



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Karla MacFarlane

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First Session

TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 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: Order. We will now 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. 983

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

Whereas March 31st marks the International Transgender Day of Visibility, a day to celebrate transgender people and raise awareness of the transgender community's struggles and achievements; and

Whereas transgender people often face discrimination, harassment, and violence, as well as barriers to health care, employment, housing, and other necessities; and

Whereas in Nova Scotia gender identity and gender expression are protected characteristics under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act and the Status of Women Office acknowledges trans women under its mandate and recognizes the International Transgender Day of Visibility as an important step towards raising awareness of the challenges often faced by transgender people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in taking the opportunity to show our support and amplify the voices of the transgender community and recognize the significant contributions the community has made to our province.

Speaker, 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.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 984

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

Whereas epilepsy is a neurological disorder of the central nervous system that impacts the brain and causes seizures presenting in different forms such as a blank stare, muscle spasms, odd sensations, or convulsions; and

Whereas between 0.5 per cent and 1 per cent of the population suffer with epilepsy, impacting approximately 50 million people worldwide; and

Whereas Purple Day is recognized every year on March 26th and is a day dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy, encouraging conversation on the topic to dispel myths, and informing those with seizures that they are not alone;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Chamber recognize March 26th as Purple Day and thank the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes and its advocates for providing education, support, and advocacy for individuals living with epilepsy and their families.

I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 449 - An Act to Create a Free Heat-pump Program. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: Speaker, this will be the first of three bills I table. I'd just like to quickly say thank you to the community members who put their time into helping me put these together.

Bill No. 450 - An Act to Amend Chapter 23 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Assessment Act, Respecting a Property Tax Cap for Disaster Victims. (Hon. Ben Jessome)

Bill No. 451 - An Act to Establish an Infrastructure Fund for Emergency Access and Connector Roads. (Hon. Ben Jessome)

Bill No. 452 - An Act Respecting Emergency Preparedness. (Hon. Ben Jessome)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

RESOLUTION NO. 985

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

Whereas Nova Scotia has the highest rate of poverty amongst those over 65 of any province in the country; and

Whereas this is directly related to the fact that Nova Scotia is one of only two provincial jurisdictions that does not have a program directly supplementing the GIS of low-income seniors; the other province in this category, Prince Edward Island, has the Seniors Independence Initiative program, which is more than twice as generous as the parallel program, the Seniors Care Grant, in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Seniors Care Grant in Nova Scotia is not to be compared with the Senior's Supplement in B.C., the Alberta Seniors Benefit, the Saskatchewan Seniors Income Plan, the Manitoba 55 PLUS Program, the Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income System, the Quebec retirement pension supplement, the New Brunswick Low-Income Seniors Benefit, or the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit, all of which are automatically received by eligible beneficiaries as opposed to the

Nova Scotia Seniors Care Grant, which requires an application and receipts;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly direct the Standing Committee on Community Services, at the earliest opportunity, to summon witnesses and provide an examination of the advisability of instituting a seniors income benefit in Nova Scotia on the model of that received by a majority of GIS-eligible seniors in the country.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

RESOLUTION NO. 986

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

Whereas according to Statistics Canada, Nova Scotia has a higher proportion of queer and transgendered residents than any other province in Canada and the provincial government aims to increase Nova Scotia's overall population twofold by 2060; and

Whereas trans and gender-diverse Nova Scotia students continue to face additional barriers to a safe and equitable education, with 51 per cent of trans and queer students reporting experiences of homophobia and transphobia in the 2023 Student Success Survey and the government of Nova Scotia has a duty to provide safe schools for all students; and

Whereas the 31st day of every March is recognized globally as the Transgender Day of Visibility, with the week preceding it, or including it, often recognized as Transgender Awareness Week;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly show its support for all of our trans and gender-diverse constituents during Transgender Awareness Week by referring the matter to the Standing Committee on Human Resources to make recommendations on how to improve the public education experiences of trans and gender-diverse Nova Scotians.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: I beg leave to make an introduction pertaining to my member statement.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

CHRIS PALMER: I'd like to draw all the members' attention to the East Gallery. I'm very honoured today to have a guest in our gallery who is doing amazing work in the province of Nova Scotia and all over Canada. We have Valley resident Jennifer Holleman here with her partner, Ryan Roberts, who is a good friend of mine as well.

I've gotten to know Jen quite a lot over the last year. Jen is a well-known, tireless, passionate, and inspiring advocate for families and communities dealing with the terrible scourge of human trafficking. As we know, Nova Scotia has one of the highest incidences of human trafficking in Canada. Jen and her story are well-known. She's asked to speak all

over Canada and around the world, and she works with country music star Paul Brandt, who is the co-chair of the Alberta Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

[1:15 p.m.]

She is just doing amazing things. I'm so honoured to have her here today, to talk about her and her new book launch. I'd like to ask all members of the House to please welcome my guests. Please rise, Jen Holleman. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. It's really nice to see you here today. Thanks for coming.

The honourable member for Kings West.

HOLLEMAN, JEN: HUMAN TRAFFICKING WORK - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to recognize the incredible work and advocacy of Annapolis Valley resident Jen Holleman and her inspiring work around the prevention of human sex trafficking in Nova Scotia, and to celebrate the recent launch of her book *Forever Twenty-One - Maddison's Story*. The book offers a heart-wrenching glimpse into the devastating world of human trafficking through the eyes of a grieving mother.

On February 22nd, I joined many friends and supporters at the official book launch in Kentville, where many spoke about Jen's resilience and amazing work on behalf of vulnerable young women experiencing the terrible nightmare of trafficking. Through her courageous storytelling, Jen sheds light on the harsh realities faced by countless individuals, families, and communities grappling with the scourge of trafficking.

Maddison's story serves as a reminder that behind every statistic, there is a human being - a daughter, sister, friend - whose life has been irrevocably altered by exploitation and violence. Jen's unwavering dedication to honouring her daughter's memory by advocating for change is both inspiring and humbling.

I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing Jennifer Holleman's bravery and resilience. Let us all honour Maddison's memory by turning sorrow into action and work tirelessly to prevent any parent in this province from enduring the pain of losing a child to such cruelty in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please go ahead.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to bring the House's attention to the West Gallery, where we are joined by some familiar faces to the House. We are of course joined by the indomitable Cassidy Megan, founder of Purple Day; her mother Angela McCarthy, who is the Vice President of the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes' board of directors; also Cassidy's grandmother, Cathy Ryan; we are also joined by Scott Ferguson, President of the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes; and Anne Peters, incoming executive director of the same organization. I ask the House to give a warm welcome to our guests. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PURPLE DAY: EPILEPSY AWARENESS - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: March 26th is acknowledged worldwide as Purple Day. It represents an international grassroots movement dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy.

Canada is the only country in the world that has officially proclaimed the Purple Day Act, which was implemented June 28, 2012, largely due to the advocacy efforts of Cassidy Megan, who convinced the honourable Geoff Regan, former Speaker of the House of Commons, to introduce this legislation federally.

In 2008, Cassidy was a little girl in Halifax who lived with epilepsy. Because of this, she feared rejection, bullying, and being made fun of. Once Cassidy's friends found out about her epilepsy, she was no longer invited to play dates and overnight sleepovers. Despite this difficult situation, at a young age Cassidy was determined to make a difference for both her and others living with epilepsy and began the journey of creating Purple Day.

Together, Cassidy and the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes have expanded the movement throughout Canada and beyond. In 2023, the International League Against Epilepsy awarded Cassidy the Ambassador for Epilepsy Award. This extraordinary recognition was given in honour of Cassidy's worldwide advocacy efforts aimed at demystifying epilepsy and teaching others to overcome their fear.

We recognize Cassidy Megan as an incredible Nova Scotian who relentlessly continues her resolve to make the world a better place for persons living with epilepsy. We thank the Epilepsy Association and their great leaders for continuing on that great, important work.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

LISA LACHANCE: Joining us in the West Gallery today is Chelsi Walsh and Robert Howlett. If you want to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. They are the dynamic duo behind the Out Loud Choir at Ekko Mindful Music Studio in Dartmouth.

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

OUT LOUD CHOIR: CELEB. OF DIVERSITY - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise today to thank Ekko Music in Dartmouth and the team behind the Out Loud Choir, including Chelsi Walsh, Robert Howlett and Adam LeBlanc. It's always time to create more space for queer and allied voices, and it's even better in song. The Out Loud Choir is a place where diversity and inclusivity are celebrated. Whether you're 2SLGBTQIA+ or an ally, all voices are welcome to come and sing and create a safe and empowering space.

The Out Loud Choir performs a variety of genres from pop to classical and strives to build a sense of community and belonging through music. Together we reinterpret lyrics and songs to notice how they fit with the times we're facing. If you were out in the courtyard for the flag-raising, you would have heard the Out Loud Choir perform earlier today. No prior choir experience is necessary, all skill levels are welcome, and training is provided.

I ask all members to thank the Out Loud Choir for bringing more beautiful music into the world.

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

PURPLE DAY: EPILEPSY AWARENESS - RECOG.

JOHN WHITE: I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge that today is Purple Day. Purple Day increases awareness and serves as a platform to acknowledge the resilience of individuals living with epilepsy. One of those people is Cassidy Megan of Halifax.

In 2008, when she was still in elementary school, Cassidy started Purple Day not only to help people living with epilepsy, but also so people could understand what to do if they see someone having a seizure. In the 16 years since its founding, Purple Day has spread across the world. When we feel more comfortable talking about epilepsy, it allows us to be better advocates and to help those living with it.

Thanks to people like Cassidy Megan, we have a greater opportunity to increase education, understanding and compassion to break down stigmas and promote world inclusivity for those affected by epilepsy. Thank you to non-profit organizations, like the

Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes, and health care workers for their unwavering commitment to providing care and support for those affected by the condition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to bring the House's attention to the West Gallery, where we are joined by members of the Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers. Today in attendance we have Vivian Dixon, Treasurer and Board Member - please rise as your name is called - Jasmine Hochman, René Boudreau, and Tadiwa Mugwise, all staff of the Association of Black Social Workers. I'd like to, on behalf of the House, welcome you all here and please accept a warm welcome.

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Thanks for being with us today.

The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ABSW: DEVT. RESOURCE - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: World Social Work Day is a celebration that highlights the achievements of social workers to raise the visibility of social services for the future of societies and to defend social justice and human rights.

Every year, World Social Work Day is celebrated all over the world to recognize the contributions of the social work profession for individuals, families, communities, and wider society. We want to take this opportunity to particularly acknowledge the Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers in supporting Black social workers across our province.

The association began as a charitable organization in 1979, and its membership has consistently grown since then. The key mission of the association is to act as a professional development resource for African Nova Scotian social workers. The association provides an environment where Black social workers and other practitioners in related fields can exchange ideas, deliver services, and develop programs to advance the interests of African Nova Scotian community members and individuals in our province.

We thank the association for its remarkable leadership in championing gender-based violence within our African Nova Scotian communities, along with its groundbreaking work in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and trafficking of African Nova Scotian children and youth. We thank these dedicated social workers for

their extraordinary role in creating vital resources that enhance the well-being of all Nova Scotian communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

INT’L TRANSG. DAY OF VIS.: AWARENESS - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I’m proud to rise and mark the upcoming Transgender Day of Visibility on Sunday. I’m proud to join all my colleagues in this House in standing in support of trans and gender-diverse Nova Scotians.

We see politicians at the federal and provincial levels toying with trans rights in the name of political gain. In Nova Scotia we have an opportunity to be an example and to set a standard for parties of all stripes. On this Trans Day of Visibility, we’re not just standing to support trans rights but to fight for the right of trans folks to thrive.

To do this, we know we need to support trans youth, seniors, and people of all colours and abilities. We need to listen to the community and put in the work, which my colleague for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island has done continuously. We need to see better health care access and outcomes for queer and trans Nova Scotians. We need attention to schools and school-based discrimination. We need to foster an equitable environment that allows people to devote their time and careers to skilled trades and other areas where workforce is so needed.

Now is the time for all of us in this House to stand up for what is right and ensure that policy and legislation coming from this Chamber is affirming of gender identities of all ages. We can only fight disinformation and hate in a meaningful way by working together, and our caucus stands ready to help in any way we can.

THE SPEAKER: Before the member for Pictou Centre reads his statement, I would like to take an opportunity to welcome guests from Pictou West who are seated in the Speaker’s Gallery. I would like Tanya and Frank MacDonald to stand. They are the loving parents of their late son Connor, whom we miss terribly and who had a big impact in our small community of Pictou West. It is such an honour to have both of you here with us today on this important day about awareness and education with regards to epilepsy. I would like the House to welcome them with a round of applause. (Applause)

The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACDONALD, CONNOR: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. PAT DUNN: Speaker, I rise to recognize Tanya and Frank MacDonald, the parents of the late Connor Francis Ford MacDonald of Central Caribou. Twelve-year-old

Connor passed away in his sleep on December 15, 2018, from sudden unexpected death in epilepsy. SUDEP is a fatal complication associated with epilepsy.

Connor had a great love for the army and belonged to #219 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps. He loved video games, riding his bike, Nerf guns, swimming, skateboarding, cars, and trucks. He loved to eat Kraft Dinner and chicken nuggets, so much so that his mother turned Connor into a box of Kraft Dinner for a Halloween costume. Connor's memory has encouraged community support for the Juvenile Epilepsy Foundation. The McCulloch Education Centre, where Connor was a Grade 6 student when he passed away, has hosted an annual KD for Connor Food Drive every March since 2018. Recently, the local Sobeys has provided Kraft Dinner to the school so that all students and staff will enjoy KD in memory of Connor.

Tanya and Frank participated in the first Hike for Epilepsy held in New Glasgow in honour of their son.

Connor loved to make people laugh and gave the best hugs. Connor was a kind-hearted kid and wanted to be a YouTube star and a Canadian soldier to help change the world.

Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, please join me in expressing our thanks to Tanya and Frank MacDonald for promoting awareness about epilepsy. We appreciate their work in helping others to avoid the tragedy that they endured when they lost their son. They're learning more about SUDEP and the complications from juvenile epilepsy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: With us today in the West Gallery, we have members from the Italian Canadian Cultural Association. I will read their names, and I will ask them to stand up to receive the warm welcome of the House. Sandra Gardin, who is the president of the ICCA - please stand up. We have with us her mother, Silvana Gardin; Tania Meloni, who is currently vice president of the association; and Roxane Mio, a past president of the Italian Canadian Cultural Association - ICCA. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Thank you for joining us today.

The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

ICCA: EVENTS - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 2023 Board of Directors and volunteers of the Italian Canadian Cultural Association of Nova Scotia, known as ICCA. The ICCA of Nova Scotia has represented the needs of all people of Italian and non-Italian heritage who share an interest in Italian history, language, food, and culture within our province. These volunteers put on many wonderful events, such as La Festa della Repubblica, Italian Weekend Festival - which is normally in September - and the Festa dei Cacciatori, the Hunters' Feast, where once again, all this was held after COVID.

[1:30 p.m.]

The association provides Italian language and cooking classes, culture courses, organizes Italian culturally themed social events, and provides a forum where these members and the community at large can share experiences and mix socially.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating the current board of directors of the ICCA of Nova Scotia. I am proud to call such an amazing Italian community my extended family. Welcome.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

ALL TOGETHER LINK: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, one result of an inadequate income can be little or no money for recreation, with all the isolating impacts that this can have. The new project in Halifax called All Together Link is organizing to counteract this. All Together Link puts on programs whose main purpose is for people to make friends and connect with one another. Monthly projects include exploring the city, trying new skills, and just generally hanging out with refreshments - all with no money changing hands. Events are all designed to be low-stress, low-pressure, and welcoming.

Projects this month have included tools to help with social anxiety, an inclusive evening conversation at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library, and crafting your own story at the Halifax Central Library. All Together Link is open to capital-e Everyone, and advanced registration is not required for this welcome initiative in the city.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, before I begin, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes. Please go ahead.

BECKY DRUHAN: In the gallery, I'm honoured to introduce members of the South Shore Open Doors Association team. In a moment, you'll hear about some of the ways that they support community and individuals in Lunenburg and Queens, but on a personal note, I want to say that my team shares an office with this incredible group of people. I can personally attest to their passion, their dedication, their warmth, and their overall awesomeness. I'm honoured to know them and to work with them.

Joining us in the gallery are Shannan Cragg, Kristi Tibbo, Elyse Leefe, Courtney Carmichael, Krista Miller, Amanda Paugh, and Amanda Phillips-Poole. I'm so glad to welcome them to the House, and I ask the members to warmly welcome them as well. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: It's a great honour to have you with us today. Enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

SSODA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the South Shore Open Doors Association, and the important support and advocacy work they do on behalf of community members experiencing housing insecurity, energy poverty, or homelessness in Lunenburg and Queens counties.

SSODA's coordinated access approach brings consistency to the ways individuals and families access support. They offer housing support, trustee services, and so much more. This Winter, SSODA partnered with the Department of Community Services and the St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Bridgewater to open and manage Roof 25, a shelter to serve individuals experiencing homelessness.

The SSODA team are tireless problem-solvers and advocates who approach their work and their clients with grace, compassion, and wisdom. They make a difference every day in the lives of our most vulnerable neighbours, and their advocacy is helping to drive long-term changes that will help others into the future. I'm grateful that the SSODA is on the South Shore working for our community members and I'm grateful to share our space and our work with the SSODA team.

I ask the members of the House to join me in thanking the South Shore Open Doors Association for the difference that they're making in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

BEDFORD LEGION BRANCH 95: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Speaker, I would like to thank comrade Rob Pitcher and Bedford Legion Branch 95. I spoke earlier this session about the great work that the Legion does with our cadets, but just in the past few days our local Legion has presented \$2,000 to Sackville-Bedford Meals on Wheels and \$9,100 to the Cobequid Health Centre Foundation so they could purchase six new TENS units.

I would note for my colleagues that the Legion is currently holding a Chase the Ace, so if you are heading home and you are saying you would like to drop off a little money at the Bedford Legion, it's just off Highway No. 102. They'd be more than happy to take a donation from you for the Chase the Ace or any other event you might like to contribute to.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY: AWARENESS - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, to do drag has always required both a lot of glitter and a lot of grit. This is especially true for the trans drag performers who are putting themselves and their art out there amidst current anti-trans and anti-drag rhetoric, organizing, and policies.

This Saturday, the trans-owned Glitter and Grit events will hold a Transgender Day of Visibility drag show at the Kings Arms in Kentville. This weekend's show will spotlight trans performers and trans stories, and the organizers bill it as an opportunity for the public to "support and learn more about the trans community."

This weekend's performers and organizers are taking centre stage at a time when it is not especially safe or comfortable to do so, and I am grateful to them. This morning, we raised the trans flag outside Province House in recognition of the Transgender Day of Visibility this coming Sunday, March 31st.

We in this House owe it to all people putting themselves on the line, and all trans people in the province, to do everything we can to push back against the tide of anti-trans hate and policies and create a Nova Scotia that is truly safe, welcoming, and supportive of the transgender community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

FLAG-RAISING: TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY - RECOG.

HON. KENT SMITH: Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the flag raising that took place in the courtyard earlier today, in recognition of International Transgender Day of

Visibility. March 31st is a day dedicated to recognizing transgender people and raising awareness of the discrimination they face.

We are committed to supporting and promoting the rights of transgender Nova Scotians. Soon after being elected, our government removed barriers and cut wait times for residents seeking gender-affirming surgery, a decision that was celebrated by the transgender community.

I ask that all members of this House join me in acknowledging today's flag-raising and celebrating International Transgender Day of Visibility in our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MITCHELL, JON: DISTILLERY VFX - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to recognize Jon Mitchell. Fans of the popular HBO series *The Last of Us* might be surprised to learn the show has an award-winning connection to the area. Former Prospect Bay resident Jon Mitchell, who now resides in Vancouver, is part of the team that won an Emmy Award for special effects in an episode of the show. Mitchell is one of the founders of Distillery VFX, a Vancouver-based visual effects studio started in 2019 with a small group of five that has now grown to 75.

In January, Distillery VFX received an Emmy for outstanding visual effects in a season or movie for their work on Season 1, Episode 3 of *The Last of Us*. He also won a Visual Effects Society Award in 2016 for his work on the film *Doctor Strange*.

Jon Mitchell's parents, who still live in Prospect Bay, are proud of their son. The Mitchells always thought their son, who attended Bay View High School in Tantallon, would work in a creative field.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Jon on his award-winning achievements and wish him continued success.

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

TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY: EVENTS - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: On April 22nd, on the International Day of Pink, Monica Helms, the trans flag creator, will be at the Grand Lake Road Fire Hall in Cape Breton at 11:00 a.m. The Visibility Anniversaries Tour celebrates visibility in all its forms - being seen, acknowledged, respected and listened to. It's about standing tall and embracing ourselves, because there is nothing more beautiful than being who you truly are.

This year marks three incredible milestones: the 50th anniversary of the Brunswick Four, the 50th anniversary of the depathologization of homosexuality by the American Psychiatric Association, and the 25th anniversary of the trans flag.

I am looking forward to the discussions and performances with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community leaders. Also, on a personal note, my friend Veronica Merryfield will be MCing that event, so I look forward to it even more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

JOHN LOHR: For the benefit of the House, in the East Gallery, my constituency assistant, William Nimmo, is present today. It's one of the rare moments that he is in the House - the first time, I think. As all of us know, constituency assistants are incredibly important people to us, in terms of helping make us look good and getting work done.

Bill is an outstanding constituency assistant, a real digger, and someone who works hard for the people of Kings North and Kings County, in fact. I just want to acknowledge William Nimmo in the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

ROSS, BAILEY: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. JILL BALSER: Speaker, I rise today to recognize an extraordinary young man of Digby-Annapolis, Bailey Ross.

Members of the Legislature will know Bailey during his time as a Page, but I've known Bailey long before that. Our families have known each other for generations, and my father actually taught Bailey in elementary school. You've got to love growing up in a small town.

Bailey is a graduate of Digby Regional High School, Université Sainte-Anne, and Acadia University, and is now fulfilling his passion as a teacher with the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. Bailey is also an avid curler, and a strong advocate for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

I have come to rely on Bailey's expertise, advice, and way with words when preparing a statement that I've made in the House in solidarity with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Bailey, I wish you continued success. Thank you for your unwavering support, and for your tireless dedication to the youth of our province and to your community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

CAPE BRETON POST: SERIES ON CANCER - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, I rise on my feet to recognize and encourage members and everyone to read the multi-part series that the *Cape Breton Post* is doing now on cancer in Cape Breton. They really take a deep dive into it, looking back to when the officials of the day back in 1999 really, really had the data - the first real sense of how bad the situation was for cancer rates in Cape Breton. A lot of work is going into this.

I rise to recognize the families who are telling their stories about their journeys with cancer. I would really encourage people to read it.

I also rise in my place as well to recognize the *Cape Breton Post* for doing that. It's an important conversation at home. I want to recognize all the people who continue to advocate for services for cancer care in Cape Breton - and across the province, for that matter. It's something that has been a big battle for our community, and communities across the province. A lot of people step up to raise millions of dollars to support the important equipment that is necessary, but also step up to provide the love and compassion that families need.

I rise in my place to recognize everybody who's involved with supporting cancer care at home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

TRANSGENDER WK. OF VISIBILITY: AWARENESS - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I'm proud to stand today to support trans and gender-diverse Nova Scotians during Transgender Week of Visibility. I was happy to see all parties present today at the flag-raising.

Today and every day, we celebrate the joy and resilience of trans and non-binary people everywhere by elevating voices and experiences from these communities. Trans and gender-diverse Nova Scotian students need safer schools, with infrastructure that fits, and curriculums that reflect their families. Trans and gender-diverse Nova Scotians need better access to gender-affirming and safe health care.

Together we can make a change. Today and every day, we must celebrate all trans and non-binary people everywhere. I ask all members to join me in combatting disinformation, discrimination, and hate impacting our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

[1:45 p.m.]

MACLEAN, RILLA: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the life of Rilla McLean of Port Hawkesbury. Although Rilla did not live in Richmond, we became really good friends when my wife Sarah and I moved home back in 2008.

Rilla passed away November 4, 2022, at the age of 77. She graduated from teacher's college in Fredericton, New Brunswick in 1964, and received her BA in education from the University of New Brunswick.

Rilla was born with a rare genetic disorder that caused her mobility to decrease as she got older. She eventually required a wheelchair, but that certainly did not slow her down.

Rilla was an active volunteer in her community. She showed great dedication to the Strait Area Accessibility Awareness Committee, the Inverness-Richmond Society for Persons with Disabilities, the Terry Fox Run in Port Hawkesbury, and the Nova Scotia Trails Federation, as well as many other local organizations.

This year, the first James and Rilla McLean Memorial Bursary will be awarded at the University of New Brunswick, and preference will be given to a student with mobility issues. I am so pleased that Rilla's legacy will live on for generations to come.

I ask all members to please join me in recognizing the life of Rilla McLean.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

FLAG-RAISING: TRANS DAY OF VISIBILITY - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: Earlier today, I was honoured to be on hand for the flag-raising in the Legislature to recognize Transgender Week and Day of Visibility. I want to thank all members of the House, from all parties, who were there today. In particular, I want to thank the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, whom I think has done a great job spearheading initiatives over the past couple of years on this. What's stood out to me, as I've been thinking about this, is that on social issues and all issues, we have to remember that progress is not inevitable. Progress is not a given.

If you look at things over the past year, you'll see that the trans community, trans youth and kids in particular, unfortunately have been used at times as scapegoats and as a means to divide people when we shouldn't be doing that. What we should be doing is recognizing that we have far more in common than we have in differences. We should lead with compassion and grace and dignity and love.

I just want to thank everybody who was there today - it was a wonderful turnout - and recognize all those in the community today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

EPILEPSY AWARENESS DAY: REMEMBRANCE - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise in support of Epilepsy Awareness Day. Today I'm thinking of a family member, Crystal Lynn Smith, who passed away at the young age of 43 from epilepsy on October 24, 2015. She was the daughter of Sheila and Keith Angus and grew up in our small community on the West Linden Road. Today marks the importance of recognizing the need for more investment in research and education programs so that people like Crystal can live a longer life. Today I'm thinking of her family.

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

HFX. QUEER ENSEMBLE: COM. BLDG. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Today I'd like to recognize a musical group in the Halifax community that strives to build a strong community for queer composers and artists. This group is called the Halifax Queer Ensemble and they are composed of, as well as directed by, 2SLGBTQIA+ musicians and artists. The Halifax Queer Ensemble meets every Tuesday evening at the Dalhousie Arts Centre to make music together, promoting an inclusive environment in which all 2SLGBTQIA+ musicians are welcome to attend.

The Halifax Queer Ensemble also makes an effort to promote the work of queer composers and artists. They recognize the importance of representation in the music industry and the positive impact that building a strong group of queer musicians can have on the queer community in our city. I'd like to ask my fellow members to join me in recognizing this creative, passionate group for contributing to our province through art, music, and community building.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SCHOONER *BLUENOSE*: 103RD ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: On this day 103 years ago, the iconic *Bluenose* was launched in Lunenburg.

The schooner was built for fishing and racing and excelled in both. Designed by William J. Roue, and originally captained by Angus Walters, the Queen of the North Atlantic and her replica continue to be the pride of Nova Scotia.

Even in her early days, *Bluenose* was renowned across Canada. As early as 1929, she was featured on a Canadian stamp and, of course, in 1937, her image was embossed on our dime. Today, wherever *Bluenose II* docks, be it at home in Nova Scotia or abroad, she is a crowd favourite, a beloved representation of the best of Nova Scotia and Canada.

It is an honour to be able to acknowledge 103 years since the launch of the original *Bluenose*. I ask members of the Legislature to join me in celebrating her past, present, and future.

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

ROFE, HEIDI: BEAUTY STARTS HAIR - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Today I rise to celebrate Heidi Rofe, a cherished member of our Fairview community and the proud owner of Beauty Starts Hair.

As a second-generation Fairview resident, Heidi's roots run deep and her commitment to her clients and craft shines brightly. At Beauty Starts Hair, Heidi's passion for hair colour is as vibrant as the changing seasons. With each new hue, she brings joy and confidence to her clients, ensuring that they feel their best year-round.

This dedication earned her a Gold win in the *Coast's* Best of Halifax Awards four years in a row. For Heidi, her clients are more than just appointments, they're family. From milestone moments like first haircuts and graduations to supporting them through difficult times, Heidi is there every step of the way. Her compassionate spirit and genuine care make her salon a safe and welcoming space for all who enter.

I want to thank Heidi for her impactful contributions to our community. I eagerly anticipate witnessing the positive impact that Libby, the third-generation Fairview kid, will bring to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

JUNO AWDS.: EVENTS - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I kicked off my JUNOs week by seeing and hearing William Prince at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium last week - it was amazing - and ended it with the amazing awards show production at Scotiabank Centre on Sunday night. Between the two nights, Mi'kma'ki has been filled with music. Performers, managers, producers, record labels, and promoters have been here, networking and sharing their talent. It's been great for our local artists and audiences alike.

The awards show on Sunday was also an amazing showcase of local talent, from Sarah Prosper's dance interpretation of the Mi'kmaq Honour Song, to the incredible African Nova Scotian performers who backed up the Prime Minister of Rap, Maestro Fresh Wes - Gary Beals, Reeny Smith, Cyndi Cain, JRDN, and Kaleb Simmonds - to the outstanding stage crew, many if not all of whom are members of IATSE Local 680, who transformed the space several times over the evening to the delight of the live crowd and everyone watching at home.

I want to extend my congratulations and our caucus's congratulations to everyone involved, especially the JUNO host committee, and now wish everyone a good rest.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

DOYLE, LYDIA: SPORT CONTRIBUTIONS - RECOG.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I stand today to recognize a Grade 12 Millwood High student from Middle Sackville: Lydia Doyle.

Lydia is an advocate for participation in sports, especially when it comes to females in sports, and this year is one of 12 Nova Scotian athletes chosen to be a True Sport Athlete Ambassador for our province. She was nominated by both her ringette coach as well as her gymnastics coach for the role. Every Thursday in March, Lydia highlights and shares her sporting experiences on Instagram.

Next month, Lydia will be participating in her third ringette nationals representing Team Nova Scotia and is the captain of her U19AA. She has also been chosen by Ringette Nova Scotia to be the flag bearer for the province during the opening ceremonies. In April, Lydia will be participating in provincials for gymnastics, trying to qualify for Team Nova Scotia to go to Atlantics and Easterns.

On top of all her training, Lydia maintains high honours in school and will graduate this Spring. She wants to continue to give back to sports by pursuing a career in sports medicine.

It's my pleasure to stand in the Legislature and recognize Lydia Doyle for her contributions and for being a role model not only to Sackville but across this province.

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

LOCAL FAM. PHYSICIANS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BEN JESSOME: I'd just like to take this opportunity to recognize the team at the Hammonds Plains Family Practice, my former neighbours: Dr. Edith Baxter, Dr. Jeremy Smith, Dr. Marci Chu, Dr. Jennifer Burns-Lachance, Dr. Heather Jones, and front-end staff Lucy Lundrigan, Amelia Scrymgeour-Hiltz, and Kelly Smith. They are part of the health care team that provides service to our community and beyond.

As I remarked yesterday, with the team next door at the pharmacy clinic, I think it goes a long way for us to pat these folks on the back for doing the jobs they do and serving Nova Scotians to help them be healthier.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PURPLE DAY: EPILEPSY AWARENESS - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I was so glad to walk into this room today and see a wave of purple. I think it is so beautiful, and purple looks good on a lot of people.

Purple Day began with Cassidy Megan in 2008. She was motivated by her own struggles with epilepsy, and she wanted to create awareness and get people talking about epilepsy to dispel the myths and to inform those with seizures that they are not alone. With the combined efforts of Cassidy Megan, the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes, and the Anita Kaufmann Foundation in 2009, Purple Day was launched internationally, which has led to the involvement of numerous organizations and individuals around the world, all promoting epilepsy awareness.

I'd like all members to join me in thanking Cassidy Megan for standing up and changing the world view on epilepsy and the Purple Day team for supporting epilepsy around the world.

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

BBK LIONS CLUB: SCHOOL DONATION - THANKS

HON. BRIAN WONG: I want to thank the Beaver Bank Kinsac Lions Club for their donation to the breakfast programs at three local schools. Beaver Bank-Monarch Drive Elementary, Harold T. Barrett Junior High, and Beaver Bank Kinsac Elementary were all recipients of their generosity.

The Beaver Bank Kinsac Lions Club has an extensive track record of community service, recently including food drives and raising money for a family who lost their home to a fire. We are fortunate to have such an active community group filled with incredible volunteers. Please help me in thanking the Beaver Bank Kinsac Lions Club for all they do for our community.

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

ACCESS N.S. DART.: MURAL PRES. - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Speaker, I stand today to recognize teamwork and artistic creativity. Renovations at the Access Nova Scotia Dartmouth office on Baker Drive meant an incomplete mural of the HRM area would potentially be painted over. Employees got together and asked to keep their much-loved mural. The facilities team engaged French-language services coordinator Michelle Saulnier to help citizen services manage the mural changes.

Local Nova Scotian self-taught artist Lynda McConnell of Visually Thirsty, who draws inspiration from the ocean and our beautiful surroundings, was commissioned to complete the task. Lynda was asked to imagine a more current and vibrant view of the Halifax area to incorporate cultural diversity and inclusion, as well as add other traditional symbols of Nova Scotia to the mural.

Congratulations to the team of Access Nova Scotia Dartmouth and to artist Lynda McConnell's vision for creating a mural for all to enjoy. Next time you need the services provided at Access Nova Scotia on Baker Drive, check out the mural.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CHIASSON, COREY: PEACE MEDAL RECIP. - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Speaker, today I rise in support of the International Transgender Day of Visibility, which is officially celebrated on March 31st.

Today I want to recognize a leader in Cumberland North, Corey Chiasson. Corey was recently awarded the 2023 Peace Medal from the YMCA. That represents participation, empathy, advocacy, community, and empowerment through their local contributions within their local, national, or global communities. Corey is a leader, locally helping get going the first shelter that we had in the Town of Amherst. She's also on the board for In the Works, which helps people with mental illness and addictions get back into the workforce. She's also on the board for the Sexual Health Centre for Cumberland County.

Today I rise to give honour to Corey Chiasson and thank her for her leadership. We are all children of God, and there is no space for hate.

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

BURCHELL, ROBERT: SPEED SKATING MEDAL - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I rise to recognize Olympian Robert Burchell of New Victoria. Robert has been competing in Special Olympics events for 50 years. At age 61, this speed skater has participated in five national championships with the Special Olympics. On March 1st, at the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games in Calgary, Robert placed fourth in the 333-metre race. On the same day, March 1st, he won silver in the 222-metre speed skate. Congratulations, Robert Burchell, on all your accomplishments and your silver medal. I ask the House to join me in congratulating Robert on his accomplishments and his silver medal.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier on an introduction.

THE PREMIER: Speaker, I just want to bring the members' attention to a couple of friends of friends of ours who are here today, Bill and Colleen Dowe, entrepreneurs, community leaders, all-around good people. Thank you for joining us today. Bill is also, I think, the president up in Cumberland North at the moment. Thank you for your commitment to community and thank you for your presence here today. Maybe stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Thank you for joining us today.

The honourable member for Argyle.

D'EON, NOLAN: AQUACULTURE AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Nolan D'Eon of D'Eon Oyster Company Ltd.

Nolan was recently honoured with the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia's Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is given to celebrate and applaud an individual who has made a significant and substantial contribution throughout their career to advance the aquaculture industry in Nova Scotia.

Nolan works tirelessly and endlessly on becoming more efficient and environmentally friendly. A major milestone for his company was processing Salt Bay oysters - which I'll add are delicious - with a completely off-grid, solar-powered processing barge. This has increased production and drastically cut out wasteful steps that, before, used fossil fuels.

Speaker, I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Nolan D'Eon on his well-deserved honour and wish D'Eon Oyster Company Ltd. continued success with their future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: Order. We will now begin Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers. It's 2:00 p.m.. We will finish at 2:50.

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: POWER BILL INCREASE - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Nova Scotians are being crushed by a 14 per cent increase to their power bills. This is despite the fact that the Premier of this province promised after passing Bill No. 212 that the non-fuel rate increases would be limited to 1.83 per cent, that he would protect Nova Scotia ratepayers.

However, what we learned was that bill was very ill-conceived. It actually negatively impacted Nova Scotia Power's credit rating, driving their interest payments up and making a real mess for ratepayers by increasing their power bills, among other things.

To respond to that, the Premier then used Nova Scotia taxpayers' money to fund the fuel debt of Nova Scotia Power. And we're learning now that as a result this may not even be enough and might only be - according to David J. Roberts, a lawyer representing residential customer interests, "This might only be a temporary solution and may not even be sufficient to address the short-term concerns."

THE SPEAKER: Question.

ZACH CHURCHILL: My question to the Premier is: How much more of taxpayers' money is it going to take to fix his mess when it comes to the handling of our energy rate issue?

THE PREMIER: Of course, our only concern is lower rates, affordable rates for Nova Scotians. That's our focus. The fuel adjustment mechanism has been in place for quite some time. People will know that the price of fuel has gone up, so that has had a negative impact on the rates. We do have a right to pass that through. We have an application before the UARB as to whether we can support the ratepayers. That's where

this support is. The UARB will make their decision on that. But we will continue to look for ways to support the ratepayers of this province.

ZACH CHURCHILL: This Premier's initial intervention in this issue actually drove rates up and impacted the power utility in such a way that ratepayers are being impacted. Also, Nova Scotia Power's ability to invest in critical renewable resources and energy sources, like the Intertie - their ability to invest in reliable and renewable energy sources that will stabilize rates for the long term are being impacted by this Premier's ill-conceived intervention.

Now we're hearing that the money he has thrown at Nova Scotia Power to buy their fuel debt for them, taxpayers' money, is not going to be enough. Will the Premier please tell us how much more of taxpayers' money is going to be required for him to fix his mess when it comes to trying to support ratepayers in this province?

THE PREMIER: Of course, the application that's before the UARB is an investment in the ratepayers of this province to help smooth the shock from the fuel adjustment that has happened because of world events. We'll continue to look for ways to support the ratepayers, to try to keep rates down.

But there is one thing that the member can do to help with affordability in this province and that's stand up to his Liberal party members and his federal cousins on the carbon tax, which is having a devastating impact on Nova Scotians. That member can speak to his friends in Ottawa and maybe offer Nova Scotians just a little bit of support on that.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Here's an obvious issue we have. We've got a Premier who is more interested in fighting everybody. He's trying to fight Nova Scotia Power, trying to fight the federal government, and the problem is every single time he has picked a fight, Nova Scotians have lost, and life has become less affordable here.

The Premier wouldn't intervene when people lost their fuel through Maritime Fuels because that would be the same thing as paying somebody when they lose their gym membership. We've got an issue right now where people are being crushed financially by an increase in power rates. Part of that rate increase is because of this Premier's reckless intervention in the energy market. And now, even after giving Nova Scotia Power close to \$120 million, we're learning that might not even be enough. Will the Premier please tell us how much more money it is going to take for him to fix the problem of his own making?

THE PREMIER: Of course, the Province of Nova Scotia has very little impact on the world prices of fuel, which is really what is at issue here. We're not shy about supporting Nova Scotians. We will step up and do that. That's what this application is about. It's about supporting Nova Scotians.

I will say to the member that I will at all times stand up for Nova Scotians. I will take anyone on in the interest of supporting Nova Scotians. I'll fight with anyone. The member may remember the fight that we won, a significant one in support of Nova Scotians, back in 2021, which has a very positive impact on this province.

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

PREM.: HOGAN COURT PURCHASE - DEFEND

CLAUDIA CHENDER: In January 2023, this government bought an unfinished hotel for \$34.5 million. Multiple consultants warned this government that the Hogan Court hotel was not suitable for a health care facility - I'll table that - yet this government doubled down, defending the project at every turn for over a year. Even when renovation costs surpassed \$17 million and the Auditor General slammed both the decision and the process, the Premier said he would not apologize for investing in Hogan Court.

Now the government has a plan to sell and run from the boondoggle that is this hotel. My question is: Does the Premier still think the original purchase of Hogan Court by this government was a good idea?

THE PREMIER: One hundred per cent, one thousand per cent. I would double down, I would triple down, I would quadruple down because sometimes in government you have to take a step, you have to move forward, you have to create that momentum and inertia. This is a good thing for Nova Scotians, and I am proud that we are part of it.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Among other searing criticisms, the Auditor General's report found that this government had inappropriately awarded a nearly \$70-million contract for the management of the Hogan Court facility without tender or a proper process. The same company will now be purchasing the hotel and it's been reported that "funding for construction would follow a similar model to what's used with long-term care homes." According to the Auditor General's report, and other folks, mortgage costs are built into the long-term rate model. I'll table that.

I'd like the Premier to confirm: Did we just sell this building to a private company and commit to paying their mortgage?

THE PREMIER: I think Nova Scotians know we need more beds in this province, and we need the appropriate level of care at the appropriate time. I remember the NDP being very negative on this situation and saying that we overpaid on this transaction - we paid too much, Speaker. That was their negative rhetoric of the day. Do you know who didn't think we paid too much? The market, when they paid even more and said we can take care of that, we can get those beds done for you. I'm very proud that they did.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The market saw an opportunity to get a free piece of land and let the government pay their mortgage. Also in the Auditor General's report, the now-scraped Bayers Lake transitional care facility was originally anticipated to be a 200-bed facility. Hogan Court was supposed to have 80. Now, despite overpaying millions for an unfinished hotel, paying a developer's tax bill, millions in construction and advisory costs, and now subsidizing a private company to run a new sector of our health care system, Nova Scotians are left with 44 per cent fewer beds than were planned and victoriously announced. My question to the Premier: Is this what the Premier means by more, faster?

THE PREMIER: It's a public-private partnership and it's a good one. It'll be more care and it will be faster. I will stand by this transaction every single day. We have to change the way we do things. The NDP, in their negative view of the world, they don't want anything to change, but we do because we want more care and we want it faster for Nova Scotians, and that's what we'll deliver.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DED: POWER RATE INCREASES - STOP

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, despite this Premier's assurances to Nova Scotians that power rates were going to remain low, we are seeing some of the most significant power rate increases that we've had in well over a decade here because of this government's bungling of Bill No. 212. Now there's an even bigger problem.

Invest Nova Scotia, through the Department of Economic Development, has been the one charged with giving \$117 million to Nova Scotia Power to buy their fuel debt. We are hearing from an expert that this solution is inherently temporary. It may not even be sufficient to address the short-term concerns raised by Nova Scotia Power.

My question to the Minister responsible for Invest Nova Scotia is: Does she see that Nova Scotians are getting good return for this major investment?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition was at an event that I attended this morning where we heard from the Senior Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, who spent three days in this province talking about - she was asked, What are you hearing? She said that if she had to characterize it in one word, it is "optimism." We knew that ratepayers in Nova Scotia, both domestic households and businesses, were going to be facing a terrible increase, and we knew that we could put it over a longer period of time, and we are supporting Nova Scotia's future prosperity in doing this.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I was there, and the Governor of the Bank of Canada certainly met with some of the most powerful businesses, business elite, and wealthy people in the province who are optimistic about their prospects in this province. People

who are not optimistic are the people being crushed by their power bills - the young generation of Nova Scotians coming up who don't know if they'll be able to afford a property, let alone their bill payments or rent payments here, and this minister's department has handed over \$117 million of taxpayers' money to Nova Scotia Power to fix a problem that they created.

My question to the minister is: I'd like the minister, whose agency was responsible for delivering this money, to tell us what analysis they've done to ensure that there is going to be a return for taxpayers on this significant bailout for Nova Scotia Power?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I can tell the member opposite that this started in 2018, when the previous government started punting the football down the road and the FAM - the fuel adjustment mechanism - came due this year. This year, when we have worldwide fuel adjustment mechanisms, we have a 400 per cent increase in fossil fuels. We have a system that still relies on fossil fuels. We're doing everything we can to protect the ratepayers of Nova Scotia while we go through this transition.

The second thing: I've tabled this before, but I have to correct the record, because I've heard the rhetoric for the last few weeks here about Bill No. 212. Well, here's a letter from the company that was affected, Nova Scotia Power, a letter from the CEO: Bill No. 212 did its job and kept rates at 1.8 per cent a year. You can see that, and I will table that, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Order, please.

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

NRR: NOVA SCOTIA POWER RATEPAYERS - PROTECT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Tell that to the Nova Scotians whose power bills have doubled and tripled under this government. Tell that to any single businessperson who knows the folly of Bill No. 212. Tell that to any person who cares about actually getting off coal and expensive fossil fuels, who wants to see renewable projects. This government's interference impacted Nova Scotia Power's ability to invest in the intertie and other renewable projects and has helped prevent them from getting off expensive fossil fuels.

The proof is in the pudding. We are still burning as much expensive coal as we were two years ago when this minister was first elected. My question to the minister is: If they're being so successful, why is everything going in the wrong direction?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: You heard it here first, Speaker: That party wants to stay on coal power. This party is concerned about renewables. Something that I have to correct the record on: The link from Newfoundland and Labrador, it's producing more power. Why

is that? Better management under this government, fighting for the ratepayers to ensure that we have the rates.

There are two aspects that we talked about in this House over the last two years. When Nova Scotia Power went in to file for the UARB rate hearing, there were two things. What we said we were going to protect them on was not the fuel. The fuel is a worldwide thing. This side of the House and the residents who wrote to my office and my constituency office about the \$117 million, saying, Thank you, because we couldn't afford a 7 per cent increase or a 13 per cent increase. There's a thank you from Nova Scotians to this side of the House.

[2:15 p.m.]

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'll remind the minister that for eight years in the previous government, we had rate stability of less than 3 per cent in this province. But in two years - it's funny that the Premier has a lot to say from his seat but won't even get up and answer more than one question a day in this House. It's shocking, isn't it? Shocking.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. When I say "order," it means to everyone. I think that's just a common rule. When I say "order," it means everyone. I did not specifically speak of anyone. I just said "order," and when I tried to recognize the Leader again, it continued, so I said "order" again.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier won't get up and answer questions on this. He filibustered his own chicken dinner for an hour and half yesterday so he wouldn't have to answer questions in the Chamber. That's why he's not answering questions here today.

Let me ask the Premier - perhaps he will get up. This Premier brought in a bill - Bill No. 212 - that damaged Nova Scotia Power's credit rating in a very obvious way, drove rates up, and also impacted that utility's ability to invest in renewable projects to get off coal. The proof is in the pudding, because we're still burning as much coal as we were two years ago.

My question to the Premier is: Why has he messed this up so much and failed to protect ratepayers?

TORY RUSHTON: I don't know how many times I have to say it, but there is a lot of thanks from Nova Scotians for the \$117 million that was spread out. If we had done nothing, imagine what that side of the House was going to say. If we sat here and just allowed this to happen, what would that side of the House say when we're talking about affordability? We stood up for ratepayers.

The fuel adjustment mechanism - it started in 2018. The member can sit over there and brag about how stable rates were because they punted the football down for five years. That payment came due this year for what was punted down the road.

We are going to do what we have to do, and we will continue to do what we have to do for all ratepayers of this province.

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

NRR: WILDFIRE CASE CLOSURE - EXPLAIN

HON. BEN JESSOME: Speaker, I hope that my constituents have an opportunity to say thank you. It's only through chance and access-to-information requests that we found out anything about the report that's forthcoming, according to the minister, on the cause of the Tantallon/Hammonds Plains wildfire. We found out only through an access-to-information request that the RCMP had closed their decision. They did not find that there was any wrongdoing that they could prove. I'm wondering when the minister was made aware of this RCMP decision to say that there was no criminal investigation that would continue.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Obviously, I know that the member and his community - along with the community in Shelburne and area, and all Nova Scotians - want the answers. The report is not going to give the cause. The report is an after-action report on the response to the fires.

What I can say about the RCMP is that they don't report to my department. That freedom of information - quite frankly, we were shocked at some of the information that was shared with that from the RCMP. What I can say is that the ongoing investigation into the Tantallon fire is still carrying. We have dedicated staff who are looking into this daily. Quite frankly, we want to get to the bottom of this as well for the residents of Tantallon, and all of Nova Scotia, so that we can get answers for all residents.

BEN JESSOME: My constituents are tired of agencies and levels of government passing the buck to one another. While I do appreciate that the RCMP is an agency outside of the minister's purview, I'll quote: "We closed our file in December and communicated this information to the minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, as the organization in charge of the investigation. We have been in contact with them and remain ready to help them, if necessary." In a conversation with the RCMP related to this decision, they said that they would make themselves available if NRR directed them to do so.

I'm asking the minister today if he will he ask the RCMP to make themselves available to answer questions on the decision to close this file.

TORY RUSHTON: As I've said, Nova Scotia saw 24,000 hectares and over 200 homes impacted by the two major fires that we saw last Spring. Obviously, what I can say to the member is that the investigation is ongoing. It would be inappropriate for me as minister to stand here and comment on that investigation or on what agencies are currently involved with that investigation.

I know that there's a lot of time that has passed. It does have a two-year window that the investigation can take place. Certainly, I share the concerns. I want answers as well as the member does for his constituents. I have full faith that the staff involved, and any agencies that are working with the staff at the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, will get the answers that they can and share with the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: DOCTOR WAIT-LIST - REDUCE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Last week, the Premier said: "There are different reasons people are on the list. Some actually have a doctor, but they don't like their doctor, or they're worried the doctor might retire, but they have access to care." I can table that.

I find this puzzling. The government actually publicly reports people's reasons for joining the Need a Family Practice wait-list, which I will table: 54,708 are on the list because they're new to the area; 15,672 have not needed a provider until now; 39,060 say their provider closed their practice; 31,092 said their provider had retired; and 15,256 say their provider is retiring. None of these are what the Premier said.

My question is: Why is this government trying to detract from the very real experience and anxiety of the thousands of Nova Scotians without attachment to primary care?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We do continue to use the Need a Family Practice registry as one of the indicators that is important, but it's not the only one. We do have to look at the accessibility of health care. People languished on that list for a long time before we formed government, and there was no other access point for them, other than waiting at the emergency department.

We have created 60,000 new appointments per month - that's 720,000 per year - in order for people to access health care. We are working with the list. We understand who's on that list. We are finding different pathways for individuals who have a variety of different concerns, and we will continue to attach and provide access to people in Nova Scotia.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Also last week, the Premier told us that only some Nova Scotians need a family doctor or nurse practitioner, and that for others, virtual is working

just fine. I just tabled that. These certainly aren't the people we speak to, who without attachment to care live in constant fear of getting sick: people with young children; people who need controlled medications prescribed or titrated; people with complex health needs. Can the minister tell the 156,000 people who are waiting which one of them doesn't need a doctor?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: It is very important that if individuals are on that list, they do update their information. Recently, we've been able to attach 13,000 people. Some of those people were pregnant, for example. We know they have a time-sensitive condition that requires them to be attached to a primary care provider.

We were able to attach a number of individuals directly to diabetic education centres. There are other people who can look after complex needs, like our pharmacists who can manage chronic disease, and we're seeing that through the pilot that we have across the province. There are many ways to access care.

We have also given over 10,000 patients access to their information, so that they can be better advocates for themselves in accessing and attaching for health care.

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

MAH: CONNECTOR AND EMERGENCY ROADS - FUND

HON. BEN JESSOME: One of the single greatest issues in my community is the issue of emergency access, connector roads, and the ability to get in and out of the subdivisions. The government continues to meddle in municipal affairs when it's seemingly convenient for them to do so. I'm wondering if the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will dip his toes back into the world of municipal affairs, and put funding into connector and emergency roads to help residents around this province.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I would disagree with the word "meddle." I think the reality is that we're working for Nova Scotians very hard, and we will continue to work for Nova Scotians. The decision to have subdivisions with one way in and out was done intentionally in the past, when that was seen as a way of intentionally limiting traffic through the subdivisions. We now know that's not a good idea. HRM knows that.

This is an area of municipal jurisdiction. We've committed to doing whatever we can to help the municipality do that. We're waiting for a request from the municipality. That's the reality.

BEN JESSOME: The minister is intentionally perpetuating the situation that he is saying they're against by way of the Fall River Special Planning Area. He has to make a decision to change the Municipal Planning Strategy to enable this planning area to go forward, which is in exact contrast to everything he said about having to meet the Municipal

Planning Strategy. If he changes the municipal planning strategy to fit his mould, then of course, it's going to go forward.

Does the Minister plan to change the Municipal Planning Strategy to allow the Fall River special planning area to go forward, and perpetuate this disaster that we continue to see in my community and others?

JOHN LOHR: The reality is that the Fall River special planning area was one that was recommended by the HRM staff, with one change needed. That was a policy change, which the HRM staff recommended to council.

We continue to work with special planning areas. We continue to try to speed up development in the province and in the city. I will say that, as the member's colleagues would know, this morning at the breakfast put on by the Halifax Partnership, Carolyn Rogers, Senior Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada, said Nova Scotia was leading the way in housing starts. She complimented us. Our hard work is paying off. We're working hard on having housing for all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DED: BEDFORD BUSINESSES - ASSIST

HON. KELLY REGAN: Dozens of businesses in Bedford were flooded after a historic rainstorm hit our area. Some businesses had insurance. Some received support from federal and provincial governments for uninsurable losses. But every single business I know was out of pocket because of lost revenue. Then there was a small ray of hope: an application on the government portal for \$2,500 to help small businesses get through this tough time. Then that same bright spot suddenly disappeared because the Department of Economic Development shut down the program and told businesses it hadn't existed, even though they had applied for it.

Could the minister tell us what went wrong here and why her government isn't stepping up to help businesses affected by the flooding?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: It is a true story that my department's staff work to be ready to help in whatever way we decided. We've had these multiple devastating events that have happened in our province. In the end, the decision was made to go a different route in terms of support, and regrettably, a web page was left live. When this came to light some time later, we were able to contact all of those businesses to help them in any way we could as they come back from that event.

KELLY REGAN: I appreciate the minister's candour, but the fact of the matter is those businesses were out of pocket. They were shut down in some cases for weeks and weeks and weeks. They could have used that \$2,500. All through the floods, the answer

from this government has been, Oh, we'll help you, but only if the feds pony up first. Nova Scotians' lives have been turned upside down by a series of natural disasters. Why won't this government stand up for the business people of Bedford and help them out?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I do want to point out that we have opened up the Disaster Financial Assistance Program portal for businesses and small profits and homeowners. It's a federal program with a \$200,000 limit for small businesses. We did step up in that event. That portal - I don't know where we're at. I can certainly update the House at a later date on exactly how many payouts there have been, but we continue to work hard as a Province, as a government, on that.

[2:30 p.m.]

We recognize the year we had last year. All of the circumstances produced tremendous hardship to many, many Nova Scotians, including all those who were flooded out. That's why we were very prompt in opening up that DFAP portal. We continue to work on that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

EMO: SNOWSTORM RELIEF - PROVIDE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, I asked the Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management if he would commit to creating a grant for people and businesses in Cape Breton who lost power, groceries, and supplies, and who were misplaced due to the historic snowstorm. I was disappointed that I did not receive an answer for the people at home, but I can tell you that I was even more disappointed that the government did not fund people or businesses who lost hundreds of dollars due to the snowstorm.

In this cost of living crisis, we know that groceries and supplies are extremely expensive, and it is not right that this government picks and chooses which disaster victims to support.

My question to the minister is: Why didn't the government put forward a financial aid package to help the people impacted in Cape Breton by that historic snowstorm?

HON. JOHN LOHR: There were snowstorms where we reacted very quickly to them by opening up our own provincial coordination centre. We worked very hard on getting it, and I'll give credit to the Minister of Public Works in terms of all the resources that we got to plow snow. We worked very hard on that.

The reality is that we have announced that there will be a Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements portal for the municipalities if it is warranted. A snowstorm

DFAA portal with the federal government is a different thing: it operates in a different way, and it depends upon the total snowfall that happens over the whole season, as opposed to one event.

Certainly we recognize that there were hardships to individuals such as snow. We had a tragic fire in a public housing unit of our own, which has changed some of our policies.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I know that as the minister, it was very difficult for people. It was a situation where a lot of people were stranded in their homes for an extended period of time, and it was disappointing to see that no financial aid package came.

My next question could go to either the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing or the Minister of Public Works. It's a question about snow removal services that were in the community. The CBRM was involved, along with private contractors, along with the Province of Nova Scotia. It was a huge expense for the CBRM to look at snow removal.

My question is this: Did the Province of Nova Scotia bill the CBRM for snow removal?

HON. KIM MASLAND: First of all, the answer is no. And secondly, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all of the contractors and Public Works employees who worked so hard. Over 60,000 hours of operating gear is what was put in Cape Breton during that storm. We had 4,000 pieces of equipment there. We had the men and women who worked for the Department of Public Works working over and over, time after time, through the clock, 24 hours a day, doing everything they could to try help the folks out in Cape Breton, but no, there was no bill issued to Cape Breton.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

SLTC: SENIORS INCOME BENEFIT - PROVIDE

GARY BURRILL: My question is for the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care, whose department is no doubt aware of the recent Maytree Foundation report, which I'll table, outlining how standard poverty measures are systematically underestimating seniors' poverty, which is in fact considerably worse than had been thought. It's very disappointing that the government is preparing to pass a Budget which does not include a seniors income top-up bringing us in line with the rest of Canada. My question to the minister is: Will the minister explain why she is opposed to a seniors income benefit for Nova Scotia?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I am always happy to talk about the investments that our government is making for seniors in the province of Nova Scotia, which includes the highest staffing level in the country, 59 new nursing homes, 5,700 new rooms, just to start off. I want to remind the member of just a few of the things that I would have talked about

more at Estimates, had I had the chance. The Seniors Care Grant is a \$30 million investment in Nova Scotians. It's the easiest grant to apply for: your name, your age, your social insurance number, and your address. That's all it takes. You just send it right in, and it includes things like your heating bill.

THE SPEAKER: Before we move on to the next question, there's a lot of chatter today in the Chamber, so please keep that in mind when someone is speaking.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I submit that the response is disrespectfully evasive. The core fact that we're dealing with is that our province is the one with the worst seniors' poverty of any province in our country, a level which is almost double that of the average in the rest of Canada. My question to the minister is: How much evidence do we have to lay at this government's feet before they will bring in an actual seniors income benefit in our province?

BARBARA ADAMS: I have a very good memory of what happened under previous governments, and I know that the amount of home care that was offered for five straight years went down. There were cuts to long-term care. I'll remind the members of just some of the other investments: free home oxygen for Nova Scotians, the free personal alert, and a tax refund for low-income seniors. Nova Scotia provides a tax refund between \$50 and \$10,000 for eligible seniors in the province.

We have the new CAPABLE program, which is putting an occupational therapist, an RN, and a home renovator into the homes of low-income seniors in the province. We got that idea from the Liberal Party over a year ago. Thank you for the opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

EMO: VULNERABLE PERSONS REGISTRY - IMPLEMENT

LORELEI NICOLL: We continue to ask this government, every House session, why they won't take the lead to implement a province-wide vulnerable persons registry. People who are made vulnerable in storms should not be treated differently because of which municipality they live in. Every vulnerable person should have the same treatment in an emergency, from one end of the province to the other.

The most recent storms in Cape Breton highlighted how some people were trapped in their homes for days and unable to get out if there was an emergency - in some cases were unable to get out and did not have family close by to even check in on them. I once again will ask the Minister of the Office of Emergency Management: Why does the

Minister not think it is the right thing to do to keep vulnerable people safe across the province of Nova Scotia?

HON. JOHN LOHR: The reality is that when we look across every state and province across North America, these vulnerable persons registries are done at a municipal level. The reason for that is because the municipalities themselves have the resources. They have the firefighting resources. They know their own people best. We're starting to see that come in in Nova Scotia.

Kings County has had a Vulnerable Persons Registry for quite some time. We're seeing HRM work on that. We see this happening at the municipal level across North America, and we see it starting to happen in our province, for the reasons the member mentions, as well at a municipal level.

LORELEI NICOLL: We do know that some municipalities have the resources to respond to emergencies as well as create and support a Vulnerable Persons Registry. Creating a province-wide, voluntary vulnerable persons registry would give every vulnerable person the same urgent response and care that they need. That's the reality, Minister.

We will continue to advocate for a province-wide vulnerable persons registry, because we know it's what advocates have been calling for and it's the right thing to do. My question to the Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management is: Since the government will not commit to creating a province-wide vulnerable persons registry, will they commit to funding and supporting municipalities across the province to create vulnerable persons registries?

JOHN LOHR: As the House knows, we fund the municipalities in many different ways and we will continue to do so. The reality is that the EMO response is directed by the municipalities themselves. We have a provincial coordination centre, but the EMO - each municipality has responsibility for the EMO response.

We do have - I will point out, and I know members know - there is a voluntary vulnerable persons registry managed by Nova Scotia Power for those who are vulnerable for needing electricity, particularly if they're taking home oxygen or home dialysis. There is that as well.

We continue to watch and work with our municipalities on EMO and on the response of the EMO, and I want to just give a tip of the hat to our municipalities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

EMO: COASTAL PROTECTION - IMPROVE

ALI DUALE: We know that if we do not protect our coastline, it will have disastrous impact on our emergency response to the increase of natural disasters. This government has shifted the blame for a lot of issues onto the municipalities, with the latest being in the Coastal Protection Act. However, another story this past week told us how municipalities are left to wonder what is next when it comes to coastal protection, as the government's decision came as a surprise and with little guidance. I will table that.

My question to the minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management is: Does he not think that he and his government leaving municipalities with little direction on coastal protection is going to hurt our response to natural disasters in this changing climate?

HON. JOHN LOHR: We are working very closely with our municipal partners. We will work very closely with them on the coastal protection action plan. The reality is that there is no one answer, no one-size-fits-all. We have coastal areas that are very built up now, that are under water right now, that we have to build to protect the coastline. There are other areas where we want to protect the natural environment.

We will work very closely with our municipalities. We know that the municipalities have the primary jurisdiction for land-use bylaws. We'll work closely with them by providing sample bylaws. We'll provide flood line mapping. To say there's a one-size-fits-all solution that we can implement from Halifax - I would disagree with that. I think the only way we can do this is to work forward case by case.

ALI DUALE: Speaker, look at what happened to the many homes across this province. If we had a Coastal Protection Act regulated and mandatory across the province, we could do more to protect people around the province. Hurricane season is coming. We are concerned that without a regulation for our coast, more people will get hurt. Homes will be lost. Our response to an emergency will be worse than if we had coastal protection. My question to the minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management is: Does he agree that if we don't protect our coastline, there could be a tragic outcome for people of this province?

JOHN LOHR: Speaker, this question points to the very conflict I hear coming from different questions across from the Opposition. The question is, are we protecting the natural environment, which is one of the intents in the Coastal Protection Act, or are we protecting the built environment and homes? I hear the member advocating for protecting homes.

This is the big question. This is the conflict. Where do we do one, and where do we do the other? I hear both types of questions coming from across the floor. That is why we're doing an action plan that will enable us to work with our municipalities to determine

exactly where we have to do one and where we have to do the other. Both things need to be done. That's the reality.

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

MAH: WILDFIRE HOME LOSS - INTERVENE

HON. BEN JESSOME: Folks who lost their houses in the wildfire are returning home only to find that their property taxes are going up. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing does have the ability to unilaterally make a change to accommodate the situation so that folks who suffered a disaster from this wildfire will not see the property tax cap go up, resulting in higher property taxes. Will the minister intervene? He has the ability to do it.

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. JOHN LOHR: The reality is that the Property Valuation Services Corporation - PVSC - is enabled by provincial legislation but is run by a board of directors of municipal leaders. It has within its ability to do exactly what the member is saying, but we know what their decision was. They are treating these fires as they have treated other fires in the past. They are holding the cap rate for every individual, so whatever rate that was - if they were at a 25 per cent cap, they are holding that cap rate. We respect that.

We realize it's a challenging situation for anyone who has lost their home. Our heart goes out to them. We also know that PVSC is additionally for those who were directly . . .

BEN JESSOME: Speaker, the minister just gave a reason why the organization can't make the change and why they have to follow the Xs and Os. What I'm asking is for the minister to show leadership, to look at the situation now and into the future for folks who experience these disasters so that they don't have to come back, rebuild their homes, and find out that their property taxes are going to go up.

He has the ability to make the change. He has said his heart goes out to this community. If his heart goes out to this community and these victims, then put his money where his mouth is and get it done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville. I'd like him to stand in his place, please, and just retract the comment and apologize for "Put your money where your mouth is." (Interruption) To retract - it's unparliamentary to say "Put your money where your mouth is." If you could retract that and apologize, please.

BEN JESSOME: I will retract that statement. I apologize for the tone of the statement and the statement.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

JOHN LOHR: Additionally, we know through correspondence that PVSC will - those impacted directly by the wildfires will receive an additional 15 per cent reduction in their assessed value. This is a long-standing policy by PVSC, and certainly the municipalities are the ones that set taxation rates. We hope that, in terms of how taxation rates are set for all residents in municipalities, they will take the struggle of all the taxation required into account, both for those who are victims of the wildfires and for all residents.

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

AMH: PSYCHIATRY ACCESS - IMPROVE

LISA LACHANCE: On February 20th, every Nova Scotia child and adolescent psychiatrist sent a letter to 25 MLAs, including the Premier and the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, expressing their concerns about the rollout of Bill No. 334. To date, they've received no response from government members. Now they're being told that the purpose of Bill No. 334 is completely changing. Instead of the minister's stated intention of providing additional access to people with mild to moderate needs, Bill No. 334 will focus more on the more complex, severe patients we see in the public mental health system. I'll table that.

The psychiatrists have said they're concerned about safety and systemic challenges related to the relative lack of integration, peer supervision, oversight, and access to psychiatry. Will the minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health listen to the team of experts working for the well-being of children and adolescents?

HON. BRIAN COMER: The Health Services and Insurance Act is really enabling the legislation for access to care for Nova Scotians. It's the first publicly funded addictions and mental health care legislation of the kind in the country, so we certainly take feedback from clinicians very seriously. I did sign off on correspondence to respond to that letter this morning, and we certainly will have a continued dialogue with these clinicians.

LISA LACHANCE: There are also concerns about the pilot to decrease wait times for autism and ADHD assessments. Private psychologists working under the pilot are completing in-depth assessments and being paid \$4,000 for each; psychologists working on the public system are being told to limit the scope of their assessments from what would constitute best clinical practice and are only being paid \$750 per assessment. I'll table that.

There is a fear that this disparity will lead to more public psychologists leaving to work privately. Recent data shows that there are 31 psychologist vacancies within the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Psychiatrists also agree, saying the damage to team morale and to our public mental health system workforce is already happening. How can the minister

claim to take the concerns of Nova Scotia's mental health professionals seriously if he didn't respond until maybe this morning?

BRIAN COMER: What I do know with this pilot specifically: that there have been over 50 families who have received diagnostic tests that wouldn't have otherwise. Access is our number one priority and always has been.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: 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 do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise to address the Budget and its relation to workers and their rights. Several organizations representing workers have criticized the Progressive Conservative Budget.

Nova Scotia Federation of Labour's president, Danny Cavanagh, representing approximately 70,000 union members of affiliated unions in more than 350 locals, expressed concerns. According to Cavanagh, the provincial Budget needs to go further, and the PC government's failure to prioritize significant relief for workers burdens them with the increasing costs.

The relentless increase in the cost of essentials such as food, housing, heat, transportation, and power bills has added further hardships to workers. Workers, like everyone else, desperately need financial support due to these skyrocketing bills while their wages struggle to keep up.

Workers do have some relief, such as the indexing of tax brackets against inflation. There is a commitment to add more beds in the long-term care sector in this budget, but what we need is workers to provide for these expanded services. We've heard for years

from workers and the unions that Nova Scotia's long-term care and home support sectors have been struggling under the weight of working short with low pay, many living below the poverty line, living paycheque to paycheque with poor benefits.

According to CUPE Nova Scotia president Nan McFadgen, the Budget claims an increase in funding, an additional 350 beds, and easier transitions to home support for those who want to remain in their homes. However, \$9.6 million dedicated to this effort does not offer enough support for the care workers.

According to CUPE Nova Scotia, home support workers make less than their counterparts in acute and long-term care while having to rely on their vehicles to move between clients. If the government is serious about helping people stay in their homes safely, then the government must ensure that we have enough home support workers. However, this government is falling short.

Many assume full-time work is a pathway out of poverty, but many Nova Scotians who work at or around the minimum wage face a different reality. Finally, after a long wait, Nova Scotians will reach \$15.50 an hour on April 1st; however, the research has shown that the lowest living wage in the province should be \$22.85, and at its highest, \$26.50 per hour.

So many Nova Scotians are identifying as working poor. They go to work, but do not make enough money to live. They struggle to pay bills, put food on the table, heat their homes, pay their rent or their mortgages. I know Nova Scotians who work, and yet they are living in their cars, they're couch-surfing. Some have been living in tents.

I know Nova Scotians who work but can't afford medications. If Nova Scotians had enough income, they would not be forced to choose on a daily basis between heating their homes, food, medications, and housing. People must be able to afford healthy food. They must be able to afford heat, power, medications, and housing. To be healthy, people need a living wage.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Labour president, Danny Cavanagh, also called on the government to prioritize the workers' needs. He and the unions the Federation of Labour represents are calling on the government for more union jobs and higher wages to drive the economy.

Speaker, the government has stated they want to support workers. If that is the case, then I have a list of things the government can do - not the full list but it's a start. The PC government must provide at least 10 paid sick days yearly. During COVID-19, as businesses began to reopen, we saw the need for paid sick days. It is good public health policy that must be made available to all workers in Nova Scotia. It minimizes outbreaks of diseases by ensuring that all workers can stay home while they're sick.

Without paid sick days, many working Nova Scotians cannot afford to lose a day's pay, let alone isolate for the required time. People with 10 or more sick days are likely to use them to access preventive health care services and stay home while they're sick, reducing long-term health care costs and the spread of illness in the workplace.

Prince Edward Island has just put in three paid sick days. Why not Nova Scotia? P.E.I. is doing it - and I'm not advocating for three, I'm advocating for more, but three is more than what we don't have right now in Nova Scotia.

This government could protect workers from unjust firings and wrongful dismissals. The government could end the practice of contract flipping, and support wage protection and job security for workers when companies change ownership or contracts expire. The government could promote full-time work by offering additional hours to existing part-time workers before hiring new employees.

This government could legislate tip theft. The government must take action to prevent an employer from withholding tips from employees or using tips as wages. Most workers in the service industry in Nova Scotia make minimum wage and rely on tips to make ends meet. Nova Scotia is the only province in Atlantic Canada without legislation that protects workers against employers taking all or part of their tips. British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador all have a form of tip theft protection. Why not Nova Scotia?

Banning NDAs from being used in cases of sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination is something the government can do to protect workers. Employers have used NDAs in the workforce to cover up criminal activities, sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination. Employers come from a place of power over these employees and NDAs are used to protect the harasser who can continue the behaviour, allowing abusive and toxic workplaces.

The government must make it easier for workers to join a union by allowing a single-step certification. Single-step certification will enable workers to join a union without a vote if more than half the members are in good standing. This single step is crucial to protecting workers' rights to unionize without being intimidated by the employer. What we have learned is that often when workers want to unionize and they have to go through the vote process, that is the time the employer uses intimidation tactics on the workers.

We must allow the workers to have this ability to join unions. Unions create balance and fairness in the workplace. Single-step certification laws are in British Columbia, Quebec, New Brunswick, P.E.I., and federally regulated workplaces. Again, why not Nova Scotia?

Banning scab workers: The Autoport workers remain on strike, with the Canadian National Railway Company using scab workers. The NSTU is expected to hold a strike vote in April. We must ban the use of scab workers in Nova Scotia. Coming from a mining community that stood the gaff in 1925, I can attest to the fact that we need to ban scab labour once and for all in Nova Scotia.

Using scab labour is the most despicable tool the employer has at their disposal. The evidence is clear: Strikes and lockouts last longer when scabs are used. Their mere presence creates tensions and violence, leaving communities to handle the fallout for years to come. Scab labour pits workers against workers, neighbours against neighbours.

[3:00 p.m.]

It is a practice, again, that must be banned. Quebec and B.C. have banned scab labour, and the sky has not fallen. In fact, they have two of the most successful collective bargaining regimes in the entire country. Anti-scab legislation has passed second reading at the House of Commons. The feds support it. It has created one of the best collective bargaining regimes in the country in B.C. and Quebec. Why not in Nova Scotia?

Before I conclude, I wish to add one more thing the government can do for workers. This PC government must respect the collective bargaining process by bargaining in good faith. Too often, what we have been seeing as of late is that the unions get to the point where the collective bargaining process has broken down. They're not even walking out with the Sobeys flyer anymore. They're walking out with an index card because government doesn't want to discuss anything. Then what happens after the strike vote has been taken, after workers have given the notice of going on strike? At the eleventh hour, the government finally comes to the table with a real deal.

That is not bargaining in good faith. Bargaining in good faith is actually starting the process fairly from the start, without creating the uncertainty and tension that goes before a strike vote has been conducted. Then after the strike vote, the preparation that workers must do to get prepared to get on the line - it's a lot of work. It's a lot of emotional work - the prep that they have to do with their families for what this strike could mean. At the eleventh hour, this government finally comes up with a deal. This has happened on several occasions. It's time to stop this kind of bargaining. It's not even bargaining. You can't call it bargaining. It's time to stop and actually start the fair collective bargaining process in good faith, and not wait till the eleventh hour to start it.

There are many more things this government can do for workers. This is only a short list. I have a longer list. These are a few of the much-needed laws and practices this government can begin with.

With that, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm going to just take a few minutes to talk in Supply. I had the chance to speak a couple of weeks ago as the budget was introduced. I talked a bit about some of the things that I thought were good, and some of the things that I thought weren't as great. I talked a bit about some of the narrative that is out in the community now that people have had the opportunity to absorb what the budget is.

I want to talk a bit about what I talked about early in Estimates last week - about government support around disability, and the supports around supporting families who may have a loved one with a disability. There's a lot of work that's under way through successive governments when it comes to this important work.

There were a lot of questions asked last week, with some limited answers on what the government plan is in this budget. We know that there's a court-mandated decision that the government, regardless of who was in government, would have to address. That will be interesting to see how that all rolls out in the coming year.

Stephen McNeil used to say it all the time - it was something that always stuck with me - that everybody needs to see themselves within their community. In saying that, we all need to ensure that as communities, we're doing whatever we can to provide the family supports, and also the community supports - that could be infrastructure, programs, financial support - for folks who are living with a disability.

I've had the opportunity to talk to stakeholders, and there were a number of comments that really hit home for me, and talking to someone at our caucus who talked about how a child goes through the system. There are supports there throughout the system. I think we could actually strengthen those supports with additional TAs in earlier grades. I'll have that conversation in another debate.

A child goes through that educational journey. There are supports within the school system which always need to be enhanced. We should always be trying to adjust to ensure that the best supports are there and to provide equality and inclusivity for everyone. But a child will go through the school system, and what this stakeholder said - this wonderful mother I had the opportunity to meet - talked about that cliff that comes after the school system.

A child receives supports. They graduate into being an adult. Then all of a sudden, that support stops, or it's very limited, because they're outside of the school system. That's where you start to see these organizations that successive governments have supported. I use the examples from home. All MLAs have examples in their communities, but I use Horizon Achievement Centre, Breton Ability Centre, and Haley Street Adult Services Centre. These wonderful organizations give adults with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to gain important training, and also a community connection.

They're involved with pretty much everything at home, and it's important - but there's a wait-list. I asked in Estimates last week if there would be increased capacity for these organizations, which I think is important. It's not the ultimate answer, but it's important that if we can provide more funding for more seats, we would give more families the opportunity to participate in these wonderful organizations. Based on the answer that I received, I would strongly say that that's not going to happen. That is a disappointment, because that's one way we can really help families - by providing more access to those wonderful organizations.

Again, it goes back to that cliff. What this mother said - it sticks with me - was: My child didn't go through school to graduate to a wait-list. That's a very strong statement coming from a parent whom we know just loves her child. She has multiple children. Her family is very closely connected. The child receives supports through school. The child is going to graduate. Some of those supports will fall off, and she has to leave work now to stay home. Well, she loves her child, so she's going to do whatever she can to support him.

The problem is that now that those supports are gone, she has to leave work. How many families are out there in that situation? I would argue that there are a lot. The financial strain that brings to many families to support - especially in today's world, where everything is so much more expensive - that financial strain on families is very difficult because of the lack of supports that come after the school years are complete.

I think that it's an important conversation. It's one that I'm starting to have across the province. They are very consistent themes. There are a lot of families who are leaving the workforce to look after their child or children. Financial aid is very limited. There is some tax relief that families can apply for, whether through the feds or - I'm investigating with the Province. These are the things from an inclusivity perspective, from supporting families that the government needs to be - not only in this budget but in budgets to come - I think that's something important that needs to be discussed.

It's tough. It's tough and it's unfortunate because a family's just trying to support one another, do their best to be part of the community, and give every one of their children the best opportunity possible. There are great organizations that are already established. There are great advocates out there, and to all of them, I want to thank them, and the educators.

As I said, my wife is a learning centre teacher at one of the local elementary schools. She taught all levels, and she talks about the cliff. The kids who graduated when she was in high school, and then what was happening was that children were graduating to a wait-list. They wanted to go to Horizon or they wanted to go to any one of these wonderful organizations that exist, and they're waiting. Sometimes it's a big list. It's bigger than many people may realize. One of the easiest things that the government could have done in this budget is provide more funding to these organizations so they could open up more seats to allow more people and families to participate. But that was not in the Budget.

It was an opportunity to talk about the Department of Community Services in Estimates, and a little bit of time in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. I think we could be making some more investments in the early years when it comes to the education system around TAs. I've heard locally at home there were big cuts to teaching assistants. That has been a concern - decisions made at the local level, where we've seen cuts to TAs. I think the more teachers' assistants we can have earlier on in the journey of education will allow classes to identify the kids who may need more support earlier on.

[3:15 p.m.]

That's something else that I would have liked to have seen in this budget from the government - more supports on the early end for kids who may need the extra support. It allows the schools to identify the children who need help earlier on. It allows the setup for those individual program plans earlier on, so that we can get those supports in place. I did want to focus a lot on that today, as the critic for both.

As I said, there are amazing organizations and advocates out there that support many facets of the disability sector and support those families and people who need that extra support who may be living with - I'm not a big fan of the word "disability." I like "ability." I think everybody's unique. Everybody's on a different journey, but some people need more supports. I want to continue to advocate for that, based on the work that my wife does, based on the fact that my mother worked at the Children's Training Centre in Sydney. It's important to our family. It's something that we've seen families advocate for years for - for additional support.

As I said, one of the things we could have done in this budget was increase the capacity of these organizations, and we're not. You don't need to build anything new, because they already exist. A few years back our government made some significant investments around a lot of these organizations that support families. One of these new things they could have done they didn't. We will be watching very closely as not only the Department of Community Services but the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development roll out supports around autism, roll out supports around inclusivity in communities, as they make the transition from the larger living buildings where a lot of these organizations were set. The court decision now says that's in place, there's a mandate, there's a timeline. They need to move away from that model, so we'll be watching that very closely to see how that rolls out.

For me, anything we can do for our kids is amazing. I said that about the lunch program, but in the education system, I think one of the things we can do for our kids and their families is look at that earlier intervention around children who are in Primary and Grades 1, 2, and 3. If we can provide specific dedicated teacher's assistants to these classrooms where their responsibility is to help support the teacher, help support the kids and be able to make assessments a little bit earlier in the journey, we can help a lot more

kids earlier on, help them establish a good foundation earlier on, so they can be successful - and of course, support the family as well.

I'll just say in my last two minutes - and I talked about this - there is a cliff that our children hit when they leave school if they are receiving support through the school system. There are ways in which the government can help support that transition from school to beyond school and the community. That's what I was looking for in the Budget. I'm not seeing a lot of it right now.

As I said, one of the things they could be doing is the additional seats in these wonderful organizations. Open some spaces, get more people in. It gives them the opportunity to provide more training opportunities, whether it's trades or whether it's skills. There's a list a mile long of these organizations that provide so many life skills, but also the sense of community and friendship. You go to Horizon Achievement Centre or any one of these organizations in Sydney - all the families and clients that use the facilities are the best of friends. It is a wonderful atmosphere, and it gives folks - I use the term "graduate to the couch," and that's really sad because as this mother said, you don't raise your child to graduate to a wait-list. In a lot of cases that is happening. Nobody wants that, and it would be on anybody who is in government to try to figure this out.

I approach this speech as, Hey, there are things I like in the Budget, there are things that I have concerns about in the Budget. We'll get into that, but I just want to put my best foot forward for families who have come forward and said that not only do we need more supports in schools - and schools are doing their best to help and support and love and care for children - but we also need to do something about that transition for many kids who are on disability between school and the community. Right now, unfortunately, there's not enough being done, in my opinion.

I don't have all the answers. That's why I'm going to do my best to speak to as many families as I can to find out what the best answers are. From the government perspective, I think it's money well spent. As I said, there are great organizations, great advocates and really wonderful parents who will help in making those decisions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I just want to say a couple of things about the budget that I wasn't able to say in Estimates, largely because of time and well, the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage didn't get a chance to get called this year. I feel bad for the Minister of CCTH because he wasn't able to answer some questions and talk about how great that department is.

Last year in the budget when the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, who now happens to be the Minister of CCTH, read the Budget Speech - I'm talking about last year now - there was a moment when I teared up, because there was a massive increase to the

CCTH budget for the purposes of expanding operating grants in the province. That was a great moment.

Had I been able to talk to the minister this year in Estimates, I would have asked questions about that money. What has happened with it? How many new operating organizations have come on to the operating grant program? How many existing operating grant recipients got increases? Are there plans for further expansion of that money? Are there any plans for money for non-operating organizations - just a general increase to the budget of arts and cultural organizations and professional and non-professional individual artists?

I ask all these questions because I don't see any changes in the budget from last year to this year. I expect that means there is no increase for arts in Nova Scotia this year. Even though there was a big increase last year, it doesn't mean we can take the foot off the gas. It doesn't mean that we can just forget about the arts now because frankly, arts funding was frozen for so darn long - I think since the days of the previous Conservative government - I'm sorry, Progressive Conservative government. That should be a long time - that means Progressive Conservative government, NDP, Liberal, and now back to Progressive Conservative. That's a heck of a long time for no increases in arts funding. Even though there was an increase in operating funding last year, the individual artists and the organizations that aren't on operating haven't seen any increases still for a good long.

Had I been able to question the minister, I would have asked about this. I just wanted to take this opportunity to remind everyone about how important it is that we support our artists, art-making, and the intricate connection between art-making and art-consuming, as it were, and economic development, tourism, the environment, education, and health and wellness. Art and culture are intricately related to all those big-budget items in the world, in this province, in Canada, and in our communities. It's a shame to have very little focus on that.

I would have also asked the minister about funding for capital spaces. A couple of years ago, there was much fanfare about money given to the Bus Stop Theatre, for instance, and money given to Culture Link CIC for the Light House Arts Centre. We also have an incredibly important piece of arts infrastructure called the Khyber Centre for the Arts that is struggling to gather funds to renovate the building on Barrington Street and to re-open as a vibrant and important space for artists of all disciplines - and queer artists especially. There's a big connection between the Khyber and the queer community. The history of the Khyber and the Turret Arts Space is part of queer history in Nova Scotia. I would have asked the minister about funding for infrastructure and cultural spaces.

I would have also asked the minister if there has been any real work on or any look at the facilities fund, which is in his department and considered to be under sport and recreation - if there has been any view to making that program, which is a pretty rich program and a helpful program by all accounts, available to arts organizations. Just because

there's a bunch of capital money given to an arts organization doesn't mean, once the renovations are done, the building is purchased, or a space is open, that it's not going to have any capital expenses. Really, the only place for capital expenses in terms of arts and culture is Canada Council for the Arts, and that program is hard to access. You must have big, giant budgets. We need something in Nova Scotia. It has been recognized by plenty of organizations.

I would have also asked the minister if he had given any time to the idea of compassionate budgeting, which is an idea whose time has come, where organizations that apply for funding from the government for anything, not just arts and culture, but in any part of the government that gives grants, that we allow folks to budget in compassionate needs.

Whether that means having a support person with somebody or whether that means budgeting for child care, or whether that means budgeting for extra plane tickets if someone has to go on a trip for work - those kinds of things - that's compassionate budgeting and it's important.

I also just want to say, while I'm taking the time, very quickly, that I have just become aware of some really problematic issues with the tax credit for people who are taking fertility treatments. That issue is that so far, it seems that sperm is not an eligible expense in fertility treatments, which makes zero sense.

I urge the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I urge the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, I urge the Minister of Health and Wellness to take a quick look at this and make sure that that tax credit, which is important for many, many people, covers the cost of sperm, which is the most expensive part of fertility treatments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The way this government has approached the Financial Measures Act is very concerning. There are no less than 15 provincial acts being impacted by this one omnibus bill - again, the majority of which are not even related to the Budget of the province.

I would say the most concerning is the change this government is moving forward with to force doctors and their record-keepers to give individual Nova Scotians' personal health information - this is verbatim in the changes in the Act - to require doctors to give personal health information to the minister or the minister's designate. That could be a political staffer, that could be a deputy minister, or that could be a policy person.

This is the scariest and most consequential piece of legislation that this government is bringing in and the fact that this government has tried to conceal it in the Financial

Measures Act is shocking. They have not consulted with doctors. That's been made very clear because, in fact, doctors are raising the alarm bells on this component of the Financial Measures Act in a very serious way.

Doctors Nova Scotia clearly was not even engaged or consulted in this conversation. Dr. Colin Audain - I will quote some of his statements here: "The way that the legislation is written is quite broad and it's not entirely clear the information they" - the minister - "might be accessing." This forces - and again, this is the language from the Act - care providers "to disclose personal health information to the Minister or a person acting on behalf of the Minister for the purposes of planning and management of the health system."

This, according to Dr. Audain, could severely compromise the therapeutic relationship between doctors and their patients. That in and of itself is very concerning.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons was not involved in the consultation of this. Again, this fundamentally changes the nature of the privacy of individuals' personal health information, the very - well - personal, sensitive information that somebody is telling their doctor or their health care provider, and now the PC government is forcing doctors to hand this information over to the minister. I don't know any Nova Scotian who wants politicians having access to their health care information.

I certainly don't want the minister to have access to my personal health information. What are they going to do with it? The information given so far - the reasons why - certainly is not sufficient and it's been inconsistent. The minister and the Premier first said it's aggregated information that we want for the sake of planning. As has been pointed out by doctors in this province, that aggregated data is already collected by the Health Authority in the form of billing codes, lab results, all the things that are recorded in the health care system. Then the Premier went on to say in Estimates that, well, this will help us tailor each individual's personalized health care plan. If it's not the personal health information that the government is getting, how could it help tailor a personalized health plan? It doesn't make sense.

While this might seem innocuous to people currently, we have to remind the House and people that governments change. The political climate changes. I bet you five or six years ago, women in the U.S. didn't think it would be a concern that their abortion records could be obtained. They didn't think that was going to be a concern, that their reproductive health rights would be in jeopardy because of their government.

I think of trans individuals in this province who have very sensitive health information that is being provided to their health care professional that will now be in the hands of a partisan minister. Again, I don't think the current minister is nefarious with any intention here, but we are setting a very dangerous precedent with giving access to a

partisanly elected individual and mandating doctors to give them personal health information. It seems absolutely ludicrous and, I think, scary for me and for a lot of people.

The other factor we need to consider here is this government has not demonstrated a very good ability at protecting people's personal records. A hundred thousand staff people - including many members, if not all members of this Chamber - as a result of a hack, had our social insurance numbers and our personal information taken by bad actors. Imagine the damage that could have happened to people's lives if their personal health information was also hacked and taken.

[3:30 p.m.]

We've actually seen examples of that in other jurisdictions, where doctors' offices are hacked, or certain organizations are hacked, and people lose their health information. It's then ransomed back to them. It's a very precarious situation. Even asking questions to the Minister of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions, it was made very clear in the first question that I asked that his department wasn't even involved with this - didn't even do a risk analysis.

What we got was bombast and attacks on the Opposition, when really, we're asking a very simple question: If this government is going to force doctors to give over people's personal health information, are they going to be protected by the cybersecurity that we have in place? It's very clear that that department didn't even look at this issue. They weren't even consulted with it.

We are facing a situation here in Nova Scotia, for reasons that are unknown to us and haven't been clearly articulated - and again, the story has changed for the rationale from this government, which, I hate to point out, has been consistent with the majority of legislation that they've brought in - that without consent of the patient, without consent or agreement by the doctors, or even consulting them, everybody's health information is now going to be able to be accessed by the Minister of Health and Wellness or a designate.

What is going to stop a political staffer from going in there and finding the personal health information of political opponents, or people whom they have an interest in? What is protecting patients from cybersecurity threats? How will this impact the patient-doctor relationship, where now, if patients know that they're going in to confide in their health care professional - whether it's for mental health issues, or other general health issues with their family doctor or nurse practitioner - how is that going to impact what they're willing to share and confide in with their health care professionals?

No one wants this to happen. I haven't talked to one Nova Scotian who said, You know what we need to do to fix the health care system is to give the Minister of Health and Wellness access to my personal health information, my personal health records. Something that is completely sacred to the doctor and the patient.

This is ill-conceived. It's dangerous. We don't even know if this will be allowed or in line with federal legislation, and the government can't answer any questions on this. The most they can say is, well, we need data to make better decisions. This government is not a data-driven decision-making organization. Point to key decisions that this government has made - some of their biggest decisions - and tell me how they've been driven by data. They've been driven by politics and headline-chasing, and that increases my concern here because this is the most partisan government that we have seen since the 1980s in this province, that will put their interests ahead of the interests of Nova Scotians and I think we're seeing it again here.

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The House will now resolve into the Committee of the Whole House on Supply. There will be a brief recess while the committee is set up.

[3:44 p.m. The House resolved itself into CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Danielle Barkhouse in the Chair.]

[7:58 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 come to agreement on 43 Estimate resolutions. The Chair has been instructed to recommend these Estimates to the favorable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House concurs in the report of the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Introduction of Bills.

[8:00 p.m.]

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

[INTRODUCTION OF BILLS]

Bill No. 453 - An Act to Provide for Defraying Certain Charges and Expenses of the Public Service of the Province. (Hon. Allan MacMaster)

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, I move that Bill No. 453 be now read a second time.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 453.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, I move that Bill No. 453 be now read a third time and do pass.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 453.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[8:01 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote, I'll just remind all members to remain

completely silent while the Clerks record your vote. I'll remind all members to stand up with a simple "yea" or "nay."

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[8:16 p.m.]

YEAS

Hon. Brad Johns
Hon. Tory Rushton
Hon. Barbara Adams
Hon. Kim Masland
Hon. Tim Houston
Hon. Alan MacMaster
Hon. Twila Grosse
Hon. Michelle Thompson
Hon. John Lohr
Hon. Colton LeBlanc
Hon. Timothy Halman
Hon. Kent Smith
Dave Ritcey
Hon. Brian Wong
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek
Hon. Brian Comer
Hon. Brendan Maguire
Hon. Jill Balsler
Hon. Trevor Boudreau
Hon. Greg Morrow
Hon. Becky Druhan
John White
Nolan Young
John A. MacDonald
Hon. Pat Dunn
Hon. Keith Bain
Chris Palmer
Melissa Sheehy-Richard
Tom Taggart
Larry Harrison
Hon. Steve Craig

NAYS

Hon. Patricia Arab
Hon. Keith Irving
Hon. Tony Ince
Hon. Derek Mombourquette
Hon. Zach Churchill
Hon. Kelly Regan
Hon. Iain Rankin
Claudia Chender
Susan Leblanc
Kendra Coombes
Suzy Hansen
Gary Burrill
Lisa Lachance
Rafah DiCostanzo
Ali Duale
Lorelei Nicoll
Hon. Ben Jessome
Braedon Clark
Carman Kerr
Ronnie LeBlanc
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

THE CLERK: For, 31. Against, 21.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

Ordered that the bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will have a short recess while the committee sets up.

[8:33 p.m. The House resolved into CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Danielle Barkhouse in the Chair.]

[9:51 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Nolan Young in the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: 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 Bill No. 419 and has made progress.

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 Wednesday, March 27th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Tomorrow is Opposition Day, so I'll turn it over to the Opposition to call the Business. After Opposition Business, we'll move into Committee of the Whole House on Bills and Third Reading of Bills No. 404 and 407.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Opposition House Leader.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Opposition Business for tomorrow will be second reading on Bills No. 450, 423, and 413.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that we do now rise to meet again on Wednesday, March 27th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 9:52 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 987**

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Amanda Maier, the owner of Integrative Heart Work, an osteopathic clinic located in Fairview-Clayton Park, exemplifies a dedication to holistic wellness and healing, driven by her fascination with the intricacies of the human body, leading her to receive a Diploma in Massage Therapy and a Bachelor of Science with honors in Osteopathy in 2020; and

Whereas Amanda's client-centered approach to her practice offers a novel perspective on illness, emphasizing the importance of dismantling preconceived notions and rebuilding individuals towards wholeness, reflecting her belief that effective treatment and healing require a comprehensive understanding of the individual; and

Whereas Amanda Maier's diverse talents extend beyond her professional pursuits, as evidenced by her joy in travel, wine culture (as a certified sommelier), and writing, with her debut novel independently published in March 2023 showcasing her creative spirit and storytelling prowess;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends gratitude to Amanda Maier for her significant contributions to Fairview-Clayton Park, recognizing her dedication to holistic wellness and healing, and her enriching presence in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 988

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Amy MacAulay, owner of Embrace Doula, demonstrates a steadfast commitment to providing postpartum support to families in Fairview Clayton Park and across the HRM as a Certified Postpartum Doula, drawing from over a decade of experience and extensive training; and

Whereas Amy's compassionate approach to postpartum support encompasses guiding families through the challenges of early parenthood, including sleep deprivation, feeding difficulties, postpartum recovery, and the adjustment to new parenthood, understanding the importance of having a supportive presence during this transformative journey as a mother of two herself; and

Whereas Amy MacAulay's leadership of a team of compassionate postpartum doulas ensures that each client receives the support they need to navigate their postpartum journey with confidence and ease, making a significant difference in the lives of families during a time when healthcare services are stretched to their limit;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends heartfelt gratitude to Amy MacAulay for her dedication to supporting families during their postpartum period, making their experience a little less chaotic and fostering a sense of confidence and ease during this transformative time.

RESOLUTION NO. 989

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Anna Shabalina, the talented owner of Soul Strings Music School, exemplifies a dedication to nurturing students into professional musicians through a carefully crafted music program designed to foster self-discovery and mastery over 15 years of experience; and

Whereas Anna's passion for music transcends boundaries, as evidenced by her extensive travels and collaborations with musicians from around the globe, with Fairview Clayton Park serving as her chosen home to share her love for music through performances and teaching, exploring diverse cultures and enriching the community with her musical talents; and

Whereas Anna Shabalina's exceptional talent and creativity have garnered widespread acclaim, with her unique sound captivating audiences worldwide, whether through live performances or recordings, showcasing her technical prowess and musical versatility;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commends Anna Shabalina for her dedication to her craft and her contributions to the world of music, encouraging all members to experience the unforgettable performances that showcase her remarkable talent.

RESOLUTION NO. 990

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Audrey Cuvilier, owner of From SEA To You - Sea Glass Jewelry, exemplifies entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and commitment to serving others through her beautiful creations and community involvement; and

Whereas Audrey's handmade sea glass jewelry, lanterns, and framed art showcase her talent and passion for handmade craftsmanship, reflecting her commitment to quality and authenticity, and can be found at various markets around Halifax, online, and at the Fairview-Clayton Park Farmers Market; and

Whereas Audrey generously donates her creations to organizations such as the Fairview Food Pantry and the Parkinson's Society, and volunteers her time with Square Roots Fairview Clayton Park, continuing to enhance the lives of those in need in our community, further demonstrating her dedication to helping others in need through her 50th donation with Canadian Blood Services last year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applauds Audrey Cuvilier for her entrepreneurial spirit, creativity, and dedication to serving others, recognizing that her contributions enrich our community and inspire us all.

RESOLUTION NO. 991

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Dr. Erin Mackay, the owner of Fairview Chiropractic and Massage, exemplifies excellence in chiropractic care, holding a Bachelor of Science from Acadia University and graduating with distinction from the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in 2001, where she was honoured with the prestigious Herbert K. Lee Award for her outstanding academic, clinical, and altruistic achievements; and

Whereas with over two decades of experience, Dr. Mackay has dedicated herself to providing exceptional chiropractic care to her patients, leading an all-female team of healthcare professionals who share her belief in holistic wellness and patient-centered treatment, serving the residents of Fairview-Clayton Park since 2007; and

Whereas Dr. Erin Mackay's commitment to promoting health and vitality extends beyond her clinic, as she actively participates in running events across the Maritime provinces and enjoys the beauty of the great outdoors with her loved ones, including clinic puppy Lennox, who joined the team in 2022;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly expresses gratitude to Dr. Erin Mackay and the staff at Fairview Chiropractic and Massage for their dedication to promoting health and vitality in our community, and acknowledges their leadership and compassionate care which inspires us all.

RESOLUTION NO. 992

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas chefs Kelly-Jo Beck and Lalanya Kaizer, co-owners of Easy Street Diner in Fairview, exemplify a dedication to quality ingredients and homemade goodness, crafting each menu item with care and attention to detail; and

Whereas their commitment to authenticity is evident in practices such as fermenting their own vegan kimchi and brining and smoking their bacon and pastrami in-house, showcasing their passion for culinary excellence; and

Whereas Easy Street Diner transcends being merely a place to dine, as an LGBTQ-friendly establishment, it fosters a sense of community and belonging, ensuring that all patrons feel welcomed and included, thereby becoming a beloved staple in Fairview;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends recognition to chefs Kelly-Jo Beck and Lalanya Kaizer for their commitment to quality, authenticity, and inclusivity at Easy Street Diner, inviting all members to experience the warm welcome and delicious flavors that make it a Fairview favorite.

RESOLUTION NO. 993

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas the community of Fairview-Clayton Park boasts over 15 daycare and day home locations, each owned, operated, or managed by women, highlighting the leadership and entrepreneurial spirit of women in our community during Women's History Month; and

Whereas these daycare centers, guided by dedicated women, serve as more than mere safe havens for children, but as nurturing environments where young minds are enriched, curiosity is fostered, and futures are shaped, thereby making a profound impact on shaping the lives of our children and contributing to the overall well-being of our community; and

Whereas the positive influence of these women-led centers extends beyond the children they care for, reaching families and fostering a sense of community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and celebrate the invaluable role that these women play in shaping the next generation with care, compassion, and dedication during Women's History Month.

RESOLUTION NO. 994

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas the Fairview Food Pantry is to be congratulated on the resounding success of their recent fundraiser held at Freeman's in Fairview, which saw over 70 community members in attendance enjoying a delicious meal of Acadian fish and chips and the musical stylings of Touch of Grey, fostering a fantastic evening of community spirit and support; and

Whereas the event's success was further enhanced by the generous donations from various community organizations to the silent auction, which played a crucial role in raising funds to support the Fairview Food Pantry and ensure that neighbors in need have access to essential resources; and

Whereas special recognition is due to Dave Aalders, Yvonne Noel, and Allison Covert for their dedication and efforts in organizing the event, as well as to all individuals involved for their incredible generosity and commitment to the well-being of our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends heartfelt congratulations to the Fairview Food Pantry, Dave Aalders, Yvonne Noel, Allison

Covert, and all contributors for their outstanding efforts in organizing and supporting the successful fundraiser, demonstrating the true spirit of community and solidarity.

RESOLUTION NO. 995

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Ghada Gabr, Associate Owner of three Shoppers Drug Mart stores in HRM, has been nominated for Business Leader of the Year at the prestigious Halifax Business Awards, demonstrating exceptional leadership, dedication to excellence, and outstanding vision and innovation in her role; and

Whereas beyond her responsibilities as an Associate Owner, Ghada serves as a coach and mentor to new Owners, providing guidance and resources for their successful growth, and her commitment to nurturing talent and fostering success shines through in everything she does;

Whereas Ghada Gabr's nomination for Business Leader of the Year is a well-deserved recognition of her exceptional contributions to the business community in Halifax, and her leadership, mentorship, and advocacy serve as an exemplary model for us all;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulates Ghada Gabr on her prestigious nomination for Business Leader of the Year at the Halifax Business Awards and commends her for her outstanding leadership, dedication, and contributions to the business community.

RESOLUTION NO. 996

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Heidi Maass, the owner-instructor of Can Play Piano, located in the heart of Fairview-Clayton Park, exemplifies a deep belief in the innate musicality of every individual, driving her mission to spread the joy of music far and wide; and

Whereas Heidi's lifelong connection to music, rooted in her upbringing in Halifax, has led her to share her passion with others through the revolutionary Simply Music Piano learning method, enabling students of all ages and skill levels to discover and develop their musical abilities in a supportive and enjoyable environment; and

Whereas Heidi Maass's dedication to her students is evident through both in-person and online lesson options, providing flexibility and convenience for learners as they embark on their musical journey;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends recognition to Heidi Maass and Can Play Piano for their outstanding contributions to enriching the lives of students and inspiring a lifelong love of music.

RESOLUTION NO. 997

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Heidi Rofe, a cherished member of the Fairview community and proud owner of Beauty Starts Hair, embodies the spirit of dedication and commitment to her craft, drawing from her deep roots as a second-generation Fairview resident; and

Whereas Heidi's passion for hair color shines brightly at Beauty Starts Hair, bringing joy and confidence to her clients with each vibrant hue, earning her the Coasts "best of" gold win for four consecutive years; and

Whereas Heidi's salon transcends being merely a place for appointments, as she fosters a sense of family with her clients, supporting them through milestone moments and difficult times alike, creating a safe and welcoming space through her compassionate spirit and genuine care;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends gratitude to Heidi Rofe for her impactful contributions to the Fairview community, and eagerly anticipates the positive impact that Libby, the third generation, will bring to Beauty Starts Hair.

RESOLUTION NO. 998

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Janina Minkus, a culinary artisan and entrepreneur, exemplifies dedication, passion, and culinary expertise, mastering the art of Polish cuisine and sharing her homemade goodies with the community since 1994; and

Whereas Janina's leap of faith led her to establish Janina's Café in 2009, known for its Polish and homestyle cuisine, where her culinary expertise continues to shine through dishes made with love and authenticity, contributing to the thriving business that has become a cornerstone of the community over the last 15 years; and

Whereas Janina Minkus's inspiring journey as a woman entrepreneur highlights the impact of dedication and passion in shaping our society and driving positive change;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applauds Janina Minkus and all women entrepreneurs for their inspiring journeys and contributions to our community, recognizing their dedication, passion, and culinary expertise that enriches the lives of others.

RESOLUTION NO. 999

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Katie Kelly, President and CEO of Maritime Interpretation and Translation Services, demonstrates exemplary leadership in promoting inclusive communication within our community, overseeing a team of over 70 interpreters offering vital interpreting and translation services to those in need; and

Whereas under Katie's guidance, Maritime Interpretation and Translation Services has completed over 2,900 assignments in 45 unique languages, spanning both government and private sectors, thereby bridging the communication gap and promoting accessibility for all, ensuring clarity and understanding for non-English-speaking clients; and

Whereas as a women-owned business, Maritime Interpretation and Translation Services exemplifies empowerment and inclusivity, making a meaningful difference in

countless lives and fostering a more connected and understanding society through their commitment to breaking down language barriers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applauds Katie Kelly and Maritime Interpretation and Translation Services for their outstanding leadership and commitment to promoting inclusive communication, thereby contributing to the building of a more inclusive community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,000

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Nick Deal has been honored with the esteemed 2023 President's Award for Volunteer Service to the Extended Community, recognizing his exceptional commitment to serving both the university and the greater Halifax area; and

Whereas at the Mount, Nick has played a pivotal role in reviving the Enactus chapter, guiding students to impactful community initiatives, and providing invaluable coaching and advice for case competitions, academic advising, and career development; and

Whereas beyond the university, Nick serves on various committees and nonprofit boards, including the Halifax West Ecumenical Food Bank Association in Fairview-Clayton Park, showcasing his dedication to addressing community needs and making a lasting and positive impact;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commends Nick Deal for his outstanding service and expresses gratitude for his invaluable contributions to our extended community, recognizing that with individuals like Nick, our community grows stronger and more resilient each day.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,001

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas the Salvation Army Halifax West Community Church Street Ministry team, led by Dave Watts and a team of 20 dedicated volunteers, exemplifies the spirit of compassion and community support through their tireless efforts to aid the homeless community in Halifax; and

Whereas despite the presence of numerous organizations assisting the homeless, the Ministry team targets areas often overlooked by others, visiting these sites with their four Emergency Disaster Services trucks every Monday and Thursday to offer vital resources, food, clothing, and support; and

Whereas their dedication was highlighted on a Monday evening in January when they served over 40 individuals at five encampment sites and transit terminals throughout the city, exemplifying compassion and dedication in their service;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognizes and applauds The Salvation Army Halifax West Community Church Street Ministry team for their invaluable contributions to our community, embodying the spirit of compassion and community support that makes Halifax a better place for all.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,002

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Tova Sherman, the CEO of ReachAbility, exemplifies exceptional leadership and dedication to empowering individuals facing barriers to employment, championing the belief that everyone has something valuable to offer; and

Whereas ReachAbility, under Tova's leadership, provides a wide range of supportive and accessible programs tailored to meet the unique needs of each individual, offering employment workshops and self-management assistance to ensure every person receives the support they need to achieve their personal goals in a safe and supportive environment; and

Whereas Tova Sherman's dedication to creating a more inclusive society has made a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals facing barriers in Fairview-Clayton Park and beyond, transforming her passion into her life's mission;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledges and celebrates Tova Sherman for her tireless advocacy, compassionate leadership, and

commitment to building a more equitable future for all through her exceptional work at ReachAbility.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,003

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Vicky Mina, a professional and award-winning makeup artist based in Fairview-Clayton Park, exemplifies resilience, passion, and the power of self-discovery, founding Vicky Mina Makeup, a proudly Canadian professional makeup brand dedicated to empowering women through makeup; and

Whereas Vicky's transformative journey from a successful career in banking to full-time motherhood and eventually to rediscovering her passion for makeup led to the creation of her own brand, where she shares her expertise and confidence-building techniques with her community, empowering women of all ages to embrace their beauty and live their best lives; and

Whereas Vicky Mina's dedication to empowering women through makeup is a testament to her leadership, creativity, and determination, inspiring and uplifting others as we celebrate Women's History Month;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognizes and celebrates Vicky Mina and women like her, who inspire and uplift others through their leadership, creativity, and determination, as we honor Women's History Month and the contributions of women throughout history.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,004

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Yvonne Noel, who retired as Community Manager with Fairview-Clayton Park Square Roots at the end of last year, has exhibited exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication throughout her four years in this role, navigating challenges such as a pandemic, floods, power outages, and more; and

Whereas Yvonne's passion and determination have been pivotal in Square Roots's growth and success, positively impacting the lives of numerous families within our community; and

Whereas Yvonne Noel's outstanding contributions to the community have been further recognized with the notification of her receiving an HRM Volunteer Award for District 10, acknowledging her extraordinary commitment and service to our community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends heartfelt gratitude to Yvonne Noel for her exemplary leadership at Square Roots, and congratulates her on the well-deserved HRM Volunteer Award for District 10, expressing anticipation for her future endeavors.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,005

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Karen Decker, the proud owner of ACCEL Physiotherapy and Sport Performance Centre in Fairview, exemplifies exceptional leadership and dedication to the field of physiotherapy, with over 30 years of dedicated service and a wealth of expertise highlighted by her attendance at three Olympic Games with the Canada health care team; and

Whereas Karen's commitment to youth athletics is demonstrated through ACCEL's active support and sponsorship of a wide range of teams, promoting sports safety and injury prevention strategies in sports such as soccer, gymnastics, goalball, and hockey, thereby enhancing the performance and well-being of young athletes and fostering a culture of health, teamwork, and sportsmanship in our community; and

Whereas Karen Decker's outstanding contributions to the health and wellness of our community are a testament to her leadership and dedication to excellence in physiotherapy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extends gratitude to Karen Decker for her exceptional contributions to the health and wellness of our community, recognizing her leadership and dedication to excellence in the field of physiotherapy.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,006

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Kylie Field, an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant and infant massage instructor, possesses a rich background as a registered nurse trained in South Africa, encompassing general nursing, midwifery, psychiatry, and public health, bringing a wealth of expertise to her practice; and

Whereas Kylie's approach is characterized by compassion and personalized care, centered on nurturing the entire family as they embrace the arrival of a newborn, collaborating with parents to craft individualized breastfeeding plans, thereby ensuring a positive and successful breastfeeding experience for both mother and baby; and

Whereas Kylie Field's extensive knowledge of postpartum maternal needs and newborn care has afforded her the opportunity to guide numerous new mothers towards confidence in their mothering journey;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kylie Field for her invaluable contributions to the well-being of families in our community, and express anticipation for her continued impact in the years ahead.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,007

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas residents from Timberlea and the surrounding areas rely heavily on the BLT Trail system as both a mode of active transportation and for recreational purposes; and

Whereas the BLT Trail is filled daily with walkers and cyclists who appreciate the natural surroundings, are concerned about reducing their use of fossil fuels, and use the trail for safety purposes by staying off the roadways; and

Whereas the 13-kilometre trail is 100 per cent managed by volunteers and requires a strong team of dedicated people to manage the trail, and to ensure repairs and continuous maintenance is scheduled and preformed to care for the trail and enhance users experience;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Deepak Prasad for his dedication to volunteering and for serving a three-year term as a board member of the BLT Rails to Trails.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,008

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Jeffrey and Todd Bishop of Dormie Headcovers believes every golfer deserves a headcover that is both functional and stylish; and

Whereas the leather used in the custom-designed golf headcovers is of the highest quality, carefully selected for its durability, strength, and softness; and

Whereas each headcover is hand-stitched with care, ensuring that the leather will protect your clubs and last for many rounds of golf to come;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jeffrey and Todd on the construction of our custom golf headcovers, commitment to ensuring craftsmanship and quality, and for their deep appreciation for the game of golf and the importance of having equipment that both performs and looks good.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,009

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas residents from Timberlea and the surrounding areas rely heavily on the BLT Trail system as both a mode of active transportation and for recreational purposes; and

Whereas the BLT Trail is filled daily with walkers and cyclists who appreciate the natural surroundings, are concerned about reducing their use of fossil fuels, and use the trail for safety purposes by staying off the roadways; and

Whereas the 13-kilometre trail is 100 per cent managed by volunteers and requires a strong team of dedicated people to manage the trail, and to ensure repairs and continuous maintenance is scheduled and preformed to care for the trail and enhance users experience;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Kevin Coady for his dedication to volunteering and for serving a three-year term as a board member of the BLT Rails to Trails.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,010

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Lee Babin of Brookside started Shad Bay Design over 13 years ago as product development engineer with a foundation in mechanical engineering, and is able to design, test, and analyze intricate parts and assemblies for exciting projects while building close relationships with people and companies that span over several years from conceptualization to production; and

Whereas Lee helps inventors and companies realize their ideas at all stages from conceptual design sessions, to building proof of concepts and functional prototypes to testing and manufacturing; and

Whereas Lee is very meticulous and spends hours validating the design and ensuring every specification and requirement is met to ensure a good and effective design;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Lee Babin on his entrepreneurial spirit and ability to take on complex challenges and use his experience from motorcycle racing, marine applications, and agricultural equipment to development new designs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,011

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Martin's Kitchen, owned by chef Martin Keyzlar, former owner of Fiasco, is a blended family-run restaurant located at Indian Lake Golf Course where Chef Martin is known for making memorable flavours and for the love he puts in every meal he prepares; and

Whereas Martin's Kitchen is a five-star "rustic chic" restaurant nestled in nature, seven minutes from the city, a charming destination spot that is a great place for a family night out or a romantic date; and

Whereas the menu is Italian-French cuisine including pastas, pizzas, fish, and a bit of everything, and can be enjoyed on a large patio peppered with vibrant flowers overlooking the manicured golf course or next to the crackling sounds of their cozy warm fire place which adds to the quaint charm of your dining experience;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking chef Martin Keyzlar for preparing his meals with care and with the highest-quality of local ingredients and creating a special and delicious night out.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,012

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas residents from Timberlea and the surrounding areas rely heavily on the BLT Trail system as both a mode of active transportation and for recreational purposes; and

Whereas the BLT Trail is filled daily with walkers and cyclists who appreciate the natural surroundings, are concerned about reducing their use of fossil fuels, and use the trail for safety purposes by staying off the roadways; and

Whereas the 13-kilometre trail is 100 per cent managed by volunteers and requires a strong team of dedicated people to manage the trail, and to ensure repairs and continuous maintenance is scheduled and preformed to care for the trail and enhance users experience;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Tara Kelly for her dedication to volunteering and for serving a three-year term as a board member of the BLT Rails to Trails.