



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Karla MacFarlane

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the King's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

First Session

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 947, Ramadan: Muslim Celebration - Recog., Hon. J. Balsler	8024
Vote - Affirmative.....	8024
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 434, Coastal Protection Act (amended), C. Chender	8024
NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 948, Rent Cap: Need to Apply to Units - Recog., G. Burrill	8025
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
St. Patrick's Day: Irish Her. Celeb. - Recog., Hon. G. Morrow	8026
Mother-in-Law, Carole: Birthday - Best Wishes, Hon. K. Regan.....	8026
ROSE Clinic: Reproductive Health Work - Recog., C. Chender	8027

Africadian Emp. Agency: 10 th Anniv. - Congrats., Hon. T. Grosse	8027
Brown, Terrance: Death of - Tribute, Hon. T. Ince	8027
CN Rail Strike: Use of Scabs - Condemn, K. Coombes.....	8028
Leggett, N./Whalen, G.: CPR Rescue - Thanks, D. Ritcey	8028
Haverstock, Gina: Winemaking Awd. - Congrats., Hon. K. Irving.....	8029
Borden Colley, Sherri: Hon. Doctorate - Congrats., S. Hansen	8029
White, Amanda: Foresight Atlantic - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	8030
Healey, Pat: Laker News - Recog., Hon. Z. Churchill	8030
Nat'l Ccl. of Cdn. Muslims: New Chapter - Recog., G. Burrill.....	8031
Kinch, Tara: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon. B. Maguire	8031
Ramadan: Muslim Celeb. - Recog., B. Clark.....	8032
OutFest: Events - Recog., S. Leblanc	8032
Slauenwhite, Charlotte: Kindness Kits - Congrats., Hon. B. Wong	8032
Elliott, Murray: Death of - Tribute, L. Nicoll	8033
Borden, Gary: Com. Serv. - Recog., K. Coombes.....	8033
Sarzuelo, Kristhel: IBA Graduate - Recog., Hon. B. Druhan.....	8034
NCCM: Prom. of Human Rights - Recog., A. Duale	8035
Students: Dart. School Food Drive - Recog., S. Leblanc	8035
Ouellette, John Victor: Death of - Tribute, Hon. T. Boudreau.....	8035
Navotsava: Indian Celeb. - Recog., R. DiCostanzo	8036
Thompson, Downey: Death of - Tribute, J.A. MacDonald	8036
LeBlanc, Ghislaine: Death of - Tribute, R. LeBlanc	8037
Gerhardt, Bill: N.S. Tourism Prom. - Congrats., Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	8038

Participants: Special Olympics - Recog., C. Kerr.....	8038
Coleman, Ed: Legion Pin Recipient - Congrats., Hon. J. Lohr	8039
Langille, Dawn: Rally for Kindness - Recog., Hon. I. Rankin.....	8039
Kiley, Gord: Ski Accident - Best Wishes, Hon. T. Halman.....	8040
Off Track Brewing: Closure - Recog., Hon. K. Regan.....	8040
Sturk, Claudette: Death of - Tribute, C. Palmer.....	8041
Decker, Karen: ACCEL Physiotherapy - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	8041
Dig. & Area Com. Gardens Soc.: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon. J. Balsler.....	8042
Mina, Vicky: Makeup Business - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	8042
Milton Canoe Club: 75 th Anniv. - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	8043
Tamil Her. Mo.: Celeb. of Culture - Recog., R. DiCostanzo.....	8043
Arseneau, Lindsay: Help for Newcomers - Recog., Hon. M. Thompson.....	8044
Gaudet, Edgar: Firefighting Svc. - Recog., R. LeBlanc	8044
Pedula, Domenic: HWFAC - Recog., M. Sheehy-Richard	8044
Volunteers: Goldsmith Lake Prot. Efforts - Recog., C. Kerr.....	8045
Richards, Diane: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon. P. Dunn.....	8045
Thomas, Derek: Death of - Tribute, Hon. Z. Churchill	8046
Chester Art Centre: Prom. of Artists - Thanks, D. Barkhouse.....	8046
Corkery, Tony: FedEx Awds. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. K. Smith	8047
Winners: St. Mary's Small Bus. Awds. - Congrats., Hon. G. Morrow.....	8047
Music 4 Mental Health Society: Fundraising - Recog., Hon. B. Adams.....	8048
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:	
ON MOTION FOR SUPPLY:	
S. Hansen	8049

Hon. K. Irving.....	8053
B. Clark.....	8056
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CWH ON SUPPLY AT 2:54 P.M.....	8060
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 7:08 P.M.....	8060
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CWH ON BILLS AT 7:10 P.M.	8060
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 9:53 P.M.....	8060
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Tuesday, March 19 th at 1:00 p.m.....	8061



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Karla MacFarlane

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Lisa Lachance, Danielle Barkhouse, Nolan Young

THE SPEAKER (Lisa Lachance): I call the Chamber to order. We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 947

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

Whereas for Muslims around the world, last week marked the beginning of Ramadan, which ends with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr in April; and

Whereas the observance of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islamic faith; and

Whereas there are almost two billion people who identify as Muslim around the world, many of whom observe the holy month of Ramadan by fasting, a practice intended to encourage Muslims to reflect on their daily habits and spirituality through piety and self-discipline;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing Ramadan and the importance of this time of year for many Nova Scotians and wishing all those who celebrate a very happy Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. Ramadan Mubarak.

I ask for 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. 434 - An Act to Amend Chapter 3 of the Acts of 2019, the Coastal Protection Act. (Claudia Chender)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

RESOLUTION NO. 948

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

Whereas the original rent cap, when introduced in November 2020, was comprehensive, applying to rental units themselves, not just to tenancies - a feature of the cap that the Liberal government then overturned by Cabinet Order of Council, so that the cap from then until now applies only to tenancies rather than to units, meaning that the cap applies just to continuous tenancies and not to new ones; and

Whereas this situation has created and is creating a powerful financial incentive for landlords to get new tenants to whom rents in excess of the rent cap may legally be charged - a situation that has resulted in both the dramatic rise of renovictions and in the ubiquitousness of fixed-term leases in the current residential rental market; and

Whereas this has created the absurd situation in which from 2021 to 2022, when the rent cap was set at 2 per cent, the actual price of rental units that changed tenants went up by 28 per cent, indicating the high volume of rentals that are not capped by the rent cap;

Therefore be it resolved that on Thursday, March 21st, immediately following Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers, the House shall devote a period of no less than two hours to (a) debate the importance of a rent cap that applies to the unit itself, not just the tenant, and which therefore covers both continuous and new tenancies, and to (b) debate the necessity in the current housing crisis of reinstating the rent cap in its original comprehensive November 2020 form.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

I hear several Noes.

The motion is defeated.

The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY: IRISH HER. CELEB. - RECOG.

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to wish everyone a Happy Belated St. Patrick's Day. We came together this weekend to honour the deep-rooted Irish traditions that have woven themselves into the fabric of our province.

In the mid-1700s, Catholics from southern Ireland came to Nova Scotia, settling mainly in Antigonish, Guysborough, and Halifax Counties. A smaller group of Protestants arrived a decade later from Northern Ireland and settled around Colchester County. We continue to celebrate their rich Irish heritage, which has contributed to the vibrant culture and identity of our province. The spirit of St. Patrick's Day unites us in celebration of the enduring camaraderie that transcends borders.

I know that everyone in this House will join me in saying "Sláinte" to everyone who celebrated St. Patrick's Day this weekend.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

MOTHER-IN-LAW, CAROLE: BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

HON. KELLY REGAN: Happy Belated St. Patrick's Day. That's not what my member statement is about, but I felt I needed to address this.

Speaker, I do want to take this moment to wish a happy birthday to my mother-in-law, Carole Regan. She's not celebrating a significant birthday that ends in five or zero, but I feel that after a certain point every birthday is a significant birthday.

I always used to tell people that I hit the mother-in-law jackpot, and I still believe that to this day. She's a wonderful woman. She's been a great source of advice and solace to our entire family, and now she has the additional title - the new title - of great-grandma.

I would like to wish Carole Regan a happy birthday today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

ROSE CLINIC: REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WORK - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize the QEII's ROSE Clinic. This past September, the ROSE Clinic officially changed its name from the Women's Choice Clinic to the Reproductive Options and Services Clinic to reflect the inclusivity for all patients who need care. Besides providing safe abortion care, the clinic offers other important reproductive care services such as free birth control to anyone who needs it.

Birth control has been provided to the community with the financial support of donors, the QEII Foundation, and the provincial government until recently, when those funds ran dry. IUDs and contraceptive implants cost approximately \$400 each, a serious burden in this affordability crisis.

While the federal NDP were able to secure free birth control, this will take some time. Until then, we ask that this government step in to continue to provide this critical funding. We continue to call for free birth control for all Nova Scotians and to applaud the amazing work of the ROSE Clinic.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

AFRICADIAN EMP. AGENCY: 10TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. TWILA GROSSE: I rise to recognize the Africadian Empowerment Academy, AEA, formerly known as the East Preston Empowerment Academy.

The AEA is a community-based non-profit organization that began in 2014 as an initiative of the East Preston United Baptist Church. The AEA currently strives to break the barriers by providing people of African descent with equitable access to skilled trades opportunities through different pathways to employment and entrepreneurship in Nova Scotia's labour market. In April, the Africadian Empowerment Academy will celebrate their 10th anniversary under the theme Reimagining the Future Together.

I ask all members of the Legislature to please join me in recognizing this group and congratulate them on their success and their upcoming anniversary. Ten years of impact and dedication, and they continue to dream big.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

BROWN, TERRANCE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. TONY INCE: Today I rise to recognize and pay homage to a dear friend who just passed last week, Terrance Brown.

Terry was a good friend and a chef. I worked with him for a number of years. Terry is well-known in the community. Back in the day, he was one of the doorkeepers for The Palace. He passed away with a bout of cancer just last week.

My condolences go out to the family and all. Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to pay homage to my friend.

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

CN RAIL STRIKE: USE OF SCABS - CONDEMN

KENDRA COOMBES: It has been 21 days since Autoport workers, Unifor Local 100, went on strike.

On Day 1 of the strike, CN Rail brought in scab workers. For 21 days, workers have faced disrespect and indignity as CN and Autoport used the courts and scab workers to try to break the spirit and resolve of their employees. Bringing in scab workers prolongs strikes, escalates tensions, and shows that this employer would union-bust rather than negotiate. This is precisely why anti-scab laws are needed.

Over the past week, solidarity has begun across the country, including on March 14th, when Unifor stopped a CN train in Winnipeg. We stand in solidarity with the striking workers at Autoport. CN must end the use of scab labour and bargain in good faith.

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

LEGGETT, N./WHALEN, G.: CPR RESCUE - THANKS

DAVE RITCEY: On March 7th, the noon-hour hockey crew at the Rath Eastlink Community Centre had just begun their weekly game when long-time team member John Guinan collapsed unresponsive on the ice, having suffered cardiac arrest.

Due to the extraordinary bravery and quick thinking of teammates Nigel Leggett and Greg Whalen, who are both trained first responders, the prompt actions on the ice saved John's life that day. Through their expertise, swift execution of CPR, and use of an AED, they were able to resuscitate John before paramedics arrived.

The selfless efforts of Nigel and Greg embody the true spirit of heroism and serve as an inspiration to all of us. Their courage and compassion have undoubtedly made a profound impact on our community. They deserve the highest recognition for this heroic deed.

I ask all members of the House to join me in extending our deepest gratitude for their unwavering commitment to preserving life and ensuring the safety of others. I wish John all the best in his recovery.

[1:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HAVERSTOCK, GINA: WINEMAKING AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: In recent weeks, we've heard a great deal about the \$250 million Nova Scotia wine industry. There's a reason that our wine industry is recognized every year at national and international reputation wine events. Our winemakers are proving to be world-class.

This year, Wine Growers Canada bestowed the prestigious Karl Kaiser Award for outstanding Canadian Winemaker to Gina Haverstock, head winemaker for Gaspereau Vineyards and Mercator Vineyards. This 2024 award marks a historic moment, as Gina becomes the first woman and the first winemaker from outside Ontario or British Columbia to receive this honour.

Gina's passion for winemaking extends beyond her own achievements. She actively mentors and inspires others, emphasizing the importance of knowledge, sharing, and fostering growth in the industry.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly to join me in raising an imaginary glass for a congratulatory toast to Gina Haverstock on this well-deserved recognition, and expressing our gratitude for her invaluable contribution to Nova Scotia's wine industry.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BORDEN COLLEY, SHERRI: HON. DOCTORATE - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize and celebrate Dr. Sherri Borden Colley. I've known Dr. Sherri for a large number of years in my own life through my home church, New Horizons Baptist Church.

Dr. Sherri has always been a kind-hearted soul, and someone whom you could lean on for support and sound advice. Dr. Sherri just recently received an Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law degree from the University of King's College. Dr. Sherri is a professional journalist and freelance writer/editor. During her acceptance speech for her honorary doctorate, her message to the graduates was to remain humble and teachable.

I would like all members of this House to congratulate Dr. Sherri Borden Colley on her doctorate and thank her for her inspiring words.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

WHITE, AMANDA: FORESIGHT ATLANTIC - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: I rise today to congratulate Amanda White from Sackville. Amanda White, president of Foresight Atlantic Inc., guides a team specializing in cost consulting and loan monitoring for construction projects across all of Atlantic Canada. Foresight Atlantic Inc. focuses on more than just business; the team is passionate about supporting local enterprises and community development.

Amanda was born and raised in Sackville, is a proud graduate of NSCC, and has a Professional Quantity Surveyor designation. The company's support of NSCC graduates is evident, as most of the team at Foresight Atlantic are graduates of the Nova Scotia Community College.

Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me today in congratulating Amanda and her team for supporting local businesses and wish them every success in this new endeavour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HEALEY, PAT: LAKER NEWS - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I rise today to recognize and congratulate local journalist Pat Healey, who is celebrating four years in business this month with his independent online news site *The Laker News*.

Pat was a reporter for print publications *The Laker* and *The Weekly Press* before Advocate Media stopped production in January 2020. Knowing the value of local journalism and what it provides to communities, Pat rose to the challenge to keep the stories of the community alive, launching *The Laker News* in a new online format.

In the past four years, Pat's commitment and love for his communities has only become more prominent. He is known amongst residents to always have the inside scoop and is the go-to for all things happening in the surrounding communities of Fall River and East Hants. Pat knows that news never stops, and he's often online around the clock, posting updates for the community.

Now more than ever, it's important to support local journalism. We are reminded of that here in the Legislature, where Joseph Howe fought for freedom of the press. As

elected officials, we must fight to uphold and support local journalism in our province, which certainly is having its challenges now.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

NAT'L CCL. OF CDN. MUSLIMS: NEW CHAPTER - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: On this day when community members and guests are looking forward to this evening's iftar gathering at the Ummah Masjid & Community Centre in Halifax, I would like to mark another event of significance which took place recently at the Ummah Mosque when, on November 17, a dinner was held to launch an Atlantic chapter of the National Council of Canadian Muslims.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims advises and advocates on behalf of Muslims and others who have experienced the infringement of basic rights guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and provincial human rights legislation, including discrimination and hate crimes. The council also engages with media and civil society to challenge stereotypes, promote mutual respect, and provide an accurate understanding of Islam.

Speakers at the launch included Stephen Brown, CEO of the National Council; Amira Elghawaby, Canada's federal Special Representative on Combatting Islamophobia; former CTV journalist Yara Jamal; and the member for Halifax Armdale, the first Muslim MLA in the history of Nova Scotia. Prior to November 17, the Maritimes and Newfoundland and Labrador were the only regions in Canada which did not have a branch of the National Council. It's good in every way that this is no more the case.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

KINCH, TARA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Today I rise to speak about an amazing person who works so hard to improve the lives of people in our community: Tara Kinch, who was the Manager of Community Support and Outreach at Chebucto Connections. She was a dedicated advocate for people living through poverty and social injustices in our community.

Last Fall, Tara accepted a position with Nova Scotia Legal Aid as a Social Justice Support Worker. Our community was very sad to see her leave Chebucto Connections, but we know this position will allow her to continue her great work of supporting those in need. Tara has improved the lives of countless people in our community, and she will continue to do this through her work at Nova Scotia Legal Aid. I wish her the very best and know she will do great things in her new role.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

RAMADAN: MUSLIM CELEB. - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the holy month of Ramadan, which began with the sighting of the crescent moon on Sunday, March 10th. For the nearly two billion Muslims worldwide, Ramadan is a time of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. Ramadan is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam and lasts approximately a month between sightings of the crescent moon.

I want to wish all Muslims Ramadan Mubarak, including my friend and colleague from Halifax Armdale, and all my constituents in Bedford South who recognize the occasion.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

OUTFEST: EVENTS - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: OutFest is the largest queer arts festival in Atlantic Canada, and it will take place in Halifax from April 23rd to 28th. OutFest Emerging Stage will feature the inaugural production of *Lifespan of a Mattress*, written and partially performed by Dartmouth North resident Sara Graham. Sara and the play's director, Rooks Field-Green, are the co-artistic directors of Think of the Worst Theatre.

In *Lifespan of a Mattress*, Aubrey, played by Sara, is a chronically ill person traversing the medical system and queer relationships while trying to keep their room tidy, all from their very own bed. The play has various mask-mandatory shows between April 24th and 28th to make sure that more people can have a chance to take in that show.

Think of the Worst Theatre is also hosting the Crafters Resistance Community Quilting Workshop during this year's Mayworks Kjipuktuk-Halifax Festival. Throughout April, attendees will work on three quilts, which will represent buildings in Halifax that could be housing. I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Sara, Rooks and all involved in OutFest, and thank them for their contributions to art and culture in Nova Scotia.

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

SLAUENWHITE, CHARLOTTE: KINDNESS KITS - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Today I want to highlight a young girl, Charlotte Slauenwhite, a Grade 3 student at Beaver Bank-Kinsac Elementary School, who spent the Christmas season giving back. Charlotte spent a year campaigning to help residents of the Homeless Gated Community on Cobequid Road. Charlotte collected money to purchase

enough items to make up 40 kindness kits, which consisted of snacks, hygiene products, socks, batteries and more, in water-resistant bags.

Speaker, Charlotte has a bright future. I hope you join me in congratulating her and wishing her the best in her future.

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

ELLIOTT, MURRAY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LORELEI NICOLL: It is with great sadness that I announce the passing of Murray Elliott. Murray Elliott has been recognized in this House for his amazing contributions to the community of Cole Harbour as the former fire chief of the Westphal-Cole Harbour Fire Fighters Association, president of the Cole Harbour Kiwanis Club, and a faithful member of St. Andrew's Anglican Church.

Murray was very well-known and highly respected in Cole Harbour as someone who demonstrated commitment and dedication to all aspects of the community in which he lived, from being Milkman Murray to becoming affectionately known as Mr. Cole Harbour.

I met Murray 20 years ago, and I can't imagine the past 20 years without him in my life. His stories in years gone by on how Cole Harbour evolved into what it is today gave me the inspiration to continue with Murray's community building.

As it is in life, we often don't know the impact we could have and do have on others, how our actions and decisions make a difference to those around us. To have lived a life busy, satisfied, and filled with joy is a life well-lived. Please join me in recognizing the life of Murray Elliott, my dear friend.

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

BORDEN, GARY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I rise to recognize Gary Borden. He is one of these people who seem to be involved in everything. There does not seem to be a community event for which Gary is not volunteering or an organization in which he is not engaged.

The list is extensive and includes but is not limited to: the 587 Whitney Pier Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron, the Cape Breton Naval Veterans Association, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 128 Mitchell, the Friends of Neville Park Society, the Whitney Pier Group Society, the Melnick Hall Association, the Black Educators Association of Nova Scotia, and the St. Philip's African Orthodox Church. Gary is also the 2017 recipient of the Tom Miller Human Rights Award.

Gary works tirelessly as a volunteer. On behalf of the community, I want to recognize Gary and thank him for all that he does. I'm sure I'll be seeing him at the next event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

SARZUELO, KRISTHEL: IBA GRADUATE - RECOG.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kristhel Sarzuelo, a recent international business administration graduate from NSCC Lunenburg campus. Originally from the Philippines, Kristhel moved to Bridgewater to broaden her horizons and expand her knowledge on owning and running a business. Kristhel graduated with honours from her program and made the Principal's List in all four semesters. She also represented the graduating class of 2023 as valedictorian.

Her journey from the Philippines to a small town in Nova Scotia is a journey of perseverance and success. As she juggles life as a working mom and the owner of her own business, she demonstrates the importance of hard work and determination. "Practise waking up every day with excitement, even if you are uncertain about what is going to happen," Kristhel said in her valedictorian speech delivered last June.

We are glad that Kristhel Sarzuelo has chosen Bridgewater for her and her family to call home. I call on members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Kristhel for being a role model and an inspiration in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Go ahead.

ALI DUALE: Speaker, with us in the House today is Mr. Thierno Jallow. Mr. Jallow is a representative of the NCCM advocacy office in Atlantic Canada. His tireless efforts have contributed significantly to creating environments where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of their background, identity, and religion. Will the members of this House please join me in recognizing Mr. Thierno and his work? (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for joining us today.

The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

NCCM: PROM. OF HUMAN RIGHTS - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Speaker, I would like to recognize the outstanding work done by the National Council of Canadian Muslims. This independent, non-profit, non-partisan organization is committed to promoting human rights and civil liberties for all Canadians. Their initiatives have been instrumentally important to equality and inclusivity in the society.

I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing the work of NCCM.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

STUDENTS: DART. SCHOOL FOOD DRIVE - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, at the end of February, members of the hockey teams at Dartmouth High School collected food throughout Montebello, Keystone, Crichton Park, and central Dartmouth neighbourhoods for their joint food drive. Together the teams gathered over a full pallet of food plus monetary donations that they donated to the Dartmouth Community Fridge, Margaret's House, and Feed Nova Scotia. Those who donated were entered into draws for prizes from the Zatzman Sportsplex and downtown Dartmouth Stone Pizza.

As the Dartmouth High School Spartans hockey wrote on Facebook - and as I have spoken about many times in this Legislature - food insecurity affects many people in our own community of Dartmouth North and throughout Dartmouth.

I am always inspired by the youth of Dartmouth North, and I am especially proud of these Dartmouth High students who are doing their part to end food insecurity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

OUELLETTE, JOHN VICTOR: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Today I would like to recognize the well-lived life of John Victor Ouellette of Arichat, who passed away on January 15, 2024 at the age of 85. Jack, as he was known, was the husband of Peggy for over 60 years, father to John and Michael, and proud grandfather to four grandchildren.

As a young man, Jack joined the Royal Canadian Navy, graduated from Canada's Naval College, HMCS *Venture*, and was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant. He then became a naval aviator and had the opportunity to fly various planes and helicopters until he left the Navy in 1963.

[1:30 p.m.]

Jack then studied at the Detroit School of Arts and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and became well-known for his craft of making beautiful pieces of pottery for over 40 years.

Jack valued his community and the people in it. He was a founding member and actively involved in the Strait Richmond Palliative Care Society. Jack openly spoke about his battle with mental illness and was very comfortable talking with anyone who may need help.

I ask all members of this Legislature to please join me in acknowledging the life of Jack Ouellette. May he rest in peace.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

NAVOTSAVA: INDIAN CELEB. - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, Nova Scotia has a large Indian heritage population that is growing every year and happy to share their culture with our community.

I was honoured in November to join the Kannada Cultural group in celebrating Navotsava 2023. This event, attended by hundreds of citizens, celebrated the unique dance, music, arts, and culture of the people from the Karnataka region of southwest India. Kannada refers to the language spoken by the people of this region. When you read about the Karnataka region, it is just like Nova Scotia, with beautiful beaches. The Karnataka people who now call Nova Scotia home are committed to engaging in local governance and civic activities and love to share their culture with all of us.

I ask the House to join me in celebrating all the different Indian cultures and languages that call Nova Scotia home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

THOMPSON, DOWNEY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Speaker, our community has suffered a great loss with the passing of Downey Thompson. Downey worked at Elmsdale Lumber Company since the age of 15 and worked in the forestry industry for 77 years. Downey was an impressive man who, during his 92 years, shared his passion with everyone he encountered. He was beloved in the community and will truly be missed. May he rest in peace, surrounded by the love and gratitude of those who were fortunate enough to know him.

I would like all members to join me in extending our deepest sympathies to the Thompson family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

LEBLANC, GHISLAINE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

RONNIE LEBLANC: La communauté de Clare a subi une perte profonde le 29 janvier dernier avec le décès de Ghislaine LeBlanc à l'âge de 38 ans. Ghislaine était enracinée dans sa communauté et fière de sa culture acadienne et de la langue française.

Ses efforts bénévoles à Clare étaient louables, siégeant aux conseils d'administration de la radio communautaire CIFA, de La P'tite Académie, de Clare Share Fridge Communautaire, et comme présidente du Festival acadien de Clare. Ghislaine avait le pouls de notre communauté, et notre communauté en est d'autant plus enrichie.

Ghislaine continue de nous inspirer à donner. Des milliers de dollars ont été donnés en son nom au projet de frigo communautaire de Clare et au Yarmouth Hospital Foundation.

Je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour exprimer nos condoléances au mari de Ghislaine, Colin, à ses fils, Simon et Joseph, ainsi qu'à sa famille et à ses amis.

Speaker, on January 29th, the community of Clare suffered a profound loss with the passing of Ghislaine LeBlanc at the age of 38. Ghislaine was deeply rooted in her community and proud of her Acadian culture and the French language.

Her volunteer efforts in Clare were laudable. She served on boards for Radio CIFA community radio, *La P'tite Académie*, and Clare Share Fridge Communautaire, as well as serving as president of the Festival acadien de Clare. Ghislaine had her finger on the pulse of our community, and our community is all the better because of it.

Ghislaine continues to inspire us to give back. Thousands of dollars have been donated in her name to Clare's community fridge project and to the Yarmouth Hospital Foundation.

I ask that all members join me in expressing our condolences to Ghislaine's husband, Colin, and her sons Simon and Joseph, as well as her loving family and friends.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

GERHARDT, BILL: N.S. TOURISM PROM. - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Lunenburg entrepreneur and TV star Bill Gerhardt and his nephew Martin, for putting Nova Scotia front and center at an international conference in Las Vegas recently.

Now, we all know that “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” but I can tell you that Bill and Martin presented at Geotab Connect, a transportation industry conference focusing on the future of fleet management. While Bill’s role on the hit series *The Curse of Oak Island* helped pack people in the door, Martin also proved to be a star.

That’s because, at 15 years old, Martin is the family trucking firm’s go-to guy when it comes to installing an asset tracking device known as Geotab GO. He’s been doing so since he was 13 years old and can explain as well as anyone how the technology helps keep Gerhardt’s trucks safe and moving.

The Gerhardts went to Vegas armed with Nova Scotia flags, pins, and their own undeniable charm. I expect a surge in visitation this summer.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

PARTICIPANTS: SPECIAL OLYMPICS - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: Speaker, I’m proud to recognize three exceptional athletes from my constituency. Figure skater Jess Cranton and cross-country skiers Chloe Stoddart and Tim Prosser recently competed at the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Calgary as part of Team Nova Scotia.

Chloe had the honour of serving as the flag-bearer for Team Nova Scotia at the opening ceremonies. All three excelled in their events, with Chloe earning a gold medal, Tim taking home one silver and one bronze, and Jess winning a gold and a bronze. So many people from Annapolis County and beyond, me included, are so proud of what these three have accomplished.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Jess, Chloe, and Tim on their impressive performances at the 2024 Special Olympics Canada Winter Games.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

COLEMAN, ED: LEGION PIN RECIPIENT - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Ed Coleman of Kentville as a 45-year pin recipient from the Kentville Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 6.

He has also served as the piper at the Kentville Legion for 30 years, and at the Berwick Legion for 10 years prior to that. Mr. Coleman started playing the bagpipes in the 1950s with the Camp Aldershot pipe band. He has composed several bagpipe tunes, including one called “Portapique - A Lament For The Fallen” in memory of the Portapique tragedy.

Mr. Coleman is a volunteer at several not-for-profit organizations and a regular columnist for the *Valley Journal Advertiser*, penning “Historically Speaking with Ed Coleman.”

Please join me today in recognizing Ed Coleman for his longtime service to the Kentville Royal Canadian Legion and to the community of Kentville.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

LANGILLE, DAWN: RALLY FOR KINDNESS - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to recognize Dawn Langille, organizer of the Terence Bay rally for kindness, just held on February 19th of this year.

The rally is a tiny parade for kindness where participants gathered at the Terence Bay Community Hall to enjoy hot chocolate and treats while preparing signage to promote acts of kindness. The parade route started at the community hall and headed to SS *Atlantic* Heritage Park. Participants displayed their handcrafted signage to encourage kindness and spread hope for a better world.

Dawn has struggled her entire life with depression and anxiety, and wanted to help friends and neighbours in her community facing similar issues, especially this time of year when the Winter blues can set in. Her plan for this event was to connect community members with a positive, fun, and inspiring activity at a time when there is so much division and suffering in the world.

Teaching our children to care for others and reminding one another of the importance of small acts of kindness helps shape who we are as a community and contributes to a balanced and compassionate place to call home.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating and thanking Dawn, her guidance and leadership within our community, and her reminder that there is still good within the world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

KILEY, GORD: SKI ACCIDENT - BEST WISHES

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: If you're lucky, and I mean really lucky, you get to have a person like Gordon Kiley as one of your friends. I rise in my place to recognize Dartmouth resident Gordon Kiley. I've known Gord for almost 20 years. He was a great mentor to me in education.

Unfortunately, a few weeks ago, my friend suffered a terrible ski accident and finds himself in hospital. Gord, you are a scrapper. You're a fighter. He grew up in Sydney on Cottage Street, and his father was a Cape Breton boxer by the name of "Gramps" Kiley. Gord, I want you to know your family, your friends, and your community stand with you. You are a Cape Breton scrapper all the way. Dartmouth is so proud of you.

I want to pass on my heartfelt support to Diane and Emma. Gord, please know your family and friends stand with you as you make your way back. All the best.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

OFF TRACK BREWING: CLOSURE - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Bedford had some surprising news this past week. After six years in business, the owners of our beloved craft brewery, Off Track Brewing, announced it would be closing April 28th, sooner if they run out of beer.

Off Track was always a labour of love for its three founders: Jon Saunders, Allan MacKay, and Matt Scott. They provided a cool place for beer aficionados, and the location really was a little off the beaten track, in the Bedford Trade Mart on Rocky Lake Drive. I loved how they would take an issue that was a problem for other people but they would just find a solution, like: We don't serve food, but people want food with their beer, so let's get the pizzeria across the street to deliver pizza here - and that's what they did.

I'm not much of a beer drinker, but I did like the friendly neighbourhood pub vibe there, and I know a lot of other people did as well. Until they go, it will be business as usual. This Thursday, for example, it's music trivia night. If you're in the area, why not show up and support our guys?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

STURK, CLAUDETTE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to sadly notify the House of the passing of a good friend of mine and my family's and our entire community: Claudette Sturk.

Claudette, originally from Pubnico, was a well-known community leader and member of many non-profit groups working for those less fortunate in our community. She was an active member of our church and held various community leadership roles there. Claudette was an educator for over 30 years and soon after her retirement was dealt the diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

Claudette was an advocate for ALS with her and her husband and for those living with that disease and did a lot of advocacy work for medication for patients living with ALS. She and her husband Eric organized an ALS walk to bring awareness for ALS and the dreaded disease, and yesterday she succumbed to ALS, but her bravery and leadership will live on.

I ask all members of the House to collectively offer our condolences to Eric and all their family. She will be missed by all in our community.

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

DECKER, KAREN: ACCEL PHYSIOTHERAPY - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Today I rise to recognize Karen Decker, a leader in our community and the proud owner of ACCEL Physiotherapy & Sport Performance Centre in Fairview. With over 30 years of dedicated service, Karen has not only built a successful business, but has also made a profound impact on the lives of the clients and teams she works with.

Karen graduated from Dalhousie University's School of Physiotherapy, and throughout the last 30-plus years, she has demonstrated exceptional expertise and leadership in the field of physiotherapy, highlighted by attending three Olympic Games with the Canada health care team.

Karen and ACCEL actively support and sponsor a wide range of teams from soccer to gymnastics, goalball to hockey, making sports safer for our young athletes and ensuring coaches are more aware of injury prevention strategies. Karen's commitment to youth athletics not only enhances the performance and well-being of our young athletes, but also fosters a culture of health, teamwork, and sportsmanship in our community.

Let us all thank Karen Decker for her outstanding contributions to the health and wellness of our community and wish her the best of luck in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

[1:45 p.m.]

DIG. & AREA COM. GARDENS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: I rise today to recognize the Digby and Area Community Gardens Society. In June, the Digby and Area Community Gardens formed an incredible partnership with Digby Elementary School. Students from Grades Primary to 6 were able to spend their mornings working away at the gardens by planting flowers and vegetables, shovelling wood chips, creating in-ground garden beds, and so much more. The students learned where food comes from, how it's grown, and the reasons why food security and sustainable agriculture are critical, especially in Digby County.

I want to thank the society for allowing this space to be used by the school and so many other local organizations. Not only do they provide rented plots for personal use, but they also grow produce for the local food bank, the Tri-County Women's Centre, the Digby Family Resource Centre, and other organizations and people in need.

This year, the elementary students helped to grow even more vegetables for the community. Speaker, I'd like to say a big thank you to teachers Tamara Horner and Tina Melanson, and to the Digby and Area Community Gardens Society for their incredible work this past Summer.

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

MINA, VICKY: MAKEUP BUSINESS - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: As we celebrate Women's History Month, I rise to shine a spotlight on women who are not only making history, but also empowering others through their leadership and achievements.

One such trailblazer in Fairview-Clayton Park is Vicky Mina, a professional and award-winning makeup artist in our community. Founder of Vicky Mina Makeup, a proudly Canadian professional makeup brand, Vicky's journey is one of resilience, passion, and the power of self-discovery. After a successful career in banking and subsequent transition to full-time motherhood, Vicky's path took a transformative turn 16 years ago. Inspired by a YouTube tutorial, she rediscovered her passion for makeup, leading to the creation of her own brand.

Vicky is committed to empowering women through makeup, sharing her expertise and confidence-building techniques with her community, and is dedicated to helping women of all ages embrace their beauty and live their best lives.

As we honour Women's History Month, let us recognize and celebrate the contributions of women like Vicky Mina, who inspire and uplift others through their leadership, creativity, and determination.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

MILTON CANOE CLUB: 75TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Milton Canoe & Camera Club on reaching the special landmark year of their 75th anniversary.

This not-for-profit club is a mainstay of community life within Queens County. Situated on the banks of the beautiful Mersey River, it offers water-based activities such as canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding, as well as operating an innovative camera club section. Generations of people young and old have benefited from the knowledge, passion, and professionalism of its instructors and volunteers.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish its chairperson, Dave Lewis, the best of luck with the anniversary celebrations and fundraising events and thank him and all of the volunteers involved for continuing to provide such a welcoming, inclusive, and health-promoting facility.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

TAMIL HER. MO.: CELEB. OF CULTURE - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to recognize Tamil Heritage Month, which occurs in January in Canada. Nova Scotia has a large Tamil community, who celebrated the declaration this year with an event at the Halifax Forum. This event was a great way to celebrate the important contributions Tamil Canadians make to our society.

At the event, Nova Scotians were treated to various aspects of Tamil culture, including dance, food, art, and clothing. Despite the bad weather that day, several hundred people attended and learned more about Tamil culture and heritage. Thank you to Lavanya, the co-head, and all the other organizers of this event.

I ask the House to join me in celebrating Tamil Heritage Month in Nova Scotia in January, and to thank the organizer for bringing such a diversity and vibrancy to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

ARSENEAU, LINDSAY: HELP FOR UKRAINIANS - RECOG.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I rise today to recognize Lindsay Arseneau. Lindsay has been volunteering her time welcoming and supporting Ukrainians who have moved to Antigonish over the past two years.

Lindsay, her husband Marc, and their children, Felix and Aveline, have welcomed Ukrainian newcomers fleeing the war into their home, and have hosted three families for interim periods. Lindsay has assisted with getting accommodations set up, government paperwork filled out, resumé writing, bridging language issues, grant applications, and anything else that she's been asked to do. She has become the one that people reach out to when they need something fixed. Felix and Aveline have often played with new friends while Lindsay assists their parents. Many of those Lindsay welcomed are now considered friends of the entire family.

In the testimonials I was provided, she was described as having an incredibly big heart, whose smile gives warmth, and she is like a star in the sky that shines brightly to help.

I ask all members to thank Lindsay, Marc, Felix, and Aveline for their kindness and the support they have shown in making Ukrainian newcomers feel at home in Antigonish.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

GAUDET, EDGAR: FIREFIGHTING SVC. - RECOG.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I rise today to recognize Edgar Gaudet, who was recently honoured at a banquet hosted by the Little Brook Volunteer Fire Department for his outstanding 40 years of service. Each year our local fire departments organize banquets to express gratitude to their firefighters and volunteers for their service to our communities. Mr. Gaudet's enduring commitment embodies the spirit of service and community that defines the Little Brook Volunteer Fire Department.

I extend my sincere appreciation to Edgar Gaudet for his four decades of unwavering dedication and I commend all members of the department for their continued efforts in safeguarding our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

PEDULA, DOMENIC: HWFAC - RECOG.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I rise today to recognize the Hants West Food Action Council and thank chairperson Domenic Padula for his leadership and dedication with this group. The council is passionate about ensuring that everyone has access to

healthy, free food. In the Summer months, the council turns its attention to the free community gardens in our area, but during the rest of the year Dom lends his keen culinary skills to the council's soup program - healthy soup made from local ingredients is prepared on a bi-weekly basis with the help of its volunteers. We see first-hand the positive impact the soup program has had on those in our community who need a hot meal.

Positive things are happening, thanks to the Hants West Food Action Council. Please join me in thanking Dom and the entire council for recognizing a need in our community and actively working to assist with it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

VOLUNTEERS: GOLDSMITH LAKE PROT. EFFORTS - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: In 2022, the Citizen Scientists of Southwest Nova Scotia proposed that the government formally protect an ecologically important area around Goldsmith Lake in Annapolis County. The Citizen Scientists have spent many hours exploring the area and documenting its biodiversity. They have found previously unrecorded old-growth forests, identified a total of 40 species at risk, and have demonstrated a high level of ecological continuity.

The Goldsmith Lake area provides the opportunity for locals and tourists alike to experience rare and beautiful old-growth forests, just a 20-minute drive from Bridgetown. The government did place holds on harvest plans in this area - however, it hasn't been formally protected and the holds could be lifted at any time. Therefore, this jewel in Annapolis County is still at risk.

I'm pleased to join the Citizen Scientists of Southwest Nova Scotia in calling for the establishment of a Goldsmith Lake wilderness area and I would like to thank those dedicated volunteers for their important work, protecting this very special place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

RICHARDS, DIANE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: I rise today to recognize a vibrant and dedicated grandmother, Diane Richards, who epitomizes the spirit of community and family service. Despite her age, she remains deeply engaged in volunteering within her community. With a warm smile and unwavering determination, she dedicates several hours each week to charitable organizations, from serving meals at Shepherd's Lunch to knitting hats and mitts for numerous organizations, including the IWK Health Centre and the Aberdeen Hospital.

Diane's altruistic nature and boundless energy inspire those around her, fostering a sense of unity and compassion among neighbours. Besides her commitment to community

service, her role as a grandmother is equally significant. Despite the demands of her volunteer work, she prioritizes her family above all else. She joyfully takes on the responsibility of transporting her grandchildren to their numerous sporting events, cheering them on on the sidelines with pride and enthusiasm.

Diane plays a vital role in their day-to-day lives. When both parents are at work, she readily steps in to provide child care, creating a nurturing and loving environment for her grandchildren to thrive in. She approaches each day with a sense of purpose and gratitude.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

THOMAS, DEREK: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: It saddens me to stand and pay tribute to a fellow Yarmouthian whom we lost recently. Captain Derek Thomas was a lobster captain for over 30 years and also did swordfishing. He was also a geologist who had been working on a number of projects locally in Yarmouth, including the most recent discovery of lithium.

More important than Derek's career achievements, he was a good father, a good friend, an incredibly generous community member who gave to people in his industry and who gave his time, insight, and knowledge to anybody who needed it, including me. He had a great sense of humour and a lot of love for his family, friends, and community.

I just want to give my very best to his wonderful wife, Kim, his daughters, Courtney, Brittany, Angie, and Lacey, and all his incredible grandchildren, friends, and family.

I ask the House to join me in sending Derek off with a great round of applause.
(Applause)

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

CHESTER ART CENTRE: PROM. OF ARTISTS - THANKS

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I rise today to show support for the Chester Art Centre. This organization has made significant contributions to the local community in the fostering and promoting of local artists, as well as demonstrating Nova Scotian culture to tourists year-round.

Starting in 2007, the facility moved to its current Queen Street location. At that time, the building needed financing to repurpose the facility as a suitable place to display art. The volunteer Board of Directors was very successful in fundraising from the local community.

On observing the level of support the centre received, a local benefactor - Sir Christopher Ondaatje - generously donated the property to the centre. Further fundraising efforts, including grants from all three levels of government, have resulted in the facility we see today.

I ask members to join me in thanking the volunteers at the Chester Art Centre for helping to build and manage a program that enlivens our local community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

CORKERY, TONY: FEDEX AWDS. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. KENT SMITH: I rise today to bring recognition to Tony Corkery of Upper Lakeville. Tony has worked at FedEx for more than 15 years. He is currently an Operations Manager in Dartmouth and is responsible for more than 170 employees.

In 2023, Tony was the recipient of the FedEx Most Valuable Player Award, a recognition for managers who exhibit excellence in leadership and exemplify the spirit of teamwork. In total, Tony is a three-time winner of this award - a commendable achievement in his management role at FedEx.

Most recently, Tony also received an exclusive FedEx Key Contributor Award in recognition of his exceptional performance and contributions to the company. It is one of the highest international honours that a FedEx employee can receive. Tony embodies the FedEx Purple Promise: to make every FedEx experience outstanding. He proves it by going the extra mile, sometimes literally, and displays an unmatched work ethic as an example for other employees.

I ask that all members of the Assembly join me in congratulating Tony on his significant achievements.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

WINNERS: ST. MARY'S SMALL BUS. AWDS. - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to congratulate the winners of the St. Mary's Small Business Awards held last month. This event is held every year by the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's as an acknowledgement of those who provide services to the community and contribute to its economy.

The 2023 Award Recipients were as follows: Best New Business went to Leigh MacFarlane, owner of the Sanctuary Shore General Store; Best Customer Service and Best Long-Standing Business went to Donnie Fraser, owner of Sherbrooke Garage and Towing Ltd; and Best Community Impact Award went to Tammie Vautour, owner of Beanie's

Bistro. Tammie purchased Beanie's Bistro last year from the previous owners and is doing great things in her first year in business.

Small businesses are the backbone of our rural economy, and it's not just about the services they provide. They are a comfort to residents, who know these businesses will be there when they are needed, including support for community sports teams and organizations. That is so important in our small communities.

I ask that members of the House join me in congratulating the winners of the St. Mary's Small Business Awards and the organizers for giving these business owners the recognition they deserve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

MUSIC 4 MENTAL HEALTH SOCIETY: FUNDRAISING - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to recognize the Music 4 Mental Society for all their hard work in raising over \$25,000 last year for mental health services in the surrounding areas and schools of Eastern Passage.

With the amazing dedication of the committee, funds are raised through a 12-hour live music marathon, an online auction, a 50/50 draw, and a raffle basket.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating this wonderful group on their tremendous accomplishment.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allocated for the daily routine has elapsed.

[2:00 p.m.]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I move that you now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to resolve into Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Chair, I would like to take this time today to talk about strong and powerful women, non-binary folks, and young girls who are resilient and impactful to all communities across this province. On International Women's Day, we stood here in our place, each of us, to recognize the women and young girls around us for all the amazing things that they bring to this world. This year's International Women's Day theme, Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress, is what we should be celebrating. My questions would be: How are we investing in women? Where is our progress?

On International Women's Day, we spoke at length about how much we appreciate women in our lives and the women around us, which is why it's so strange to also hear from this government that they're not going to pass legislation to restrict the misuse of NDAs. As we know, NDAs do a lot of harm to the survivor that extends past just the physical harm.

What are NDAs? Non-disclosure agreements are contracts that were created to protect trade secrets, not perpetrators. When used wrongly, they become secret settlement contracts used to buy the silence of a victim or whistleblower. They have become the default solution for organizations, corporations, and public bodies to settle cases of sexual misconduct, racism, pregnancy discrimination, and other human rights violations.

What's the problem with NDAs? NDAs perpetrate the problem. They allow a person who has behaved abusively, and possibly criminally, to stay put or move with impunity to another organization. NDAs don't protect the victim. They protect an employer's reputation and the career of the perpetrator - not the victim - who can be protected by a simple one-sided confidentiality clause.

NDAs make victims lie, preventing them from reporting, preventing them from speaking to their families and friends about their own experiences or warning others about the same harms. NDAs chill the climate about the past, and in some cases require co-workers to tell lies or risk being sued for defamation. NDAs gag victims permanently for anyone wishing to speak up about abuse in the workplace.

On International Women's Day, we had discussions at length about lifting up women. Last week, we heard from the government that the victims have choice. I heard the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act say that their decision to not move forward on this piece of legislation is because it's driven at a community level. It's driven at a community level. I'm wondering what community that might be. Who is the government listening to? What are the actions taken?

The Minister of Health and Wellness, with her experience in this trauma-related situation, said that women have choices to treatment, and we shouldn't be the ones to decide - that sexual assault victims have choices. I would disagree with the member opposite on that. Healing is a process, and trauma is because of an action towards a person. How are you fully able to heal if you're not able to talk about the assault, not able to walk through that trauma because you have been forced to sign an NDA? Some women don't even come forward for fear of repercussions and legal battles.

Think for a moment. I just want everyone in this room to really think about all of the discussions that we've had on this topic. If this was your sister, your wife, your daughter, your mother, you as a woman in this House - if it was you, what would you do? At a time when we should be lifting each other up, here we are debating the rationale of silencing women, non-binary folks, and men from speaking their truth, and allowing perpetrators to walk about continuing to harm others, and some our own family. Let that sit and sink in for just one minute.

My first reaction to this is that I have four daughters of my own. I want them to feel like they are protected by me, my family, this government. Yet we are telling young girls, women, anyone who is experiencing sexual assault through an abuse of power, and some who are under NDAs, that you have choices. Choices. I'm sorry, but that's really not good enough.

My entire caucus and I are consistently advocating tirelessly against gender-based violence. We are committed to our bill, which would restrict how non-disclosure agreements can be used. It is something that we as a government should all be stepping up to pass.

The government was on board up until the final hour, and then abruptly there was a directive given to stop the scan and research. Now we promote "victims have choice" without any explanation, without any answers given. Listen, if that isn't transparency at its finest, I have no idea what transparency means. But I will say this: Think about those folks I mentioned earlier. How would they feel, knowing that there is a government that's not defending them, that's not stepping up for them, that's not supporting them?

Our caucus continues to commit to advocating for stable core funding for women's organizations. We will not back down on holding this government to account - at no time. We also strongly advocate to move away from police response to mental health emergencies by expanding emergency mental health care.

Our caucus put forward a bill that would restrict how non-disclosure agreements can be used. Following the #MeToo movement, as we all know, there has been international advocacy to address this. Currently, NDAs can be used to silence victims and allow offenders to avoid accountability for their actions. Currently, NDAs can be used to

silence victims. This is what we're promoting: silencing victims. They allow offenders to avoid accountability for their actions.

NDA's in this use are a barrier to justice. They can prevent individuals from reporting or seeking support or healing, which is - what we've heard from the government during our conversations - that they have a choice. They have a choice to come and talk and have support. But they can't talk about what happened to them because they've signed an NDA, and they're silenced. So what choice is that?

Survivors need to have an agency to determine their own path and resolution. Preventing NDA's from silencing survivors will allow them this agency. We worked closely with frontline organizations to develop this bill, and we were hopeful that this government could join with other history-making jurisdictions by passing this. Unfortunately, its progress has been stalled by the current government, who now say that addressing this issue is not a priority.

We sat here for a number - well, I've been here for only a few years, but I will say that we've heard from a number of folks in community. We've talked to survivors. We've talked to victims. We've talked to those who have been through this and who have had NDA's imposed upon them. We've had conversations with organizations that lift women up, that will lift up people who have been abused in any type of circumstance, and not one of them have said that NDA's are good. Not one.

We know, as I said earlier, that NDA's are used for specific reasons. Absolutely. They're contracts that were created to protect trade secrets. I don't think sexual assault is a trade secret. So when I think about what they are being misused as, we need to step up and be that support for those folks who are experiencing this, who are going through these situations.

We've heard from them here. They've been in our gallery. They've come and poured their hearts out. They've talked about what this means for them. Some people couldn't even talk about it for fear they would have repercussions, legal repercussions.

As you know, our caucus is committed to advocating for stable core funding for women. We also strongly advocate to move away, as I said, from police responses to mental health, because we know that is not what is needed. We know that we put forward this bill and, as well, the government was doing a jurisdictional scan to see how we can implement this piece of legislation. All of a sudden, the piece of legislation was no longer to move forward - for no reason. No explanation given, other than "we have choices."

What we would like to see from this budget, and future budgets, is support with funding to ensure that the community organizations that do the important work of supporting survivors of gender-based violence are adequately funded.

We would love to see that in the budget. We know that's not the case in this particular budget. We're hoping that we can move the dial a bit, because we haven't had a piece of legislation put forward to ban the misuse of NDAs.

We want to make sure that survivors have the mental health care and housing supports that they need. We need to increase core funding to women's organizations across the province to ensure that survivors of sexualized violence have access to trauma-informed counselling. We need to make same-day, next-day, and in-person mental health appointments available. When something happens, they need to speak or see someone in the moment. We need to make it available to everyone who needs it across the province. We need to integrate mental health services with our services associated with mental distress, such as education, family supports, and housing.

We need to expand the definition of workplace violence to include bullying and psychological harm. We've put forward amendments about that on many occasions, to make sure that we are actually examining the way we put legislation forward that actually helps folks who are in these situations. We need to provide sustainable multi-year funding - and I say this often when we're having Estimates. Multi-year funding is super important. It's really important for non-profit housing organizations, for non-profit organizations, to ensure access to services and any type of care that is needed, but as well to housing first. We need to make sure that housing support and eviction prevention are available across the province.

As I talked about earlier, we need to sit and think, in this moment, about if it was your sister, your wife, your daughter, your mother, or any women and non-binary folks who are in this House. If it was you, what would you do?

At a time when we should all be lifting each other up, we need to stop debating. We need to move. We need to act. We need to do all the things that are necessary, especially when this year's theme is Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress. We know how this government likes to move faster. It would be lovely if we could move on legislation faster.

I want to take this time today because we had really interesting conversations on International Women's Day. A lot of things stood out. It was really interesting to see that there are a number of us women and non-binary folks in this room, and there's a call and a need to do the things that are right.

The work that we do as Opposition is called constructive - constructive criticism. It is not for us to tell you and create any type of barriers or rifts. We are trying to help with the legislation that's being put forward. All of us in this room are here because we care about Nova Scotians. That means that we all need to view the legislation and put our feedback forward to build a better Nova Scotia.

I think that's where we lack. When we talk about issues here in this House, these issues are important to Nova Scotians. It's not that we're just putting it forward because we personally think it needs to be done. These are things that come to our desks, to our offices, that come via phone calls and emails. These are things that are important to all Nova Scotians, and we need to make sure that we address them here in this House.

[2:15 p.m.]

I'd like to take this time to talk about those strong and powerful women, non-binary folks, and others who have experienced this trauma. Know that you are amazing. You are resilient and impactful to all the communities across this province. On International Women's Day, and every single day that I stand in my place and my colleagues stand in this place, we recognize the women and non-binary and young girls around us for all the amazing things that they bring to this world. Our hope is that all members of this House, and all Nova Scotians, do the same.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I'm pleased to rise as we go into Supply to make a few comments on the budget. Some of this has been debated in the House, and some will be debated in the House as we move forward through Estimates and the Financial Measures (2024) Act. I thought I would share with Nova Scotians some initial observations around the narrative around this budget.

First of all, I think Nova Scotians have to ask: Is this actually a real budget? The track record of this government with respect to their estimates of spending going into a budget and their estimates of revenue have been so wildly far off from reality, one really has to question the fiscal competency of this government - to have so much underrepresentation of revenues and then the excessive overspending and the March Madness of sending money out the door, which has been highlighted by the Auditor General with respect to this very sad approach to fiscal management by this government.

I want to begin by reflecting on a few things. Clearly, this government has a huge, huge amount of money flowing in. When we were in government the idea - even concept - of this amount of money coming into the province from so many different sources was just unthinkable. I think Nova Scotians need to be aware that just three years ago, the actuals in 2021 approached about \$7 billion in provincial revenues. Now we're at \$9 billion. A full \$2 billion more revenue from Nova Scotians is now in the hands of this government; 36 per cent more provincial taxes are being collected by this government than three short years ago. An extra \$1 billion of Nova Scotia taxpayers' money is now in the hands of this government to use to meet the needs of Nova Scotians; \$750 million dollars more is being collected in HST. Each and every year, this government has a huge amount of additional monies to work with.

Meanwhile, they have just completely ignored any spend-downs on debt and thinking about our children's future in terms of being able to pay for the huge amount of debt that this government is racking up in this unprecedented time of revenue growth. This government is looking to increase debt, in four short years, from \$15 billion to \$20 billion, at a time when interest rates are high. Those debts will need to be paid off, and they will not be paid off by us. They'll be paid off by our children. Our children will be facing a world in which so many more dollars are going to be needed to deal with issues of adaptation to climate change. We're seeing the early signs of that with respect to the amount of money that we need to fight forest fires, flooding, et cetera.

One really has to question the revenues. The government has shown no track record with respect to being able to accurately estimate revenues. It could be up or could be down next year. It's clear that they have not been capable of properly estimating revenues. When they do get the money, they throw it out the door, as I stated, with these additional appropriations that really should not be happening, according to the Auditor General and that damning report by the Auditor General showing \$433 million sent out the door to projects that didn't even exist to sit in the bank account of organizations - Nova Scotia taxpayers' money sitting in the bank accounts of organizations that didn't even have a project. It's an absolutely scathing report by the Auditor General.

The other thing I think that Nova Scotians really have to look at are the words of the Premier: that he has provided the biggest tax break to Nova Scotians ever. Let's put that in the context of exactly what the numbers show. It's a tax break. It's getting rid of bracket creep - a little bit difficult for people to understand, but in essence, the government, with not indexing the brackets, collects a little bit more taxes each year and erodes the wealth of taxpayers. This was a hidden tax increase.

The government has, to their credit, removed the hidden tax increase. They haven't made life any better for Nova Scotians; they've just stopped taking this hidden money that has been on the books for years and years.

How much is that? It's nothing this year. The change that the Premier is touting is \$13.4 million next year. The biggest tax break in the history of the province, when the personal income taxes in this budget that this government will be taking in are \$4.2 billion and we're celebrating \$13.4 million of a hidden tax increase. It's not a break. It's absolutely not a break. Nobody's taxes are going down - it's just removing a hidden increase. That is a complete mischaracterization of a budget that is taking \$2 billion more from Nova Scotians than three short years ago.

The other thing I want to note is that, if you look at the budget documents, one really has to question what the Department of Finance and Treasury Board and the minister are saying to each of their ministers with respect to their budgets. Is anyone in this government following a budget? It has to be said: Is any department following a budget?

If you look at the Budget Estimates from Page 24 of the budget documents, there is only one department in the province that is within budget: the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. Their \$35 million budget came in just short of \$1 million less than budgeted. Every other department has exceeded their budget, so how is this a budget?

In this Legislature we are going to pass a budget which the government has demonstrated they pay no attention to: the Department of Health and Wellness, \$78 million over budget; the Department of Advanced Education, \$33 million over budget; the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, \$36 million over budget; the Department of Community Services, \$97 million over budget; the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, \$158 million over budget; the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, \$107 million over budget; the Department of Service Nova Scotia, \$100 million.

Now every Nova Scotian wakes up in the morning, looks at their budget, and figures out how they're going to spend their budget. This government doesn't even look at their budget. They spend recklessly.

Again, you go back to the Auditor General's report in which \$433 million were given to organizations and only 14 per cent of that money got spent in the following nine months. Nova Scotians lost millions of dollars in interest. There were monies given to projects that didn't even exist, throwing money out the door with no financial constraints, no financial procedures used.

Government has rules on how to spend. They have been thrown out the window by this government. Nova Scotians should be extremely concerned about this reckless spending by government. A government that can't estimate revenue gives complete disregard for its spending budget. How can Nova Scotians have any faith that this new \$16 billion budget is worth the paper it's written on?

The track record over the last two years of this government shows Nova Scotians that we come in here, we debate for 80 hours a budget, nothing changes, and then the government throws the budget - apparently in all but Finance and Treasury Board - and in every department, the budget is thrown on the bottom shelf and nobody looks at it, and we just spend, spend, spend so that our children can have more debt.

There's absolutely no reason with good, sound fiscal management that this government could not be fulfilling its goals of fixing health care, adding to education, increasing income assistance. There's no reason whatsoever, with the amount of revenue that this government has - but instead, they're wasting it. They're not providing any tax relief to Nova Scotians, and on top of that, they're increasing debt for our children.

It's time that Nova Scotia had a government that takes fiscal responsibility seriously. This government has been given the honour and privilege to serve Nova

Scotians; to take their taxpayers' dollars and responsibly, ethically, prudently spend them. This government has shown none of that. Sole-source contracts out the yin-yang. Friends receiving money. And deficits continue. It's time for this government to get a new accountant and begin responsible fiscal management of the public purse.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: I just wanted to stand up here and speak a little bit on the budget, continuing the theme that my colleague from Kings South was putting forward with regards to what is pretty reckless, indiscriminate, unaccountable spending, which we've all talked about. I think that the budget really highlights where this government is on spending in general: It's not reassuring, and the answer is not something that Nova Scotians should be happy about.

Over the last two years - Budget 2021-22 and 2022-23, and I'm sure a year from now, when we're debating this year's budget - we'll see this again: \$2.6 billion dollars over the last two years in additional appropriations. That is money spent outside of the budget of each department - which, as the member for Kings South pointed out, was not met by basically any department - that's fine. No one on this side of the House - I don't believe, anyway - has said that additional appropriations can't exist. Of course they can exist. Things happen. There are wildfires, there are floods, there are hurricanes, there are unexpected opportunities. Fine - no one disputes that.

Like every other province and territory, including the federal government in this country, all that the Auditor General is asking for, all that I think is reasonable, is that the government come to the Legislature and actually debate and vote on additional appropriations after the fact. Spoiler alert: The government has the votes, so the spending will be approved, believe it or not. There will be zero change to the on-the-ground impact of the program. The government can still spend all the money it wants to spend, they can give the money to this, that and the other thing - untendered, alternative procurements - have your fill, if that's what you want to do.

When the appropriations come to the House, after they have been approved and after the money has been spent, the government can vote in favour. Fine, that's democracy, that's reasonable, that's what every other jurisdiction in the country does as a standard practice and has done for a long time.

The government's response to this has been anemic at best. The arguments are weak. They make no sense. It is basically: Trust us, we're doing the right thing - if I can paraphrase, and I will. It's actually shocking to read the Auditor General's report and to read the response of the Department of Finance and Treasury Board and, by extension, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

[2:30 p.m.]

As the member for Kings South mentioned, the Auditor General looked at a smattering of projects over the past two years - 11 projects - a total of about \$433 million, which is more than the budgets of most departments. In none of those 11 projects did the Auditor General find there was a need to spend the money when it was spent.

At the time of the report, 86 per cent of that \$433 million hadn't even been spent, and some of those projects date back to the 2021-2022 fiscal year, so we're talking almost two years later a lot of the money hasn't been spent. Why is that? Because the proponents weren't ready. In many cases they didn't even have projects ready to go.

We get to March 2022, we get to March 2023, the government receives a windfall of money from a growing population from the federal government, and they sit down and say: Oh jeez, if we don't spend all this money in the next three weeks, we're going to run a surplus and that surplus will be applied against the debt. The government made a decision that they didn't want to do that. That's fine, but justify it, bring it to the Legislature, make an argument in favour, don't just say, Trust us, it will go into the black box of government and you'll find out two years later what we spent your money on.

If you look at some of these projects - and again, this is not to criticize the projects themselves; I am sure many of them are worthy - the government gave out \$25 million to St. Mary's for a health information program. The AG said the \$25 million had no clear purpose, no goal, no performance metrics, no way to know whether or not the money was being spent in the way it was supposed to be spent, no way to know if it was achieving the goals it was set to achieve because there was no goal. The money, at least some of it, has been sitting in bank accounts at Saint Mary's University, at EfficiencyOne, at Cape Breton University, at many other places across the province, accruing interest instead of doing that for the Province of Nova Scotia. Why? Because the government did not want to run a surplus and needed to get a whole bunch of money out the door very quickly without any justification or any real planning. I believe that is what has happened here.

If you look again, Speaker, at the AG's report on this, it really makes for some sobering reading. There are several recommendations and almost all of them, except for one, have been rejected by the department. Now, it's not obligatory that the government should agree with all the recommendations. That's fine if there's a disagreement, but at least make a good argument as to why you are not going to follow the recommendations.

Just to give you a sense of how basic this is, Recommendation 1.3 from this report recommends that the Department of Finance and Treasury Board do the following when they are submitting funding requests to Cabinet: outline the nature of the funding; plans for the funding; program requirements; cost estimates - believe it or not, cost estimates for the amount requested; assessment of risk - that seems relevant when we are spending \$2.6 billion outside of a budget. Reporting requirements to the Province: If the Province gives

Saint Mary's University, SMU, \$25 million, gives Efficiency Nova Scotia \$140 million, or gives Cape Breton University, CBU, \$59 million, and six months, a year, or 18 months later - whenever it is - CBU, SMU, or EfficiencyOne comes back and says, Here's what we did with the money, the Province can decide whether or not that's a good thing.

That is a recommendation from the Auditor General - to do those things that are very basic. The department disagrees on this. It says here: The Department of Finance and Treasury Board and Executive Council Office work within the legislative framework of the Province to support government. This is the key sentence here: where submissions to Cabinet and its committees provide opportunity for documented support.

Where would there be an opportunity not to have documented support for a Cabinet submission? Is the government's position - the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board's position - that Cabinet should make decisions without a scrap of paper justifying their spending?

Based on this response to the AG, that is the position of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, and that is a position that I cannot agree with and I don't think Nova Scotians could agree with.

When you spend a few thousand dollars replacing your windows in your house, for example, you ask for a receipt. You get an indication of what work was done. That's pretty basic. Yet this government spends \$50 million, \$100 million, or \$2.6 billion outside of budget without those very basic safeguards in place. How do we know the money is being well spent? The answer is that we do not. We have absolutely no idea what the return on investment is for this spending.

It is, to me, unconscionable that this is the situation we find ourselves in. The response from government is non-existent, as far as I can tell. If I want to accept that it exists, it's weak. It's, Trust us: We're doing the right things, it goes to Cabinet, that's enough. Well, Cabinet is a political body. Of course it's a political body. This Chamber is also a political body, and in a functioning, healthy democratic system, when the government spends \$2.6 billion that they didn't tell us they were going to spend, they should have to justify it.

The fact that I'm sitting here having to make this argument is bizarre, but this is a bizarre place at times. That is where we find ourselves.

There was something else here that was really shocking. Where was it? I lost it.

Again, I think the government's position is that maybe Nova Scotians aren't interested in the details of financial management and policy, and we can just kind of gloss over this, put it off to the side, and pretend nobody cares because other governments did it

too. Well, yes. That is true. Is this a practice that should have been in place 10 years ago? No, I don't think so. I think this is something that should have been done a long time ago.

There are many members in the Chamber who have been here a lot longer than I have. It's about two and a half years for those of us in the 2021 class. One thing I've noticed is that anytime anyone, no matter what side of the House they're on, stands up and starts talking about what previous governments have done or not done, it's a weak argument. It's as simple as that. That's what it is.

On this matter of spending outside of budget, that is the defence: Well, you guys did it too, so therefore it's okay. That's schoolyard logic at the best of times. As I've said before, my son's six. He's going to be seven soon. If he came to me with that argument, he would be embarrassed. He knows better than that. Those of us who are adults and who are responsible for billions of dollars in spending on a yearly basis owe it to the voters of Nova Scotia to be a little more transparent and a little more upfront. Just make the argument and let people decide. What is it that is so scary about making an argument as to why you spent money or didn't spend money? It's not complicated. It's not reinventing the wheel.

The government has a majority; they can do whatever they want. All of their spending decisions will be approved, whether it is done in Cabinet and then, nine months later, we're in the Legislature and the government brings forward their additional appropriations motion or bill, we debate it, and then at the end of the debate, the government votes and it passes, and all carries on in the world the next day. Nothing would change, and we've confirmed that with the Auditor General. There would be no on-the-ground program change. If that is an argument the government wants to make, it is incorrect.

I think the government has been very fortunate. Sometimes circumstances dictate a lot of things in politics, and this government has been lucky to have such a windfall of revenue come its way. That's fine. That's the nature of timing, but when you have hundreds of millions of dollars in unexpected revenue coming in every year, you have an obligation to be careful with it.

One of the things I talk to people about whenever we're talking about provincial budgets - which doesn't come up often in small talk, but when it does, one of the things I always tell people is the third, or fourth, or fifth - I'm not sure which it is - biggest line item in the budget is interest. Seven-hundred-plus million dollars a year of taxpayer money is spent on interest, and that's going to go up and up and up over the next few years because this government is addicted to spending. We're going to go from \$15 billion in debt to over \$20 billion over the next few years. That is going to have long-term consequences.

In politics, we're not always good at thinking long-term. In fact, we're usually very bad at it, but this is an example where we need to have a little more common sense, a little more prudence and say: Hey, you know what? Did we really need to shovel out that \$400

million over three weeks in March 2022? Was that really necessary? Did that really change things when, 24 months later, most of that money is earning interest for other institutions and not the Province of Nova Scotia, not the taxpayers of Nova Scotia? No, of course not, but the spending of this government is designed to make a political point, and the political point is: We will spend every dollar we get, no matter where it comes from, to show Nova Scotians that we are spending and we are changing things.

Guess what? Spending doesn't equal outcomes, and the outcomes we've seen over the last two and a half years and in this budget are not reassuring. They're not reassuring on health, they're not reassuring on housing, they're not reassuring on cost of living, and I wish this government would just come clean, be honest, and make an argument and let us decide.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will now dissolve into Supply, and we will take a brief recess while the committee is set up.

[2:54 p.m. The House resolved itself into CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Nolan Young in the Chair.]

[7:08 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Danielle Barkhouse resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Supply has met and made some progress and begs leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[7:10 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Danielle Barkhouse in the Chair.]

[9:53 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Nolan Young in the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. I call the House back to order. The Chair of the Committee

of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Bills has met and considered and made progress on Bill No. 404.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That concludes government business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Tuesday, March 19th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Business will include Committee of the Whole House on Supply, Committee of the Whole House on Bills, and Second Reading of Bill No. 419.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that we do now rise to meet again on March 19th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 9:54 p.m.]