



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Karla MacFarlane

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First Session

THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2024

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HALIFAX, THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 2024

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Karla MacFarlane

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Lisa Lachance, Danielle Barkhouse, Nolan Young

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

LISA LACHANCE: I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause of which reads:

Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to rein in Nova Scotia Power and reduce bills, provide free meals to children in schools, and get rid of unnecessary vehicle inspection and licence fees in Nova Scotia.

It has been signed by a number of folks from Victoria Road in Halifax and I have affixed my signature to the petition as well.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause of which is:

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to establish an immediate moratorium on all new open pen salmon farms and further expansion of existing ones, followed by a transitional plan to move salmon farms out of our provincial waters permanently.

I have affixed my signature, as required.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I beg leave to table a petition that states:

Whereas there has been a noticeable decline in both Winter and Summer maintenance of the roads and highways of northeastern Cumberland County, therefore we, the undersigned residents and business owners of northeastern Cumberland County request the Minister of Public Works to restore maintenance of our roads and highways to the service levels they had when equipment and personnel were based locally in Wallace Station.

Speaker, there are 356 signatures and I have affixed my name to the top, as per the Rules of the House.

THE SPEAKER: Unfortunately, the petition is out of order, due to the fact that there are phone numbers instead of addresses.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, I wish to table the Annual Accountability Report on Emergency Departments.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Speaker, I beg leave to table a report entitled the WCB Nova Scotia Report to the Community 2023 Q3.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: In connection with the member's statement later that I would like to quote from this document, I table a document entitled "Halifax group working to help people earn university degrees from prison."

THE SPEAKER: The document is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,035

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

Whereas many Nova Scotians offer exceptional care to family members, friends, and neighbours in their homes and communities, providing physical, emotional, and mental health support day in and day out; and

Whereas the commitment, kindness, and compassion so selflessly given by these caregivers makes a huge difference in the lives of the people they care for; and

Whereas the first Tuesday in April marks National Caregiver Day and gives us the opportunity to shine a spotlight on their amazing work and give them some of the recognition they so rightly deserve;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing National Caregiver Day and thank the many caregivers across the province for all that they do.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

KIM MASLAND: Speaker, that notice of motion was delivered on behalf of the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care.

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 Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,036

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Madame la présidente, à une date ultérieure je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que le Congrès mondiale acadien est un rassemblement international ayant lieu tous les cinq ans depuis 1994 dans une région différente pour renforcer les liens qui unissent les communautés acadiennes à travers le monde et pour honorer une identité acadienne moderne et florissante; et

Attendu que les municipalités d'Argyle et de Clare ont été choisi pour accueillir la septième édition du Congrès mondial acadien du 10 août au 18 août 2024; et

Attendu que plus de 30 000 nouveaux visiteurs vont participer aux nombreux sommets, spectacles en plein air, expériences culinaires, et rassemblements familiaux au cours des neuf jours des festivités;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi et à toutes les communautés acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse et d'ailleurs pour célébrer les contributions culturelles, économiques, et sociales de nos communautés acadiennes. Au comité organisateur du Congrès

mondial acadien 2024, le meilleur des succès pour cet évènement de classe mondiale.

Madame la présidente, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas the Congrès mondial acadien is an international gathering held every five years in a different region since 1994 to strengthen the ties uniting Acadian communities around world and to honour a modern and thriving Acadian identity; and

Whereas the Municipalities of Argyle and Clare have been selected to host the 7th edition of the Congrès mondial acadien from August 10-18, 2024; and

Whereas it is anticipated that over 30,000 first-time visitors will attend the many summits, outdoor shows, culinary experiences, and family gatherings over the course of nine days of festivities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me and all Acadian communities in Nova Scotia and elsewhere to celebrate the cultural, economic, and social contributions of our Acadian communities and wish the Congrès mondial acadien 2024 organizing committee the best of success with this world-class event.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,037

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

Whereas sport fishing creates opportunities for young people to be outdoors and barrier-free fishing sites support Nova Scotians of all ages to enjoy the province's beautiful lakes and rivers; and

Whereas more than 20,000 young people across Nova Scotia have experienced the sport, some for the first time, through the Learn to Fish program and mentorship provided by community partners; and

Whereas sport fishing adds more than \$70 million to the economy each year, is a growing part of the tourism sector, and the next generation of anglers is key to the future;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize the young anglers highlighted in the Anglers' Handbook and 2024 Summary of Regulations and wish them and everyone well as the sport fishing season begins on Monday, April 1st.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,038

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Madame la présidente, à une date ultérieure je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que l'Alliance française de Halifax est un organisme à but non-lucratif dont la mission est de promouvoir la langue française ainsi que toutes les cultures francophones; et

Attendu que depuis 1903, l'Alliance française de Halifax a offert la formation en français à des milliers d'apprenants de français de tous niveaux et de toutes origines; et

Attendu que l'Alliance Française de Halifax organise des événements interculturels qui mettent en valeur la diversité de toutes les cultures francophones grâce à des concerts, des séances de cinéma, de la lecture de poésie, des expériences culinaires, et de nombreux autres événements;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour reconnaître l'engagement, la persévérance, et la passion du personnel et des bénévoles de l'Alliance Française de Halifax à l'occasion de leur 120^e anniversaire.

Madame la présidente, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas the Alliance française de Halifax is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the French language and all French-speaking cultures; and

Whereas since 1903 the Alliance Française Halifax has offered quality French training to thousands of French learners of all levels and backgrounds in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Alliance Française Halifax organizes cross-cultural events to showcase the diversity of all French-speaking cultures through concerts, movie showings, poetry reading, or food experience, amongst many others;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing the commitment, the perseverance, and passion of all the staff and volunteers of the Alliance Française Halifax as the organization celebrates its 120th anniversary.

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

[9:15 a.m.]

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. 455 - An Act to Establish a Department of Emergency Management and Authorize the Establishment of a Nova Scotia Guard. (Hon. Tim Houston, The Premier)

Bill No. 456 - An Act to Amend Chapter 93 of the Revised Statutes, 1989. The Consumer Reporting Act. (Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 457 - An Act to Amend Chapter 62 of the Revised Statutes, 1989. The Cemetery and Funeral Services Act. (Fred Tilley)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

THOMPSON, WAYNE & DONNA: RET. COUPLE - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Wayne and Donna Thompson, a retired couple with a rich history, have found solace and happiness in their quiet community of Trenton.

Wayne, once a diligent policeman with a keen eye for detail, and later a successful businessman, now relishes in the slower pace of retirement. Donna, a former schoolteacher known for her patience and warmth, brings a sense of nurturing to their home. Together they have crafted a life filled with simple pleasures, finding contentment in the tranquil rhythm of their days.

In the summer months, the couple eagerly retreat to their cherished cottage nestled in a quiet area of Melmerby Beach. It is here, while they sit on their deck entertaining friends or neighbours, that they relish in the memories they've created. Amidst their peaceful moments, they find delight in watching their grandchildren grow, cherishing each milestone.

Wayne, an exceptional athlete in his day, is a devoted fan of the New York Yankees, always watching them play on TV, and on occasion, travelling to New York to watch them play live. The baseball season adds an extra layer of fun to their lives as they cheer their favourite team together.

THE SPEAKER: Before we continue, I, as Speaker, want to introduce someone who is in the gallery today. She has been in the gallery many times, and in the East Gallery and the West Gallery for the last 11 years. I would like my good friend and my assistant over the years, CA, campaign manager, SA - Michelle Livingston. This is her last day. I will be lost without her. It's been 11 years of Michelle being unconditionally, unfaithfully - faithfully, I'm sorry. (Laughter) Not unfaithfully - faithfully loyal, and I wouldn't be here without you. There is so much more to say, but we'll celebrate these past years. Thank you so much. (Standing ovation)

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

WOMEN IN MUSIC: AMAZING ARTISTS - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize women in music. Today marks International Women in Music Day. While women have been shown to have just as much, if not more, musical talent as men, the music world is one of the many arenas where women have often been held back or undercut.

Today I celebrate women in music by recognizing some amazing artists, because I love music and think artistry is a gift. I would like to recognize, obviously, Beyoncé, Patti LaBelle, and the late Whitney Houston. Locally we have Reeny Smith, Haliey Smith, Four the Moment, Zamani, Shauntay Grant, and Eriana Willis, to name a few.

I'd like all members to join me in recognizing and encouraging the promotion of women in music, and thank all women in music for their talents and gifts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

GAZA CONFLICT: NEED FOR CEASEFIRE - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Our caucus continues to be deeply troubled by the escalating loss of life and destruction in Gaza, as reported by members of our Palestinian community here in Nova Scotia and beyond. The gravity of the situation has reached a

point where urgent action is needed, prompting both the United Nations and our federal government to advocate for a ceasefire.

It is imperative to recognize the humanitarian crisis unfolding before us and the catastrophic loss of civilian life and infrastructure, which is why we are supporting the U.N. Security Council's call for a ceasefire and pathway for peace, safety, and security in the region.

Additionally, we must urgently address the critical need for humanitarian aid to enter the country to alleviate starvation and provide essential support to those affected by the conflict as well as support family reunification here in Canada for Canadian Palestinians.

Civilians need an immediate end to the violence and a return to peace and safety in the region.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Kings North.

EASTER: CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION - RECOG.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I rise today in celebration of Easter to recognize this week of prayer and reflection, this holy week for Christians all over the world. For many Nova Scotians, Easter is a time to reflect on the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Customs among us may vary, but the celebration of Easter is undoubtedly a holiday of faith, tremendous hope, and the redeeming power of love. On Good Friday, Jesus took our misdeeds upon himself. On Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the grave, showing us that death is conquered.

I would ask all members of the House to join me in wishing Christians all over Nova Scotia a blessed Holy Week and a joyous and happy Easter.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MSVU: PRISON ACCESS TO EDUC. PGM. - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, I'd like to recognize the prison access to education program at Mount Saint Vincent University - a unique program that provides post-secondary education to imprisoned people across Nova Scotia. Through the efforts of a group of faculty and former students and the financial backing of the Northpine Foundation, the program connects inmates to professors, and covers the costs of everything required to attend university, such as textbooks, fees, et cetera.

The program has been spearheaded by MSVU Women's Studies professor El Jones, known in prison circles as the co-host of the Black Power Hour, a radio show of Black history and culture directed to incarcerated people. The prison access to education program typically has 12 to 15 students enrolled at the moment from six different prisons in Nova Scotia. It was established in 2018.

"We believe that access to education is a right," says Jones in a recent interview as she discussed some of the barriers, like prohibited internet access to post-secondary education for incarcerated people. Mount Saint Vincent has a lot to be proud of as the only degree-granting university for incarcerated people in Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction before my member statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please go ahead.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: In the West Gallery today, we are joined by three amazing young entrepreneurs who are dedicated to promoting their home culture in Nova Scotia. I would ask them to stand as I read their names. Today we're joined by Nisarg Pandya and Vaibhav Pathak. Nisarg is the founder and president of Celebrate Bharat Festival. Vaibhav Pathak is the secretary of the Celebrate Bharat Festival Club. Then we have also Vaidehi Pathak, who is a member. Please give them the welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Thank you for being here.

The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CELEBRATE BHARAT FESTIVAL: INDIAN CULTURE - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the young, new immigrants to Nova Scotia, amazing entrepreneurs who join us in the gallery today. Our office first met the Celebrate Bharat Festival Club when they came to our office to learn about how to start a non-profit organization.

These young entrepreneurs wanted to celebrate their roots in Nova Scotia as they bring the best of India to us. Celebrate Bharat promotes and preserves the rich culture and heritage of India by organizing community events and educational programs that highlight the diversity and richness of Indian traditions, and foster a sense of pride and belonging among Indians living in our province.

They held their first event in October of last year, celebrating Navratri with music performances and dance that were enjoyed by many. We are so blessed to have new, young immigrants like these who bring so much to our community. Please join me in congratulating the Celebrate Bharat Festival Club in their inaugural year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

CDN. CANCER SOC.: DAFFODIL CAMPAIGN - RECOG.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank the Canadian Cancer Society for the important work they do every year during the Daffodil Campaign.

The Daffodil Campaign takes place every Spring. Throughout the month of April, we encourage you to support the campaign in any way you can. I want to take this opportunity to thank Jim and Judie Edgar for the work they've done in establishing the Daffodil Garden for Cancer Survivors in Dartmouth.

No family is untouched by cancer. An estimated two in five Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. We've made such tremendous progress. When the Canadian Cancer Society was founded in 1938, the survival rate was just 25 per cent. Now it's 63 per cent. For some types of cancer, it's also 90 per cent, but there's much more to be done.

Those advancements are able to continue thanks to the generous donations of Canadians year after year to this important campaign that centres around the message of hope and the symbol of the daffodil. With your support, we can help hope bloom. I encourage all members of this House and all Canadians everywhere to show their support for those affected by cancer by supporting the Daffodil Campaign.

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

YOUNG, TUMA: INDG. LAW CONTRIBS. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise to recognize the work of Tuma Young. Tuma Young, King's Council, is an L'nu from Malagawatch and his band is Eskasoni First Nation.

Tuma has taught Mi'kmaq Studies at Cape Breton University, and has a private legal practice focusing on Indigenous law, Aboriginal law, health law, estates, board governance, adjudication, and arbitration. He grew up on his mother's trap line and loves to lead L'nui-npisun medicine walks, where he shows folks which plants are used by L'nu people and illustrates the importance of biodiversity in Mi'kmaq.

Tuma is the first L'nui'sultinj or fluent Mi'kmaq-speaking lawyer called to the bar in Nova Scotia in 2001 and was the first Indigenous president of a law society in Canada when he became president of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society in 2021. He also co-founded the Wabanaki Two Spirit Alliance, which has led groundbreaking work across Wabanaki.

Tuma's work isn't about firsts; it's about building collective resilience and strength. Their influence and support have changed the lives of so many people and communities. He considers his greatest accomplishment in making L'nuk communities welcoming and to celebrate two spirited people.

Mi'kma'ki and Turtle Island are better for their contributions, and I ask all members to join me in honouring them.

[9:30 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

VOLUNTEERS: EMERGENCY SHELTER - THANKS

CARMAN KERR: While much of the attention around the underhoused and homelessness is in HRM, rural communities including Annapolis are certainly not immune.

I've spoken to constituents who are couch-surfing with friends and family and others who are sleeping in tents, camper trailers, abandoned buildings, and at one point, on a bench behind my constituency office. This is truly heartbreaking.

I'm so proud that a caring and committed group of community members in the Middleton area have started an emergency shelter to provide unhoused individuals a warm, safe place to lay their head at night, a bite to eat, connection to my office and other supports, and resources in the community.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Linda Thorsen, Diane Thurber, Jeff Milne, and all the volunteers from churches in the broader community for their commitment to ensuring that residents have a safe place to sleep and feel supported.

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

JOHN WHITE: I beg leave to make an introduction before I start.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

JOHN WHITE: In the East Gallery, I am honoured to introduce three members of the Dominion Community Hawks Club, an important organization to our community. The truth is that many strive to leave a lasting positive impact on the community, but I can assure you that this group has done that successfully.

Joining us today, I have John Stefura, Blair LeBlanc, and Sheldon Currie. I would ask the members to please give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. It's a pleasure to have you with us today.

The honourable member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

DOM. COM. HAWKS CLUB: COM. SERV. - THANKS

JOHN WHITE: The Dominion Community Hawks Club was formed in June 1989 by a group of concerned citizens who wanted to get involved in community activities in a way that was unique from other organizations.

The group had experience in sports, and the feeling was that far too much time was spent on fundraising. They saw this as a direct challenge to the real goal of spending time coaching kids and working with them, so they set out to do something about it. More than thirty years later, the Hawks Club continues to disburse money raised by the organization so coaches and teams no longer have to worry about where the money is coming from to play.

The Hawks Club donates money to various other groups, clubs, tournaments, community programs, and individuals, as well. Like many service groups, the Hawks Club quietly but impactfully makes our community a much better place to live and raise our children.

On behalf of our community, I would like to extend a huge round of applause and a thank you to the Dominion Community Hawks Club for their extraordinary work for Glace Bay-Dominion.

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

WESTRAY BILL: 20TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: March 29th marks the 20th anniversary of the enactment of the Westray Bill. The bill was born out of the ashes of the devastating 1992 Westray Mine disaster that took the lives of 26 workers. The purpose of the bill - and now law - is to hold corporations criminally accountable for negligence leading to workplace fatalities. On average, we see 25 workplace fatalities annually in Nova Scotia. Since 2004, 460 workers have died on the job. On average, 1,000 workers die on the job in Canada, yet only one

employer has been charged in Nova Scotia under the Westray Law. We need stronger occupational health and safety laws, and proper charges should be placed when a work death occurs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

GAUVIN, JEAN: EDUC. AWD. RECIP. - RECOG.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Madame la présidente, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour féliciter Jean Gauvin, le récipiendaire du prestigieux prix Omer-Caissie, qui reconnaît les apprenants. Jean s'est d'abord intéressé à l'apprentissage continu en s'inscrivant aux cours d'informatique offerts par l'Équipe d'alphabétisation - Nouvelle-Écosse. Depuis, il a pris goût à l'apprentissage et s'est donné pour mission d'encourager les gens de tous les âges à apprendre eux aussi quelque chose de nouveau. Jean est également membre du conseil d'administration du Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences, l'association qui lui a décerné ce prix lors du Sommet national sur l'apprentissage pour la francophonie canadienne.

Je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour féliciter Jean Gauvin de ce récent honneur et pour le remercier de son dévouement à l'apprentissage.

Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jean Gauvin, the recent recipient of the prestigious prix Omer-Caissie, which recognizes learners. Jean first focused on continued learning when he enrolled in a computer course through l'Équipe d'alphabétisation - Nouvelle-Écosse. Since then, he has embraced learning and is now on a mission to encourage folks of all ages to learn something new. Jean is also a member of the board of directors for the Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences, the association that honoured him with this prestigious award at the Sommet national sur l'apprentissage pour la francophonie canadienne.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating Jean Gauvin on this recent honour and thanking him for his dedication to learning.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

SCOTT, MURRAY: CUMBERLAND MAYOR - THANKS

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I stand today to recognize Cumberland's mayor, the honourable Murray Scott, for his years of dedication and devotion to the residents of Cumberland County and the Province of Nova Scotia.

Murray first started as a police officer, where he received the Governor General's Commendation for Bravery, and in 1998 he became the MLA for Cumberland South. He

was the Speaker of this House for nearly seven years and held various ministerial portfolios over his dozen years of service as MLA.

After a short break, Murray was elected as the first Cumberland County mayor and one of my greatest mentors. Behind Murray is a fantastic partner and supporter: his wife, Linda. Together, they volunteer for our community through various organizations and their church. Murray has announced that he will not be seeking re-election this coming Fall, but I do still have a couple of months to work on him.

I want to take this opportunity very quickly to recognize and thank Murray and Linda and their family for all the dedication that they put out through our community and province over the last decades. It really has been a family team effort, and Murray would be here to recognize this, but he'll be here later in the day to say hello.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

AMHERST RAMBLERS: HOCKEY EXCELLENCE - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: It's so great to hear my colleague from Cumberland North congratulate and honour Mayor Murray Scott. I echo his comments.

Today I also want to rise and say congratulations to the Amherst Ramblers Junior A hockey team. On Tuesday night, they were triumphant against the Pictou County Crushers in a game that they won 5-4 in an overtime win. The dedication and resilience demonstrated by the Ramblers throughout this series serves as a testament to the talent and spirit of our local team. Their hard-fought victory not only brings joy to our community, but also inspires admiration for their commitment to excellence on the ice.

As a passionate supporter of the Amherst Ramblers, I eagerly anticipate returning to the vibrant atmosphere of our arena, affectionately known as "The Jungle," to cheer on our beloved team as they face off against Summerside in the next round. Congratulations, Amherst Ramblers. Go, Rams, go.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CREW SOCIETY: COM. SERV. - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize the CREW Society in Halifax. Standing for Community Residents Enriching Within, the society formed to empower communities. The society organizes a number of events throughout the year to promote coming together and getting to know your neighbour.

Coming up is the annual Easter egg hunt, where they have 3,500 eggs or more distributed throughout the local playground for age groups from zero to 12 and up. Each

of the age groups has their own separate time so that everybody gets an opportunity to gather the eggs, and the CREW Society makes sure to have bags of treats for those kids that cannot attend.

Not only do they have an Easter egg hunt, they do a back-to-school event, Halloween treat giveaway, holiday family meals, and many others which are all driven by community, because they need it so much. I would like all members to join me in thanking the CREW Society for their dedication and commitment to community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

WIFE & SISTER-IN-LAW - BIRTHDAY WISHES

FRED TILLEY: Today is a special day in the Tilley household. I'd like to wish my beautiful wife a Happy Birthday today. She is the rock of our family, for sure, and makes sure that we all look after ourselves, especially over the last year. I would also like to wish her wombmate, or twin sister, Janet a happy birthday as well. They're both in Toronto visiting Janet's daughter, and I hope they have a great day and a great supper tonight. I can't wait to get home on the weekend and we'll celebrate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

DUGGAN, JOE: VOLLEYBALL COACHING - THANKS

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, I rise in my place today to acknowledge Joe Duggan, an educator, administrator, and volleyball coach.

Joe started playing volleyball for Antigonish Regional High School. He then attended StFX University, where he obtained a teaching degree while playing on the varsity volleyball team. Joe then began his teaching and coaching career. He coached the boys' team at Guysborough Municipal High School and at Dr. J.H. Gillis Regional High School in Antigonish. He then served as assistant coach with the StFX women's volleyball team before settling in as the coach for the girls' team at Dr. J.H. Gillis, where he can still be found coaching today.

Joe has been coaching volleyball for more than 40 years and was the leading force behind the creation of the Stoirm Volleyball Club. His dedication and commitment were recognized recently as the club marked its 25-year anniversary at the first annual Joe Duggan Tournament. Each year Joe builds a competitive team, which can typically be found in contention for the top spot in any league. He has coached countless female athletes, instilling in each of them a strong sense of confidence and determination. As his daughter Alli says, "He's been championing women in sports before it was cool to champion women in sports."

Please join me in thanking Joe for his ongoing dedication to women's volleyball and women in sport in my community and across the province.

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

SPATZ, JIM: ORDER OF CANADA INDUCTION - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, today I'd like to take a moment to recognize a prominent member of the Halifax Citadel-Sable Island community being awarded one of our country's highest honours. Jim Spatz has become a prominent figure in the Halifax business and non-profit world and was inducted into the Order of Canada just before the new year. Jim was honoured with the Order in recognition of his volunteerism with a wide variety of community organizations and projects. He shows his support for the local arts community by serving as chair of the Capital Campaign Council for the new Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and on the board of Neptune Theatre. His previous honours include the Nova Scotia Business Hall of Fame for his leadership at Southwest Properties, as well as the QEII's Diamond Jubilee Medal. I conclude by congratulating Jim once again for his induction into the Order of Canada and his continued work to make Halifax a better place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

TERENCE BAY COM. HALL: 40TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I want to recognize the Terence Bay Community Hall and everyone who has created and nurtured a vibrant community gathering place for events, programs, rentals, and more. Once an active fire hall, in 2015 HRM declared the fire station in Terence Bay as surplus to municipal operation requirements and approved the disposal under the Community Interest order. On October 30, 2018, HRM, through a motion of former councillor Steve Adams, approved the sale of the hall for \$1 and directed staff to prepare a report outlining funding options for renovation work to the Terence Bay Community Hall. I was happy to support some funding from the provincial level as well.

The residents in Terence Bay have embraced and developed the old fire station and turned it into the hub of the community, celebrating holidays, hosting seniors' luncheons, organizing yoga and Pilates classes, bringing people out for cribbage events and bingo, and opening the hall to more. On April 7th this year, they'll be celebrating the 40th anniversary.

Jerry Lawrence, a former MLA for Halifax St. Margaret's from 1978 to 1993, was a special guest of honour at the ribbon-cutting ceremony over 40 years ago, and the community is hoping to locate Mr. Lawrence to invite him back.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking all - and there are many - contributors to building and growing the Terence Bay Community Hall.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

GLENCOE STATION HALL: 50TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, the community of Glencoe Station is celebrating the 50th anniversary of their recreation association and the Glencoe Station Hall. Fifty years ago, this hall was the dream of Donnie MacNeil, who wanted a place where people from Glencoe Station, Saint Ninian, Dunmore, Hawthorne, Upper Southwest Mabou, and Southwest Mabou could gather.

The building and grounds have hosted all sorts of events since the mid-1970s. They raised funds for good causes, hosted wedding receptions, and harnessed many volunteer hours for the good of the community - a community that grew out of the importance of the railway station that once stood there, serving the neighbouring communities and the farming and forestry that sustained the big families who made their homes in these peaceful hills of Cape Breton Island.

The community knows how to celebrate. They were celebrating their new hall before the roof was put on it back in 1974. Square dances on Tuesdays, and pig and whistles on the weekends made memories, and no doubt helped to extend some of those big families.

A great deal of work went into building that hall, and an even greater amount of happiness came to Glencoe because of it. May we in this Legislature congratulate the community of Glencoe Station and the Recreation Association on their milestone.

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

CAPE BRETON POST: SERIES ON CANCER - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: The *Cape Breton Post* is doing a multi-series collection on the impact of cancer in Cape Breton. The special series looks back to April 1999, when officials in health acknowledged that Cape Breton has higher cancer rates than anywhere else. The series is also looking at what has been done since 1999 to combat cancer in Cape Breton, and what still needs to be done.

This multi-series includes personal stories of community members who survived cancer, and community members we have lost. Since April 1999, nearly 10,000 Cape Bretoners have died due to cancer. Since 2000, over 21,000 Cape Bretoners have been diagnosed with cancer, with nearly 10,000 losing their lives.

I want to thank the *Cape Breton Post* for highlighting the devastation of cancer 25 years on, and bringing attention that there is so much more to do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

[9:45 a.m.]

EASTER: CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, we're entering the Easter weekend, and for many Nova Scotians this will be an important weekend of celebrating their faith. But I also want to just mention that whether you celebrate Easter or not, or any of the other holidays, these can be difficult times for families that may not have family at home. A lot of service organizations try to put on more supports for people during these times. A lot of people really step up to make sure that anyone who wants to celebrate the season, whether it's Easter or any other holiday, do so. I rise in my place to recognize all of those people who this weekend are going to do their very best to make sure that everyone who celebrates it has a good weekend. But also, there are additional pressures, as we all see, that happen with these organizations, especially during the holidays, so I want to recognize and thank them. To everyone who's celebrating Easter this weekend, I wish them the very best. Give where you can.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BLAIKIE, GARY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What can I say about Gary Blaikie? Gary was hard-working, intelligent, kind-hearted, a straight shooter, and a man of his word. He was a confidant, a friend, a loving husband, and a dad. Gary passed away peacefully this past Monday, surrounded by loved ones at home in beautiful Herring Cove. To his wife Patty, a dear friend, I am always here for you. To Katie, Martha and Duncan, your dad was an incredible person. Rest in peace, Gary. We are all grateful for every moment we had with you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

LINDSAY'S CONVENIENCE: OPENING - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a new business that recently opened in the community of Pugwash. Opening a new small business in today's challenging economic times is, quite simply, very brave, and I'm proud to say Lindsay Polley and Aaron Spencer of Pugwash are two of those brave people. Lindsay's Convenience, located on Durham Street in the Village of Pugwash recently opened, and is fully stocked with treats and everyday essentials. It has very quickly become a popular place to shop. Being a business owner is not for the faint of heart. This time of year, in a community that thrives on cottagers and tourists, business can be a little slower. However, Lindsay's Convenience is heading in the right direction, and I'm sure they are looking forward to bigger and better things when Summer arrives.

Please join me in congratulating Lindsay Polley and her team in wishing them the very best in her new endeavour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

MARCH MADNESS: WOMEN'S NCAA TOURN. - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: It's March Madness, the time of year that every basketball fan looks forward to. It's the excitement of filling out your bracket and cheering on your favourite team that everyone loves. This time of year is of great importance in the Balsers household. We've never missed a Women's Final Four. Growing up, every March my sisters and I, my mom, and my best friend Robyn Tidd would be glued to the television watching the NCAA women's tournament from start to finish.

I want to recognize Robyn Tidd, my lifelong friend but rival when UConn and Tennessee hit the court. We Balsers are the fans of the late Pat Summitt and the Lady Vols through and through, but Geno Auriemma's Huskies are Robyn's team. To this day, my mom and I can always count on Robyn's messages when she sends us her picks and her trash talk. I want to thank Robyn for all the years we watched and played basketball together. My family and I continue to love this time of year because of you. Go Lady Vols.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

CDN. CANCER SOCIETY: DAFFODIL CAMPAIGN - RECOG.

HON. KEITH BAIN: Monday marks the first day of Daffodil Month. Every Spring, the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Campaign raises vital funds to support individuals fighting cancer, helping them live longer, fuller lives. The daffodil, often the first flower of Spring, embodies strength, resiliency, courage, and hope for those battling cancer. It symbolizes optimism and new beginnings, serving as a beacon of light in the darkness of this disease. For more than 65 years, the Canadian Cancer Society's daffodil campaign has raised funds for the vital work that they do, including funding research, educating people, and providing support services to enhance the quality of life of those impacted by cancer.

I know that every person in this Legislature has been impacted by cancer. Whether it is personally or someone we love, cancer touches us all. There are a number of ways we can let Nova Scotians living with cancer know that their battle does not need to be fought alone. I ask each of us to spend time next month to consider the ways that we can inspire hope and fight this good fight.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

CARE & FUN CHILD CARE: NEW LOCATION - CONGRATS.

BRAEDON CLARK: Speaker, today I just wanted to recognize and thank Hoda Ibrahim and Basma Elhefnawi. They are constituents of mine and also the owner/operators of Care & Fun Child Care, which I have known personally over the last few years. Last night at our monthly parent meeting, we learned that the location on the Bedford Highway will be moving to a brand new location on Dutch Village Road, which is very exciting. I just want to congratulate Basma and Hoda, and the team and staff there. They are the best in the business. They do a great job. I know that all the parents will be excited. Moves are always difficult, but I think that this one's going to make a lot of sense. I can't speak for all the kids, but I know that at least one, my daughter Heidi, is very excited to have a new cubby and a big new playground out back. I just want to congratulate Hoda and Basma, and all the team.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

PARKINSON'S AWARE. MO.: NEED FOR SUPPORT - RECOG.

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Speaker, I rise today to recognize that April is Parkinson's Awareness Month. Parkinson's is a lifelong, incurable brain disease, and no two journeys are alike. More than 100,000 Canadians live with Parkinson's. Here in Nova Scotia, nearly 2,450 people live with the disease. During this important month, we highlight that just because someone lives with Parkinson's doesn't mean that they can't live life on their own terms. The truth is that the people who are living with Parkinson's embody a resilience and strength like no other. With no known cure or disease-modifying therapies, support and services are critical.

Organizations like Parkinson Canada work to empower the Parkinson's community through tailored programs, innovative research, and advocacy. Living well with Parkinson's is still possible despite the challenges that come with each stage of the journey. I encourage all members of this Legislature to join me in celebrating the residents of Nova Scotia who are living with Parkinson's, and organizations like Parkinson Canada that help them live their best lives.

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

OFFICE CAs: WORK FOR RESIDENTS - THANKS

LORELEI NICOLL: I rise to acknowledge and express my deepest appreciation to two people who faithfully share their amazing talents to operate the MLA office of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. Ellen and Julie, we embarked on this journey together as friends, and we have drawn closer with a deeper understanding of helping residents. Ellen and Julie were invited to be present here today to be thanked publicly and acknowledged by the House, but in their admirable humbleness they chose not to. In any case, please join me in

recognizing Ellen and Julie, the constituency assistants in my office for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. They are truly appreciated by not only me but by their residents with whom they work each day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

DWYER, DAISY: ALCOHOL ABUSE EFFORTS - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: Speaker, I rise today to highlight the extraordinary dedication of another great Kings West volunteer, Daisy Dwyer. Daisy has been a steadfast advocate for the well-being of our community through her contributions to both the Community Alcohol Partnership and the Kingston-Greenwood Mental Health Association. Her tireless efforts have not only raised awareness but have also brought about tangible change in addressing the complex issues surrounding alcohol abuse and mental health.

As a key member of the Community Alcohol Partnership, Daisy has been instrumental implementing initiatives aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm, particularly among our youth. Her proactive approach, coupled with her compassion and empathy, has empowered countless individuals to make healthier choices and live more fulfilling lives. Furthermore, Daisy's involvement with the Kingston-Greenwood Mental Health Association has been nothing short of exemplary. She has helped break down barriers surrounding mental health and fostered a community of understanding and acceptance. Daisy's dedication to promoting mental wellness has undoubtedly touched the hearts of many and has provided invaluable resources to those in need.

I ask my fellow members to join me in expressing our heartfelt gratitude to Daisy Dwyer for all her outstanding contributions to the well-being of our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

SIMONS STORE: NEW HFX. LOCATION - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Today I would like to recognize Simons store, a permanent Canadian leader in sustainable fashion retail. Simons store, a five-generation family fashion store, has established its presence across the country from British Columbia and Alberta to Ontario and Quebec, and now, with the recent opening of a new branch at Halifax Shopping Centre, reaching the Atlantic coast. It's commendable that Simons store has chosen Armdale as the location for its business expansion, and I extend my best wishes to them for the future growth and success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

NORTHERN SELECTS: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to recognize Kendall Doiron of Boylston - Reddy's Hill in fact - and her teammates on the Northern Selects, based at the Hector Arena, for winning the Nova Scotia U18 AAA Female Hockey Championship.

The Selects finished the regular season with an impressive record of 29 wins, two losses, and a tie. They also captured their home tournament, the Sobeys Cup, in October - a top four finish among 40 teams from the U.S. and Canada at the Two Nations Cup in Toronto in December. Kendall finished tied for first in league, scoring with 34 goals and 30 assists for 64 points in 32 games. I'm no math expert, but that works out to two points per game. Pretty impressive, especially as a 15-year-old.

In the playoffs, the Selects swept the Cape Breton Lynx in three games in the first round, then beat the Penguins three games to one to win the provincial title. Kendall led the playoffs in scoring with 10 goals and four assists for 14 points in seven games - again, good for two points per game. She and the Selects are off to Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador to defend their Atlantic title next week.

I remember the first time I spoke about Kendall in this House. It was a Mr. Speaker, and at that time I told him it wouldn't be the last time we'd hear about Kendall Doiron. Please join me in congratulating Kendall and the Selects on a great regular season and provincial playoffs. But the job isn't done yet as we wish them good luck at Atlantics in Newfoundland and Labrador next week.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

STANLEY, RYAN: SHEFFIELD SOC. CMT. - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ryan Stanley, an engaged citizen in my own beautiful neighbourhood of Sheffield in Clayton Park West. Ryan and his family moved to Sheffield only two years ago. Ryan is passionate about community, and created the Sheffield Social Committee by gathering neighbours together to promote building a community. In September, they held their inaugural meeting and had their first event as a neighbourhood block party, which was a tremendous success. I look forward to their next event: the great Sheffield garage sale on May 25th. I ask the House to join me in thanking citizens like Ryan Stanley who are enthusiastic about community-building.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

JONES, DAVID WYN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KENT SMITH: I rise today to acknowledge the life accomplishments of David Wyn Jones. On March 4th, at the age of 81, Wyn passed away as he wished - at his home in West Jeddore to the sound of the crashing waves. Wyn was a writer and avid reader of historical novels. He had a passion for politics and engaging in stimulating conversations. He had a love of cooking, and insisted that wine improved any recipe. Wyn was a self-taught artist who painted incredibly beautiful scenes from nature, and was often inspired by the ocean view just outside his seaside home.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in offering my deepest condolences to his wife Carole, daughter Carys, son Ian, and his grandchildren, along with many cherished friends. He is and will continue to be deeply missed.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time is now 10:00 a.m. It is time for the order of business, Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers.

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: HEALTH RECORDS PRIVACY - ENSURE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, doctors and patients alike are registering alarm and concern over this government's forcing doctors to give personal health information over to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Dr. Gus Grant, Registrar and CEO of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, says this strikes at the heart of the doctor-patient relationship, impacting the trust that patients can have in their doctors. We've also heard from sexual assault survivors like Carrie Smith, who said trust is essential for survivors of sexual assault to seek treatment. Survivors, she added, could lose confidence in the health care system if they know they won't be consulted about the release of their medical records.

My question to the Premier is: Considering he has changed every other single piece of legislation that has come into this House, will they do the right thing and change this one?

THE SPEAKER: I would ask that the Leader of the Official Opposition take his place and rephrase that. You are speaking specifically to the bill; as we know, we can't do that, so I'll give you an opportunity to rephrase.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Will the Premier stop directing doctors to give personal health information to the minister?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): This is certainly an area where there is a lot of misinformation being spread. We know that our government was elected on a promise to fix health care. We're committed to fixing the health care system. We want to work with doctors. We want to work with health care professionals. We want to make sure that Nova Scotians have access to their information. We believe that Nova Scotians should have access to their information. That's what this is about.

There's a lot of misinformation and a little bit of fear being disseminated, but honestly, as a province, our focus is making sure we fix the health care system and making sure we have the data and the information to properly manage the system. That is not individual data; that is aggregated data. On the individual side, we want Nova Scotians to have access to their information, and I hope that member can get behind that.

ZACH CHURCHILL: To say that the doctors who are registering concerns about this are spreading misinformation and are fearmongering, I think, is wrong. To say that patients who have dealt with sexual assault and who are scared about the minister having access to their personal health information - which is how the law is written. To say that African Nova Scotians, Indigenous Nova Scotians, and transgender Nova Scotians, who already have fear and lack of trust with the health care system and are concerned about having their personal health information available to the Minister of Health and Wellness - to say this is misinformation and fearmongering is wrong. To say people are rightfully concerned about the fact that this government is forcing doctors to give their personal health information to the Minister of Health and Wellness in law - especially considering that this government had the largest cybersecurity issue ever.

My question to the Premier: Will the Premier please stop his minister from trying to do this?

THE PREMIER: Let me be clear. It's none of those people or groups of people who are spreading misinformation. It is the Opposition that is spreading misinformation. This would be members of the Opposition, the same Opposition that tried to conceal the theft of taxpayer money. This would be the same Opposition that is constantly trying to - and I would just remind the member that he stood in his place and said there has been no consultation with doctors. That was not true. That was completely dispelled at the Law Amendments Committee.

I just want to say what Doctors Nova Scotia - how they concluded at the Law Amendments Committee - this is from Doctors Nova Scotia, the group representing doctors: "We feel through adequate safeguards we can protect the confidentiality inherent in the therapeutic relationship between a physician and . . ."

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. (Interruption) Order. Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier forgot to finish Doctors Nova Scotia's statement where they said those appropriate safeguards are not in the piece of legislation that he is moving forward with.

My question to the Premier: Why didn't the Premier finish the comment? Dr. Gus Grant, CEO of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, patients and doctors whom we are hearing from privately are concerned about this. I had a doctor who told me this is insanity to do, and it is going to jeopardize the trust that patients have with their physicians and impact patient health negatively.

I want the House to also consider the fact that under this government they had the largest cybersecurity breach in Nova Scotia history, where 100,000 employees of this government lost their social insurance numbers to bad actors. We know from the minister responsible that the department hasn't even looked at this.

My question to the Minister is: What cybersecurity protections are in place to protect people's health care records?

THE PREMIER: This is a quote from Doctors Nova Scotia. They know this government is working with the best intentions. They know they can work with this government. They say they trust this government. They say it is the future ones that they are not too sure about.

I want to ensure Doctors Nova Scotia and all Nova Scotians that that is a long, long way away, but I just want to quote Dr. Gus Grant from his email to our team, to the deputy minister, on March 26th: Be assured that the college will support the ongoing efforts of government to manage the health care system and will continue in our efforts to improve access to competent, safe care.

Government is committed to developing regulations and a structure of data. Government that will empower patients while preserving patient privacy . . .

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

PREM.: PATIENT PRIVACY CONCERNS - ADDRESS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The Minister of Health and Wellness and now the Premier are accusing the Opposition of fearmongering following discussions around the disclosure of personal health information, but these concerns are not originating from opposition members. The Premier can read as many selective letters as he wants, but we know that

35,000 members of the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, sexual assault survivors, and many others have meticulously laid out their concerns about potential abuse and intrusion into patient privacy in this government's proposed approach.

My question to the Premier is: What makes the Premier so confident that he knows better than most of the health care professionals in our province?

THE PREMIER: Speaker, there are significant obligations under the Personal Health Information Act to keep private information private. Of course, that is going to happen. Of course, we respect that, but I just want to say, we have to move forward on this. We need data to manage the system. Now, this would be the same opposition, the same negative New Democratic Party that voted against the Patient Access to Care Act and were saying of all these things, The sky is going to fall. Guess what? The sky is not falling. That Act is working. We are hiring nurses; we are hiring doctors; we are expanding the scope of practice. Our intentions are good; the professional bodies know that, and Nova Scotians have a right to know that is true. We will fix health care, and more access to data is part of that.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We amplify the voices of the professionals on that bill, too, because they didn't want the minister deciding who was fit to practise. Yes, there are good parts of that bill, and there are parts of that bill that are open to abuse and overreach, just like in this one. It is not clear what this bill is trying to solve. The government has the data they say they need. The explanation of why they need it now is constantly changing. If it is really about Nova Scotians having their own information, then why does the minister need to access it? I don't care what her intention is. Why does she need to lightly touch it? Why does she need to peek at it? What will the access of private vendors be? Even doctors have expressed concern that they won't be able to explain it to their patients if asked whether their conversations are confidential. We deserve clarity here . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question?

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Does this proposal allow access to more than government actually needs? The minister said this morning that it was "broad." Why is the door being locked . . .

THE PREMIER: Speaker, here is the reality: We know that the NDP will always try to find the negative. The Personal Health Information Act is about 35 pages long and covers what the minister and other custodians can do to protect people's privacy and are required to do. That's a fact, and it is an important fact in this discussion. There is another fact that is necessary - we are committed to making sure Nova Scotians can access their health care system. The Opposition can be negative and stand in the way of that, but we are moving forward in the best interest of Nova Scotians. That is only what matters to us, and that is our focus, and we will continue to do it.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: What matters to Nova Scotians is being attached to primary care. When I ask Nova Scotians if they would prefer access to test results they can't decipher on an app or a doctor to share those results with them and walk them through them, 100 per cent say that they would rather have a doctor. The Premier referenced Doctors Nova Scotia. Doctors Nova Scotia has brought an amendment. Will the Premier pass it? Will they reconsider, and if not, why not?

THE PREMIER: I want to say that people have a right to have access to their health care. The NDP can find all kinds of negative reasons why people shouldn't have access to their health care. We don't agree with them. We are on the side of Nova Scotians, and we believe they have a right to have access to their health care information, and we're going to make sure it happens.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DHW: NON-IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION - ENSURE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'll remind the Premier patients do have a right and currently do have access to their personal health care records. The concern is giving the minister access to people's personal health care records.

I think the Premier hit the nail on the head when he said there's concern about what future governments might do. And he's not concerned about that, because the Premier doesn't care about the future, does he? He cares about what happens right now, and how long he can hold power, which was very clear in his answer, wasn't it?

Doctors are registering concern, and they say the language of the bill should be clarified to ensure the information gathered can't be identified to an individual patient. That has not happened. Will the government ensure that the information collected from people's personal health care records cannot be identifiable to the patient?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Currently, throughout the health care system, we collect aggregate data from a number of sources. Similarly, as we do in the acute care system, I can tell you how many people were in the emergency room yesterday, but I can't tell you who they were. Similarly, we need to be able to have that information so that we can understand utilization.

We have a whole portion of our health care system that we cannot see because we don't have access to aggregate data. Under the Personal Health Information Act, I'm not allowed - no minister is allowed, and the former Minister of Health and Wellness would know that, as a former custodian - I have no access to individual data. What I do have access to is aggregate data so I can plan and manage the system accordingly.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Again, the minister says she wants aggregate data, but then says she wants to also know who is attending the emergency departments. The government can't even get their story straight. The minister should . . . (interruption).

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor. Please, again today, let's do our best to try to be respectful of one another.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The fact that the language of the law is specific to personalized health care data is what the cause of concern is for doctors, for patients, for members of the African Nova Scotian community, for members of our Indigenous community, for members of the trans community in Nova Scotia, for people who have dealt with sexual assault, victims of sexual assault. All of these individuals are registering concern about their personal health information, as prescribed by law, literally, to be mandated to the minister. Will the minister do the right thing, like they've done in every other single piece of legislation, and reverse this decision?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Well, I can see we're not going to let the truth get in the way of a good story in the media. That's what's happening here. I have said it; I can say it fast; I can say it slow; if I knew a different language, I would say it in that: I cannot access people's individual health care record.

What I want is for them to access their personal health information. I want big numbers - big numbers, so that I can look and see how many people had appointments in offices yesterday. How long did they have to wait? How many missed appointments were there? Similarly, we look at how many people called EHS yesterday, how many people went to the emergency department. But I don't know who went . . . (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Order.

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

HCR: QEII PROJECT SCOPE REDUCTION - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The concern is that what the minister is saying is different from what the legislation says. That's the problem. Also, when it comes to the QEII redevelopment project, what the previous minister has said is different from what the plan is moving forward.

This QEII redevelopment project was announced in 2018 by the previous government. It was supposed to be in place for 2025. This government said they were delaying that project to account for increasing population. Well, we learned yesterday that this project has been cut in half from a square-footage perspective. There are fewer beds,

it's going to take four to five years more to build, and it's going to cost probably at least twice as much.

[10:15 a.m.]

Speaker, how can we take the minister's word in saying that this was for increased population when the scope of the project has actually been reduced?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Here's the difference between the two projects: when we took pictures on the site yesterday, there were actually backhoes in the background and people with hard hats and shovels. When the former Minister of Health and Wellness was leading that project, there was nothing.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Okay, the optics were better for the minister. We're terribly sorry that the previous government didn't focus on a photo op, and having fake shovels in the ground, and having cranes in the background for a photo.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I kindly ask the Leader of the Official Opposition to speak through the Chair, please.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: What the previous government was focused on was actually getting the signature transition health facility built for Nova Scotians by 2025. This government delayed it for years, and we were told it was because of increasing population - that the scale of the last project wasn't big enough. We learned yesterday that this project has been cut in half, there are fewer beds, it's going to take another five years to get built, and it's probably going to cost twice as much money, even though nobody can answer how much money it's going to cost. My question to the minister: How can she justify what was said for the reason of the delay, and what is the real scope of the project that we learned yesterday?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Yesterday, we celebrated the fact that we will have a million-square-foot state-of-the-art facility in this province on that site. We've also committed to a number of beds at Hogan Court. We've talked about Cobequid. We've talked about a variety of other things. And you know what else we got done, Speaker? We got the Yarmouth ED.

THE SPEAKER: Order. There's a lot of chirping here today. I will just advise that when we start throwing insults and when we start throwing mud, we're all losing ground in here. We're all losing ground. Let's try to do better.

The honourable member for Bedford South.

HCR: INFIRMARY CONSTRUCTION DELAY - EXPLAIN

BRAEDON CLARK: I'm glad we're talking about this, and we're talking about construction. The minister's talking about shovels and backhoes and piles of dirt. On May 12, 2023, this government issued a press release titled "Construction Set to Begin on QEII's Halifax Infirmary Site." That was 10 months ago, and over that time period, do you know what we did not have on that site? No dirt. No shovels. No hard hats. Maybe a fence. Congratulations on the fence.

We were going to have two million square feet under the former plan, which I will table. Now we have one million square feet. We were going to have 278 beds for transitional care. Now we have 178. Three more years, three billion more dollars. In what way, in what world, is that "more, faster"?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We certainly have looked at the former proposal that was available, and we realized it wasn't doable. There was not enough workforce. There was just no way that that project could be delivered. So as we always do, we took a common-sense approach. We sat and we wondered, What is in the best interest of people not only in HRM, but across this province?

The hospital that had the sod-turning yesterday is a resource for the entire province. The clinicians who attended that and spoke yesterday are thrilled with the prospect of finally seeing an opportunity to have a state-of-the-art building. They have informed us all the way along. We are very proud of that project, and we know we will deliver for Nova Scotians.

BRAEDON CLARK: I think what would have been beneficial for Nova Scotians is to have had the Victoria Building closed by 2025, to have the Halifax Infirmary ready and operational by 2026, which was the former plan, which I will also say again was for two million square feet, not one million square feet. It was a bigger project, faster, with half the price tag.

I wonder if the minister can explain how a bigger project for half the price in less time is worse. I know logic is sometimes upside-down here in the House, but that doesn't make any sense to me. We're years behind on this project. The government shows an inability to manage large projects. They had Shannex come and bail them out on Hogan Court. I'm wondering why Nova Scotians should trust that they're going to get this project done.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I think it's really important to highlight the fact that Hogan Court actually is an incredible innovation. When you have a private-public partnership, someone who is going to come in and operate for that, who's a leader in the sector, who actually thinks the project is so good that they want to buy it, I actually think that is a feather in the cap of not only the clinicians but Build Nova Scotia.

That is an incredible project. It is going to be an innovative model that will not only go through Atlantic Canada - because we now see that there are people in Newfoundland and Labrador who are looking for RFPs for a similar project - it is going to go across the country. I think we should be very proud of that in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EECD: PROVINCIAL INCLUSION POLICY - IMPLEMENT

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Courtnee Peddle has spent years trying to find suitable inclusive child care for her son, who has autism and is non-verbal. None of the local facilities near the Peddles' home have the resources needed to care for her son. Despite the Province saying they're working on a provincial inclusion policy and practice framework, families are left waiting without the care they desperately need. Can the minister tell me: When will this new policy be in place and when will families like Courtnee's be able to access the care they need?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: The significant and historic transformation that is under way in child care absolutely is focused on ensuring that we have spaces available for all children and families who need them across the province, regardless of where they live, regardless of when they work, and regardless of their individual needs.

One of the pillars of this work is inclusion, and that means we need to have child care across the province that meets the diverse needs of all our children. One of the next steps that we're working on in this five-year historic transformation is to build an inclusive system. What does that mean? It means we have to have enough spaces, and that's why we're adding spaces. Over 3,800 spaces have been added in our work. What does it mean? It means we need educated and well-paid child care workers, and we've been doing . . .

SUZY HANSEN: The significant and historic transformation are words that are clearly not creating the spaces needed. Parents in this province are struggling to ensure their children receive the care they need - struggling. This is even more difficult for families who need accessible and inclusive care. One of the few child care centres in the province that provides specialized care for children with disabilities has a wait-list of over 500 kids. The executive director of this centre recently stated, "In my years in working within the child-care sector, I have never witnessed such a desperate need for care."

My question to the minister is: Children and their families deserve safe and suitable care. When will they have it?

BECKY DRUHAN: This is a sector that has been neglected for decades. If I could snap my fingers and build the inclusive spaces across the province instantly, I would. This is a five-year transformation, over \$600 million. We are doing the work to deliver that care.

The next pillar that we're working on is inclusion. We've been collaborating with the incredible people at our engagement table, who are ECEs and child care operators, to build the kinds of programs and supports that the member opposite is asking for. That includes working with the existing Inclusion Support Grant to support our inclusion coordinators. That includes adding wages and benefits so that we have enough ECEs to deliver this care. We are well on our way, and we will deliver.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

HCR: QEII REDEVELOPMENT COST - DIVULGE

BRAEDON CLARK: A critical component of the QEII redevelopment project, which is the largest infrastructure project in Nova Scotia history, is the cost. Unfortunately, the most recent cost estimate we have is six years ago, \$2 billion. Yesterday at the sod turning, Nova Scotia Health Authority officials were asked: Will the cost be \$5 billion - more than double? The answer was, "I'm not going to answer that question." I would like to ask the minister: Will the minister answer that question here in the House? How much is this project going to cost?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We know that this is going to be a considerably expensive investment. We know that, as the market changes related to labour and supply chains, we do expect that there will be increased costs. In the press release that was sent out yesterday, this current facility is around \$245 million. When we look at the entire project, it will be in the billions - 100 per cent it will. We know that. We are doing what we can based on market availability of labour, as well as equipment and supplies, and we're going to continue to assess that. This is necessary. We have a hospital that is falling down around patients and staff, and we're doing our very best to keep it going. This project should have been started 10 years ago.

BRAEDON CLARK: Yes, the minister is correct. There is a hospital falling down around people. That's why, in the previous plan, that hospital would have been up and running in two years, not four years from now just for acute care. With respect, to the minister, I think it's important . . . (interruptions).

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: With respect to the minister, I think we deserve - and more importantly, Nova Scotians deserve - a bit more clarity than a vague statement that it's going to be in the billions. Are we talking \$3 billion, \$5 billion, or \$10 billion? Will the minister commit to at least a timeline when Nova Scotians will know how much more this project is going to cost?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We will have a clearer picture and financial close about the cost of the project, but what I must go back to all the time is the cost of deferred maintenance. The project will be more expensive because it wasn't started a long time ago. Unless there's an invisibility cloak over this beautiful building that they are ready to unveil to show us all the work they did in advance of the change of government, I don't know what else to do. We have deferred maintenance on an incredible amount of infrastructure across this province, not only facilities, but also equipment. It is expensive to catch up when you've had no investment in health care for over 10 years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HCR: HEALTH CARE PROJECT COST - EXPLAIN

HON. KEITH IRVING: Nova Scotians have had little to no sufficient information on the largest health care project in this province's history. Since this government took over - two and a half years ago - we've had very little information. We needed to use a FOIPOP to see how many taxpayers' dollars have been spent on this project while nothing has happened in three years. The FOIPOP has indicated that \$77 million was spent in the first 11 months of this year. The minister can't show us a design, the minister can't show us a budget, and all we have is a loose schedule. What did \$77 million this year provide Nova Scotians?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: This project is incredibly complex. It is the biggest infrastructure project in the history of the province. We heard about that yesterday. It is significant, and we know that. We continue toward the design planning and financial close, and those details will unfold.

What we heard yesterday from PCL Construction was how important it was for us to have this parallel process that allows them to begin enabling works and shorten the timeline on delivery. We're working hard with PCL, as well as the clinicians, to get this off the ground. We're pleased with the progress, and we're not waiting for one portion of this project to stop before the other starts. We know that we can deliver this project in a timely fashion for Nova Scotians.

KEITH IRVING: Clearly, it doesn't take rocket science to know that three years of delay by this government has increased the costs, but the government knows something. They know enough to decrease the size of the project by 50 per cent. Clearly, they had some numbers. We know that the developer talked about insurance, to go and get insurance for this project - to move forward with it, they needed to have a preliminary budget. So the government and the developer must have estimates. If they have any kind of a concept design, they'd have a Class D estimate. Why will the minister not share with Nova Scotians the current estimate of the project, that they are well aware of?

[10:30 a.m.]

MICHELLE THOMPSON: The original project that was discussed in 2019 was two million square feet. What we've done in December 2022, we introduced that more, faster. We are building in a waved approach because of the reasons I talked about, because of labour, because of supply, and also because of the data that tells us our population is growing. The data helps us understand where people live. The data helps us understand how people are accessing health care services. As a result, we have used a wave approach which will have sites in various locations throughout the HRM in order to serve the population that is growing.

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

HCR: QEII REDEVELOPMENT SHRINKING - JUSTIFY

HON. KEITH IRVING: Let's talk about the data. The government changed their plans, based on population numbers of 1,069,732, the population in 2031. The population of January 1, 2024, in this province is 1,069,354, or something to that effect. The project is now outdated. How can this government rationalize shrinking this project from what was recommended in 2019 and remove beds from the system? How is that more, faster?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: In fact, we haven't reduced the number of beds. We have increased them, and we have also increased the number of operating rooms on this plan. What we've done is recognize that the congestion on the original bill is too much on the peninsula. We're looking at where people want to access services. We're looking at how the beds are utilized in the hospitals.

This is why we have a transition to care facility, because we know, with the age and demographic of our population, we need a different model of care for our frail seniors and others in this province. We didn't accept the other plan, because it wasn't a good one. We made our own plan. We looked at the population, we looked at the services that are required. We are modernizing and transforming health care, and this is what it looks like.

KEITH IRVING: I asked the former minister who was responsible for this project that went nowhere for a year, what was happening with those other projects in this waved approach - there was nothing last year.

I asked the current minister in Estimates, where were these other projects? Was there a facility plan for any of those five, six projects - other than Hogan Court, which is a mess and a boondoggle? The minister had no answer other than that they were doing master planning. Clearly this waved approach - we can't see it because the tide is out.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: This is not a project that can be sketched on the back of a napkin and submitted. This has got multiple layers. We have been working on Hogan

Court, West Bedford, for a year, getting it off the ground, remodelling it, looking at it, making sure that it's going to suit the needs, working on a model of care. It's not only about the beds - it's about the people who are going to work there, how we're going to move through the building. We can't waste an inch of the space that we have. The work is unseen, perhaps, but it is not wasted time. This is a state-of-the-art facility built with clinicians and it will deliver futuristic care for Nova Scotians in this province.

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

AMH: YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS - IMPROVE

LISA LACHANCE: My question is for the Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health. I implore him to understand the significance of what child and adolescent psychiatrists have been saying. They are worried that the most serious patients will be further marginalized from the mental health system due to the rollout of the Health Services and Insurance Act. Nova Scotia Health Authority psychologists are also concerned about a pilot where only 31 assessments were completed against a wait-list of 1,600 children. Both the assessment pilot project and the implementation of this Act are incentivizing practitioners to leave the public sector for the private sector, where their work is better remunerated.

How is this government going to improve timely access to mental health services for children and adolescents without working with the Public Health workforce?

HON. BRIAN COMER: Everything about mental health care is universal access - that we focused on as the minister and as the government. Certainly, this one specific pilot completed over 50 diagnostic tests in less than three months for families that wouldn't have received services otherwise. In addition to this, we have invested over \$124 million of an increase since we formed government in addictions and mental health care. I know there's certainly work to be done, but the enabling legislation is a critical piece of universal access for Nova Scotians.

LISA LACHANCE: My concern is that the enabling legislation is actually undermining the current system. Karn Nichols, Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association of Nova Scotia, has said: "By prioritizing mental health and substance use health, we invest in healthier individuals, stronger communities, and a more resilient province and nation." Such investments, Karn explains, are not only a matter of moral obligation, but are also the intelligent choice. I'll table that. Will this government make the intelligent choice and commit to investing in the public sector support needed to improve access to services and ultimately the well-being of children?

BRIAN COMER: Certainly, the quote from that article is from the Canadian Mental Health Association, which does incredible work in the province. As part of this budget, we're the first government to invest in a community wellness framework. I think that's

important because, for the first time, these community-based organizations across the province are going to get core funding to deliver health care to Nova Scotians for mental health within the communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DHW: MEDICAL RECORDS CONSENT - ENSURE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: We had a lot of conversation in the last number of days about consent of private medical records and the concern that residents and medical professionals have around politicians having the ability to access that personal medical information. A big part of that conversation is around consent. My first question to the minister is: Will she ensure that there's mandatory consent as part of anyone providing their medical information to the Department of Health and Wellness?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Under the Personal Health Information Act, the minister, the custodian, the people who work in the department, are able to manage health system data in order to manage the system. Those data are compelled from a variety of different places. They're compelled from Nova Scotia Health, IWK, and other aspects. We also look at aggregate data from EHS, as an example. Those data are part of the system management. We also have MOUs signed around CTAS agreements and other databases, like ambulatory care information, like NACRS data, as an example.

These all feed into system management. It's not about personal health information in order to manage the system. That's not helpful. It doesn't help me manage the system. What I want for personal health information is for people to have access to their own, and they can opt in to that process.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: We're hearing the concerns coming from the medical community about how the legislation is written. I talked about this last night during debate, that this government had issues, and there's a number of examples. You had a non-residence tax, where stakeholders came forward with legislation and the government pulled back. Then you had issues with the wineries, where the wine industry in Nova Scotia had concerns about what was coming forward proposed, and the government pulled back. Now we have another situation where we have the people who look after us, the medical community, coming forward saying that they have concerns about legislation that is presented.

My question to the minister is: Why won't she have a conversation with them and look at amending this so that they can all work together?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We are working very closely with the College of Physicians and Surgeons and Doctors Nova Scotia, but we're working with others as well. We currently have a pilot underway where 13,000 Nova Scotians have the option to have

access to their personal health information, which includes things like their prescription records, their lab and their DI, hospital visits and primary care, as examples.

The information that we get from them, 98 per cent of people are thrilled to have that. Of the 500 people who have completed the survey, 35 per cent of those people said that they would actually have had to go back to the physician to have another appointment if they didn't have access to their records. We are very interested in making sure that this works for Nova Scotians, and we'll continue to get feedback from a variety of different groups.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DHW: HEALTH RECORD ACCESS - ADDRESS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I have heard from multiple constituents who are really upset about this government's decision to allow the minister to access personal health information. Not the patient - we have no problem with the patient accessing it. It's the minister. Please do not confuse the two.

A therapist in my riding expressed her deep concerns and how her relationship, her confidential relationship with her patients is at stake here. It's important. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: Why don't they listen to health care providers like therapists who have real concerns about the proposed legislation?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Okay. I'm going to say it again, with everyone with their listening ears on. Under the current Personal Health Information Act, the minister is considered a custodian. There is a document, the Personal Health Information Act - it is 35 pages long. It only allows certain things. The information that the Minister of Health or the designate receives is data to manage the health care system.

It is data to improve access. It is data that allow us to allocate resources. This is not personal health - it's actual unlawful for any minister to access personal health independent records.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: If that was true, she would change the bill and the wording in that. That is wrong. They will have access to the EMR information. That is my mental health information. I don't want the minister, her staff, or anybody to know about mental health issues. My question to the minister: Does she not see how this legislation can hurt Nova Scotians who want a high level of confidentiality to get mental health treatment?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Personal notes that physicians write are currently not available to patients either. This is not the type of information that we want to see. Personal information, records, do not help me or any future minister or the department manage the health care system.

We are trying to understand how we can improve access, how we can improve outcomes for patients in this system. There are so many ways in which data are used in order to understand the system; how patients move through the system, whether they bounce back after surgery. I have no line of sight to understand if patients bounce back to a primary care provider, as an example, after surgery.

[10:45 a.m.]

How do we allocate resources to make sure people have access and attachment? They say they want access and attachment and when we put steps in place to achieve it, now everyone's upset.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW: HEALTH LEGISLATION CONCERNS - ADDRESS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: During Law Amendments Committee we had several people present who had grave concerns about the proposed legislation, specifically around personal health information. One of the questions that the College of Physicians and Surgeons asked during Law Amendments Committee was: Did the government consult with the Privacy Commissioner about the significant legislation amendment? I'm wondering if the minister can let us all know here in the House: Was the Privacy Commissioner of Nova Scotia consulted, and what was their opinion on this?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We have done a number of privacy assessments in the department. This happens all of the time. There are a number of regulations that govern the way in which data is used. I want to assure people that there has been a very rigorous privacy assessment done of this.

We don't want people to feel that they can't - we want people to access health care. We want people to access their health records. We don't want to put any impediments in the way of that. There has been rigorous assessment in the department to ensure that we are within the confines of the Act.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question was very specific, and that is a reflection of the question that the CEO of the college asked and we're asking here: Did the minister consult with the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Nova Scotia in preparing legislation around the release of personal health information?

I also want to table a CBC article from 2021, where the Premier said: "We're going to work with the Privacy Commissioner to make sure the proper authority is there, so that Nova Scotians have access to the information they rightly should have access to." My understanding is that this has not been done, and concerns have been shared about security

from a victim of sexual assault during Law Amendments Committee. Can the Minister answer the question: Was the Information and Privacy Commissioner consulted?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: As I've said before, there has been a rigorous privacy assessment that has been done through the department. We are working across government. We are working with the Department of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions around how we use the app, Nova Scotia Health Authority, IWK Health Centre. All of the individuals we work with have rules and regulations as custodians under the Personal Health Information Act.

I also want to note that this is the exact same place we were last year. The sky was falling. We were going to change everybody's scope of practice. Nobody would be safe in health care as a result. We have attracted over 1,100 nurses as a result of PACA last year, 379 doctors. Everything we do is to advance and modernize our health care system to ensure safe and adequate care for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

RTA: RENOVICATIONS - PREVENT

GARY BURRILL: I want to ask the Minister responsible for the Residential Tenancies Act about the federal government's announcement yesterday of a Canadian Renters' Bill of Rights to be introduced in two weeks with the federal budget.

The Renters' Bill of Rights, Ottawa said in a statement - these are the exact words - "will also crack down on renovictions." The clear intimation here is that in provinces like Nova Scotia, despite whatever rules or regulations may exist, people continue to be displaced at an alarming rate by renovictions, and something more than is presently in place is needed in order for them to have proper protection.

Does the minister recognize that this is the case?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I was a little bit surprised to hear about this new proposal from the federal government. I just found out about it myself in media coverage. There was no reach-out or consultation or engagement with the Province prior to. Certainly, we welcome support . . . (interruptions).

THE CHAIR: Order. The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

COLTON LEBLANC: Again, we always look at ways of modernizing and strengthening the program. I think it's a little bit of the federal government swimming in provincial waters here. I'm interested to see if they have more to say.

Pertaining to renovictions, we brought amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act to strengthen that. Based on the member's questions in Estimates the other day, I think there's a better role for all of us to better understand the roles and responsibilities and the process regarding that.

GARY BURRILL: The federal government is also going to introduce, they said yesterday, a nationwide standard lease agreement. So there is a clear indication here that current lease aberrations, like the overuse of fixed term leases in Nova Scotia, have undermined security of tenure. The federal government is saying that in a province like ours, more protection is needed from aberrations of leases. Does the minister recognize this is the case and register the significance of what Ottawa is saying here?

COLTON LEBLANC: What I do register is the ongoing need for balance when we make changes to the program. Interested to see what the federal government's . . .

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[11:00 a.m. The House resolved into CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Nolan Young in the Chair.]

[3:36 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Danielle Barkhouse resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 419 - Financial Measures (2024) Act.

and reports considerable progress on the bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Pursuant to Rule 5(c), I move the House do not sit on Tuesday and Wednesday, but sit on Thursday, April 4th, and the hours not be 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., but 11:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request that the House does not sit Tuesday, April 2nd, and Wednesday, April 3rd, but sits April 4th from 11:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.

All those in favour?

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[3:39 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied? The Clerk will conduct a recorded vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[4:39 p.m.]

YEAS

Hon. Brad Johns
Hon. Tory Rushton
Hon. Barbara Adams
Hon. Alan MacMaster
Hon. Twila Grosse
Hon. Michelle Thompson
Hon. John Lohr
Hon. Timothy Halman
Hon. Kent Smith
Dave Ritcey
Hon. Brian Wong
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek
Hon. Brian Comer
Hon. Brendan Maguire
Hon. Jill Balser
Hon. Trevor Boudreau
Hon. Greg Morrow
Hon. Becky Druhan

NAYS

Hon. Patricia Arab
Hon. Tony Ince
Hon. Derek Mombourquette
Hon. Zach Churchill
Hon. Kelly Regan
Claudia Chender
Kendra Coombes
Suzy Hansen
Gary Burrill
Lisa Lachance
Ali Duale
Lorelei Nicoll
Braedon Clark
Carman Kerr
Ronnie LeBlanc
Fred Tilley
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

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

THE CLERK: For, 28. Against, 17.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

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

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

[4:42 p.m. The House resolved into CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Danielle Barkhouse in the Chair.]

[5:08 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Danielle Barkhouse resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. 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 the following bill:

Bill No. 419 - Financial Measures (2024) Act. (Hon. Allan MacMaster)

and has made considerable progress on the bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: That concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise and meet again on April 4th between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m., as already established. Government business will include Committee of the Whole

House on Bills on Bill No. 419, Third Reading of Bills No. 404 and 407, and Private and Local Bill No. 442.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The House is now adjourned. We will reconvene on April 4th between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.

[The House adjourned at 5:09 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1,039**

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on March 6, 2024, Alexa d'Entremont and Shawn Stoddard welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Alexa d'Entremont and Shawn Stoddard on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,040

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Kentville Rotary Club is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, being founded on May 10, 1924; and

Whereas the Kentville Rotary Club's guiding principles are based on a four-way test of truth, fairness, goodwill, and friendship; and

Whereas the Kentville Rotary Club has served our community, with a range of activities that include support for community projects, the relief of poverty, programs for the physically and mentally challenged, preservation of the environment, advancement of education, international development, advancement of the arts, and club fellowship;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Kentville Rotary Club on their 100th anniversary.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,041

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas the Lyons Brook and Area Branch of the Women's Institute is celebrating its 95th anniversary of serving the local, provincial and global communities; and

Whereas the Women's Institute's motto "For Home and Country" aims to help rural and urban women acquire knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of life in the 21st century and foster concern and cooperation among women for the betterment of home and country and world-wide community; and

Whereas the Lyons Brook Branch is the oldest of the all the branches in the Pictou District and one of the only branches that still working towards the betterment of families and supporting others;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the historical significance of the Women's Institute, predating women's suffrage and the long-standing history of the Lyons Brook Branch over the past 95 years and the commitment from its members to its attention and relevance to social issues at home and abroad.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,042

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Bramble Hill Farms Inc. is a year-round greenhouse in Greenhill, Nova Scotia that produces nutrient-dense microgreen salad mixes that has partnered with Nourish Nova Scotia to launch Nourish Your Roots 2.0: a Micro Garden fundraiser; and

Whereas the micro-garden school fundraiser aims to help schools raise funds for their healthy food programs while promoting food literacy; and

Whereas Bramble Hill Farms has also partnered with Summer Street Industries in a partnership for co-packing which helps with its expansion of production and creates opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly commend

Bramble Hill Farms for significantly promoting and impacting healthy eating among children and families and its partnerships with Nourish Nova Scotia and Summer Street Industries for the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,043

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Florence Van Veen has been recognized as the Volunteer of the Year for the Lyons Brook Community; and

Whereas Florence has volunteered with the Lyons Brook Community Hall and Lyons Brook Church over the past number of years in various capacities; although Florence is usually behind the scenes, she contributes to her community in many ways including everything from washing dishes, making quilts, knitting and crocheting hats, mitts, and scarves for the Mitten Tree, but also puppets for the hospital and nightgowns for the Women's Institute for palliative care; and

Whereas Florence also volunteers at the Pictou Opportunity Ship, and sits as a member of the Auxiliary for the Scotsburn Fire Department;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Florence Van Veen for her devotion and commitment to her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,044

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas David and Velma Fulmore have retired from operating Fulmore's Pharma Choice on Front Street in Pictou after 27 years; and

Whereas Fulmore's Pharmacy is independently and locally owned and operated since 1996, as well as recognizing David's role as a community pharmacist for 40 years; and

Whereas Fulmore's Pharmacy has been an integral part of their community,

supporting local events, sponsorships, and donations to a variety of projects for almost 30 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and celebrate the well-deserved retirement of David and Velda Fulmore and their valuable contribution to their community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,045

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Margie Grant-Walsh, Executive Director for the Big Brothers Big Sisters Pictou County, is celebrating 37 years with the organization; and

Whereas Margie is an amazing community leader and mentor with an incredible impact on youth and families in Pictou County, she is a high-energy, motivated, and visionary thinker who has a strong concern and care for the youth of today and tomorrow; and

Whereas Margie is a familiar face at fundraisers and meetings, both within the business and school communities, her guidance, commitment, and compassion have been steadfast;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank Margie Grant-Walsh for her focus, knowledge, and community spirit in all that she does and her leadership at Big Brothers Big Sisters Pictou County.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,046

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas volunteer firefighter Mark Stewart received the 2023 Fire Fighter of the Year Award from the Pictou Fire Department as well as the Firefighter Award in memory of Harold Flemming; and

Whereas Mark exemplifies the positive characteristics of a member of the fire

service and who has a notable record of service and achievements; and

Whereas the Fire Fighter of the Year Award is presented to the individual who has given selflessly of themselves in support of the department, the fire service in general, and the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the high degree of dedication and participation that Mark Stewart has provided to the Pictou Fire Department, as well as his allegiance to the department and to its fire fighters and officers. Thank you, Mark, for your loyalty and dedication.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,047

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Sterling Heighton, a resident of River John, rose to action during the historic multi-day snowstorm in February 2024 that trapped many residents in their homes in Pictou County; and

Whereas Sterling volunteered his plow, machinery, and time to clear and remove snow from the Cape John Road where residents were snowed in and there was no access to them on the 35.6-kilometre oceanside road when almost 150 centimetres fell over three days; and

Whereas assistance was requested by the Department of Public Works for citizens to assist getting access to vulnerable people, to perform wellness checks, and emergency access, Sterling stepped up to the plate to work tirelessly removing snow for another week post-storm;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Sterling Heighton for his selfless volunteer efforts to clean and clear snow for his community members during the extraordinary snowstorm of 2024.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,048

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas volunteer firefighter Travis Heighton received the 2023 Fire Fighter of the Year Award from the River John Fire Department; and

Whereas Travis exemplifies the positive characteristics of a member of the fire service and who has a notable record of service and achievements; and

Whereas the Fire Fighter of the Year Award is presented to the individual who has given selflessly of themselves in support of the department, the fire service in general and the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the high degree of dedication and participation that Travis Heighton has provided to the River John fire fighters and officers.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,049

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas mother and son Antoinette and Migel Abboud, co-owners of Antoinette's Cheesecakes, recently opened their third location in Lower Sackville; and

Whereas Antoinette discovered her love for baking while helping run her parents' café and her son Migel, a serial entrepreneur, inspired by his mother's passion for creating delicious treats, joined forces to make their cheesecakes a beloved local delight; and

Whereas offering New York-style cheesecakes, vegan, keto, and gluten-free cheesecakes, Antoinette's creative flair and Migel's entrepreneurial spirit have been celebrated for its dedication and delicious offerings;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Antoinette and Migel for their success in opening their third location in Lower Sackville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,050

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Fabian O’Neil from Lower Sackville was recently honoured for his 60 years of community service with the Kinsmen Club; and

Whereas Fabian’s work with CIBC led him to the Kinsmen Club, whereby he has been a member of nine clubs across the Atlantic provinces, serving in Moncton, Charlottetown (on two separate occasions), Sydney, Glace Bay, Corner Brook, Fredericton, Digby, Halifax, and now Lower Sackville; and

Whereas Fabian served as President during his time in Digby, Halifax, and Sackville, and continues to be an outstanding example of the Kinsmen Club’s Motto of “Serving Our Communities’ Greatest Need”;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding Fabian O’Neil for his dedication and continued service with the community and the Kinsmen Club.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,051

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas my office received a call from a senior constituent who needed post-surgery care following her cataract surgery; and

Whereas her surgeon told her that the surgery would not happen unless she found someone to stay with her for 24 hours following the surgery; and

Whereas we reached out to a few local organizations and in no time, Fred Gallop of Knox United Church in Lower Sackville, very quickly rounded up two ladies to stay with her and he offered to drive her to and from the hospital;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding Fred Gallop and the other volunteers for quickly coming to the rescue of this senior so that her surgery could go ahead as planned.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,052

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

resolution:

Whereas the staff of Freeman’s Little New York Restaurant, over the span of a few weeks in February 2024, contributed \$2 from every large pizza sale to Phoenix Youth Programs; and

Whereas Phoenix is a non-profit, community-based organization that has been dedicated to supporting youth aged 11 to 24 years old and their families; and

Whereas the team at Phoenix believes that people are the leaders in their own lives and Phoenix is a leader in supporting them;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the staff at Freeman’s Little New York Restaurant in Lower Sackville for their efforts in raising some “dough” for a very good cause.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,053

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Lorne Alexander Julien is a member of Millbrook First Nation and a proud “Warrior On The Hill” Mi’kmaq self-taught artist whose bold and beautiful paintings are known for their uplifting energy and heartfelt messages; and

Whereas Lorne recently painted an eye-catching power box mural entitled “8th Generation” on Sackville Drive in Lower Sackville; and

Whereas Lorne's mural carries profound symbolism of the importance of unity and collective action for a brighter and more inclusive future, a real power symbol of unity and peace;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding Lorne Alexander Julien for touching hearts and spreading messages of hope and connection in the community through his vibrant artworks.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,054

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas for the past 23 years, Monique Guilderson has served as Chair and Director of The Friends of First Lake Society, while juggling her home life, managing a business, and working as a full-time osteopath; and

Whereas recently, Monique announced that she will be retiring from the Society in May of this year, due to family commitments; and

Whereas her retirement from The Friends of First Lake Society will leave some pretty big shoes to fill, as her leadership and dedication have been extraordinary;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Monique for being such an excellent steward of First Lake for the past 23 years and wish her well as she ventures into this next chapter of your life.

FILED PETITIONS**(Tabled Mar. 28, 2024)****Petition for the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Mar. 27, 2024 - Re Gaza Conflict**

By: Hon. Becky Druhan

Whereas The Premier of Nova Scotia stated on 24 October 2023 that:

The attack by Hamas and the continued acts of aggression against Israel - I feel very strongly that Israel has a right to defend itself. I stand with Israel in this conflict as they try to stamp out Hamas and the terrorist activity that's happening. I will stand, as will our caucus, and we'll encourage members of the House to stand with Israel and its right to defend itself. I cannot stand behind the member's call for a ceasefire. I can only stand behind Israel and its right to defend itself.

We believe that the Premier of Nova Scotia expressing unwavering support for Israel despite its disproportionate use of force against Palestinian civilians is problematic given the mounting evidence of crimes against humanity;

Whereas the Honourable Gary Burrill presented a petition on 23 November 2023 calling on "the Government of Nova Scotia to join the groundswell of voices across our province and around the world calling for a ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine conflict"; and

Whereas the Government of Canada called for a "sustainable ceasefire" on 12 December 2023;

Whereas the decision reached on 26 January 2024 by the International Court of Justice that there is plausible reason to believe Israel is committing genocide or failing to prevent genocide is evidence that the Premier of Nova Scotia must call for a ceasefire;

Therefore we, the undersigned residents of Lunenburg and Queens Counties, call upon the Premier of Nova Scotia to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, that would include: the release of all hostages, allow for the flow of sufficient humanitarian aid, and permit Canadian Citizens to safely leave Gaza.