a housing crisis, so what is available is available, but if people knew that there were things in their units that they could avoid, they probably would change their minds and continue to look . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I believe the member is talking about a bill that she put forward. The debate is on the bill that the minister has put forward.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, we have many families and renters that do not have many options. As well, we all know we're in a housing crisis, so options are limited. That still means that the landlord should keep up with work needed with pest removal.

I would like to say thank you so much to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services for bringing forward this amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, because we all know that these additional amendments, as you said, will also create better administration and efficiency.

We understand that there are upgrades that are needed for a lot of these places that are in question, but not at the cost of the tenants. Clarifying the rules will protect both tenants and landlords.

We suggest amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act which would require rental rates for a unit to be publicly posted and allow group applications to the Residential Tenancies Board. Stopping the questionable rent rates - when you apply for a unit, the price will be the price.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the opportunity to be hearing from the members of the public on these particular law amendments.

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

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on Bill No. 30, an Act to Amend the Residential Tenancies Act. As the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services said yesterday, the Residential Tenancies Act has an integral role in protecting the rights of both tenants and landlords. It's an important Act, one that impacts all of our constituents. We have all received calls from tenants and landlords asking for more support and protections. I am pleased to say that that's what Bill No. 30 is all about: new rules to protect tenants and clarity for landlords around program efficiencies.

One of the many amendments being proposed is related to renovictions. Renovictions happen when a landlord evicts a tenant for the purpose of renovations. It's safe to say that we appreciate the need for landlords to do renovations. The issue, Mr. Speaker, is some landlords manage this better than others.

With these amendments, landlords will have to make an application under the province's Residential Tenancies Program for an eviction order if a tenant does not agree to terminate the tenancy. Tenants will get a minimum of three months' notice before they can be evicted due to renovations, and landlords will have to give the tenant between one and three months as rent compensation for the eviction.

If a landlord doesn't follow the new rules, they will have to provide additional compensation for tenants, such as covering moving expenses or paying the difference

between the tenant's new unit and the rent paid for the former unit for up to a year, making it easier for tenants to get their security deposits back. That is another change we are making with the amendments we are introducing. This is a concern many tenants have shared. We are pleased to respond to their concerns and amend the Act, yet again adding more protections for them.

The details of this bill have already been shared in the Legislature as part of Second Reading debate, so I won't continue to list the specifics. What I would like to do before closing is to underline the importance of this Act and the amendments being introduced.

[5:30 p.m.]

The Residential Tenancies Act protects the rights of both tenants and landlords. Changes made to the Act over the years and the ones currently being proposed are in response to regular consultation the department has with stakeholders. We are always working to balance the needs of both tenants and landlords. Our work to continue to modernise the Residential Tenancies Act is ever-evolving. We are not done yet.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

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

PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I will keep my remarks brief to this. I wanted to speak in this reading before the bill goes any further, just to have the minister consider a few other things that I feel might add a bit more balance to the bill as it is.

I appreciate particularly the member from Halifax Needham's comments on the differentiation between the developers that are a part of the problem and the developers who want to be a part of the solution. I think that that's really critical that we talk about that.

We talk a lot in generalities of an "us versus them," but the majority of developers in this province want to be a part of the solution. They do not want to be the problem; they want to help. When you have balance within residential tenancies, it allows for that to happen.

I applaud the minister for the changes that he has introduced here and that will happen, but I do have a few questions as to, perhaps, other things that can be considered while we have this Act open and in front of us.

One of my first questions is: The government has introduced a 2 per cent rental cap that continues beyond the state of emergency, but with the introduction of this bill, does that mean that the ban on renovictions goes away before the state of emergency does?

Something just to clarify and to look at. It might be an oversight, but something that's important, that can't be forgotten about.

Something that we have been looking at or that I have looked at is Prince Edward Island, our sister province, and the changes to residential tenancies that they have been focusing on in terms of renovictions during a school year. They are looking at the potential to not allow for any type of eviction due to renovations during a school year so that any children who would be living in this residence wouldn't be displaced from their school.

Again, through you into the ether of those who are speaking about this, Mr. Speaker, are we considering this? Is this something that could be put in?

When we look at our most vulnerable, our kids are our most vulnerable, so we want to make sure that we're not doing anything that is going to put them in a disservice. We have a neighbouring province who is looking at this and who has research that we can collaborate with, and we can work with, and possibly partner on.

Another initiative that P.E.I. is looking at is a right of first refusal for renovicted tenants. That would mean that after renovations were complete, a landlord would have to offer the apartment back to the original tenants if the tenants choose to exercise that right.

This would keep Nova Scotian families in their neighbourhoods that they call home. Is the minister considering that? Is that something that could be added to these amendments, to allow for?

We're going to talk a little bit about these landlords who aren't so great, these developers who are part of the problem. The maximum amount a landlord or tenant can be fined for breaking the Residential Tenancies Act is \$1,000. This does little to dissuade unscrupulous landlords from breaking the terms of the Act.

Something I would implore the minister to consider is perhaps a raising of that fine to make it more of a deterrent. You have to apply for permits and you have to apply for these things, but \$1,000 to not follow these things when you're talking about multi-million-dollar developments is really inconsequential and is easily dismissed.

Maybe having more teeth? I think it was the member for Halifax Needham - and I apologize if it wasn't - who talked about the ability to have some teeth in the enforcement of this, and have this have some bearing for both tenants and landlords.

I appreciate the minister walks a fine balance because that's what residential tenancies is all about. It's about finding that balance between the two parties. It's never supposed to be - nobody's really supposed to be happy at the end of it. That's how you know that you've done the right job, you've found that balance if all the stakeholders on either side aren't exactly thrilled.

I implore the minister to think about these recommendations. Look at our neighbouring province of P.E.I., find out what happens with the 2 per cent increase in the rental cap. Why wasn't that in these changes? Where is that going to go? Then make sure that the renovictions ban stays with the state of emergency, even if this is something that will be passed before, possibly, that state of emergency is lifted.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and say a few words about this bill as well. Yes, there are many things in this bill that I am grateful for and excited about, but I do have a few concerns and a few questions.

I will start by saying that in my constituency of Dartmouth North, there have been a number of buildings over the last several years that have been renovicted or that the people in them have been renovicted. They've turned over. I will give you one example from just before Christmas of last year: There were two buildings on Victoria Road where the renoviction date was December 31st if you can imagine.

It was two buildings of folks who were paying about \$535, which is about what their housing allowance was, and it was clearly mostly single, mostly men, mostly just before turning senior, and often people with disabilities. The idea of those folks finding a place in the current rental climate, number one, and also being able to literally get out. Even if there were a bunch of apartments to go and view, to get out with disabilities in the cold at that time of year was virtually impossible.

Legal Aid, myself, my office, and other people organized the tenants. We filed a - I forget what it was called - but we filed extensions, blah, blah, blah. We did all the things that we could do to sort of keep them in their apartments for as long as possible. Now my understanding is that they are all gone. All the former tenants are gone, the buildings have turned over and the rent has doubled.

So, to my colleague's point about the sort of - well, yes, unintended consequences, but the idea that landlords should give first right of refusal to existing tenants is a great idea. However, it is usually absolutely impossible, because we are going from a rent of \$535 to \$1,200, so anyone who was living in that building before is certainly not living in it now.

I want to give you another example of a similar situation. Earlier in my first term of being the MLA, the same thing happened. We sat with tenants, we tried to figure out how they were going to find places to live in light of these renovictions, and then this past election I was canvassing in the building and I knocked on the door of somebody and what I heard from them was that the place was awful.

So, after evicting all of the residents, jacking up the rents, and making it look really nice on the outside, it turns out that inside the carpets are still stained, things are still falling off the walls, and it is still not a great place to live, especially for the constituent for the amount of rent that they are being charged. We all know that these instances exist all over the province, but in certain areas it is happening an awful lot.

I do love the new protections for tenants, but I just want to say a couple of things in general about it. Number one: The thing that I love most, from what I understand about these amendments, is the part where landlords are not allowed to charge two prices. We have one particular landlord whom I could name - am I allowed to name? Ah, I won't - in Dartmouth North. A big landlord in Dartmouth North who does this thing where if you renew your lease for another year, your rent stays the same or \$20 more, whatever, so around \$1,200. If you go month-to-month, it is \$475 more. Imagine, if you go month-to-month? People call me - is this allowed? Unfortunately, yes, ma'am, it is allowed. That is what I have to say to folks so I am so happy to see, from my understanding, that this rule will be changed. Thank you to the minister for that one, for sure.

I think the idea of compensating people for being renovicted is very important, but again I will say that in this climate, and this also speaks to my colleague from Fairview-Clayton Park's comments, there is nowhere to go. So, it doesn't matter how much money you get paid to leave your apartment, literally you are going to - like there are folks who will be spending it on hotels until their money runs out and then they will be in shelters. There is nowhere to find places to live, at least in Halifax Regional Municipality right now.

It is imperative that until that changes, we do allow for a ban on renovations until the state of emergency is over.

The other thing I want to say about the bill in general is that for all of the rules in residential tenancies - and I would say there are actually already some protections for tenants in the Residential Tenancies Act. The problem for many people is that they do not know their rights. The landlords in general know their rights, because in general - again good landlords, bad landlords - but any company that's in the business of renting properties, especially the big REITs and the people who are answering to their investors, they have teams of legal people who can understand the Residential Tenancies Act with no problem.

I can't understand the Residential Tenancies Act. Certainly, when I was a renter, I was like, okay, thanks for my copy of my lease, and I just put it in a drawer and hoped for the best. There are so many people who do not know their rights. They come to the MLA's office, and we are able to connect them with Legal Aid. We are able to connect them with an amazing document that Dalhousie Legal Aid put out, which is a Tenants' Rights Guide. We can also walk them through the process of filing a Form J or doing all of those things. But if they don't know that, they can come to the MLA's office or go to some other

community advocacy office, very often they will simply say, thanks, you told me I'm evicted, I'm evicted, and I'll leave.

Often the eviction notice is written on a piece of loose-leaf. They're like, this is what they gave me. We say we can work on this. We can extend this out a little bit because that is not allowed. My point to the minister is, it would be great if, to accompany all of these changes, there was some caveat, some education program, some bus station ad program or ad campaign or something to make sure the tenants of Nova Scotia know their legal rights.

I know that it's in the Act that a tenant must be offered a copy of their lease when they sign the lease. Again, like I said, that's not too helpful for many people. It goes in a drawer. If there was some kind of quick fact sheet that said these are your rights, like the Dal Legal Aid Tenants' Rights Guide, or even a condensed version of that - if there was some way to legislate that, that landlords must provide tenants with a simple-language description of their rights, it would be very helpful for many people.

That's all I would like to say for second reading of this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I want to give my support to the member for Dartmouth North and what she says. I think our communities are very similar. If we had to do the guessing game of who that landlord was, I would probably get it within one or two guesses.

I do want to say that - and I'll keep it short because I have to - with a renoviction, it's really important that you understand that those who are doing a renoviction don't care who you are. There was a story in the paper a couple of years back of a gentleman whose building was getting renovated, and he was being renovicted. They were literally tearing the building down around him. It made the *Chronicle Herald*. The unique thing about this was that it was MP Andy Fillmore's father who they were doing this to, and they knew it was him.

We need to be very clear that, when it comes to renovictions, as the member for Fairview-Clayton Park said, there are true penalties. If they're going to do this to an MP, if they're going to do that to the father of an MP, who could easily just call up and say "Hey," then we need to make sure that the penalties are there, and they're in place so that renoviction is not a tool being used, and it's being used.

The last thing I'll say around the Residential Tenancies Act is the member is absolutely right. Even during all of this, when the Liberals put in strict regulations during COVID-19, tenants were being told, here's your increase. If you don't like it, after the state of emergency is off, go fly a kite, you're gone.

[5:45 p.m.]

When the member says there is a team of lawyers versus an individual - and the member for Fairview-Clayton Park referenced that too - it's absolutely true. It is intimidating. People are being confused on what's right and what's wrong. In the end, because of the situation we're in, they are just giving in to the demands. They're saying, okay, if you want to increase my rent 20 per cent or if you want to tear things down around me, I guess I'm going to have to stay because it's the only place I have to go.

When it comes to renovictions, this is something that I would say is very new in the tool of people who want to - I know that for all the years that I rented, and even when we first started as MLAs, it wasn't something that we heard a lot about. Maybe it just didn't make the news as it is now.

This legislation - the rules and the regulations do not work unless there's teeth behind it. An example I'll use of regulations that work is one of the few remaining fishing villages in HRM. When it comes to poaching, any of us that grew up in a fishing community knows what the penalties are for poaching, right? So we don't poach. Besides the fact that the fish you're caught with, you're in trouble. The penalties are so steep, to the point where they can confiscate your vehicle and everything you own for breaking the law. People don't do it anymore. It was rampant. People used to do it a lot.

If you're going to give multi-millionaires, and in some cases billionaires, a \$1,000 fine, that's the cost of doing business, I think, for some of them. Aside from people saying don't rent from them, they're still going to rent from them. A thousand dollars isn't going to do anything. I think we need to look at what really hurts and what really hits them.

It doesn't necessarily always have to be money. There could be a merit system, and this is something that I always thought about for construction and things like that, a merit system. If you are getting stung left and right for being a terrible landlord and then you go to apply for developments to build more, should we not be looking at the history in the past and saying listen, you are increasing people's rents by astronomical amounts, people are being homeless, you've got rats?

There was one - and I'll bet you it's probably the same individual that the person from Dartmouth North was dealing with ownership-wise - the sewer pipe had broken in the person's apartment. It took a week and a half for them to get in there to fix it. And that was after multiple calls from myself. I called the police. We had moved the person out. We went into the bathroom. The entire tub was filled with feces and urine.

When I finally cornered - and almost killed - the landlord, they said, well, we're getting rent from them anyway, we'll just toss them out and put someone else new in. That's what it was all about.

What I would say to the minister back there, is just put some teeth into it. Just think if this was your friend or your family member and they were going through this and then the landlord just said, well we're going to do what we want, we'll just take the \$1,000 fine, that's the cost of doing business.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the member for Halifax Atlantic for giving me a few minutes left to answer a couple of many questions, so I'll try to get through them.

Regarding the process behind renovictions - the legislative process, obviously, so it won't be prohibiting renovations as they currently exist under the state of emergency order, but point taken from the member for Fairview-Clayton Park. I'll bring that back to the department for further clarification.

Essentially, it's outlined in the bill that there are very specific requirements for renovictions to take place. It's not a matter of changing a window or a bathtub that does not require a building permit. In fact, it's outlined that it's going to require proper building permits and approvals and vacant possession requirement needed to conduct other demolition.

We have to agree that there's some life expectancy to a building or that the repairs or renovations are so extensive that a building permit would be required as well as vacant possession to do the renovations. It's significant renovations. It's not painting the walls or bringing back wallpaper to put back on the walls. That might be a new fad that will be coming back. Who knows?

Regarding the enforcement piece, I want to reassure the members of the House that beyond the thousand-dollar element that's outlined in the RTA, it is outlined that residential tenancy officers will be authorized to provide tenant compensation if landlords do not comply with the order. That includes reasonable moving expenses, additional expenses up to a maximum amount equal to one month's rent, and the difference between their old rent and their new rent for up to 12 months. That is included in the legislation.

Regarding housing conditions, all landlords are required by the RTA to keep residential rental properties in a good state of repair and fit for habitation. That includes all laws respecting standards of health safety in housing. We'd like to bring to the attention of the Legislature that there's also an opportunity to contact local municipalities through their bylaw enforcement folks if there are questions regarding building codes, for example.

I'd like to also remind members, Mr. Speaker, that the Residential Tenancies Act only applies to three situations - three landlord/tenant relationships. I don't want to list them, because there are specifications regarding the language there, but it's only when three of those types of relationships start.

As the member opposite spoke about rental rates, that would be not possible to include as the Act is written in its current format, because the RTA is only specific once the landlord and tenant establish a relationship.

Regarding the point about the school year, it's outlined that it'll be a minimum of three months' notice, but that can go up to 12 months' notice. That's up to the discretion of the residential tenancy officer. That could be factored into those considerations.

Amending fines: Again, as it's been noted by my colleagues opposite, the Residential Tenancies Act is about finding that balance between tenants and landlords and modernizing the legislation. It is one of those older pieces of legislation, and part of my department's work is to continue to modernize this piece of legislation, as with others, for future sessions. The point is taken.

For my colleague from the NDP regarding the rights of tenants: perhaps a summary document. It's certainly something I'll bring back to the department to see if we can put that together. It won't necessarily be a legislative piece required in this Act, but perhaps a summary for tenants would be beneficial for them.

Regarding land-lease properties, we do have ongoing discussion with folks from within that division. They have rent regulation through our Act, but we predominantly hear about the process there. I'm not sure if that answers the question from the member opposite, but I can have a conversation with the member afterwards.

I'm sure there'll be other opportunities for discussion and debate. I look forward to hearing from members of the public through the Law Amendments Committee. I'm willing to answer any questions from members opposite once we leave this Chamber and seeing this bill pass through the legislative process.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I do move to close debate on the Residential Tenancies Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 30.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move the House do now rise to meet again tomorrow, Friday, October 22nd, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Government business will include second reading on Bill No. 37, Committee of the Whole House on Bills No. 1, 4, 11, and 13, and time permitting, allow Address in Reply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for the House do now rise, to meet again tomorrow, Friday, October 22nd, between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

[The House adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]