



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Karla MacFarlane

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First Session

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2024

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HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 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 will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Speaker, I beg leave to table a document from the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, entitled *Positive Aging: The 2024-2025 Directory of Programs and Services Directory*.

THE SPEAKER: The report has been tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1,061

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I rise in my role as Minister of Gaelic Affairs. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Tartan Day was chosen to be held on April 6th by its Nova Scotian founder, Jean Watson, in tribute to the Declaration of Arbroath, which was made on the same day in 1320 and states in part: “As long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom - for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.”

Whereas Scottish Gaels created through their cultural practices a process of weaving material from wool, upon which they dyed patterns referred to as *breacan* (tartan) and through their Gaelic language give us the terms *am féileadh mòr* (the great kilt), *am féileadh bheag* (the little kilt) and *féileadh bhreacain* (belted plaid), and through their *bàrdachd* (Gaelic poetry), praised the wearing of tartan as a badge of their cultural identity and have passed down to us the cherished cultural practice of *luadhadh* (the milling frolic), where a Gaelic song would be sung to accompany the work of preparing cloth for kilt- and other garment-making; and

Whereas following the Battle of Culloden, one of the many measures designed to break their Gaelic identity and pacify their society, laying the groundwork for the Highland Clearances and the voluntary and forced emigration of an estimated 250,000 Gaels, was the implementation of the Dress Act, which banned the wearing of tartan from 1746 to 1782;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize *Là a' Bhreacain* as a day to learn more about Scottish Gaels and their resilience and how they have enriched our province via their Gaelic language and cultural expression through poetry, song, music, dance, story, foodways, and customs.

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 Municipal Affairs and Housing.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,062

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

Whereas April 7th to April 14th is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week; and

Whereas our passionate 911 call-takers and emergency dispatchers play a critical role in protecting the health, safety, and property of Nova Scotians; and

Whereas many lives are saved each year thanks to the dedicated services of 911 call-takers and emergency dispatchers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature honour and pay tribute to the hundreds of public safety telecommunicators who work behind the scenes to provide a vital link to the public safety services on which Nova Scotia relies.

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 Responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,063

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

Whereas April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and the opportunity to raise awareness to show our support for survivors of sexual assault; and

Whereas sexual violence and sexual assault are serious crimes that have negative social, health, and public safety implications that affect victims, survivors, and their families, particularly women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals; and

Whereas through the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and Standing Together, the Status of Women Office provides funding to a number of community-based projects that are focused on prevention, supporting those impacted by violence, and programs that provide trauma-informed, culturally appropriate support;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month and learning more about how we can prevent sexual violence and about resources in our communities at breakthesilencens.ca.

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 Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I'd like to bring everyone's attention to our Press Gallery, where we have a familiar face who joins us here every day, Jean Laroche. Jean is with us on our good days and our bad days. Sometimes he creates the bad days. (Laughter) Not often does he create the good days. He's a friend to all of us in this Chamber - maybe

even the Premier. Not sure if he's the Premier's friend. But I would like to read this resolution.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,064

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

Whereas the media plays an important role in covering provincial politics and informing Nova Scotians on the work of government;
and

Whereas Jean Laroche has been a journalist with the CBC since 1987; and

Whereas this legislative session marks Jean's 30th year reporting at Province House, covering governments of all stripes, minority and majority governments, led by eight different Premiers.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House join me in thanking Jean Laroche for his 30 years covering Province House with the CBC and sharing the important work of this Legislature and the Provincial Government with Nova Scotians.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried. (Standing ovation)

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Before I read my second government notice of motion, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do. Order. There's a little bit of chatter in the Chamber. Could we reduce that, please?

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

JILL BALSER: It is my honour to introduce a group of dedicated adult learners to the Legislature today. Here with us is Arianne Richardson-Coté, Selena Atwell, Vicki Steadman, Firman Young, Clinton Ray Howard, Rachel Brautigan, and Ruth Brown. I think the group has grown quite large. We also have staff from Literacy Nova Scotia. I ask all of us to give them a huge round of applause and congratulate them for all their work and success. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,065

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

Whereas Nova Scotians have celebrated the achievements and dedication of adult learners during Adult Learners' Week from March 31 to April 6, 2024, at events across the province; and

Whereas literacy and lifelong learning equip Nova Scotians with the skills and confidence needed to fully reach their potential and the demands of the rapidly changing workplace; and

Whereas the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to helping Nova Scotians advance their education and strengthen their skills by providing tuition-free adult high school diploma programs, GED testing services, and adult literacy programs through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, which has resulted in thousands of learners continuing their personal development through the many academic opportunities available in our province;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing this week, March 31 to April 6, 2024, as International Adult Learners' Week in the Province of Nova Scotia and encourage all Nova Scotians to honour the importance of literacy and the role it plays in establishing the foundation for the social and economic well-being of our province.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

TARTAN DAY: CELEB. OF SCOTTISH HER. - RECOG.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I'd just like to stand for a minute and recognize that tomorrow is Tartan Day. If you recall in 2019, Speaker Murphy at the time introduced a tartan for our Legislative Assembly. Some are wearing it here today. Also, some bagpipers such as yourself and the previous Premier - I don't know if there are any others - would normally be wearing a kilt; maybe tomorrow at the hockey game. I'll be wearing mine. I also do want to make reference to the member for Sackville-Cobequid, who wore a kilt today. It's Tartan Day. Let's celebrate our Scottish heritage and have a great Tartan Day tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BLUENOSE BONSPIEL: CURLING EVENT - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize the curling world. Yesterday kicked off the Bluenose Bonspiel 2024, hosted by Loose Ends Curling League. The annual curling bonspiel is hosting queer curlers from all over the Atlantic provinces and beyond, all under one roof, to showcase all of their curling talents. I would like to encourage any members who are interested in curling to attend the Bluenose Bonspiel at the Mayflower Curling Club this weekend. Curling is a fun time for all ages, and the schedule is posted online at loosendscurling.ca. I encourage everyone to go on out this weekend and enjoy the curling world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

[9:15 a.m.]

LEG. STAFF: HARD WORK - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Today marks what could be the end of another Legislative sitting, and I want to take a moment to express our gratitude to every single member of the staff who has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to put all this together and make this work possible.

Firstly, a big thank you to Legislative Television Broadcast and Recording Services for their streaming services, ensuring that Nova Scotians can stay engaged with our proceedings; to the Commissionaires and Halifax Regional Police, thank you for your commitment to keeping us safe throughout the sitting; to the Clerks, Pages, and House of Assembly Operations team for their diligent efforts in ensuring that the legislative process runs smoothly and that members are duly informed.

A special mention to the team in the Legislative Library as well, whose incredible research, skills, and readiness to assist at a moment's notice are truly commendable. Thanks to the media for the role they play in keeping us accountable for our toes. The dedication to transparency and accountability is vital to our democracy, and congratulations to Jean Laroche on 30 years. Lastly, it's crucial to recognize the hard-working individuals in our party caucus offices and the staff at home. Your hours of preparation do not go unappreciated, and to all the families who do all the work while we're here, thank you so much for making this possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

LEG. STAFF: HARD WORK - RECOG.

LARRY HARRISON: Well, the honourable member just took all the words right out of my mouth. Anyway, I know I speak for all of us MLAs when I offer a thank you to all the folks who help make this place run smoothly. There are rough spots, but they make it run a whole lot smoother.

It does take a lot of very, very good people to keep this place going. I want to thank the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Clerks, and the Pages. They all do a fantastic job - and Legislative TV - to keep us all operating the way we should. There are also many people who never get to be in this Chamber, and of course the caucus staff, who do so much work in preparing talks for us, in getting our statements in order, just being there to support us all through this Legislature. And, of course, constituency assistants - also very, very important to us. They keep things going when we're in here.

We the MLAs are an integral part of this Chamber, no question, but we're only a very small part of what makes this place function. I ask each of us to join as I thank the

other members of our Legislature teams for all the assistance for this sitting. Thank you very much, everyone. I hope you all have a very pleasant Summer. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DAFFODIL MO.: CANCER AWARENESS - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to add to that, the folks at Hansard Reporting Services, the folks at the Legislative Counsel Office, people who are behind the scenes - very important - and also Rudy's Catering, who kept a lot of us fed during this House sitting.

Every three minutes, someone in Canada hears the words "You have cancer." For those people, their lives change. April is Daffodil Month. I see a lot of daffodils being worn here in the Legislature today. My colleagues are wearing them. Daffodil Month is actually a Canadian tradition that's been under way for more than 65 years here in Canada, and it's actually changed the face of cancer, the outlook on cancer.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, the survival rate in Canada for all cancers combined is now about 63 per cent. In 1940, it was around 25 per cent. I'd like to thank all those working to combat cancer - the health care workers, the researchers, the families, the patients, the fundraisers - and wish everyone Godspeed who is dealing with cancer.

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

MERLIN THE MACAW: LEAVING MUSEUM - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: We learned yesterday that Halifax Citadel-Sable Island is bidding farewell to a beloved feathered resident. Merlin the Macaw, hatched in captivity 22 years ago, has spent his days at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic since 2006, delighting Nova Scotians and tourists alike as the site's unofficial mascot. Not unlike many of us, Merlin's spirits dwindled during the COVID-19 pandemic, and he started to feel a little depressed and lonely. Merlin is taking his mental health into his own talons and joining a large family of macaws at Safari Niagara in Fort Erie, Ontario. I got a chance to drop by the museum yesterday to bid my goodbyes and drop off a card for him. By all accounts, the envelope was delicious. Merlin's big journey is coming up on April 15th, and Nova Scotians can visit him until then. I wish him all the best and ask everyone in the House to do the same.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne on an introduction.

NOLAN YOUNG: I'm pleased today: In the gallery, I have a local constituent, Ruth Brown. She's a lifelong learner and current student of the GED program at the

Shelburne County Learning Network. She's a shining example of her favourite quote: Don't let anything or anyone stop you from becoming the best version of yourself you can be. I think we can learn a lot from her. Thank you for coming.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

LOCAL CCAs: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to recognize some dedicated health care workers in Guysborough on their recent retirement. Last month, Sheila MacLellan-MacPherson, who grew up in Lincolnville, and Gail Dorrington of Sunnyville retired after 36 years of service as CCAs at the Milford Haven Home for Special Care. Also last summer, Ruby Mansfield of Sunnyville retired as a CCA from Milford Haven after 35 years.

We know CCAs often become like family to some of the residents in our long-term care homes. Sheila, Gail, and Ruby have represented their African Nova Scotian communities with the exceptional care they provided to residents at Milford Haven. Their families, friends, and communities are proud of them for dedicating their careers to helping elders in our community. I ask members of the House to join me in congratulating Sheila, Gail, and Ruby on their retirement, and thanking them for their years of service to the residents who call Milford Haven Home for Special Care home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

CBU: 50TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: It's interesting, listening to all these thank yous, that everybody thinks they're getting out today. We'll see what happens. I rise in my place because my colleague from Timberlea gave me this Cape Breton University tartan tie.

I do want to recognize that when we all go home, graduations are going to be happening for universities and colleges across the province. I rise in my place to recognize Cape Breton University, and I want to congratulate all of the graduates who will be walking across the stage in the next few weeks.

CBU plays a big part in our community. It's celebrating 50 years this year as a university, so there are a lot of events planned throughout the coming weeks. One of them for me is the Cape Breton University Students' Union reunion. A lot of the student leaders from over the decades are going to be there. I rise in my place first to recognize all the graduates who are going to graduate from Cape Breton University, but also the institution that provides so much to our island.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

MAYWORKS: SOCIAL JUSTICE EVENT - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Last Thursday, Mayworks announced its program for the 16th annual Mayworks Kjipuktuk-Halifax Festival of Working People & the Arts, to be held in Halifax from May Day until May 12th. Founded in 2009, Mayworks has grown from year to year to become Nova Scotia's largest social justice-themed cultural event, attracting over a thousand diverse audience members with an interest in issues of social, economic, and environmental justice.

This year's theme is honouring a legacy of resistance. The lineup includes: on May 3rd, Portrait of the Artist as an Essential Worker with printmakers Sarah Mosher and Hannah Genosko illustrating their experiences as essential workers in the pandemic; May 4th, 11th, and 12th, labour folklorist Emma Lang's Working Class Heritage Tour: By Choice or By Force, emphasizing stories of migration and work in Nova Scotia; and May 8th, Resting Space, a workshop exploring exhaustion as a collective issue rather than a personal issue.

Mayworks is brought forward by a host of sponsors, including its principal sponsors the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, the Halifax-Dartmouth & District Labour Council, and CUPE Nova Scotia.

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

DAVE RITCEY: Before I begin, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes. Please go ahead. The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

DAVE RITCEY: Today in the gallery, I'm honoured to introduce Kai Jassal, who worked as a Dalhousie University intern in our caucus office over the past month. Kai, I would ask you to rise and accept this warm welcome from the Legislature. (Applause)

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

JASSAL, KAI: PUBLIC SERVICE WORK - THANKS

DAVE RITCEY: Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge one of the young talented members of the PC team, Kai Jassal. Kai joined our office as a student intern in March and has been a wonderful addition to the team during the sitting. Kai is a first-year student at Dalhousie University, where he is studying political science and is also vice-president of

the Young Conservatives Club he established along with his fellow caucus staffer Evan Colclough. It is so encouraging to see a young person who has a passion for civic engagement and public service. This is Kai's first experience working in a political office, and we are so happy to have him on our team. It is important that we recognize when young people make the effort to get involved with their province and its government. I ask all members to join me in thanking Kai for his work and interest in public service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

VOLS.: FOOTBALL TEAM FUNDRAISING - THANKS

BRAEDON CLARK: Speaker, today I just wanted to recognize a group of parents and volunteers, in particular Blair Frost, who is leading the charge on this. A new school opened in September, West Bedford High School in my constituency. One of the challenges when opening a new school is starting up the sports teams, and football in particular is lengthy and expensive to set up. Blair has been leading the group trying to raise funds for the establishment of a football team at West Bedford High. They're doing very, very well. We have been sharing the message. I hope to be there in the Fall when the team steps on the gridiron for the first time. I just want to congratulate Blair and the rest of the team as they work forward to get a football team at West Bedford High School.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

LEG. STAFF: HARD WORK - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Speaker, today I rise to also thank my team back home and all the people of Cumberland North who have given me the honour of being here to represent them here in the Legislature. I want to thank my legislative team, Alex Wilson and Ann Keddy and my constituency team, Gladys Coish and Dan Gould, for all of their efforts. I also want to echo the comments in the Chamber in thanking everyone here who helps keep this place running. Specifically, our Clerks do an amazing job advising us each and every day, as well as all the Pages, Legislative TV, Legislative Counsel - who have been amazing, assisting with the work - security, Commissionaires. The Legislative Library staff have been incredible, the support that they do - they always have been, and they continue to do amazing work. Legislative TV - if I haven't mentioned them - and all people who help to keep this place running. Thank you to everyone. We all know in this place that we cannot do it alone, and we're very grateful for the team that surrounds us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MEN'S CURLING TEAM: WORLD CH'SHIP PARTIC. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Canadian Seniors Curling Championship men's team. They are preparing to represent Canada at the World Senior

Curling Championship in Östersund, Sweden. The team is comprised of Paul Flemming, who is the skip; Peter Burgess, third; Marty Gavin, second; Kris Granchelli, lead; and Kevin Ouellette, alternate. They will be competing against the world's best from April 20th to 27th. I would like all members of this House to join me in recognizing the Canadian Seniors Curling Championship men's team and wish them well as they represent Canada at the World Senior Curling Championship in Sweden.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

BEALS, RON & RHONDA: MR. SMOOTH - RECOG.

HON. TWILA GROSSE: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ron and Rhonda Beals, owners and operators of Mr. Smooth Real Fruit Smoothies + Grill. Mr. Smooth has been in business for 20 years, providing real fruit smoothies and delicious, curated meals from their versatile food trucks to catering to a variety of events.

Mr. Smooth can easily be spotted at festivals and outdoor events throughout Nova Scotia. As they say, We go where the people are. The once grill-and-smoothie truck has evolved into a brand of trucks providing fresh cut fry creations, high-quality smash burgers, and hand-battered wings that have created quite a reputation, along with their newest venture, authentic BBQ. Growth has brought opportunities to employ both family members and community members.

I ask all member of the Nova Scotia Legislature to please join with me in recognizing Ron and Rhonda Beals for their success and look forward to what the future holds for them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

EID AL-FITR: MUSLIM CELEB. - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: As the holy month of Ramadan draws near, I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt greeting of Eid Mubarak in advance. Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the month of fasting, praying and spiritual reflection, is a joyous occasion for Muslims all over the world. It is a time of celebration, gratitude and unity.

As we approach Eid, let us remember the important lessons of compassion, generosity and solidarity that Ramadan has taught us. Let us reach out to our families, friends and neighbours to spread love and kindness in our community. I take this opportunity to say I hope Eid will bring happiness, peace, blessings for all of us and our loved ones. Once again, Eid Mubarak in advance.

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

[9:30 a.m.]

HFX. REFUGEE CLINIC: SUPP. FOR NEWCOMERS - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise to recognize the work of the Halifax Refugee Clinic, sharing the words and reflections from Aminah Basirika, who completed an internship at my office, and those of the MLA for Halifax Needham.

I rise to recognize the Halifax Refugee Clinic for the tremendous work done in holding hands of newcomers, comforting them, and giving them hope for a brand new life to experience. Many people from different parts of the world walk into this clinic, and their life is never the same as before. No one comes from their country smiling, and many are seen shedding tears, but at the clinic you come out with a smile. Of course, it is not in one day, but a process.

The workers at the clinic are equipped and talented, and they nurse every soul irrespective of race, religion, language, gender or colour. Everyone is welcome and given equal treatment. They work tirelessly to find shelter, food, clothing, good mental and physical health support, to mention a few. The clinic works hand-in-hand with people in the community of Nova Scotia, and this builds a spirit of togetherness and hospitality, driving social development.

I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in recognizing the Halifax Refugee Clinic's work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

TARTAN DAY: CELEB. OF SCOTTISH HER. - RECOG.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, I rise to recognize that this Saturday, April 6th, is Tartan Day. The Nova Scotia tartan symbolizes a deep connection of history and roots in Gaelic and Scottish heritage to our province.

In 1953, the design was created by Bessie Murray, with the provincial government proudly adopting the Nova Scotia Tartan Act in 1963. The tartan's five colours symbolize our province's culture and our Scottish heritage: The blue signifies our beautiful Atlantic Ocean; the green symbolizes the lush highlands; the white represents granite rocks and crashing surf; the gold indicates the Royal Charter, and the red mirrors the line on the Nova Scotia coat of arms.

Tomorrow, the Antigonish Highland Society invites residents to join them at the Antigonish Royal Canadian Legion to celebrate Tartan Day. This July, we will be celebrating our 159th Antigonish Highland Games, which showcases the rich Gaelic history

of our area. I would like to thank all the volunteers for their work in putting together this exceptional event in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

NSCC MARCONI CAMPUS: NEW FAC. - BEST WISHES

FRED TILLEY: Speaker, today I would like to recognize the Nova Scotia Community College's Marconi Campus. This year, they will recognize their last graduation in the current facility that they are occupying out on Grand Lake Road. As former principal, I want to wish them all a very happy and joyous occasion as they celebrate the graduates of 2024, and look forward to opening a brand-new facility on the Sydney waterfront in September 2024. I wish them all the best, and I can't wait to get in and see the new building. To my former staff, congratulations, you did it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

FATHER, ANDRÉ - BIRTHDAY WISHES

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, I rise today to honour my father André Norbert Leblanc as he prepares to celebrate his 90th birthday. Born in northern Ontario, he moved to Calgary as a young man, where he met my mom. They married and had five kids across the country before settling in Prospect Bay, Nova Scotia, almost 50 years ago. Andy spent his working years in the grocery business and later in the insurance business. He is an active and devoted member of St. Joseph's Church in Shad Bay, and he is a loyal friend and neighbour. Above all, he is a loving partner, father and grandfather. He has been a fierce supporter and defender of Michele, Doug, David, Gayle, and me, and nothing is more important to him than his family. He is the best dad a kid could ask for, and I love him very much. I ask everyone to join me in wishing Andy Leblanc a very happy 90th birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

VOLS. & PARTICS.: ILLUMINATE N.S. - THANKS

NOLAN YOUNG: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Illuminate Nova Scotia, an event dedicated to celebrating special needs individuals across the province in a positive and comfortable environment. This event is organized by Joanne Ozon, with the help of over 100 volunteers. This April, Illuminate will be held for the third year in Shelburne, where guests are treated to a special prom-style evening that begins with the ladies having their hair and makeup done, followed by an RCMP escort, along with red carpet, a spectacular dinner and dance, and ending the evening with every participant being crowned king or queen. I respectfully ask all members to join me in thanking the participants and volunteers involved in this great project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

POWER, BILLY: 60 YRS. OF FIRE SVC. - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: On behalf of the Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea communities, I want to join the Lakeside Fire Department in their formal recognition of Billy Power's 60th year of volunteer service to the local fire department. Billy joined at the age of 16 and responded to his first fire call even at that tender age. He would rise to serve as fire chief as elected among his cadre of volunteer firefighters. What is rather astounding is that Billy continues to serve the fire department and is the only one of his generation who is left standing in this service. I would ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to thank Billy for 60 years of service as a volunteer firefighter.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

HANSARD STAFF: WORK - THANKS

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, in addition to the words of gratitude that have already been registered towards the close of this session, I want to express the special gratefulness of our caucus and of the whole House to the staff at Hansard Reporting Services. Words matter, and in public discourse, they matter in a particular and heightened way. The thoughtful and accurate recording and reproduction of such words is a key part of that importance. The staff at the Nova Scotia Hansard Office are the custodians of many of the Province's public words. I want to mark today, with every respect and appreciation, all of our gratitude for their work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

LANDRY, RICHARD: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the community dedication of Richard Landry of St. Peter's. Richard has been recognized as a Volunteer of the Month in Richmond County, and I was honoured to present him with the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal last year.

Richard has been one of the driving forces of St. Peter's Lions Hall, and has spent many hours contributing to the success of their weekly bingos. Richard has been actively involved with St. Peter's Knights of Columbus and St. Peter's Catholic Church. He also advocates for seniors in the area and assists them when he can. Richard is best known in our county as the man who does the taxes, as he volunteers every year to complete income taxes for seniors and residents on a low income.

Thank you, Richard, from the residents of Richmond County who have benefited from your selfless dedication.

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

FAIRVIEW FOOD PANTRY: FUNDRAISER - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the Fairview Food Pantry on the resounding success of their recent fundraiser held at Freeman's in Fairview.

With over 70 community members in attendance enjoying the delicious meal of Acadian fish and chips, and listening to the musical stylings of Touch of Grey, it was a fantastic evening of community spirit and support. Our heartfelt thank you goes out to all the generous community organizations for their donations to the silent auction, which played a crucial role in making the night such a success. The funds raised will go a long way in supporting our food pantry and ensuring that our neighbours in need have access to essential resources.

Thank you to Dave Aalders, Yvonne Noel, and the legendary Allison Covert for organizing the event, and to everyone involved for your incredible generosity and dedication to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

WOOD, ARNIE & DEANNA: 50TH ANNIV. - BEST WISHES

JOHN A. MACDONALD: On March 2, 1974, Arnie and Deanna Wood were married. This year, they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with their family. Over those years, they raised a son and a daughter, and have four grandchildren. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in wishing Arnie and Deanna a happy 50th wedding anniversary.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

LYNCH, DET. SUSAN: POLICE AWD. RECIP. - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the long-standing service of a constituent of Clayton Park West. I was pleased to attend the Minister of Justice's Police Long Service Award ceremony in November, which celebrated the service of members of the RCMP, HRP, and the Cape Breton Regional Police force, as well as the Nova Scotia towns' police services. Detective Susan Lynch, one of my constituents, was recognized for her 15 years of service as detective constable with the Halifax Regional Police. We are privileged and honoured to have her as part of our community. I ask the House to join me in thanking Detective Susan Lynch and all other members of our police services for their unwavering commitment and service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

DRADER-MURPHY, LISA: BUSINESS SUCCESS - RECOG.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Lisa Drader-Murphy is an award-winning Canadian fashion designer. She has boutiques on Halifax's waterfront and in Bedford's Sunnyside Mall, but Falmouth is where the magic happens. For over two decades, Lisa has done her design and production work in her LDM studio at the carriage house on Willow Vale Estate.

Willow Vale Estate, and the land it sits on, has a long history dating back to the 1600s. Lisa and her husband Carey welcome visitors from around the globe as their estate is once again open to the public. It is a relaxing getaway, a place for folks to stay adjacent to the many landmarks throughout the beautiful Annapolis Valley.

Lisa was recently named one of the 25 Most Powerful Women by *Atlantic Business Magazine*, which is not surprising, as she is no stranger to the limelight. What sets Lisa truly apart is that despite how busy her career is, her volunteer and charitable efforts never fall short. Please join me in celebrating Lisa and all her successes both inside and outside the studio.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

D'ENTREMONT, SIMON: NEW CAREER - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would like to recognize someone who is no stranger to many of us in this particular House: Simon d'Entremont, a former deputy minister across successive governments. He's not here today, but I wanted to recognize his new career. I think it's actually his third career. He's now a nature photographer. He leads tours in Africa, and he's going to be doing one, I think, in Norway or in the Nordic countries next year. He takes the most fantastic photos of wildlife, as well as night skies. His latest trip to Kenya has amazing shots of lions, giraffes and zebras, and all kinds of things. I just want to say that sometimes in life, there are second acts, and sometimes there are third acts. I want to congratulate Simon on carving out a wonderful new career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

FITZPATRICK, DEANNE: ORDER OF CANADA - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to congratulate and recognize a good friend, Deanne Fitzpatrick of Amherst, who recently became a member of the Order of Canada.

She is being honoured for her contributions to the advancement and recognition of rug hooking as an art form. Deanne was born and raised in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador, and came to Amherst over 30 years ago. She is very well-known in artistic

circles for her beautiful hooked rugs. Her work is in permanent exhibits in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, among other galleries.

In her downtown Amherst studio, she creates, designs, sells kits, writes books, teaches rug hooking, and runs online creative retreats. Deanne truly believes that being creative changes people, so she encourages everyone to pursue their artistic side. Despite all of this, she was truly surprised to receive a call from the Office of the Governor General telling her that she was being admitted to the Order of Canada. Please join me in congratulating Deanne Fitzpatrick on this honour, and thank her for being so inspiring to many others to embark on this journey of rug hooking, an authentic creation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

STATES, BONNIE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: I rise today to recognize a very kind and selfless constituent, Bonnie States. Bonnie was raised in a family of 10 children, and knows the value of family and community. She moved to Toronto, where she lived for 12 years before returning home to Digby after her mom became ill. Shortly after her mom's passing, Bonnie was awarded custody of her sister's six children. As a single mother, Bonnie opened her heart and her home to her nieces and nephews while raising her son, Kyle. During this time, Bonnie went back to school to upgrade her education at the Digby Adult School, where she graduated with honours, won seven academic awards, and was valedictorian of her class.

Bonnie is now retired after working at the Digby General Hospital for 16 years. Now that she is retired and her children have all grown up, Bonnie spends her time helping the community as a member of the Digby General Hospital Auxiliary, the Jordantown Acaciaville Conway Betterment Society, the Acaciaville United Baptist Church, the Digby African Heritage Month Dinner and Dance Gala, and the Digby Education Committee. She also loves to cook, paint, do puzzles, listen to music, and photography. One more fun fact about Bonnie is that she never leaves home without wearing one of her famous fedora hats.

I'd like to ask all members of this Legislature to join me in recognizing Bonnie States.

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

MACGILLIVRAY, DAVID: UKRAINE WORK - RECOG.

HON. BEN JESSOME: I'd like to recognize a former member of the Hammonds Plains-Lucasville community and present member of the Bedford South community. His name is Dave MacGillivray. Dave has, through his participation with the Order of Malta, gone twice now to Ukraine on humanitarian aid missions, and I can only imagine the things that he's seen and how difficult it could have been to do that work. I know that he doesn't

want thanks; that's not why he's doing it. That's not why folks are doing it, but he did want me to stand on my feet and remind people that there's still a terrible situation going on there. We all have busy lives and there are many things that require our attention and focus, certainly here domestically in our own hometowns, but there's still a war in Ukraine and we need to be mindful of that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

[9:45 a.m.]

VOLS.: MUSICAL GIFT CHRISTMAS CONCERTS - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to speak of the generosity of the many musicians and volunteers who have been a part of the Musical Gift Christmas concerts put on in support of the Berwick and Kingston area food banks since 2006. The first of these concerts took place at the Berwick Legion in 2006 in response to a call for help for the Berwick Food Bank. In 2009, the Musical Gift initiative was expanded to Kingston, where an annual Christmas concert has been held every year at the Lions Club to support the Upper Room Food Bank.

Many residents look forward to these concerts every year and they have become part of Christmas traditions for so many families. I am honoured to have shared the stage with so many amazing artists who have donated their time and talent to help those in need in our communities.

These artists and many other volunteers have helped raise almost \$75,000 through the Musical Gift concerts for our local area food banks. I also want to take this moment to thank everyone who works year-round in the Berwick and Upper Room food banks. For one day at a Christmas concert the musicians are the stars, but the food bank staff truly are the stars we need to celebrate. Their love of their fellow citizens is amazing. I ask all members of this House to recognize the efforts of those who volunteer in all our local food banks day in and day out.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

FESTA DEI CACCIATORI: ITALIAN FESTIVAL - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to celebrate the Festa dei Cacciatori 2024. In English, it's called the Hunter's Feast 2024. This event, hosted by the Italian Canadian Cultural Association of Nova Scotia, was held on January 27th to a sold-out hungry crowd. This event has been held each year for the past 40 years. Thanks to Renato and Danilo Gasparetto and a few other hunters from the Italian community who donated the game meat. The menu featured lasagna with goose meat, deer stew with mushrooms, and polenta and roasted rabbit with vegetables. I'm hoping more people will be showing up next year,

but you have to buy your tickets very early. I ask the House to join me in celebrating Hunter's Feast 2024 and thanking the organizers of this beautiful community event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

MASON, MARCIENNE: FREE FOOT CARE CLINIC - THANKS

HON. BARABARA ADAMS: I rise today to thank a good friend of mine, Marcienne Mason of Toe to Sole Foot Care, for graciously donating her time and knowledge to our community members through her free foot care clinic. This clinic has been held at the Eastern Passage Lions Club on the third Sunday of each month for a number of years. Marcienne, along with fellow volunteers from the Lions Club, have been running this much-needed service for the past seven years. Our aging population, diabetics, and many additional clients from the community hope to continue attending for many years to come.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Marcienne Mason and the wonderful group of volunteers for offering such a crucial service for our community. Volunteers like Marcienne are valued and a true gem of our community of Eastern Passage.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

EARL'S GREENHOUSES: 100TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Speaker, I would like to recognize a very important business in our community that reached a hundred-year milestone of operation: Earl's Greenhouses in Upper North Sydney. It's been a staple where people can stop by and grab their flowers for the Summer. They do a wonderful job.

Earl made a decision many years ago. He was a pilot through the Air Cadets system, and he made a decision: either the Air Force or to buy this business. It was started in 1923. Obviously, Earl MacPherson chose to join the business and make a wonderful service for the people of Northside-Westmount.

I just want to wish them the best, congratulate them on a hundred years, and wish them another successful hundred years in that business. I'd like all the members of the Legislature to congratulate them and thank them for their perseverance.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

WEBSTER, NIAMH: AVCOC AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Niamh Webster of Tir na nOg Dance Academy in Kentville as the winner of the Mentor of Excellence Award at the 2023 Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce Women of Excellence Awards. This award recognizes women in the Annapolis Valley who pursue excellence in their respective fields and community, improving the lives of others through leadership, volunteerism, entrepreneurial spirit, and mentorship.

Niamh Webster is the owner and director of Tir na nOg Irish Dance Academy. She has been cultivating a community of dance through teaching and mentoring young girls and women since the academy began in 2000. Niamh encourages her dancers to become strong, independent, self-confident dancers. Please join me today to congratulate Niamh Webster as the Mentor of Excellence Award winner, as recognized by the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please go ahead.

IAIN RANKIN: In the West Gallery, we have with us Katy Jean. She is a journalist who writes for the Nova Scotian SaltWire Network. Before that, many would know that she was a blogger during some of the COVID briefings. She kept it light and funny during the briefings with the previous Premier, the current Premier, and me, and she had some funny nicknames for us all. I'd like Katy Jean to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Thanks for joining us today.

The honourable member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

BETTENS, MARK: FIRE & EMERG. SVCS. LDR. - CONGRATS.

JOHN WHITE: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mark Bettens on his role as Director of Fire and Emergency Services in CBRM. Mark has more than 35 years of experience in emergency services and public service leadership. He started his career as a paramedic while he was still in high school and has served numerous roles since then, including 10 years of volunteer firefighting in Glace Bay before moving to the CBRM Fire and Emergency Services.

Mark moved up the ranks in his service, serving most recently as platoon chief. Mark has taken training courses from across North America and has also trained many a

new generation of first responders in Level 1 and fire extrication. Mark also spent several years working in the Office of the Mayor in CBRM, where his expertise in emergency management was incredibly helpful.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Mark Bettens on his new position as Director of Fire and Emergency Services. We know that he will be a tremendous help to the people of CBRM.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

VOLS.: TATAMAGOUCHE BOAT SHOP - THANKS

TOM TAGGART: Speaker, I rise to recognize the Tatamagouche Boat Shop. The boat shop is run by volunteers, including Keith Driver, who strives to support the local community and promote traditional building skills. The boat shop uses many hand tools, with a few power tools at the ready.

The shop transports people to an old world made by hand and an opportunity to build their own watercraft. The woodworking experience is enjoyed by members of the community of all ages. The boat shop is open to residents with all levels of skills. You can learn how to build a boat, assist with an ongoing project, or simply observe the process.

Keith Driver and a small group of volunteers have worked diligently to ensure the traditional industry, along with the associated skills and knowledge, is preserved. I thank them very much for their dedication.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do. The honourable member for Kings South.

KEITH IRVING: I would like to draw attention to the West Gallery, where a good friend of mine is joining us from Ottawa - he has settled recently into his Summer home in St. Francis Harbour in Guysborough County. Ed McKenna worked in the North with me. He was my first client when I designed the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts & Crafts in Pangnirtung. I later went on to design his house with his wife Cindy. I would like Ed to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

BADDECK LIONS CLUB: FUNDRAISER - RECOG.

HON. KEITH BAIN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Baddeck Lions Curling Club. As many will recall, Cape Breton and the Baddeck area were hit with the kind of snowstorm that many haven't seen for a long time. Despite the weather event, approximately 100 people attended the Baddeck Lions Club's Kidston Curling Classic.

The Lions Club roads were pre-shovelled, which provides daily transport for visitors and locals alike across the 300-metre bay over to Kidston Island. The island has been known for its lighthouse at the northeast tip and its sandy crescent beach, complete with a lifeguard from July 1st to Labour Day.

All funds raised go to the Kidston Island activities. This is just one of several fundraisers the Lions Club will be holding throughout the year. Please join me in recognizing the tremendous work of the Baddeck Lions Club and wishing them every success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

FAMILY & OFFICE STAFF: SUPPORT - RECOG.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Speaker, I just want to stand and recognize some support that I have back home while we're sitting here in the Legislature. As with everyone else - all the other MLAs - there's big support staff back home. Shout-out to Karen and Wanda in my constituency office. They're there every day to work for the constituents and better everybody's lives, not just in Cumberland South but all over the province.

Especially back home: my wife, Tracey, and my three kids, Bayley, Cooper, and Briar - I never had a chance to bring Briar here yet. The other boys have been here. My daughter hasn't been here. She adores me. Every night I get a hug and a kiss on the phone. I hope that never ends. As we can all appreciate, we have that family that's within us.

One of the things that I do get to experience is that the kids know everybody's names. They watch what's happening on Legislative Television, and they know people across the floor. Cooper, my middle boy, appreciated the previous campaign when the previous premier made electric bikes a thing. He said, "He's got my vote." No, he doesn't. (Laughter)

I guess my point, very quickly, is that our kids are paying attention. They're a big part of our support, whether it's this side of the House or that side of the House. We have been on both.

Thank you very much to the support staff.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

NEWTON, SAVANNAH: HOCKEY CH'SHIP - BEST WISHES

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, very quickly today, I'd just like to recognize a Middle Sackville resident, Savannah Newton, who is currently serving as team Hockey Operations Manager with the IIHF Women's World Championship, which is running currently. I want to wish her and all the girls on the 2024 Women's World Canada hockey team all the best as they play this week.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

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

PATRICIA ARAB: In the West Gallery, we are joined today by some of our staff in the Liberal caucus office, especially one new individual, Chris Abraham, who has just come on to join us as Director of Stakeholder Relations and Strategic Initiatives. We poached him, I guess, from MP Lena Metlege Diab's office and have brought him back to the provincial Liberals. He was my executive assistant when I was in Cabinet and is a remarkable force. I ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time is now 10:00 a.m. We'll begin with 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.: FLIP-FLOPPING ON DECISIONS - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: We see a very disturbing trend with this government flip-flopping on decisions. Just in the last two months, there's been at least seven flip-flops that this government has done: on the Coastal Protection Act; not moving forward job-protected leave; changing the FMA around firefighters; putting a cork in the bottling program; most recently, on the amalgamation of Antigonish. How is it that the Premier's decisions are so terrible that he doesn't even have the conviction to stand behind them?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): I guess it says a lot about the member that that's his view on it. What we actually do is we actually put Nova Scotians first. We listen to Nova Scotians. We're not so arrogant as to think we're always right or that we're perfect. We listen to Nova Scotians, and we make decisions based on what we hear from them. Imagine if we had had governments in this province over the last 10 or 12 years that had the courage to listen to Nova Scotians and support Nova Scotians. We always put Nova Scotians first. They can put Liberals first; we'll put Nova Scotians first.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Listening is what you do before a decision is made. Courage is having the conviction to stand behind it because you know you made the right choice. Reacting and scrambling is what this government does, because it neither listens nor has courage when it makes decisions. And it's a result that this government does not have purpose. They stand for nothing except attacking the Opposition, and we see that demonstrated every single day in this House, primarily with responses from the Premier. Does the Premier think that if he was a little less fixated on the Opposition and a little more fixated on the important decisions that he has to make in doing his homework, that he could actually stand behind them once a decision is made?

THE PREMIER: Listening is something you do before; it's something you do during; it's something you do after; it's something you should never stop doing. My commitment to Nova Scotians is I will never stop listening to them. I will never put my own pride and arrogance in the way of what is best for them. Imagine what our film industry would look like in this province today if that government, if that member, had listened to them when they were talking. We'd be a lot better off. We'll pick up the pieces. We will always put Nova Scotians first, and we will continue to move this province forward.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Leadership is about keeping your word. Leadership is about making decisions. The Premier can try to make a virtue out of making mistake after mistake, bad decision after bad decision, and not having the conviction to stand behind them, but I'd say that's not strength, that is weakness. The fact is this Premier has given his word to people in Nova Scotia: promised a Better Pay Cheque Guarantee; promised to report on job-protected leave in this province in this session; he promised the councils of Antigonish that he would stand behind them. He also passed a law that said he would have a fixed election date. Now that we know the Premier isn't anchored to his word, will he tell us today: Is he going to stick to the first law he passed in this House and keep a fixed election date in Nova Scotia? (Applause, interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. Order. Please. Please. Order.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: And there it is. He wants to know if he has time to get ready for the election. I assure you there's not enough time for that party to get ready for an election. But really, what we're talking about is we're talking about a party that puts the Liberals

first. We saw it when they governed. There's a law of the land for the Liberals; there's a law of the land for the rest of us. When the Liberal Party knew that a bunch of taxpayer money - over \$100,000 of taxpayer money - had been misappropriated, do you want to know the first thing they did? How do we protect ourselves? Quick, call a lawyer; let's protect the Liberals. That was the first thing. In fact, Bruce MacKinnon kind of summarized it very well, and I'll table that for the benefit of the House. We put Nova Scotians first. They can put the Liberals first. We're here for . . . (interruption).

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. Thank you. Just a friendly reminder to not use anything that you're showing in the Chamber. Certainly, you can table and make sure it's tabled for the rest of the members, but not to hold it up for viewing.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

PREM.: HOUSING PROJECT SCRAPPED - EXPLAIN

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The Executive Panel on Housing in Halifax Regional Municipality has just been extended, and for thousands of Nova Scotians struggling to find an affordable place to live, it's unclear whom the housing created by this panel is actually helping. In the Southdale-Mount Hope development, people were already supposed to be living in affordable units, partially subsidized with a no-strings-attached forgivable loan by this government to the developer. Not only are these not available for occupancy, but we recently found out the plan had been scrapped. The developer doesn't think that it's financially viable.

The government isn't planning to produce the thousands of units we need, and the few that have been announced are disappearing. Where does the Premier think that affordable housing is going to come from?

THE PREMIER: This is a serious issue, the housing crisis that we're experiencing in Nova Scotia. It's a national issue. We see that. We're focused on more housing, faster. That's been our focus. I know that the federal government is kind of catching on to that "more, faster" thing as well. We will invest in housing. The answer to the question is we need housing across the spectrum. We need student housing. That's why we're investing in housing at Nova Scotia Community College campuses for the first time in a generation, or probably ever. That's why we're investing in affordable housing. That's why we did the first investments in 20 or 30 years in affordable housing. We need housing across the spectrum. The answer to the housing crisis is more housing.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The construction of new units in this province across the spectrum is not meeting the need - not even close. This government's own numbers show that Nova Scotia will need over 70,000 new homes by 2027. The 40,000 units in the government's plan include things like rent supplements and long-term care beds. These are not affordable homes. The Construction Association of Nova Scotia has said that to meet

our targets, the province would have to build an unprecedented 16,000 units a year, which is well above the average. The units that are getting built are out of reach for Nova Scotian families and young professionals, and impossibly out of reach for those in core housing need. We are not on a path to building our way out of this crisis. Can the Premier tell us how we're going to meet those targets?

THE PREMIER: It's absolutely a challenge. There's no question. We're not the only ones experiencing this challenge, but we are leading the way in meeting the challenge and addressing the challenge. Housing starts are up. We know there's work to be done. But there are also challenges in the supply chain, challenges in labour. That's why we've come in with programs like the MOST program, the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades program, to encourage young people to get into the skilled trades and to encourage young, skilled tradespeople to come here and help us build this province.

There are many moving parts to the solution, and we're focused on all of them. All we need is a few other Nova Scotians to get on board and put some positive messages behind the MOST program and behind what's possible. It would be nice to see the negative NDP turn the page and get a little positive at some point.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Here's a positive message: Get people housed. Under this government, the price of housing has skyrocketed, rental costs have soared, and mortgage rates have more than doubled. It's a national problem, but it's a provincial problem, and it's under this Premier's watch.

Vacancy is at an all-time low. Our formerly relatively low housing costs were a key driver in the massive increase in interprovincial migration we've seen in the past few years - the one the Premier likes to brag is because of him. In the most recent year, that number hasn't just slowed; it's flat, in no small part because people can't afford to start a life here.

We need young tradespeople. We need health care workers and teachers, but this government's policies and lack of action on affordable housing is driving them away. When will the Premier get housing built that everyday families can afford?

THE PREMIER: If I could build houses, I'd do that too, for sure. We support those who do, through the MOST program, through working with Nova Scotians. We know there's a lot of housing to be built in this province. That's why we've taken some very aggressive steps on working with municipalities around bylaws. That's why we've taken some aggressive steps on trying to work with developers and not-for-profits and those who build.

This province is growing and it's not because of me. It's growing because it's a wonderful province to live in. There is a lot good happening in this province. You might not hear about it in this Chamber, Speaker, but I assure you, this is a wonderful province. We have our challenges, but as a government, we accept them. There are positive things,

and some day I wait for the time that the NDP will recognize some of the positive in this province.

PREM.: CRITICISM OF NDP LEADER - RETRACT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I listen day in and day out to the Premier speak to the Leader of the NDP very differently than he speaks to other members in this Chamber. He calls her negative all the time. I have no problem saying that the Leader of the NDP is not negative. She is constructive and her questions are a lot more thoughtful than the answers that come from the Premier. I want to ask the Premier: Will he do the right thing, the classy thing, apologize to the Leader of the NDP and actually . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Questions in the Chamber need to be directed about subjects that ministers in this Chamber represent. You are bringing up a debate on how you feel someone is acting in this Chamber. We can all do that, can't we? We can all form - we all have our opinions that we'd like to share, but Question Period is not for that. Question Period is to ask government questions to the ministers responsible.

I will give you an opportunity to rise in your place and begin again.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I will say that the Premier owes the Leader of the NDP an apology and I think should treat her with the respect and professionalism that she has earned in this Chamber. I will also ask the Premier - the tone of his ministers, the tone of this House is actually set from the top. We see, every single day, a response to very real questions about health care, homelessness, poverty, being responded to with petty attacks on the Opposition. My question to the Premier: Does he not understand that most of the negativity and pettiness in this House actually comes from the top and comes from his approach to answering questions in dealing with debate in this House?

THE SPEAKER: Again, questions have to be with regards to government business to ministers, not with regards to your opinions on how members are acting in this Chamber. Again, I would ask that you stand in your place and put a question towards government that has to do with government business.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: This Premier attacks the Opposition about following the law. This is a Premier who, according to the Auditor General, has put himself above the law of the land - not engaging in proper protocols for tendering, for hundreds of millions of dollars. I think he illegally married somebody - it has been confirmed by the Minister of Justice. My question to the Premier is: While he attacks the Opposition in governing, not

following the rules of the land, particularly with procurement and spending of hundreds of millions of dollars, does he himself think that he is above the law of this province?

[10:15 a.m.]

THE PREMIER: This is an incredibly positive province. There's a lot good happening in this province. You might not know it in this Chamber. The NDP is particularly negative, the Liberal . . . (interruption).

THE SPEAKER: Order. Have I ever told you to take your place because you called someone negative? No. (Interruptions) It doesn't matter. (Interruptions) Oh my, everyone. Really. Look, this is getting out of hand. We all know that we've stood in our places in this Chamber - every single one of us - and have made attacks on each other. Absolutely. I watch it day in and day out. The behaviour is unbelievable. It really is, and I have done my very best in this Chamber to set the tone. There's a lot of disrespect, let me tell you. I'm going to move forward right now, and I'm going to ask each and every one of you to be respectful. As I sit here, I see people talking under their breath and saying things. I will move ahead.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: There's no question that there's a certain approach that the Opposition takes. They both have their approaches. They're similar in nature. What I would say is that there's a lot positive happening in this government. It's happening because of the positivity of Nova Scotians. If the members wanted to focus on some of those things that happened, they might have called the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care for Estimates and asked questions, but they didn't do that. They called the Premier to try to dig and fish on craziness. If they want to focus on policy, we can talk about that all day.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I certainly agree with you. I think we recognize that the tone comes from the top, and there's one person at the top of the chain in this Legislature. My question to the Premier is around following the laws of the land - the laws of the Province around procurement, which the AG has said very clearly that he hasn't followed. We've got laws of this House of Assembly to deal with issues like harassment and assault. The Premier is part of a caucus that didn't follow those rules either. The Premier also voted on a resolution . . . (interruptions).

THE SPEAKER: Order. You cannot ask questions with regard to the internal workings of the House. Are you arguing with what the Speaker is ruling? Okay, I ask you to stand in your place and ask the question, please, so we can move on.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We also have a Premier and a government that didn't move forward with a resolution that they passed themselves in this House to expand job-protected leave for Nova Scotians who have the most severe illnesses in this province. My question to the Premier is: Why is he the kind of person who says, Do as I say, not as I do, and not even follow the laws of this province while he's governing?

THE PREMIER: Isn't this interesting - but you know what the member is not asking me about? The 60,000 new primary care appointments every single month. Month after month, there are 60,000 new primary care appointments available to Nova Scotians so they can access the care they need. You know what the member's not asking me about? The health care professionals that we're hiring under the Patient Access to Care Act that we passed in this House. You know what the member is not talking about? All of the wonderful things that are happening in this province. On this side, we'll focus on Nova Scotians. They can focus on politics. We'll focus on people.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: PERSONAL HEALTH INFO. - PROTECT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: What we have been asking about is this government potentially breaching its own Personal Health Information Act and moving forward with a mandate to doctors to give over personal health information to the minister or a designate. Has the Premier read that law, and does he think that that change to the FMA and to the Personal Health Information Act is in consistency with the law of the land with the Personal Health Information Act?

THE PREMIER: What Nova Scotians are saying to us is that they want access to their personal records. They want their health care records. We have a pilot going. Initial feedback on that pilot - extremely positive. Nova Scotians are happy to access their records. That is what we want. The member wants Nova Scotians to forget the past, but they can't forget the past. Under that member, a Nova Scotian would have to pay almost \$250 to \$300 to get their records. We want them to have them in their hands. We will move forward with solutions for fixing the health care crisis. We know there is work to be done, but we know that it can be done - and we will get it done.

ZACH CHURCHILL: People certainly want access to their health records. What they don't want is politicians to have access to them or potential hackers to have access to them. That is what Nova Scotians want. That's what doctors are telling us. They said it to the Law Amendments Committee. They are telling it to us every single day. That's why we have a Personal Health Information Act in Nova Scotia - to protect people's personal identifiable health information. We brought amendments in that would have at least taken the identity markers out of the data that the government has, and they voted that down. I believe that Act is against the laws of the land, and once again we see a Premier who thinks himself above the laws of this province. My question is: Why?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions in this Chamber, the requirements of the Minister of Health and Wellness that I and any subsequent Minister of Health and Wellness have to meet under the Act are not changing. What's happening is two things. Aggregate data is being collected from a portion of the health care system that we currently cannot see. Physician services in this province are \$1.2 billion per year, and there is no clear line of sight in terms of the aggregate data that supports our primary health care and some of the work that happens in the offices.

The other thing we hear repeatedly is that people want access to their health care records. Through this change, we will be able to offer that to Nova Scotians. It will empower them to have agency over their health care decisions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

MAH: BEDFORD FLOOD RELIEF - PROVIDE

HON. KELLY REGAN: More than eight months after the July floods, many people in Bedford are still waiting to find out what they will receive from the Disaster Financial Assistance Program. People in Bedford have received a variety of answers about their claims. For example, one constituent was told the Union Street claims were at the top of the pile. I was told the government is still dealing with previous hurricane's claims. Another person was told it would be months and months for most people, but they are just dealing with the first part of the claim and sending out small amounts of money to tide people over. It has been more than eight months.

Bedford residents - and I am sure residents of other areas affected - would like to move on. Can the Minister of the Office of Emergency Management please reassure them they won't be still waiting at the one-year mark?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I do want to give a shout-out to our team in EMO, who are working on this and have spent an unprecedented 15 to 16 months. I think there have been over 3,000 claims for DFA of various sorts. They are working hard on them. In terms of Union Street, I believe there have been 25 claims. Twenty-one of them have been paid out, and four are in process - they are more complicated.

I just want people to know that there is a process for a DFA claim, which includes the requirement to have an insured adjuster on site. The documentation has to be very, very good for the federal government. This is a program that is administered by the federal government for us to put a claim in, as the member may recall from her time in government.

KELLY REGAN: It is more than just Union Street. I met with several residents of River Lane yesterday, and they are very concerned about the impact of siltation on water heights. They believe some mitigation - removing silt, adding barriers, one-way valves - could help reduce the impact of excessive rain on this part of Bedford. Every time it rains,

everyone gets worried because they can see how things are changing due to climate change. Will the Minister of Environment and Climate Change come to Bedford to meet with these residents and me to discuss possible mitigation?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Certainly, the extreme weather events Nova Scotia is experiencing are impacting all parts of Nova Scotia from Cape Breton to Southwest Nova Scotia to Yarmouth. Most certainly, I want the residents of Nova Scotia to know that the climate risk assessment that we put out in December 2022 outlines the challenges that we're going to be experiencing. That's why we've set up the Nova Scotia Guard - so that Nova Scotians, as they experience these challenging events, will have an opportunity to help their neighbours in a formal way through the provincial government.

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

ECC: COASTAL PROTECTION REPORT - RELEASE

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Recent correspondence obtained by media showed that the Insurance Bureau of Canada had reviewed and had endorsed the draft regulations associated with the Coastal Protection Act. They said that the regulations are aligned with what the industry had been advocating for.

Given rising costs associated with extreme weather events - and I'm not being negative; I believe members of the government have also referred to "extreme weather events" - and the fact that such events are forecasted to increase, we need these regulations in place. I'll table that.

Will the minister finally explain what or who convinced this government not to put Nova Scotians first and to disregard the growing list of experts and advocates who supported this Act?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: This government, this Premier, will always put Nova Scotians first. It's always at the top of our mind in terms of how we advance policies.

On a multitude of issues, there's a diversity of opinion that exists. We have established a coastal protection action plan that is balanced, and that will support informed decision-making for coastal property owners. We are working with our municipalities right now to develop an example bylaw. We will be there for our municipalities to provide the necessary reports. We'll work with all organizations - the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities. We know how important coastal protection is, and coastal protection is a big part of our overall climate change strategy.

LISA LACHANCE: Nova Scotians have been trying to wrap their heads around this decision to abandon the Coastal Protection Act for over a month. Now a spokesperson

from the department has confirmed that they did not release a report because there was never one completed. The department only recently asked for a report to be written after the decision was made to abandon the Act. Not only was the decision not based on the majority of feedback received, but there wasn't even a report to support this. Can the minister please give us the exact date on which this report, which should have been completed months ago, will be released?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: When the honourable member says "report," I believe they're meaning the consultation that we engaged in in Fall of last year. Once that summary is completed by Group ATN, we'll post that summary to the Environment and Climate Change website.

I also want to say that we haven't abandoned anything. We're moving forward in a very strong and positive way to ensure that Nova Scotians have the necessary information to protect their property if they live along the coastline. I can tell you, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and I are working closely with our municipal units to ensure that they have the supports, to ensure that they have what is requiring for the zoning, to ensure that we have strong coastal protection in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MAH: EXHIB. PARK DEVT. INTERFERENCE - AVOID

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There is a development being proposed around Halifax Exhibition Park. It went from 1,800 units in 2021, and is now being proposed north of 5,000 units. I'll table that. That's about the amount of people that we'll have in that area if it's approved - the size of Truro on the Prospect Road, which is already overburdened. I think we all agree on that. I want to ask for a commitment from the minister that he will not interfere and overrule the normal municipal planning process by making this a special management area. Will the minister respect municipal jurisdiction in this matter and let council decide?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, we recognize that there is a housing crisis in the province. I think all members in this Assembly do. We welcome new developments. I'm very pleased about the potential of that one, and recently, another 3,000 in Truro-Bible Hill. This is exactly what we need to meet our goals in our action plan.

In terms of the process, we've always stated that we have respected the Centre Plan and Municipal Planning Strategy in terms of making things move quicker if we need to step in through the executive panel. That may or may not happen. I can't predict that. We certainly welcome any new housing. As we know, the solution to the housing crisis is more housing.

[10:30 a.m.]

IAIN RANKIN: This isn't just about needing more housing. We shouldn't be putting houses just anywhere. I am for proper planning and process and studies. My question to the minister is: Has he or any of his staff met with the proponents in advance of this going through the regular municipal process? Have they met with BANC to discuss potentially designating this a Provincial Special Planning Area to override municipal jurisdiction?

JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I can say I have not met with the proponents on this issue. In terms of what we've always said about our Special Planning Areas, the normal permitting process all has to take place. We're not trying to bypass any of the normal permitting that is part of the process. We are committed, as a government, to doing what we need to do to get more housing faster.

I will say that we've just seen recently the federal government taking a lead from Nova Scotia on some of the things that we are doing. We are starting to see the federal government echo that for the whole nation, like freezing our permitting fees, making land available that the government has owned for housing and other things. We see the federal government taking a nod from Nova Scotia, actually.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

EECD: HALIFAX SCHOOL - REPLACE

ALI DUALE: I rise today to ask a question of the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development about a school in Halifax Armdale, John W. MacLeod-Fleming Tower Elementary. I have written to the minister previously and I have asked her a question at Estimates but families in my community are concerned about the status of the school, which is over 130 years old and is overcrowded. Modular classrooms are not cutting it and a solution is desperately needed. The HRM is being promised four new schools. My question to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is: Is John W. MacLeod getting a new school?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: The member and I have spoken about the needs of the community around John W. MacLeod-Fleming Tower School on a number of occasions, I think most recently during Estimates, but on prior occasions before that as well.

We know very well how much work there is to support our schools to ensure that they have the facilities and the conditions they need to be in to support students. We've taken action - unprecedented action - with a \$1 billion capital plan to make those improvements for students in Halifax, students across the province. That includes new builds, four new schools in Halifax. I am excited to announce the locations of those in the

near future, as well as across the province, and other improvements to meet the needs of our students.

ALI DUALE: I thank the minister for the answer, but the four schools being promised in HRM - where are they and where will they be? My community is concerned about the age of these schools, and we have a community that is rising. I ask the minister if, today in this House, she will commit to give the community a full answer.

BECKY DRUHAN: Our government understands that we need to be strategic about the purchase of land. Ideally land in HRM would have been acquired years ago for schools that we need now. It wasn't, but we are taking action to address that.

We have a dedicated envelope of capital funds to support public works to acquire schools in HRM and when we are able to announce that, we are excited to do that. We also know that other actions need to be taken to support our students and support our schools. That includes investing like never before in capital repairs so that we can maintain the state of these schools. That includes investing on a regular basis in modulars and we're doing that, a \$1 billion capital investment in our five-year capital plan.

We're building schools and supporting schools to have the conditions they need to meet our students' needs and we're excited to be moving forward.

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

DHW: SPECIAL NEEDS CARE WAIT-LIST - REDUCE

HON. BEN JESSOME: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In September 2023, Dalhousie University Dentistry reported that there are more than 130 adult patients with special needs that sit on the wait-list at the IWK - they've already aged out. Because of the limitations around our system, this group of people have to wait as much as more than two years to access basic dental care. These are folks that require sedation or general anaesthesiology. I'm wondering if the minister can comment on how this year's budget addresses the wait-list for this group of high-needs patients?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: There are a couple of things that have happened over the past year. We have changed the tariff agreement with dentists, and one of the things that we've enabled them to do is to do sedation in their offices. Previously, that was not the case for all physicians, so this has enabled them to do more straightforward care in their offices, which is very helpful. The dentists themselves had asked for that specifically.

The other thing we've done is change some of the tariff fees around the scaling procedures that are required so that there's more opportunity for dentists to do that. What that will do is help alleviate. And of course the work that's happening through public-

private partnership with Scotia Surgery is also enabling us to do more straightforward day surgery procedures that don't require anaesthetic in-hospital at the IWK or NSHA.

BEN JESSOME: Those are welcome additions to the solution for the problem. I wonder if the minister can comment on whether or what type of impact those solutions are having. Is that 130-person wait-list decreasing? Are wait times decreasing? Dalhousie University Dentistry, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Dental Association, has put forward a proposal to take on a thousand patients, and I did not hear that as a response commitment to help out. I'm wondering if the actions that the government is taking are actually addressing the wait-list in the province.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, correcting the long-standing issue that is in the province around the tariff fee agreement with dentists has been helpful. We know that for a long period of time they wanted to do procedures in their offices but had been unable to do that. That is certainly a very important step, not only in addressing low-acuity needs, but making sure that low-acuity needs don't progress to higher-acuity needs.

We are working with the Dental Association to understand the needs across the province. We're looking at opportunities with Scotia Surgery, IWK, and NSHA for the more complicated cases. It is a priority. Oral care is incredibly important, and there is an oral health strategy that is under way. Any proposals that are in front of the department are being considered in conjunction with that strategy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: PERSONAL HEALTH DATA SHARING - EXPLAIN

SUSAN LEBLANC: This government is proposing greater collection and sharing of our health data. Matthew Herder, Director of the Health Justice Institute at Dalhousie University, has warned that virtual care platforms see "value in collecting that data and using it in a variety of ways that have little to do with patient care." I will table that. Some companies are collecting personal health information for commercial reasons, and to share analytics with third party actors. Can the minister please tell Nova Scotians why this government is rushing to collect their personal health data when patient privacy concerns remain so high?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: In relation to the current change in fee, as well as the pilot that's under way, a full privacy impact assessment has been done on all the systems and how they handle data. The information being collected and provided as part of the current pilot is also being done according to the highest Canadian privacy protections. All the necessary safeguards are in place, and that's not going to change.

We continue to look at data. We know it's important. Data sources come from so many places now, within the contracts that we have with folks. We make sure that things are collected in a way that aligns with PHIA and other regulatory statutes.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Many Nova Scotians are worried about how changes to how health data is shared will impact doctor-patient relationships. As Carrie Smith, a sexual assault survivor from Digby, explained: "The loss of trust could make it very difficult for doctors and nurses to treat future patients." I'll table that. Those with experiences of trauma, Carrie warned, may hesitate to seek out the life-saving care they need if doctor-patient confidentiality is stretched to include the minister and other unknown people acting on the minister's behalf.

Will this government take Carrie's warning seriously and work with vulnerable Nova Scotians to protect their right to privacy and health care?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to thank Ms. Smith for coming to Law Amendments Committee. I think it was important that she came and gave us the opportunity to speak about the importance of privacy. In regard to sensitive matters, there are a number of people who present to other parts of the health care system. I would think specifically about when we present to the emergency room. There are very sensitive conditions that bring people to emergency. Some are around trauma - sexual trauma as well. Similarly to how the data is collected there, the aggregate data comes back to the Department of Health and Wellness to help system management. I don't have access to the individual emergency room records that happen there. This is a similar process. We'll use the same standards of privacy, and we'll continue to protect people's privacy in the health care system.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

ANSA: DPAD FUNDING - PROVIDE

HON. TONY INCE: Speaker, the African Nova Scotian community, through the work of the African Nova Scotian DPAD coalition - Decade for People of African Descent - has been working tirelessly on initiatives and goals to build better relationships between community and government and to create conditions for all African Nova Scotian communities to thrive. This has been made possible by funding provided by government over the last decade. However, I have heard from community that DPAD has not received funding this year. My question to the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs: Why have they not received funding?

HON. TWILA GROSSE: They have not received funding to date because there has been no application with respect to funding. We have reached out, and there have been conversations, but there has not been an application forwarded to African Nova Scotian Affairs to review for funding.

TONY INCE: The work of DPAD - the Decade for People of African Descent Coalition - is crucial to engagement with community. They work with many people and organizations on key issues such as justice, community services, and health initiatives. Much of this work is done primarily because of the federal government that they receive from government. My question to the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs: Will DPAD get crucial funding so that they can continue the important work of engaging African Nova Scotian communities?

TWILA GROSSE: Why, of course, if they submit an application. There is a process. We recognize and know that they have extended DPAD or the Decade for People of African Descent, I believe it's to 2028. Again, there has been no application with regard to funding. When an application is submitted, we will review it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DED: CB RAIL SUBSIDY END - EXPLAIN

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Yesterday, listening to the Minister of Economic Development's comments around ending the subsidy for the rail, she indicated to the media and to the House that she met with a number of representatives locally in the community to talk about the rail subsidy. What we learned today is that the CBRM government had no idea, which was reported in the *Cape Breton Post*, which I will now table. My question to the Minister of Economic Development: Who did she talk to in the local community when making the decision to end the subsidy for the rail?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: There were several business people from the industrial area. Certainly, there was a lot of consultation with the government members who represent their own areas with the same passion and ferocity as the member opposite. Also, critically, among those meetings were those with the proponents of Novaporte. I'd like to reiterate we are a government that believes in Cape Breton and has made - is making historic investments in Cape Breton and just this morning, in fact, we have made an announcement regarding light rail.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: It's amazing that came out today. I saw that. That's part of my second question, which is a noble cause, but this could have happened three years ago. The population of CBU has exploded over the last three years, and suddenly there's an announcement of a feasibility study for light rail after the government, historically, removed the subsidy from the rail line of Cape Breton.

I took it upon myself to make some calls when this came out, and nobody has any idea what this is. Local government representatives don't know what it is, and if this is something that the government is talking about, at least you'd want to talk to the local folks on the ground about it. My question to the minister: With this announcement of a feasibility study, has she engaged in the local community to see if this is a viable option?

[10:45 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. Just a reminder, as indicated earlier, not to show any pictures or hold anything up. You can certainly table it, though.

The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: This announcement today reflects a lot of discussion and volumes of material that can be brought forward to show you about the discussion of this to date. Cape Breton is experiencing, like the province, historic growth - growth that has not been seen for decades - and this is a very positive thing in all ways, but particularly for the economy of Cape Breton. It does bring with it pressures - pressures around housing and movements of people. This announcement today of an exploration of a battery-powered light rail system speaks to our government's commitment to economic development in Cape Breton.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DOJ: MISUSE OF NDAs - BAN

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: There is a culture of silencing in this province, particularly around sexual assault. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act. I'd like the minister to tell us here in the House why this government still refuses to pass legislation around the misuse of non-disclosure agreements in cases of sexual assault. Other members in this House have raised today the concerns around misogyny and the silencing and the treatment of women, particularly in this Legislature. I've seen it first hand, and I'd like the minister to be able to share with us today how the minister can support continuation of silencing of victims, particularly women in this province.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: As we've said in the past, we certainly do not want to see NDAs used for improper purposes. We have done a jurisdictional scan. While I was out, I do know that the Minister of Health and Wellness talked numerous times, as well as the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration. We'll continue to monitor situations, but we're not changing that at this time.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: What we just saw is another example. The status of women in this government was just silenced when I just posed a question. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, order. That is so unparliamentary. I ask that you retract that statement now, please.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'll retract that statement, Speaker.

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

Before we begin, the member for Northside-Westmount on an introduction.

FRED TILLEY: Speaker, in the gallery across, I would like to introduce a young man who has a keen interest in politics, and the grandson of one of our illustrious staff members, Mr. Colton O'Neill. Please stand and accept the . . . (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome, Colton. Thanks for being here.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Public Bills for Third Reading?

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 419.

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

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Thank you, Speaker. I move that Bill No. 419 be now read a third time and do pass. This bill establishes one of our key budget commitments and modernizes other legislation that has budget, financial, or governance implications. Most notably, it includes something many a Finance and Treasury Board Minister has dreamed about but few have had the opportunity to see happen, certainly in this province. What I'm referring to is the indexation of personal income tax brackets. Tax relief by way of income tax bracket indexing was the number one ask made by Nova Scotians during budget consultations. This bill extends the life of business tax credits.

[Nolan Young assumes the Chair.]

Speaker, I will acknowledge you have just assumed the Chair.

Investment decisions are being made. We want companies to choose to invest in our province and in our people. This bill extends the life of credits like the Innovation

Equity Tax Credit, the Digital Animation Tax Credit, the Digital Media Tax Credit, and the Venture Capital Tax Credit.

Amendments in this bill will allow provincially regulated credit lenders to implement changes to variable interest rates without a 30-day notice, allowing them to be more responsive when interest rates change. Federally regulated financial institutions like the “Big Six” Canadian banks have this ability. Financial institutions regulated in Nova Scotia will now have it with the passing of this legislation.

Amendments are being made to the Chartered Professional Accountants Act to align with national standards, and Nova Scotians will be able to rely on dedicated professionals to help them manage important financial matters. These amendments will ensure that Nova Scotians are getting qualified professional services under a regulated system that protects them.

With that, I know I have other comments, but I’m anxious to hear what members of the Opposition have to say about this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Here we are debating a concern that we have repeatedly raised to this government about the security of personal health information. Concerns were raised at the Law Amendments Committee by the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons and by Doctors Nova Scotia about the broad language that is in this particular bill. Again, I go back to - let’s look at this bill.

There are 111 clauses plus some schedules at the back. Clause 110 deals with personal health information:

Subsection 110(1) of Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2010, the Personal Health Information Act, as amended by Chapter 31 of the Acts 2012 and Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, is further amended by adding immediately after clause (n) and the following clause:

(na) requiring custodians and classes of custodians to disclose personal health information to the Minister or a person acting on behalf of the Minister for the purposes of planning and management of the health system, resource allocation and creating or maintaining electronic health record programs and services.

Sounds benign, but the College of Physicians and Surgeons and Doctors Nova Scotia have raised concerns, and we have not heard a sufficient answer yet as to why this government won’t tighten up the language on this particular clause. We’re going to leave it in regulations. We have suggested various alternatives. We have pointed out why people

might be concerned about a government having access to their particular health records, to no avail.

Over and over, we have raised these particular issues. We have seen what happens in jurisdictions where a government decides to be anti-woman, anti-abortion, and I'm not suggesting for a moment that this Minister of Health and Wellness would do that, but we are leaving the door open for future governments to do something like this, and we should not do this. It should be clear that it can only be aggregate data.

The minister keeps saying she just, you know, needs it for planning, and they'll lightly touch. Again, we don't know what "lightly touch" means. She may simply mean that it's a quick through, but the wording is too broad, and you can't get away from that. You can't get away from that. There's nothing in here that says what happens if they're used for nefarious purposes - nothing. It will be in regulations, and that is always - and I get it, it's tough being in government because the Opposition always says, Well, there are no details here. And the devil is in the details, but this is about people's personal health information, and this government, having stepped back on so many other things - firefighters, a bill that was included, jammed in here like so much else.

They stepped back on coastal protection, stepped back on umpteen other things. But here, when people's private information is up for grabs and they won't back off on this most important thing, it kind of boggles the mind. I was hearing a story from someone who had been speaking with people who are involved in the high-tech industry, where a company thought they were interviewing - I think it was a CFO, their incoming CFO. They thought that's who they were interviewing and talking about upcoming issues and things their company's concerned about. They come to find out that's not who they are dealing with. It's somebody completely different.

There are bad actors everywhere. The government needs to ensure that Nova Scotians have the confidence that their personal information will not be leaked out somewhere. As it is, we are left with: Oh, just trust us. Quite frankly, seeing some of the shenanigans that I have seen of late, how can we trust? It boggles the mind. It also creates a new professional legal duty for doctors. Doctors have been in here talking to us. They recommended an amendment, and the government won't do it. We keep saying, why?

We heard today where government is asserting: Well, people had to pay all this money to get their records. I've got news for you: they still have to pay all this money to get their records. They haven't fixed it.

They like to go after the Leader of the Official Opposition - who was Health Minister for six months, I might add. They have had almost three years. They haven't fixed it. To add insult to injury, they downloaded automatically that app to government stuff. Anybody with a government phone and a government email address, bam, you've got it. Talk about arrogance. Here you go, you have to take this. People weren't even given a

choice - just so they could run around and crow about the number of downloads they had of this app.

[11:00 a.m.]

Yes, people want access to their information. I applaud that. I think we all applaud that. People do want their own health info, but they don't want everybody else to have it or anybody else, other than their physician, other than people who have every right to have it, who are treating them.

Over the years I have dealt with people whose records were accessed inappropriately. It is a shocking betrayal. People feel violated when that happens. We've already had the biggest breach in this province's history under this government. I can tell you, most of the people who had the option of having a company monitor their accounts to make sure they weren't being used nefariously have found the process onerous. Anybody who has married and changed their name, you had to go through more hoops. If you had been adopted, forget it. You had a name change somewhere in your past - it was not an easy process and maybe it shouldn't be.

The government has chosen to back down on so many other things, and is refusing to listen to Doctors Nova Scotia and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It boggles my mind. They could have put safeguards in this bill. They didn't have to put all the regulations in the bill, but they could have put some in there. They could have ensured that Nova Scotians will know a future government will not be following them, and trying to punish them if they have a procedure that the government of the day doesn't agree with.

I can't be any clearer than this: The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia says that for patients, it means that the entirety of their medical records will be accessible to government. Again, I would point out that the registrar is not just an MD - not that there's any "just" about being an MD. He's also a lawyer. I know it's the job of lawyers to protect us from making mistakes and ensuring that when you're firing an employee, they're being treated fairly, so you don't end up having to pay that employee more money - which might be why you might want to reach out to a lawyer.

The letter goes on to say: "The college, however, supports the rights of patients to privacy and the duty of physicians to maintain confidentiality, which is a cornerstone of medicine. The obligation set out in Section 1(10) runs contrary to these rights and duties, or is, at the very least, in tension with them."

The government could have removed that tension by putting at least some of the regulations in this bill so that it was very clear - very clear - to future governments that they couldn't just wade through there to find out who's going for an abortion or who's having their tubes tied or who's getting a vasectomy - who knows? Maybe they'll pay more attention if there's something that happens to men. I don't know.

We have pointed out over and over that different patients place more value on their privacy. Perhaps as we get older and suffer more ailments, we don't want anybody knowing about them. But I don't think it's just older citizens who are concerned about their privacy. I think there are young people who are concerned about their privacy. I think folks who are dealing with issues of gender and sexuality may not feel overly comfortable having this conversation with their doctor anymore because they don't want that information in the hands of the Minister of Health and Wellness or their designate.

Our job as legislators - we're not here to be cheerleaders for the government. We are not the government's cheerleaders. That is not our job. We are called His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Our job here is to point out when there are problems, when there are concerns. The Premier has a whole cheering section over there. That's part of their job, and we see it when they're on camera. They're supposed to clap and all of that. If that's how they want to do their job, that's fine, but that's not our job. Our job is to look out for Nova Scotians, and that's what we're doing.

I know it offends the Premier that we are pointing out flaws, but this, unfortunately, is a flawed bill, in part because they tried to jam in a suitcaseful of different things. It's a Frankenstein bill. It's a bunch of different body parts stitched together. We would not be doing our job if we just said, "Oh, government says it's okay. The health care professionals over here, their associations are concerned. They've suggested an amendment, but government says it's okay. We'll just take their word." We would not be doing our jobs.

I don't believe that it's appropriate for people to use a term like "too negative" always in reference to one leader of one gender, and I don't believe that it is our job to simply say, "Okay, the government says this. We'll just take their word for it." Our job is to go through this legislation and to be very clear on what our concerns are.

If we don't hear what makes not just us, but the health care professionals - if they're not satisfied, then we ought not to be satisfied. If we were satisfied without hearing from them that they were satisfied, I'd be concerned about that. If we talk to people, and we're hearing from the African Nova Scotian community and the Indigenous community, that they have concerns about their personal health information, and if we just decide that, hey, we're not going to listen to them, we're just going to look the other way, then we would not be doing our duty.

I keep coming back to: Why hasn't the government just simply tightened up the language and made it clear? We don't know why that is, because we have not heard a satisfactory answer. All they had to do was tighten up the language, and we'd be in a very different place. But that hasn't happened.

There is every reason for us to be concerned about this. We have not received adequate assurances from this government, and quite frankly, they would have to be in the

form of putting something in this bill that ensures that people would feel safe. That hasn't happened. Multiple climbdowns on multiple parts, but not this.

At committee, when we were presented with the letter from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, what we heard - and I'm going to quote directly from Dr. Grant's letter:

From my years of practice as a family physician, I can say with confidence that many of our most vulnerable patients are also among our most mistrusting of large institutions and government. This generalization might extend to members of many disadvantaged communities. The analogy could be drawn to our vaccination experience, where our most vulnerable and most disadvantaged were most disinclined to be vaccinated.

I hope that there has been consultation with groups such as the Mental Health Association, groups representing our trans and LGBTQ

...

Actually, it says LGBTQ patients.

... let alone our Indigenous and African NS communities.

He goes on to say: Let's face it, very few Nova Scotians - and I'm paraphrasing now - are sitting at home watching this debate. Don't blame them. What's the old line? Politics is celebrity for ugly people, or something like that. The truth of the matter is that I think there are going to be some very surprised people. Let's face it, the government can pass this bill. They have the numbers. They're going to pass the bill, but we would not be doing our jobs - even if it offends people on the other side - if we did not point out these very real concerns about Section 1(10) of the Financial Measures (2024) Act.

He goes on to note: How are these various groups going to respond to the surprise of hearing that their medical records are now accessible to the government? Never mind that some deeply suspicious people think that the Nova Scotia Guard is just an opportunity to scrape more data from Nova Scotians. Sign up with your special skills. Give us your email. Do we know that that information is going to remain in the hands of government? We don't know that. Will it be given to the PC Party to use come election time? We don't know that. So we sign up for another thing. Give us your email for that. We're all concerned about that.

How are our most disadvantaged groups going to respond to the concerns of their physicians and other health care workers who are going to have to tell them "I have to give this information to the government"? Are we going to now go into our doctors' offices and see, along with the other signs about "If you're leaving the province to go to school, you'd

better sign up for more health care, blah, blah, blah” - are we going to see a note there that says “I’m obliged to give the government your records”?

[11:15 a.m.]

We heard from the Minister for Health and Wellness that people are now going to be able to get their records. Let’s be clear, this is only their go-forward records. You’re still going to have to pay to get your old records from your doctor. Presenting that as a solution here is inaccurate. This will be go-forward. They’re not going to go digitize your old records.

That was not a full answer. Let’s just put it charitably that way, number one. You’re still going to have to pay to get your records from before this coming in if you choose to participate in this particular program. So let’s be clear on that. The companies that manage this, they’re making a killing. All these doctors coming and going. Was that a sole-sourced contract? I don’t know, but I’d like to.

The government has not been transparent about this, how it will work. The government has not consulted with the groups that Dr. Grant talked about here. There are other groups - victims of sexual assault, victims of assault, victims of anything. How will they feel about knowing that their records are going to be accessed? The government does not appear to have done some of the basic work we would expect in a case like this.

Dr. Grant says we can also look to other jurisdictions to see how concerns about greater access to personal health information can be mitigated. Alberta, for example, requires a privacy impact assessment related to the provincial electronic health records system that’s submitted to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The entire electronic records system is overseen by a multi-disciplinary data stewardship committee.

Ontario utilizes an advisory committee to engage a review and also creates the ability for patients to limit ministerial access to information through the use of consent directives, a form of lock box to protect designated information. Will such approaches be considered here? The text of Section 110 does not require any of these important things.

We don’t know if the Information and Privacy Commissioner was consulted about this. If she was consulted, did she have any recommendations? Were those taken into account? We don’t know. We applaud the government in wishing to provide access to go-forward patient records, but there have to be safeguards around that, and we’re not satisfied that there are safeguards.

Dr. Grant goes on to note, “We also know that in instances where large amounts of confidential data are collected, used, and disclosed, it is common to have data sharing agreements in place to create safeguards around the information. What does that look like here? Section 110 is silent.”

People's information is so important to them. It's so important. People can come up to you at the mall, hold out their phone, and they've got your information. It just happened to a client of a professional that I visit. She's just spending all her time cancelling everything. It happened at a local mall.

This government could have made sure that Clause 110 wasn't just a couple of lines long, that it had some meat on the bones, that it was there to protect Nova Scotians. We've heard the Premier say he's always looking out for what Nova Scotians want. Nova Scotians do not want unauthorized people accessing their health information. This government could do something to tighten up this clause. They have chosen not to.

We raise these issues not because we're being negative but because it's our job. It wasn't that long ago that these folks were on this side of the House, and it was their job when they were here.

It's interesting: Gus Grant goes on to say in his letter that they, too, have a job. He notes:

We would be remiss in our obligation to protect the public interest in the practice of medicine if we did not raise our concerns about the lack of transparency of this legislative change, the need for its breadth in advance of understanding the learnings of the pilot project, the lack of identified safeguards around how the collection, use and disclosure will be governed and administered, and the potential for adverse impacts on the therapeutic relationship that is foundational to the provision of good health care.

What is true of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, I want to remind government members, is also true of us. This is our job here too. We are not here being negative. We are here because we are His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It is our duty to point this stuff out. If people on the government side don't understand that, they should go take a constitutional law course and find out what our role is.

We're not here to be the government cheerleaders. We are here to ensure that we are speaking out for Nova Scotians who are having their concerns not met, their rights trampled on, or anything like that. That's our job. That's why we're up talking about Clause 110 in this bill.

There are legions of political staff. The government bureaucracy is at their beck and call. The fact that you have a couple of dozen people who stand up to you day after day to point out when there are flaws in a bill like Clause 110 in the FMA - the fact that we stand up and do this is because we are loyal Nova Scotians who want the best for our constituents and all other Nova Scotians; that we're looking out for people who have been historically overlooked, or mistreated, or told they're crazy, or whatever. The fact of the matter is we

are here doing our jobs, and the fact that we have a Premier who chooses to characterize that as negative, when we are doing exactly what we are supposed to do, frosts my cupcakes, and I've got to tell you, it really burns my buns. I'm mixing metaphors here.

The second-last line of Dr. Grant's letter also underlines that this proposed legislative change will impact all regulated health professionals, as well as all members of the public. This affects everybody in Nova Scotia, so you're darn tooting that we're going to stand up here and talk about it and tell you what's wrong with it.

Dr. Grant noted that while the other regulated health professionals were not there at Law Amendments Committee, they asked him to note their support for the position he outlined on that day as the same concerns apply to the registrants of other regulated health professionals - professions who act as custodians of personal health information.

I want to assure the members of the government that while we may not be here to clap every time the Premier speaks, we too love Nova Scotia, but it's our job to point out when the emperor has no clothes, and it's our job to point out when the government is heading down a path that is wrong, that is not good for Nova Scotians, and we're going to keep on doing it until the cows come home.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise to speak to the Financial Measures Act. With a bill of this magnitude that exists in theory to enact the spending in the budget, it's important that we understand the context that gives rise to it. We spend most of our time here talking about the government's agenda and how well or how poorly they are doing at making progress. Health care, housing, cost of living, protecting ourselves and our province from the changing climate - these are the things that Nova Scotians ask us about, that they care about, and that we, in turn, try to solve in this Chamber.

We can talk about bills and numbers and percentages, but our work is really about Nova Scotians, and ensuring that they can thrive: to live a fulfilling life, to provide for their families, and to be optimistic about their future. The year 2023 was a year where Nova Scotians shined, sometimes against all odds. It has been a challenging time. We had fires, we had floods, and we have seen the necessities of life become harder and harder to afford. As always, when faced with a challenge, Nova Scotians have shown their true colours: from local bakeries and restaurants feeding first responders to Legions stepping up, volunteer fire departments, countless community organizations, search and rescue, families and volunteers showing up and taking care of each other. In that way, 2023 showed us again who we are as Nova Scotians. We are a province of people who do what needs to be done. We don't swagger, we don't care about our mojo, we care about each other - quietly, steadily, loyally. We don't talk about it, we do it, and we need a government that does the same.

We need a government that cares about us the way we care about each other: always and without reservation. This is what we look for in the budget and in the Financial Measures Act. These are our metrics. A school food program points to this, which is why we have fought for this for so long.

[11:30 a.m.]

As food costs rise and more and more children in Nova Scotia are food-insecure, a school food program is imperative in our province and in our country as a whole. The reality is, despite the great work of organizations like Nourish Nova Scotia, many children in this province today don't have enough to eat. They don't eat lunch, and breakfast may be a granola bar.

The minister and I had a disagreement about this earlier in the year and the minister assured us repeatedly that every student in this province had access to healthy and nutritious food in school. They didn't and they don't, but hopefully, with the help of federal funding, they soon will.

Diabetes care also points to this and in a province and country with socialized medicine - that's right, health care is free and accessible to all and socialized. This is a necessary step, but there is so much more to what should be a straightforward bill. There are entire bills in this bill. There was a provision enabling career firefighters to volunteer, something on which the Halifax firefighters were clear that they were not consulted and which, wisely, the government amended before the bill came for debate in Committee. Now we have the Nova Scotia Guard. Is this an end-around? It's too early to tell, but we know that search and rescue organizations, volunteer fire, and other professional organizations whose job it is to respond in emergencies were not consulted and that, yet again, government is acting without proper advice or consultation from those who know best.

This isn't in the FMA. It isn't in the budget, and so is it even going to happen? I guess we will have to wait and see. What is here is an extension of the Executive Panel on Housing in Halifax Regional Municipality for another two years, when the existing process has gone anything but smoothly. This panel makes closed-door decisions and circumvents municipal jurisdiction.

In Southdale-Mount Hope in my district, after serious concerns about the treatment of the wetland on part of the site, we recently learned through FOIPOP that 300 affordable - they were never going to be affordable, they were attainable - housing units planned and partially financed by a \$22 million forgivable loan to the developer, have been quietly scrapped with no consequence. Not only was this not announced, but when I asked department staff about it, they denied it.

This confirms what we have said all along, which is that this government is going to have to get much more serious about financing attainable and affordable housing in order for it to get built. Not only will it not trickle down, it will - for the most part - not get built at all by the private sector, even with incentives, unless there are good partnerships and clear contracting, and we have not seen that.

Even setting aside affordable housing - which, it goes without saying, we are woefully underfunding in this bill, notwithstanding the someday investment in 200 units of public housing that represents a fraction of the need - the task force is not leveraging their powers to achieve important public goods. They are not requiring units to be built to the latest building codes. They are not requiring heating and cooling systems to meet our climate commitments. Shockingly, they are not even requiring egress for entire communities being built adjacent to neighbourhoods ravaged by fires, where residents fear they would not be able to escape in time with only one way out.

These special planning areas are yet another giveaway; giving away land, giving away expedited development permits, and giving away our wild spaces, and what do we get? Some housing - yes, at the very high end of the market. We need homes for families, for tradespeople, for health care workers, for educational assistants and restaurant workers and tourism operators - for the people who make our economy run. But we are not building housing for them - certainly not in the areas approved by this task force. We are expediting housing for the people who can afford to buy it and build it themselves already. That housing will get built, with or without government intervention, because the market will see to it, but what about everyone else? That question is not answered in this Act.

That brings me to the poison pill of this legislation, buried at Clause 110, not heralded in any press release or triumphant announcement: an unprecedented intrusion in the privacy of all Nova Scotians. When this bill passes, conversations between Nova Scotians and their primary care providers will, no matter what the minister says, no longer be confidential.

I would like, for the record, to read Clause 110 of this Act, because it is very important that we understand not what the intention is, not what the idea is, not what the program is, but what the legislation says, and the legislation says the following:

Subsection 110(1) of Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2010, the Personal Health Information Act, as amended by Chapter 31 of the Acts 2012 and Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, is further amended by adding immediately after clause (n) the following clause:

(na) requiring custodians and classes of custodians to disclose personal health information to the Minister or a person acting on behalf of the Minister for the purposes of planning and

management of the health system, resource allocation and creating or maintaining electronic health record programs and services.

The provision is quite clear. The minister or her designate may have access to all medical records of patients - all records. Let that sink in. A conversation about fertility, about substance use, about gender reassignment, about anything, visible directly to the minister. Why? Health care planning. We have the information we need. It comes through MSI billing. We've been told that in previous sittings by the minister herself. This is how they triage the list. This is how they understand how to allocate primary care resources. They have the information they need.

What else? For resource allocation - well, that's terrifying. Why would the assigned personal information of Nova Scotians be needed for resource allocation? Well, you could say, like, who's busy or who's not, but you could also say, What are our priorities in terms of health care? Well, we know that it's probably not women's health right now. We haven't seen an increase in access to the endometriosis clinic, which we've talked a lot about. We haven't seen free birth control in this bill, which we've talked a lot about. There are lots of ways in which women and gender-diverse folks continue to be disadvantaged in health care. That's not a priority.

What is a priority? My colleague, the member for Bedford Basin, has talked about what's happening in the U.S., and I think was accused of fearmongering. That is real. We have jurisdictions around the world that are making health care decisions based on ideological opposition to what kind of health care people should receive, and this provision opens the door to that possibility. Do I think that's going to happen this year or next year? No, I don't. I don't think that's the government's intention, but it's possible. They have been told that over and over again, and they refuse to amend this legislation.

The question is: What problem is the minister trying to solve? We have asked that question, and we have not gotten an answer. The minister has been clear that she doesn't want to see our personal information, but she's also said that she might just need to peek at it or lightly touch it in order to manage the system. Which is it? Because those who know - physicians and regulators - have been clear: The department has access to the disaggregated information it needs. It's not accurate to say that this is needed for health management.

Another explanation has been that Nova Scotians can have access to their own data. That's what this is for. It's for the app, and it says that here: ". . . maintaining electronic health record programs and services." The legislation doesn't mention an app. So, if that's what the minister has decided that this is for, then she should amend the legislation, so it says that; but before she does, we should be really, really nervous, all of us, if that is what this is for.

Should we have access to our own medical records? Absolutely. Should we have to pay to access them from third party storage providers which, as we lose more and more family doctors, Nova Scotians are needing to do? No, we shouldn't, but this government says they are doing that through the app. I can't make the point strongly enough that this is a massive overreach, and one of many. It's a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

If it's for us, then that probably means that, although the government hasn't said so, it's for the app. She's not talking about us all getting a copy of our electronic medical record to us, and that's not what the legislation says. So the huge privacy breach hidden in this bill is to give us access to the information. But is it? Because who built this app? Who has access?

Well, I'll tell you. It was built by a company called Think Research Corporation, chosen directly through an alternative procurement process - which the Auditor General has formally frowned upon - which has signed a \$50 million contract with the government of Nova Scotia, in part to build this app. FOIPOP's show that it's likely that that alternative procurement was settled upon because Jenni Byrne + Associates - you might recognize that name, Jenni Byrne, chief adviser to the hopeful next leader of the country, Pierre Poilievre - hopefully not, I would say, on this side of the aisle - who also represents Loblaws and other companies who have a direct interest in monetizing people's medical data.

So, Jenni Byrne's company shows up in the Premier's Office and says: Hey, have I got a deal for you. Sign this alternative procurement with Think Research, pay them \$50 million, they're going to build you a crackerjack app, you're good to go. This raises red flags, and we have continued to raise them as the Premier has quadrupled down on his alternative procurements and bad decisions. Why no procurement, why this company, why this app? Those questions remain.

Back to the minister's new power: This makes us deeply concerned, but not as concerned as when we learned that Think Research has gone out of business. Think Research has gone out of business and been acquired by its lender, a business called Beedie Capital.

Nova Scotians, when you release your information to the minister, maybe it's going to a hedge fund. Maybe it's going to Beedie Capital. Maybe they're figuring out how to monetize it. We have no idea. We have no idea, because this government has not been transparent in the procurement, has not been transparent in questions about this matter, and is not being transparent about what this provision is going to be used for.

Alarm bells should be ringing. Will Beedie Capital have access to our health information? Are they a designate of the minister? Well, we don't know, but we should be concerned about it, and we have not gotten the answers that we need.

The minister continues to say that they are following the highest privacy safeguards, but we know - well, we don't really know, but because she won't answer the question, we think - that the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Nova Scotia was not consulted on this. What we hear is that the minister and presumably her staff believe that they are complying with privacy, but this government has a bad track record on that. We have no third-party verification of that. In fact, the only external feedback we've been given, including from the most prominent privacy lawyer in our province, is that this is extremely dangerous, and that this provision should at the very least be amended if not removed from the legislation.

[11:45 a.m.]

There are some things in this Chamber that never penetrate public conversation. They're too technical; they're too boring; they're too complicated. We make a big deal about it in here, and it never gets out there. This is not one of them. This provision is an overreach just in the language, right on the face of it. In dozens of conversations over the phone, via email, and around kitchen tables over the long weekend, people have asked me about it repeatedly. We have done our best to amend it, raising the voices of health regulators, doctors, assault survivors and others who are concerned over and over again. The government has refused to listen - maybe because there is not a specific seat that they fear losing when it passes. But make no mistake: This provision is a poison pill. It does nothing to fix health care and everything to shake our confidence further in its management.

As Dr. Gus Grant eloquently said at the Law Amendments Committee - and I have tabled this - there are already people who don't trust the system for very good reasons, and this confirms their fears.

Last, I want to speak for a moment about the suggestion of a Child and Youth Commission, which appears as a schedule at the back of this bill. Again, in the context of the year that was and where we find ourselves at this moment, I'd like to talk about the Child and Youth Commission that is created - except that it isn't. This was an election platform promise - one of many, but also one of the most important. Why are we here if not for the next generation and for the generations to come? With the rising cost of living, with the challenges in health care and housing come children and families who suffer, an independent child and youth commission is critical to ensuring that we are living up to the responsibilities to the next generation, especially to young Nova Scotians who are excluded from or marginalized by the systems that this government oversees.

We are so glad to see the mention of this in the FMA, but in a cruel twist, for a bill literally titled the Financial Measures Act, it comes with no budget, no staff and no timeline - just a promise. Almost three years into this government's mandate, a promise is not enough. My colleague the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island attempted to amend this bill with, I think I can say, the support of the entire Opposition, adding what was needed to make this bill real. But it isn't real. We hope it will be, and we will fight until it is.

Speaker, I want to conclude where I began, by taking a moment to recognize and honour the strength, resilience, innovation and excellence of Nova Scotians this year and every year. In this budget, in this bill, we were looking for something that honoured that, that supported it, and that reflected the care that Nova Scotians have for each other. Sadly, we did not find it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I'm happy to stand and speak on Bill No. 419, the Financial Measures Act. We've got grave concerns about this piece of legislation. We have articulated them before in Committee of the Whole and second reading in this Chamber.

First and foremost, while there are things in this budget that we do support - things, in fact, that we've advocated for consistently - and successfully, evidently, by the fact that they've shown themselves in the budget - this budget does not go far enough to deal with the affordability pressures that are affecting Nova Scotians. The Premier has trumpeted his indexing of income assistance as the largest tax cut in a generation, when we know it's saving people \$59 to \$259 a year, beginning in 2025, I believe.

There has been commentary on how the Nova Scotia government trumpets the largest tax cut in provincial history without actually cutting taxes. We know that seniors on fixed incomes, working families, and young people who are coming up through our system are facing a stark reality around our economy, around finances, and around affordability, and this budget does not change the water on the beans on that.

We have not had fundamental change. We have had trinkets delivered in this budget that will provide some help: the school lunch program, another thing we've advocated for, time and again, and we've tabled bills in the House; the glucose monitoring program, which will certainly help those dealing with diabetes, was another idea that did not spring from the government's own policy process but came from the Opposition benches, which we do support; and indexing income tax to inflation, which is something we have fought for consistently in this House and which the government announced after the passing of their own budget.

While these things will help, we had a cut to the housing department when we were dealing with the biggest housing crisis that we've ever had in our province. There has been no talk about the impact immigration has on housing availability, cost, and supply, let alone inflation. Yet the government thumps its chest continually about how much money they're spending and how they're changing things when, whichever metric you look at - affordability, poverty, food insecurity, power rates going up by 14 per cent for the first time in nearly a decade - this budget clearly does not go far enough to deal with any of these things in a substantial way. I think that will become more and more evident.

I am particularly worried that there is no thought for the next generation of Nova Scotians who are coming - a generation of Nova Scotians who do not own property, do not own houses, and are facing a situation where they may not be able to enter those markets and own assets.

We are at a very serious fork in the road here in Nova Scotia, where we could have a major generational divide when it comes to wealth, comfort, and affordability, where those who have purchased and owned these assets previously and those who haven't are going to be going in opposite directions when it comes to financial stability, wealth generation, and ability to survive in this province. There is no thought for the morrow in this budget on that situation at all.

There certainly are some major concerns on this side of the House regarding this government's effort to force doctors, by law, to hand over personal health information to the minister or a designate. We just had more information presented to the House about the company that is responsible for accumulating this data on behalf of the government, that has ties to the federal Conservative Party - one element of it has gone bankrupt, and there may be a hedge fund involved. There could be companies like Loblaws attached to this data. All these groups benefit from having information around people's personal health, whether it's aggregate or it's personally identifiable. This is not something the government has considered.

This creates a major risk, first and foremost, to the doctor-patient relationship, as doctors have expressed vehemently to members in this Chamber, through Law Amendments Committee, through personal outreach, and through letters. Patients go to doctors and confide in doctors because they trust that their information is not going to be seen by a politician, a business, or a political staffer or bureaucrat. Nothing protects patients in this situation.

We have brought forward amendments to try to change this, to at least take the personal identifiers out of the data collected so the name, the residential address, the contact information of people. The government voted that down. We tried to bring in an amendment that would allow people to opt out of this if they were uncomfortable with the government and private business having access to their health information. The government voted that down.

Furthermore, I believe this move goes against the word of the law, the spirit of the law, and the Personal Health Information Act. The minister stated that consent was protected in the Act. The Act is very clear that consent may be limited or revoked at any time, and that if a custodian is required by law to hand that personal information over to somebody else, then the privacy protections in this Act are actually null and void. There is no protection here.

Our first concern is obviously on the doctor-patient relationship. Our second concern is on who within government or the private sector is going to have access to people's personal health information. Our third is related to bad actors.

We just went through the biggest cybersecurity attack in Nova Scotia history under this government: 100,000-plus social insurance numbers and addresses were collected by bad actors, hackers. It's become very evident in questioning in the House that the Minister of Cyber Security and Digital Solutions wasn't even consulted on this. His department wasn't consulted. It's clear that the privacy commissioner wasn't consulted on this. This is a very problematic thing to do.

Again, I think it contravenes the Personal Health Information Act as well. I think it contravenes the law that's been established to actually protect people from this. I'm particularly concerned because what we've seen from this government, actually, is an effort to collect people's personal health information.

The Nova Scotia Loyal program, the great plan that was promised in the Tory platform that has since been taken off the internet, that has not been moved forward on in any substantial way - none of the ideas in this budget come from the Progressive Conservative platform that was promised in the election - not one, I believe. They come from what the Opposition has committed. What was promised in that election was a Nova Scotia Loyal program, a points-based system that would encourage and reward Nova Scotians for buying locally produced goods and items. The irony is what the government did with the wine sector, where they actually brought in a taxpayer subsidy to encourage the importation of grape juice produced elsewhere.

Beyond that, what is the Nova Scotia Loyal program? I've seen it out in the field. People - some of them, I believe are Progressive Conservative staffers who worked on campaigns - are driving decaled trucks around the province carrying ministers in parades. Wherever they're set up, they are collecting cell numbers from people. Why is that happening? They're collecting emails from people. I saw the Premier just launched a new newsletter, which is also collecting people's personal information. There's a very clear effort here, I think, to stack the Progressive Conservative Party with personal contact information for use in campaigns. I think that's what's going on.

I don't trust the motivation of the government - I don't question the motivation of the minister herself, because, again, I respect her and what I think her intentions are on this. But I don't trust the Premier's Office. I don't trust the political staffers. I don't trust the private companies that have ties to federal Conservatives to not misuse this health information - people's personal, identifiable health information. I do think something's afoot here, and I have no problem saying it.

I do think this is one of many issues where, as we've debated the budget, as we've debated the pieces of legislation that are left - because the government has had to flip-flop

and backtrack on nearly everything they've brought forward except probably the most important thing, people's personal health information. I think this session we've seen the true character of the government come to light, particularly in debate around the budget and the FMA.

[12:00 p.m.]

We have seen a government that does not have the conviction to stand behind their ideas. Seven flip-flops in the last two months, and the Premier tries to make this a virtue. It's not a virtue to make that many mistakes when you're governing. It's not a virtue to make bad decisions. It's not a virtue to react after the fact and scramble and turtle when political pressure arises. What's a virtue is doing all the important work before a decision is made; doing the due diligence before a decision is made so that when you face the public, when you face the Chamber, you've got conviction. You're doing something that you believe in, that you think is right for the greater good. I don't think that's the motivation of this government.

I think it's a highly partisan motivation that directs, particularly, the Premier's efforts. This is a government that we have seen - in the debate on the FMA in public communications, inside the Chamber and without - that is totally geared around propaganda - that is geared around communication, and not always communication that is factual or accurate. This is not a government that is driven by policy. It's evidenced every single day in what's communicated in debate. It's evidenced in what comes out of the Premier's office in press releases. It's indicated with what comes out on social media. Everything is built around propaganda and trying to deal with political fires or create political issues for opponents.

There is nothing here that is driven by sound policy work, homework that's done in advance, or, do I think, a real incentive and motivation to just make the right decisions and stick with them. If that was the case, this government wouldn't flip-flop so much. They wouldn't turtle when the pressure's on. The conviction, the backbone, would be there consistently.

I know now that the Premier wants to compare himself to former Premier Stephen McNeil after he was his chief critic. That comparison is a very stark one. Premier McNeil made one adjustment over eight years around seniors pharmacare, one that he owned and changed and lived with because the work that he did was in advance of making those decisions. The decision was what was important, not the communications around those decisions, not the propaganda. I welcome the Premier to continue to make that contrast between him and the past Premier.

On this bill - on the FMA - I do think we find elements of the character of this government in the fact that I believe they're moving with opposition ideas - not because they necessarily think they're the right things, but because they want to neutralize angles

of attack from the Opposition. It doesn't matter to us because we only care about impact on the lives of people on this side of the Chamber, and we're happy to see these things in the budget.

After all this flip-flopping, the one thing this government needs to do is change course on this personal health information. I'm genuinely and deeply concerned about this. I think this is an unsafe thing to do. It creates risks with patients and their doctors. It creates risks with our marginalized and minority groups who already mistrust our health care system, particularly those groups who have been systemically impacted negatively by our systems of government which we have still not recovered from. It does also create a major risk for bad actors within government, within the private sector that's going to be overseeing this data and managing it, and with bad actors in the cyber world.

This is creating massive risks for Nova Scotians, risks that have not been calculated by this government or even assessed. They haven't even thought about it because, again, this is a government that always acts before they think. I think this is going to prove to be a very problematic situation, which is why I'd like to move to discharge the order for Third Reading of Bill No. 419 and recommit the bill to Committee of the Whole House on Bills for the purpose of proposing amendments to and reconsidering Clause 110.

THE SPEAKER: I recognize the honourable . . . (interruption).

We have a dilatory motion on the floor for the bill to recommit.

All those in favour?

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[12:05 p.m.]

[The division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote, I'll just remind all members to remain completely silent while the Clerks record your vote. I'll remind all members to stand up with a simple "yea" or "nay."

[The Clerk called the roll.]

[12:38 p.m.]

YEAS

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

NAYS

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

THE CLERK: For, 21. Against, 28.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I'd like to take a few minutes to speak on the Financial Measures Act here at Third Reading, just to register a sense of how disappointing it is that with the budget that this bill is putting into place, the government has passed over the opportunity to bring our province into line with the rest of the country by establishing a seniors income benefit for the GIS-receiving seniors of our province.

The core facts about this, I think, in a budget-related debate, ought not to be evaded. Our province has the highest rate of poverty among those over the age of 65 of any province in Canada. When we think about why this is, I can't see that we can come to any conclusion other than to say that it has a great deal to do with the fact that Nova Scotia is one of only two jurisdictions in the country which does not have a program that directly supplements the GIS cheques of low-income seniors.

In response to this point, government continually answers that, Yes, but we have the Seniors Care Grant. I want to submit that this is a false comparison. The Seniors Care Grant, on its merits, cannot reasonably be compared with any of the GIS-supplementing parallel programs in the rest of the country; that they have in B.C., or in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, or in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The reason why this is a spurious comparison is that all these other programs, their benefits are benefits that are directly distributed to the person who is eligible to receive them in connection with the filing of their CRA return. This is totally different from the situation we have in Nova Scotia with the Seniors Care Grant because the Seniors Care Grant is not a benefit that you get based on your CRA return and what it says about the level of your income. It's rather something that much smaller, a grant that you actually have to make an application for, and which, in connection with that application, you have to hold receipts.

Now I think it is worth registering, as we move towards the close, on this Financial Measures Act debate, that on this particular dimension of income inadequacy and poverty in Nova Scotia, the landscape on this discussion has changed significantly since this House last met in session late in 2023.

One of the things that has changed that was the publication in late '23 of the Maytree Foundation report called *A fine line: Finding the right seniors' poverty measure in Canada*, which is basically a study about the extent and the measurement of the extent of seniors' poverty in Canada and across the country. Fundamentally, what that study says is that conventional ways that governments have had of measuring seniors' poverty, over a number of years, in the current situation, are tending to significantly underestimate its impact.

In Nova Scotia, where we have such a significant percentage of our population who are seniors and where that significant population has the highest percentage of poverty in the country, this is a very important point. This consistent undermeasurement or underestimation of the poverty among seniors has to do with a host of considerations. I won't go into all of them, but it has to do with things like the prevalence of medical expenses, and also the impact of falling personal investment returns and the impact that's having on the older-people population, particularly in an age of longer life expectancies.

[12:45 p.m.]

It is very significant - pointed out also in this same report from late 2023 - that just recently, Canada has dropped out of the top 10 of OECD countries, those countries with the lowest rates of seniors' poverty. We had been one of the countries with the lowest rates of seniors' poverty for a long, long time. This is no longer true. In this country, where it is no longer the case that we are in the best, top 10 amongst OECD countries for seniors' poverty, we in Nova Scotia are the worst on this front of seniors' poverty of any province in the Canadian jurisdiction. That is the situation in which the Financial Measures (2024) Act and the budget it codifies have missed this opportunity to bring forward some kind of a program that would be parallel to the GIS, supplementing programs that are received by seniors across the country elsewhere.

How ought we properly describe this absence of any provision for a seniors' income benefit in this year's budget? Speaker, the Premier likes to characterize this government as one that doesn't, as he often says, look the other way, but I think that's exactly how this absence needs to be described. This government, in April 2024, is precisely looking away from the realities of income inadequacy amongst the seniors of our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I'm pleased to stand in my place for third reading of Bill No. 419, the Financial Measures (2024) Act. I want to speak on a few areas. I'll begin by talking about legislation and the omnibus bill; talk a bit about bracket creep, in terms of the overall budget and fiscal management of the province by this government; then on health care and the progress, or lack of progress, we're making there; and then finally on issues in terms of the long-term economic health of the province.

I've spoken on this before, but I do think it's important to reiterate to Nova Scotians that this FMA is unlike, most likely, any FMA that we've seen in the history of this province. What we have here is an FMA, which is the Act that puts in place tax measures that reflect the direction of the government's budget. While there are a few tax measures in the Financial Measures (2024) Act, it now contains legislative changes to multiple departments and pieces of legislation. I think my count was 15 pieces of legislation and the creation of two new pieces, although I guess that's now one, because one has been withdrawn. It touches on the work of at least eight ministers of this government.

The real question for Nova Scotians is: Why is this happening? Why are these ministers not bringing forward their own pieces of legislation, standing before the House and before Nova Scotians, and debating their bills? We have only two pieces of legislation now in this Legislature. One is the requirement of the FMA, and then there's one other.

Clearly, there's only one conclusion: It is this government does not want to be in this House facing Opposition questions, facing media questions, facing daily Question

Period. Instead of bringing forward 17 pieces of legislation - which is about normal, normally in this House we'd have 16 to 25 pieces of legislation - at least, that's my experience in 11 years in this House - here we've got two.

The goal of the government is to get in and out of this House as quickly as possible and not face the questions that we in Opposition have on behalf of Nova Scotians, and the media, as well, have. That is truly, truly unfortunate, and is another step backwards with respect to parliamentary democracy in this province.

I did look into this. We know now that Doug Ford introduced an omnibus bill and that's perhaps where this government got the idea. Clearly, it is a step backwards in terms of our doing the people's work in this House, and we in Opposition being able to question government, and for government - if they're confident in what they're doing - to be able to defend the decisions that they're making.

It's interesting. Now in Parliament, in response to governments bringing in omnibus bills, they've now set in new rules that they can actually vote on second and third readings of pieces of an omnibus bill. It's something that this House may want to consider. I'm not quite confident that the government is interested in that, because they are steamrolling ahead with this FMA without any shame whatsoever.

How does that affect us as MLAs? We are here to voice the concerns, ask the questions on behalf of Nova Scotians, on behalf of our constituents. We get one vote on the FMA. Actually, we got two because we hoisted the bill to try and voice our concerns that we have heard from Nova Scotians on the decisions being made in this government.

Every one of us MLAs have had our rights and privileges compromised here because we only have one vote in third reading on the FMA. I am enthusiastically supportive of ending bracket creep. I am enthusiastically not supportive of the violation of privacy with respect to the personal information clauses in this bill. How do I represent my constituents and voice on the floor of this House, my approval of this and my disapproval of that?

The use of an omnibus bill has removed that right and privilege of every MLA in this House from being able to execute their duty to consider what the government is putting forward, to reflect on what our constituents feel about these issues, and to be able to support for or against an action by this government. It's truly a very sad day in this House that we are dealing with an omnibus bill.

I'm extremely disappointed. In second reading, I had hoped that putting a bit of a challenge before the ministers to speak to the elements of this bill that they're responsible for. To my knowledge, I don't think any minister has been on their feet to speak to this legislation. Again, that begs the question of what our ministers are doing.

We have virtually no pieces of legislation coming forward in the House. The only minister that we can point to who is doing any work is the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. He introduced the Electricity Act. That's the only bill, the only idea from government that is actually in a piece of legislation.

What are ministers doing? They've been given the honour and the privilege to be a minister of the Crown. They have at their command dozens if not hundreds of staff to bring forward ideas in legislation to the floor of this House. What are the ministers doing? They're on their phones. They don't have pieces of legislation. They've been told to sit in their seats and look at their phones.

This is a government out of ideas. If you need ideas, have a look at the Order Paper. There are literally hundreds of ideas on the Order Paper presented by the Opposition - hundreds of ideas. And this government came to this House and couldn't steal one of them? What are the ministers doing?

The FMA really has one clause to respond to as the finance critic, and that's Clause 62. There are some other housekeeping ones that I don't feel I need to comment on, with only an hour to speak to legislation.

Let's talk about Clause 62, which is the ending of bracket creep. This bill I put forward earlier in the House, before the FMA was put on the floor, to end bracket creep - we've been advocating for that for a couple of years. We're very happy to see that the government has brought that in, in the FMA.

Where I take issue with the government is the government's portrayal, or the Premier's portrayal, that this is the biggest tax break in Nova Scotia's history - the biggest tax break in Nova Scotia's history. In the last four years, this government is receiving \$1.2 billion more in Nova Scotia taxpayers' dollars, and the government has the audacity to suggest that \$13.4 million is a significant tax break for Nova Scotians. In fact, it's not a tax break, and I've spoken about this before: bracket creep is a hidden tax increase. It is not a tax break.

I made an error in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, saying that this legislation had a removal of the tax - the hidden tax increase. It's actually not this year; it's next year. In fact, in this year's budget there remains a hidden \$13 million tax grab by this government in this budget that we're debating here today.

The biggest tax break in Nova Scotia history, in this budget this year, is a big, large, zero. In 2025, the end of bracket creep will happen, and the removal of bracket creep will have a benefit of a \$13.4 million removal of the hidden increase, but how much is that on the \$1.2 billion of personal income tax revenue that this government is receiving over the last four years? We are now at \$1.1 billion each year collected in personal taxes from Nova Scotians from three short years ago. The removal of \$13.4 million is 0.000033 per cent.

How in the world is that the biggest tax break in Nova Scotia history? How can the government have a straight face telling Nova Scotians - I've seen it in social media. I've seen it in emails from Cabinet ministers to their constituents. Do the ministers actually believe what they are telling their constituents?

[1:00 p.m.]

If we round off the biggest tax break in Nova Scotia history to three decimal points, it comes back as another big zero. We need to be honest with Nova Scotians. We need to tell Nova Scotians what this budget is, really, and it is not the biggest tax break in Nova Scotia history.

Let's move on to the budget. I have heard the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board talking about the budget as an estimate, and things are going to change, but that's not actually the most important element of what a budget is. A budget is what the plans of government are. It lays out the priorities of a government. It lays out to Nova Scotians what taxes they are going to collect and how they are going to spend it.

Unfortunately, the track record of this government is that they cannot budget. They cannot lay out a plan for Nova Scotians. That has been evidenced by this heavy, heavy reliance on additional appropriations of bringing things into their spending during the course of the year that have not been planned for.

There is actually a purpose and a reason why the budgets need to come to this floor and be debated in this House and be approved and questioned and prodded by the Opposition and the media. That is a fundamental part of the work that we do here as legislators. The Auditor General has pointed out how this government is violating those principles by the abuse of additional appropriations. I would submit that it goes beyond the ire of the Auditor General, what this government is doing with the misuse of additional appropriations - that they are actually breaking the law.

I have a section of the Finance Act with respect to additional appropriations: "27 (1) An additional appropriation must be obtained when it becomes apparent to the head of an appropriated entity that its appropriation for the fiscal year is insufficient to carry out the purpose of the appropriation."

Clause 4: "An additional appropriation must not be requested and may not be made for a new program or activity that has not previously been included in the Estimates for a fiscal year."

If you look at the additional appropriations, some fit into that, but many do not. Many are projects or programs that have not been put in the budget. It is against the law - this own government's Finance Act - to bring in an additional appropriation that has not been put in this budget, put before this House, debated, and passed. It's okay to say we had

higher utilization in health care, and we needed to increase it - you bring in an additional appropriation. It is not okay, mid-year, to hand out \$58.9 million to Cape Breton University, \$27.4 million to St. Francis Xavier University, or \$25 million to create a new health data analytics and health system administration at Saint Mary's University. Those were not in the budget. Those were new ideas for which an additional appropriation was passed by Executive Council, contradicting the Finance Act.

I'm certain the government is going to say, Hold it now, health care is in a crisis, so we used special warrants. That's the other part of the Act that I wanted to quote - this is 29(1): "A special warrant may only be requested by the head of an appropriated entity when it appears that the expenditure of money or the incurrence of an expense is urgently and immediately required for the public good . . ."

"Urgently and immediately." How does \$25 million to create a new data health analytics and health system administration program at Saint Mary's - if you used a special warrant, how do you justify that that is urgent and immediate? Special warrants are for things like the pandemic and a forest fire. Saint Mary's didn't even ask for this money. There are no plans - the Auditor General's report is scathing about the use of additional appropriations.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I ask the member to stick to the Financial Measures Act. (Interruptions) No. Order. There's been some argument within the crowd, but you are going off. This is not the first time you went off, but you are going off, so stick to the Financial Measures Act, please.

The honourable member for Kings South.

KEITH IRVING: It is important that the budget that is reflected in the Appropriations Act is recognized for what it is. You've thrown me completely off, Speaker, and I know you're trying to guide me here. Let me move on.

Let's talk a little bit about what the Finance Minister's response to additional appropriations is: We're just doing what other governments do.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I see a lot of questions. This is the Financial Measures (2024) Act. It is not the Appropriations Act, 2024, so you are to stick to the Financial Measures (2024) Act.

The honourable member for Kings South.

KEITH IRVING: Thank you very much, Speaker. The challenge with the Financial Measures (2024) Act is that it does nothing with respect to indicating any kind of economic plan by this Province. Normally, in a Financial Measures Act, we would see tax incentives to reflect an economic plan for this province. The government has exhibited through this

budget that there is no economic plan, and we are not seeing that in the Financial Measures (2024) Act in terms of tax breaks for Nova Scotians. Nova Scotia continues to be the most heavily taxed province in the country, and we are seeing a lack of economic development strategies and initiatives that would find their way into a Financial Measures Act.

Nova Scotia and Canada have a productivity problem. Between all of the U.S. states and 10 provinces, we are No. 60 and dead last. Now the minister corrected me and said that we are actually No. 59 now. Productivity has become a huge issue in Canada as we continue to lose ground against the U.S., and we are losing ground in Nova Scotia with respect to productivity.

There is nothing in the Financial Measures (2024) Act that shows that this government has an economic plan. The budget shows virtually no increase in fisheries, in agriculture or in economic development. How are we going to grow the economy? How are we going to afford all of these promises that the government has made if we don't have an economic development plan and are not introducing measures in the Financial Measures (2024) Act to stimulate business, to stimulate innovation, to raise our productivity and raise our quality of life for Nova Scotians?

The deputy governor of the Bank of Canada was recently in Halifax, talking about this problem. Again, the budget plan, the Financial Measures (2024) Act is silent on any kind of economic development strategy for this province.

We've talked a lot about the need for tax relief. We don't see tax measures in the Financial Measures (2024) Act. If we don't see clauses in the Financial Measures (2024) Act that help with affordability in this province, then we are letting Nova Scotians down.

I think I will leave it there, Speaker. I want to thank you for your advice on this. I guess my remaining comments might have to be a letter to the editor, or a letter to the minister on the failure of this government's financial management. I'm deeply concerned about it. I wish there were some other pieces of legislation on the table that gave us more opportunities to discuss the important issues of the day for Nova Scotia, issues of the climbing debt, large taxation, and the lack of progress and measurement of progress by this government.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I just have a few comments on this third reading of the Financial Measures Act. When I previously spoke to the budget at the start of the Estimates process, I talked about the fact that when times are tough, Nova Scotians want to know the government has their back. I think that this government, through this bill and through this session, continues to show them that they don't.

[1:15 p.m.]

We are greatly concerned by the widening gap and the widening inequality in this province. A rising tide doesn't lift all boats and we have sought with care and attention and evidence and data to bring the government's attention to this in a multitude of ways. While this has been characterized as negative in this House, in fact it's an act of collective care, which I believe is what Nova Scotians want us to be doing.

If people actually listened to our various statements, we are very positive about this province, its people, and its future. I can even be positive about some of the aspects of this budget. This is me trying to demonstrate that. We are, of course, happy to see the inclusion of a school food program. We're happy to see the indexing of taxation brackets. We're happy to see the introduction of a child and youth commission and since, I would argue, we don't actually worry too much these days about money being in the budget or out of the budget so we can spend it, we're also happy to see the indexing of income assistance.

Throughout this whole process, throughout all those ways in which the government makes policy and makes laws and spends money, there is a pervasive theme of a lack of accountability and transparency. Many of my colleagues have said clearly that this omnibus bill is a huge example of that.

First of all, there are so many measures in here - and we've talked about it so many times - there are so many measures in this bill that have nothing to do with financial management, that don't need to be in the Financial Management Act, and in fact, warrant their own specific piece of legislation. Time and time again on these pieces of legislation, it's clear to me that the government has sought to completely ignore and sideline key stakeholders and interlocutors, completely sidelining and ignoring municipalities in decision-making.

On the public Personal Health Information Act, Clause No. 110 - completely ignoring the fact that there's a network of the regulated health professionals available to be consulted on this. They've made it really easy. It's not that you actually have to go to dozens of different regulated professions, you can literally go to just one network, and that wasn't done.

In Estimates debate I brought forward to the Minister of Addictions and Mental Health a budget release from the Canadian Mental Health Association - Nova Scotia Division which indicated their very strong concerns with the budget and with the budget's ability to deliver on universal mental health care. It's a demonstrated remarkable lack of connection to key stakeholders, and in that way it's hard to accept that this budget is founded on priorities of Nova Scotians.

I think we've just seen trends in the consultation or engagement process of this government to maybe consult and then ignore - that might be the Coastal Protection Act.

Or don't consult but say they did, and I would argue that in lots of stuff to do with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Or don't consult and say they don't have to - I mean, that's a number of different pieces. I think what we've been trying to talk about is what is the invisible string of who's influencing government decisions, and who is subsequently making laws for the Province of Nova Scotia? Because it doesn't seem to be reflective of the needs and desires of Nova Scotians.

I also really have to say that, along with this lack of engagement and lack of consultation and lack of respect, I would argue to Nova Scotians that maybe there's also a remarkable lack of curiosity. I want to frame it that way because I certainly don't want to consider it arrogance, is what I would say.

In this session of the House, this government refused to support a motion to study the well-being of two-spirit folks in Mi'kma'ki. They disagreed with the idea of having a discussion in an appropriate House committee about trans and gender-diverse students and their well-being. They wouldn't initiate a better understanding of the needs of autistic Nova Scotians.

To be clear, I'm not making up the issues facing children or the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. What we want to do is make things better. We know that the rising tide doesn't lift all boats equally. What we want to do is make sure that in fact we can support everyone to flourish in this province.

I think, throughout this session, the government has been particularly flippant about good public financial management, with complete disregard for procurement policies in this government. Why do we have public procurement policies? Guess what, folks: It's not just in Nova Scotia that we have them - it's actually an international standard. Why? Because the history of public procurement is not a good one, and we need to overcome that. We need to make sure that we're spending money that serves the public interest, that they're on real issues and not pet projects.

We need to prevent corruption. We need to make sure that politicians and their friends are not benefiting personally now or in the future from the money that we spend on behalf of Nova Scotians. We need to make sure that infrastructure is safe, and we do that through competitive processes where we hear from different folks who provide services and programs, and so we make sure that we choose the one that has the highest potential to be a safe environment.

We want to make sure that payments match the costs and that the costs are realistic, and we want to be efficient, because every dollar of public money that is saved can be used to address another policy or program challenge. But this government doesn't seem to be too worried about throwing the money around or making sure it's getting spent the way it's supposed to.

They are flippant when they are called to account for the spending of Nova Scotians outside the Legislature - and yes, I think that it is absolutely an issue to be discussed here today. It is relevant to the discussion of the budget, because while we're looking at a budget here, we know that there's a ghost budget somewhere else. There are allocations that are going to happen over the next year for which this Legislature will not be called back to approve.

I understand that this government is using the Orders in Council process. I do not see it. I've actually taken some time and gone through some of the special warrants and Orders in Council from this government and from previous governments, and I'm going to continue. Just give me a minute, I'll come back to the bill.

THE SPEAKER: Order. You're doing the yo-yo thing again and you're walking the line - like this is about bracket creep, this is about all that, and not things that we should've or could've done.

Order. As much as I adore the NDP caucus, I don't adore their heckles right now. I'm following the rules of the House, and she needs to talk about the FMA, not what she . . . (interruption). They - my apologies. They need to talk about the FMA, not woulda, shoulda, coulda. Fair enough.

The MLA for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island admitted - it will be in Hansard. I will get back on the topic. I am asking you, respectfully, to stick to the FMA, please and thank you.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Before I begin, I have had to remind several members during this session, particularly on the government side, that the pronouns I have been asked to be referred to - I would appreciate the Chair not rolling their eyes . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I apologized. I made a mistake, I apologized, and I started using the pronoun they, so I ask that the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island accept my apology but also continue in regard to the FMA.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: What I would say that I think is very relevant to the FMA and to the budget is that this is not the government's money to spend at will. This is Nova Scotians' money, and we expect it to come before the Legislature, before all elected officials, and be voted on.

The government are not the only MLAs who were elected. We were all elected by our constituents. We all have a role to play here. When you are spending \$2 billion outside

of the process, I think there are serious issues there. I think that eventually, honestly, the road less travelled is going to look a lot better, because this government is going to come to realize just how flagrantly they have ignored the requirements of the Finance Act of Nova Scotia.

Regarding core issues around affordability and poverty, we laid bare - we've brought forward statistic after statistic, evidence after evidence, story after story, and stakeholder after stakeholder - about concerns around child poverty, inclusive education, growing senior poverty, and the deep poverty that is experienced by many Nova Scotians. We don't see that reflected in the Financial Measures (2024) Act. While income assistance has been indexed, that wasn't in the Financial Measures (2024) Act, and it wasn't in the budget, it was just one of those extra things. I am sure we can talk about it, because it's something good that the government did - but fundamentally, it still leaves Nova Scotians in deep poverty.

We need dignity for all. Dignity does not look like asking people to spend their lives filling out forms, following food calendars, or worrying about whether this is the month they'll lose their family's home.

As the member for Dartmouth South made so evidently clear earlier, we don't see more affordable housing. What we do see is increasing homelessness, and we see abuses of the Residential Tenancies Act, but we certainly do not see Nova Scotians having a feeling like they are able to access more affordable housing.

In health care, from what we understand, this budget and the FMA that activates it aren't going to result in more emergency service hours, ambulances, or rural ERs. There isn't an investment into more OR hours. The focus is on accessing care, but it is not providing stability for folks in primary health care. We haven't heard enough about how we are focusing on recruitment and retention of doctors and nurses. I had an email from a constituent today talking about two doctors who were recruited from the U.K. and are now leaving. They are heading back because the conditions of work in this province are not what they expected.

We are deeply concerned about Clause 110. I've spoken extensively about that. I would prefer not to think of arrogance but rather misinformation that would make government think that this is something that shouldn't be sent to the Privacy Commissioner - it should be further examined - and that it won't have a detrimental effect.

I know this government likes to talk about being innovative, the only jurisdiction, and that sort of thing, and that's important. That's when you should be working hand-in-hand with community. That's when you should be building on evidence, information, and data. Innovation isn't just the next idea out of your head; innovation is a process of building trust and building the evidence as you go.

[1:30 p.m.]

I've raised my concerns that haven't been answered around the spending and planning in the Office of Addictions and Mental Health. I have brought forward the voices of our senior mental health workforce in this province, every child and youth psychiatrist, every public psychologist, who is concerned that what's happening now is actually eroding the public system and not actually leading to better outcomes for Nova Scotians.

The budget and the FMA are silent on our economic future. We have very real economic concerns in this province. This is reflected in the long-term stagnation of wages while returns on investments and dividends continue to rise. At the same time, basic living costs are all spiralling upwards.

We have a labour shortage, and that is a persistent challenge across all sectors, and it's holding us back. It's holding back businesses; it's holding back institutions. It's not an employee's market. It should be an employee's market in this province, but it is not because people are unable to find the housing and health care that they need.

This is all part of our fiscal plan, including population growth. Population growth is stagnant. Our projected real GDP as outlined in our fiscal plan in the budget is a sliver on the positive side. It's very easy for that sliver to be knocked over into the negative. We have a growing debt, growing debt-to-GDP ratio, and growing debt servicing costs. This is terrifying for folks to see grow while there have been no real efforts to eliminate poverty and inequality. What happens is that then we have to look at austerity measures.

In an FMA that contains 15 or so different pieces of legislation, there were a few missing that we could have seen in there. The food and beverage strategy, that would have been a great one. The agriculture industry has been waiting for almost three years now. Key decisions are being put aside. There is no agricultural strategy in the FMA. If you're going to open it up to 15 acts, why not open it up to a ton more?

We see nothing around soil and water conservation. These could have been parts of the FMA if that's what we want to use the FMA for. The FMA could have created land banks for agricultural use. This is a key and consistent demand from the agricultural sector for the protection of agricultural land and to facilitate the entry of new farmers.

During this session, this government made their abandonment of the Coastal Protection Act official and presented what I would term "still not a carbon-alternative plan." This whole budget and the FMA should be grounded in our sustainable future. It should be grounded in a green jobs plan. It should be grounded in housing and health care infrastructure that is also built green.

This FMA should also include a transit strategy. It is true that in most of this province, people still need to drive, often to get to school, to get to work, to get to a doctor,

to get to their community involvement. There's a lot we can do about that to fix that. That is a policy choice that people can't access good public transit across this province. We are, in fact, a small territory. Other jurisdictions have made better choices and have been able to build robust public transit systems that actually work.

During this sitting, the doctors wait-list hit a record high at the same time that the Premier suggested it was time to get rid of the list. We don't have a plan for the Nova Scotia Health Authority, so we don't actually know what that looks like. We don't have a budget for the QEII redevelopment project. While the Premier wants to access your private information - Nova Scotians' private health records - he limits our access to information about how things are going and if things are improving.

The FMA, much like this year's budget, is a disappointment. It fails to address the skyrocketing costs of everything from food to energy and housing. The striking lack of intersectional analysis throughout the budget and throughout the FMA, despite being mandated by the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act that this government brought proudly forth, which was supposed to guide all of the other pieces of legislation, including the FMA. Everything is - I would almost argue that especially the FMA, if it's going to have 15 pieces of legislation in it - should then have - we should have the tools and structure in place now in government to review it through the lens of the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act. Many ministers continue to run programs without understanding . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. A gentle reminder: It's not in order to talk about anything that's not in, so I ask that you tie it closely to everything that's within the FMA.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I could do that. I could do the work that the government hasn't done, and I could take the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act and go through the entire FMA, going point-by-point about what sort of questions and analysis you should be doing. I have time . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

LISA LACHANCE: Yes?

THE SPEAKER: That would be in order if you did that, but what's not in order is talking about things that are not in the FMA.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

There is a point of order. The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: A point of order, Speaker. It is in the character of the Financial Measures (2024) Act, distinct from other pieces of legislation, that it encompasses the government's entire program, and therefore, permits a scope of debate that is not the same. I submit that these continual interruptions of the member and admonishing her to keep close to the subject are based on the failure to recognize this and amount to a kind of harassment. I want to invite the Speaker to please reconsider this approach . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I'm not stopping you - I'm asking everybody in the crowd to just please - so I can hear you.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: On the basis of that reasoning, I think it would be helpful if the Speaker - if you would give some reconsideration to the approach that has been leading the Speaker to this level of constant admonishment of the member on these grounds.

THE SPEAKER: For the member for Halifax Chebucto, in the FMA it's narrower, whereas the Appropriations Act, in regard to spending, is where you can have a wider variety of . . . (interruption). Excuse me. I ask the member for Dartmouth South to please stop heckling. You're screaming across the room. I'm trying to explain to your colleague the advice that I've been given from the Clerk.

Anyway, the FMA is narrower, whereas in the Appropriations Act you can go off a little bit. I'm asking the member to stay on the FMA, which was and is a lot of "could have, would have, should have" in spending. That would have been fine on the Appropriations Act, but we're talking about the FMA.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I feel strongly that the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act, which we all got behind - it was an all-party committee that created it - in fact, mandates government to review all pieces of legislation, including the FMA, all the laws we make, through its lens. I strongly feel that I can comment on the fact that nothing in here has had an intersectional analysis. Of course, some of my comments are going to be what should have been done.

Why don't I just focus on, say, Clause 110. Clause 110, for instance - thank you - around the Personal Health Information Act. If we were actually using the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act as intended, we would have capacity within government - and actually, I believe the capacity exists within the Department of Health and Wellness. I know there is a health equity team, a health equity framework that's being developed. The consideration should be brought to bear on this particular clause of the FMA - Clause 110 of this FMA.

Instead, it's been up to us on the Opposition side to remind people that certain groups, such as 2SLGBTQIA+ folks, African Nova Scotian folks, Indigenous folks - lots of people may, in fact, have specific concerns about how this would impact them.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable member for Halifax Chebucto, I just would like to make one statement.

These Rules are older than before I became elected. It is nothing personal. The House first sat on October 2, 1758. We are 266 years in. I just want to make that note, because I know there is still some discussion over there about the ruling.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, I wonder if you would be good enough to grant us, at this point in the debate, a five-minute recess.

THE SPEAKER: I would need unanimous consent. Do I have unanimous consent for a five-minute recess?

There has not been unanimous consent.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Am I wrong to think that you, in fact, do have the capacity to rule unilaterally for a recess?

THE SPEAKER: I cannot force a recess if people object on it. We could have a motion on it, but there would have to be unanimous consent.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, I'm sorry. I didn't quite hear the last part of your final sentence. Would you please repeat it?

THE SPEAKER: You would need unanimous consent to have a recess. I've just asked. We did not get unanimous consent.

GARY BURRILL: Would it be in order for me to make a motion for this purpose?

THE SPEAKER: It would be in order for you to make a motion for this purpose, but you would need unanimous consent.

It is in order that the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island asks for a recess. We would need unanimous consent in order to have that recess.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

[1:45 p.m.]

LISA LACHANCE: This Financial Measures Act, this bill, was rammed through this House in as little time as possible and contains as many extras as possible. What is up with listening to Nova Scotians?

As I said, I'm sure the road not taken looks really good now. We are all surprised that the government did not choose to amend Clause 110. This isn't the budget, and this isn't the FMA that Nova Scotians needed. We want more for Nova Scotians. We bring their voices forward every day in this House. We want a Nova Scotia where everyone can trust in their government to be open and honest with them and to guard - not that kind of guard - the public purse.

We will continue our work for a Nova Scotia where all feel heard and respected and can flourish.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise to speak on Bill No. 419, the Financial Measures (2024) Act. As representative for Cumberland North and as an independent, I can speak honestly and authentically here in this Legislature. It is a gift, and I am grateful for it.

In a five-point plan to fight inflation, I had called on the government to end bracket creep. Thankfully, the government listened to me. There were many other Opposition members . . . (interruption).

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I ask that there's quiet and respect for the member who has the floor.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Since that was so funny, maybe I'll just repeat it.

On behalf of the people I represent, I had tabled a piece of legislation calling on the government to end bracket creep. That was a year ago. I was very pleased to see the government include that in this bill - to end bracket creep. I had called on the government to do that, and they did so, and I'm very thankful for that. Other members in Opposition had also called upon the government to end bracket creep, and they also were listened to.

What wasn't in the Financial Measures Act was another thing that I had called on the government to do, as well as the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. That is to increase the basic personal tax exemption. The Halifax Chamber of Commerce - and I'll table this document - recommended that the government include this in their Financial Measures Act. They stated:

We can't compete with other provinces for skilled workers and top talent because the tax burden in Nova Scotia is materially different than it is in various other provinces . . .

The high marginal income tax rates are putting the province at a greater competitive disadvantage for attracting and retaining skilled labour and, less directly, investment and entrepreneurs. The further our province's tax system falls behind, the less attractive it is to live and work here.

The tax system is fundamental to a competitive environment, inclusive growth and a fair society. It affects people's daily lives and it urgently needs an overhaul.

The Atlantic Economic Council estimated the impact of increasing the Nova Scotia BPA and other similar provincial income tax credits to \$15,000 plus the elimination of the income clawback provision at roughly \$318 million. While this is the ultimate goal of the Chamber, for this year we are asking the Province to increase the BPA and other tax credits to \$15,000 while maintaining the clawback provision . . .

Increasing the BPA will help affordability by allowing Nova Scotians to keep more of their income. The biggest winners from this tax change will be low- to middle-income residents, who will likely spend the additional disposable income on taxable items such as shelter, food, and fuel.

I will table the Chamber's document on this.

When I speak with the people I represent, they tell me they need relief from inflationary measures - high prices of fuel, high prices of groceries, high prices of rent and other housing - basic costs of living. They want access to a family doctor, not an app. They want health care when they need it. They want roads they can drive on, which is not the case right now in Cumberland. There are two culverts out: one in Conns Mills and Thompson Road, and one on Route 6, which is the evacuation route for all Nova Scotians in the event of flooding in the Chignecto Isthmus.

People of Cumberland North need relief from these high inflationary costs, from carbon tax, and from other taxes that this government has control over - namely tax on tax and tax on fuel. This government is taking the carbon tax and benefiting from it. This government is taxing government fees. This government continues to tax the sale of used vehicles and continues to tax seniors by charging them a late fee on their Pharmacare.

Like the member for Halifax Chebucto has said, our seniors are the poorest in this country, and they should not have to apply for a Seniors Care Grant. It should be provided and given, like in almost every other Canadian province in this country.

The high prices of fuel, the high prices of groceries, and the high prices of rent and mortgages are what these people need relief from in this province, and the Financial Measures Act does not provide that. The people of this province - the people I represent - need hope. They need a budget that represents that hope.

There are people living with no heat. There are people living with their vehicles being repossessed. In fact, I spent an hour and a half on the phone last night with someone who is right now in the situation of losing her vehicle this weekend and their home next week. These are the lives of the real people we represent. These are the lives of the people we represent in this Chamber right now.

For the first time ever, in the Town of Amherst, they have seniors going to their food bank. Seniors thought they would be able to live with dignity in their retirement years, but instead are being forced to go to food banks. Many are turning to drugs and alcohol in their attempts to cope, and the problems with addictions are growing, contributing to increasing criminal activity and increased lawlessness.

Access to wraparound services and addiction supports is scarce. In fact, we have seen a decrease in the supports in Cumberland County. In the town of Springhill, the detox centre that used to be open seven days a week is now only open five days a week. People who are suffering and need help to get through their addictions are being discharged on a Friday - being put out on the street - because the detox is closed for the weekend. That is not helping those in need.

Meanwhile, this government - through the FMA and this budget - floats in generous surpluses and spends with no legislative oversight, bringing criticism from the auditor as more than 10 per cent of taxpayers' money is being spent without any legislative oversight.

There are a few specifics I want to address here in the Financial Measures Act. One is the amendment to the Highway 104 Western Alignment Act. The Highway 104 Western Alignment Act is a bill that was brought in almost 30 years ago to govern the Cobequid Pass. That is a sore point, and always will be, for the people I represent in Cumberland County. This bill changes the Highway 104 Western Alignment Act so that the money that is collected from the tolls at the Cobequid Pass will no longer only be used to service and

maintain the highway for what is known as the Cobequid Pass. The money that is collected now can be used anywhere on the 100-series highways throughout the province.

Some may say it's not a lot of money, but the fact is it represents money being taken away from the highway in Cumberland and Colchester. The people of Cumberland County would love to see that Cobequid Pass toll removed completely. It represents so much that has hurt so many in our area. There is a strong feeling, and it has not changed, that many believe Nova Scotia begins at the Pass, because so often Cumberland County is forgotten by this province. I want to make sure the people I represent know there is this change in the Western Alignment Act.

Now there are a lot of things to talk about in this bill, and ideally, in a perfect world, most of the things in this Financial Measures Act, especially those things that have nothing to do with financial measures, should have been presented here in the Legislature with their own piece of legislation and properly debated with proper legislative oversight.

I did a little bit of research, just looking back to see what should be included in a Financial Measures Act. Although this officially isn't called an omnibus bill, it does meet the definition - and I'll table this document - where the House of Commons Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure defines an omnibus bill as "A bill that seeks to amend, repeal or enact several Acts where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked."

From everything I've read, usually there has to be a procedural reason why an omnibus bill is presented. I don't think that was ever questioned here formally, but I don't see a real reason why we would have an omnibus bill tabled here in this Legislature. The legislation seems light. I've only been elected since 2017, but the amount of legislation tabled here, I think, is the smallest I've seen since I was elected in 2017.

It is an odd bill. This Financial Measures Act, from what I can see, has 16 different pieces of legislation, either new legislation being tabled, like the Youth and Child Act, or amendments to other legislation, most of them not financially related, municipal legislation included. Last year in 2023, the Financial Measures Act affected six pieces of legislation, where I think this year it's 15 or 16. Last year it included amendments to the Revenue Act, the Credit Union Act, Non-Resident Property Tax. Those are all financial measures, which you would expect to see in a Financial Measures Act.

In 2022, the FMA affected four pieces of legislation, including the Income Tax Act and Non-Resident Property Tax; again, financial pieces of legislation. In 2021, there were more, up to nine pieces of legislation, but not what we're seeing here, 15 or 16. In 2020, the FMA affected five pieces of legislation, all tax-related. In 2019, the FMA affected nine pieces of legislation, all tax and revenue related. In 2018, the FMA affected seven pieces of legislation, all tax- and revenue-related.

You get the idea. There is a trend, which seems to be a move away from good governance, a move away from using the Financial Measures Act as a piece of legislation to address financial measures for the province. Now we've moved towards a Financial Measures Act piece of legislation that is being used for non-financial related matters. Is this appropriate? Is it permissible? I guess it hasn't been challenged, so that's why we're here to pass this today.

[2:00 p.m.]

An important piece of this bill that has been debated for an extended number of hours in this Legislature - and it's important that it is brought up again here in third reading - is Clause 110. I learned a couple years ago from a good friend and mentor who said, "Make sure whatever is debated in Supply is repeated and debated again in third reading, so it is recorded in Hansard." I always remember that. For those reasons, I'm going to reiterate comments that I've made on Clause 110 in Supply. I'm making sure they're documented in Hansard in third reading on this bill.

We know Clause 110 gives the minister and anyone she designates access to personal health records in this province. Full stop. It's clear when you read the legislation. The FMA also does state that regulations will be put in place, but the fact is, what we vote on in this Legislature is what is in legislation. We have no say over what is put in regulations, and we know that can be changed at any time by the Executive Council - by Governor in Council.

I do not believe that the minister or anyone she designates should have access to people's personal, private health information, and I am not alone in that. All health care professionals who are represented by professional bodies have come out against this bill. They have all come out publicly stating that they do not support this legislation as it stands. Because of that, I had requested that the minister - the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - repeal Clause 110. I asked that the Department of Health and Wellness prepare a new piece of legislation - a new bill that is robust, that is comprehensive, that ensures proper governance, and that would not allow the minister and her designate to have open access to people's personal health information.

It is important that while electronic medical records are developed, it ensures the privacy of people's personal health information and patient confidentiality. That is a core standard of care for a nurse and all other health care professionals: patient confidentiality. The preparation of this new bill should have included planning with Canada Health Infoway, the Privacy Commissioner of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, along with non-partisan consultation with the public.

I also believe, given that many Nova Scotia residents receive patient care through a Maritime network of health care professionals, the governance of confidential patient

information and electronic medical records should be done through a Maritime collaborative approach. We know the IWK and the QEII see patients from all over the Maritimes, and many Nova Scotians seek care outside Nova Scotia as well. This work should be done collaboratively with fellow Maritime provinces.

During Law Amendments Committee, we saw presentations from both Doctors Nova Scotia and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. The Doctors Nova Scotia president offered an amendment to this bill, which we saw the government turn down in Supply when it was tabled - by the NDP caucus, I believe.

Doctors Nova Scotia also said they were pleased to work with government to establish a data governance framework that would provide a formal commitment outlining the parameters of the collection, use, disclosure, retention, and disposal of information extracted from physicians' EMRs for the purpose of the YourHealthNS app. However, based on my research, I believe this data governance framework should be in legislation, not in regulations.

When you read the legislation from other provinces and territories, you see that. You see more robust, comprehensive legislation and laws put in place to ensure patient confidentiality, unlike what we see here in Clause No. 110 in Bill No. 419.

Nunavut seems to have the most robust legislation, and one of the things that I like about Nunavut is that the person whom they are authorizing is not a politician. The person whom they are authorizing is the Chief Public Health Officer. I could go on to read, but I won't read all their legislation. I can assure you that what they have in legislation is far more robust than what is being proposed here in Nova Scotia, and I'll table those documents.

As a former business owner, one of the biggest lessons I learned is that to be successful, you need to listen to your staff. You need to listen to your employees. The staff of the health care system are not being listened to with regards to Clause No. 110 in Bill No. 419. I believe that this is a big mistake.

In addition to Doctors Nova Scotia, we had Dr. Gus Grant, representing the College of Physicians and Surgeons, who also spoke strongly, very clearly and articulately, against Bill No. 419 and Clause No. 110. From his submission, I'll read:

If passed, Section No. 110 will fundamentally change the nature of the patient-doctor relationship and the professional duties of physicians. Going forward, this law requires all physicians to enable access to their medical records to the minister. For physicians, this creates a new professional, legal duty. For patients, it means that the entirety of their medical records will be accessible to the government.

Dr. Gus Grant also asked in his submission:

Has government consulted the Privacy Commissioner about the significant legislative amendment in Bill No. 419 that will require the release of patients' personal health information to the minister? Have any recommendations from the Privacy Commissioner been considered in the form of safeguards that should accompany this legislation?

We also know that in instances where large amounts of confidential data are collected, used, and disclosed, it is common to have data-sharing agreements in place to create safeguards around the information. What does that look like? Section No. 110 is silent.

Those are comments from Dr. Gus Grant. He is a lawyer as well as a medical doctor and represents the physicians of this province.

It's actually unbelievable that we have heard from the groups, all of the organizations, and the bodies that represent all health care professionals in this province. These are licensed, regulated health care professionals. We haven't seen any amendments to the legislation, or this clause being pulled. It's actually unbelievable.

The Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network, which represents all regulated health professional bodies here in the province, including: the College of Dental Hygienists of Nova Scotia, the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia, the College of Paramedics of Nova Scotia, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, the Denturist Licensing Board of Nova Scotia, the Midwifery Regulatory Council of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Board of Examiners in Psychology, the Nova Scotia College of Chiropractors, the Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists, the Nova Scotia College of Dietitians and Nutritionists, the Nova Scotia College of Dispensing Opticians, the Nova Scotia College of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Professionals, the Nova Scotia College of Medical Laboratory Technologists, the Nova Scotia College of Nursing, the Nova Scotia College of Optometrists, the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists, the Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists, the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers, the Nova Scotia Dental Technicians Association, and the Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia.

That network, representing all of those organizations, provided a submission regarding Clause 110, Bill No. 419, and their submission included, "While the network supports the goal of One Person One Record in YourHeathNS, the network has two primary concerns arising from Bill No. 419." This is important. Their concerns are:

. . .the lack of transparency and consultation, respecting such a significant change to the collection, use, and disclosure of patients'

personal health information and the lack of accompanying safeguards respecting such collection, use, and disclosure.

Respecting transparency, despite the potential impact of this legislation on custodians, meaning anyone that holds peoples' personal health information, there has been no advanced notice to the network of this proposed change to FIA. As a result, there has been limited opportunity for the network to consult with its members to obtain feedback on how this legislation will impact them.

Not only has the network had limited opportunity to consider the impact of this proposed legislation, even more importantly, it is concerned that patients, particularly those who have distrust in government's authority to access patients' personal health information, remain unaware of the fundamental changes that lie ahead. Many of these patients are from vulnerable communities who may well have concerns about accessing health care within a system that allows such broad governmental access to their health information.

When I read this, Speaker, my mind immediately goes to think of people who have gone through serious trauma, people like victims of sexual assault, who have shared their personal stories in hopes of getting support and help from their medical practitioners, from their psychologists, from their psychiatrists, from their physicians, from their therapists. It is very upsetting to them.

We heard from one woman who had such courage to come forward in Law Amendments Committee and share some of her story. Unfortunately, this person has already had her personal health information violated and breached. Her story represents so much.

One point in relation to what Dr. Gus Grant asked: Has the Privacy Commissioner been involved? I bring that up again because of the case of Carrie Smith, who shared it at Law Amendments Committee. I don't know the exact date her personal health information was breached, but it was a few years ago, and she still does not have any resolution because it is still before the Privacy Commissioner because of the backlog - because the Privacy Commissioner, from everything that we can see, from everything that we've read and has been shared, is underfunded.

We are in a situation now where legislation is about to pass that is going to open a whole stream, potentially, of privacy breaches and our Privacy Commissioner and her office are already in a situation where there is, I believe, a three-year or more backlog.

Nova Scotians deserve better than this. Nova Scotians need to know there is a place they can go in a timely manner to report and get an investigation going if their privacy is breached. From all that we can see, that is not going to be possible, considering the brave, courageous woman who presented at Law Amendments Committee is still in a situation where she has not received answers or a final investigation or resolution to her situation.

[2:15 p.m.]

I shared previously - I got a call myself a couple of months ago that my personal medical file went missing. My first instinct was that somebody took it for political reasons. It's a sad thing to say, but there is a lack of trust in government, and there are reasons for that. I believe we should be doing everything we can to try to rebuild trust of the people. Passing this bill right now is the wrong thing to do without making amendments and without making changes to Clause 110. However, it appears that that is not going to happen - based on all of the efforts of everyone representing health care professionals, us members in Opposition, representing the people of, what it would seem not only our own constituencies, but also citizens from the constituencies in government, considering that they are supporting this, from what it would appear.

There's lots more that can be said, but I think I hit the highlights. The real question is: Are we passing laws in this Legislature that will hold up in court? That's the real question. From everything that I have been told, this will not because the proper governance structure has not been put in place.

Lastly, Speaker, I want to just mention a very important piece of this bill which many have said, and I would agree, should have been its own bill brought before this House to have proper input in Law Amendments Committee by the public, but also proper debate and something that we all could have been celebrating and, I would assume, likely would have had full support by all 55 MLAs. That is the piece of legislation around the office of children and youth.

We did have several people present at Law Amendments Committee on this as well. We had a really strong amendment put forth by the NDP caucus on how to make this piece of legislation better, including recommendations that it be an independent officer of the House of Assembly based on the principles established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I'm hopeful that even though the government refused to pass the amendment that was put forth, they will take the information that the NDP caucus and staff prepared for the government and use that, because it's very, very good information and would definitely make the bill stronger in the future.

Something else that I wanted to make comment on while we discuss the Financial Measures (2024) Act is I wanted to table this document by the Fraser Institute. It was published on March 26th this year. I think this is an important point to make since we're discussing the budget and discussing the financial measures of the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Fraser Institute released this document that shares their concerns around the size of government in Nova Scotia. I'll read this quote:

It finds that the size of government in Nova Scotia, relative to the economy as a whole, is the largest anywhere in Canada at 63.0 per cent of GDP . . . Government size was 58.3 per cent in Prince Edward Island, 57.6 per cent in New Brunswick, and 44.1 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador. Measured as a share of the provincial economy, the Atlantic provinces - as well as Quebec - have the largest government spending in the country. Nova Scotia saw the largest increase (nationally) in the size of government with 6.1 percentage points.

This is important: "Previous research has shown that the size of government (as a share of the economy) to maximize economic growth and social progress is between 26 and 30 per cent of . . . (GDP)."

Let me read that again: "26 per cent and 30 per cent of . . . (GDP). When governments exceed that size, it imposes negative effects on the economy, such as crowding out private sector investment, but without providing proportionate benefits such as greater social progress."

I make this point because I think it's important when we're discussing financial measures here in this province to show that Nova Scotia has the largest government in the country, based on GDP, and that's actually hurting our private sector. We have private companies coming to us saying: We can't find enough workers, we can't find enough people to work in the trades, can't find enough people to work in health care. Maybe the government might want to take a look at what they're doing, how many people they're hiring and keeping hired in government. Are we actually using taxpayers' dollars wisely? Are we being efficient and wise with the money that is given to us by the taxpayers of this province?

I believe this government needs to take a closer look at what the people need. People whom I represent need help right now. They need help with the high price of fuel, the high price of groceries, and the cost of living every day, and they want to have a doctor when they need one. For these reasons, with these comments, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I'd just like to take a few minutes to address the misinformation that is being stated here now twice on the floor of the Legislature by the MLA for Cumberland North regarding the broadening of the mandate of Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I'd ask the honourable member to retract and replace the word "misinformation."

The honourable Minister of Public Works.

KIM MASLAND: Again, I'd like to address some - pardon me? I'll retract the word "misinformation." I heard a couple of times on the floor from the MLA for Cumberland North that constituents in her constituency are very disappointed and she's very disappointed with the legislation on the Highway 104 Western Alignment Corporation. I want to correct the record so that people understand, first of all, that when it comes to roads and highways, safety is our number one concern. It always has been, and it always will be.

I wanted to say with certainty that our commitment to the Cobequid Pass will not change under these amendments. That's been stated twice now on the floor of this Legislature. It is not correct. The highway will continue to be maintained to a high standard and the jobs associated with the Pass will remain.

The people of Cumberland and Colchester Counties will continue to enjoy the benefits of this highway as they have since the 1990s. This is one the best-maintained pieces of highway in the province. This issue is about excess of revenue from the tolls. Isn't it great, the fact that the excess revenue now - the Cobequid Pass will continue to remain and maintained as it was, but the excess will be able to be put on other 100-Series highways, which I'm sure the member's constituents also drive.

This will be done on a priority basis. I'm very pleased with this legislation. I think it's a good piece of legislation to continue to make sure our highways are maintained for people who travel them. I just would like to say that as minister, I take this job very seriously about keeping our highways open and safe and traffic flowing. When you see me on the highway this Summer, it will be in a hard hat, a safety vest, and work boots. It won't be in high heels. I will be making sure that our highways are open, not like the member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I just want to briefly stand up as well and speak into the record in regard to the Financial Measures (2024) Act, in particular Clause 110, which will amend the Personal Health Information Act. As we've said, our government is committed to fixing health care, and access to data that is up to date is an important part of managing that system. There's been a lot of discussion in this Chamber and elsewhere in the Legislature about the proposed amendment to PHIA, the Personal Health Information Act, but it has been inaccurate.

Simply put, the change to the Act is necessary. It's a necessary step to allow to make regulations to do two things: One, to give the Minister of Health and Wellness - or really the Department of Health and Wellness - access to overall aggregate data to manage

and allocate resources in our health system. I would say that the aggregate data that we receive from other parts of the health care system allow us to do that in other areas, but this is really around the personal health information in a portion of the health care system on which we currently do not have a timely line of sight.

It will also ensure that every Nova Scotian has access to their own health records as they should. The requirements that the Health Minister must meet under the Act - which I currently have and every other Health Minister under the Act has had - are not changing, including the legal obligation to protect individuals' information and privacy.

Information cannot be used for just anything; it can only be used for the specific purpose for which it's collected. In this case, it is to manage the health care system, plan for the future, allocate resources, and ensure that people have access to their own personal health records. In fact, using data for other reasons would be in violation of this Act. Rest assured, no Health Minister will be looking at anyone's individual health records. No one needs to worry about the confidentiality of their discussions with their physician. Nova Scotians' health records are secure, and no data will be stored on the YourHealthNS app.

This change does not impact any of the privacy protections that are provided in the Act currently. No change is being made to any of the legislative parameters that cover the use or the protection of private health information. The change is simply expanding the data sources connecting to our existing system - the same system already in place for hospital visits or for doctors to be paid, for example. The change will give us high-level data about family doctor or specialist visits, for instance, and give Nova Scotians access to their own records about these types of appointments.

A full privacy health assessment has been done on all the systems and how they handle data. The information being collected and provided as part of the current pilot is being done according to the highest standard of Canadian privacy protections; all the necessary safeguards are in place, and that won't change.

This amendment is necessary to expand that pilot so everyone can access their records, if they wish to, and that's what we're working towards. It will allow us to give Nova Scotians access to their own electronic health records in the palm of their hand. Too often, we hear that people struggle to get their medical information, or they must pay expensive fees to access it. Nova Scotians shouldn't have to jump through hoops to get records that are rightfully theirs.

The only way to ensure everyone has a choice to access their information is to mandate that health care professionals make it available. Nova Scotians told us to treat their health information with diligence; we will, and we are. We have also consulted with equity-seeking groups around data collection, and we will continue to engage them to ensure that the principles they want around the collection and release are followed to protect rights of privacy and safety.

The Department of Health and Wellness has established relationships with organizations like Tajikeimik and entities like the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Client Linkage Registry. We also have relationships with the Primary Reference Working Group, who are integral in the development of race-based data collection, and the Fair Care Project. Through these relationships, we have worked and will continue to work on not only the regulations that are developed but other projects to ensure that data is protected and vetted through a culturally safe and relevant lens. Through these collaborative relationships, we will ensure people have access to their own data and their own story.

Going forward, we will work with all stakeholders, including the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Nova Scotia Regulated Health Professions Network, and Doctors Nova Scotia, as we develop the regulations. This approach has been successful in the past, creating the Patient Access to Care Act regulations, and we will work to ensure similar successes with these.

This amendment is necessary to ensure that we have a modern health care system that Nova Scotians deserve now and into the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I will be very brief, and just in response to the minister's comments. The doctors don't agree. The College of Physicians doesn't - they don't agree. They said it changes the relationship between the doctor and the patient. Everything the minister just said - she stood on her feet - I get it. The doctors do not agree with that statement. I want to get that on the record.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, it will be to close debate on third reading.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I now move to close debate on Bill No. 419, the Financial Measures (2024) Act.

I won't be long today. There are a couple things I must address. One is - well, I'll go back to Budget Day - the Budget Address. The standing ovations that came so spontaneously from the Official Opposition gave me hope that they would be voting for the budget. I had some hope for a little while. Shall we say it's waned a bit over the last few weeks? I had hoped that there would be a vote by everyone for the budget. There's a lot of spending in the budget. There are a lot of good things in the budget. I also hoped that there would be a vote in favour of the Financial Measures Act that's before us.

No one has a monopoly on ideas. I will say this: It's harder for somebody to claim credit for an idea if they don't vote for it. I will say that it's one thing to talk about an idea; it's another thing for a government to budget for it and to implement it.

With everything that's in our budget this year, and what's in this Financial Measures Act, that's actual action taken by government for the benefit of Nova Scotians. I think about the indexing of income tax brackets, which was the number one ask during the pre-budget consultations.

[2:30 p.m.]

Another thing I think that I have to address is all of this discussion on additional appropriations. One of the members in the Official Opposition suggested today that the government isn't even following the law. Well, we're following the same law that was put in place years ago under an NDP government. I would say to that member that if we're not following the law, why did his government also not follow it for eight years?

The truth of the matter is that we've all followed the law, and it's been the same law for all three parties at this point. If you don't believe me, we need only look - and I'll table this - at a recent report from the Auditor General, where she states: "The Province is correctly following the requirements as set out in Nova Scotia's Finance Act for over-budget spending." Additional appropriations.

So we're following the law. Let the record be clear. That's why I have to get up and state it here in the House today. I can't let a remark like that go unchallenged, because if people believe that out there, they would be given information that was not true. So I must stand and correct that, and I will table that for the benefit of the House. That's from the Auditor General.

How common are these additional appropriations? Well, would you believe - I've got them here, and I'll table these as well - that this has been going on for many, many years? Going back to 1997-98, every single year there has been an additional appropriation. Every single year.

I will also say that some people say the magnitude of these additional appropriations is different now. The member spoke about this in their debate on the FMA, so I'm addressing the comments that they raised in reference to the Financial Measures Act, which contains things like the indexation of tax brackets.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The comments on the additional appropriations that were discussed before on the floor were actually found to be now part of this bill. I'd ask the honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, if he's tying this in, to stick to the FMA.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Okay, I will dispense with that. I've already provided the evidence previously in Question Period anyway. I think I've done enough to stay within the rules here to address the comments.

What is this Financial Measures Act about? Well, I'm going to keep it quick. It's about indexing tax brackets and various tax credits to put more money in people's pockets. I tell you, we take it for granted here in the Chamber, but we're actually going to vote on this and make it happen today. This is something that many governments have talked about, and we are really the first to do it in this province.

It's about extending the life of business tax credits for companies investing in our province and our people. It's about a future of electronic tolling on the Macdonald and MacKay Bridges. Some people are going to be going across those bridges momentarily. Think about this: It's going to reduce the average trip across those bridges by 90 seconds. Now at some times of the day it probably doesn't take 90 seconds to go across, so I think it tells you that there are times of the day when congestion results in people spending lengthy periods of time trying to get across those bridges. That is good news.

It's about an office to advocate for children and youth. It's about continuing the Executive Panel on Housing in HRM to facilitate an increase in housing supply. It's about bigger fines for people who steal the resources of our fishery and put its health at risk. Our fishery, it must be noted, as our Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture often reminds me, it is our biggest export.

I won't do justice as the Minister of Health and Wellness just did, so I will let her comments stand for the government's side here today, but it's about empowering people with their own health information. It's about empowering the system with the aggregate data, the bigger picture information, so that the system can make decisions to make sure the system is operating efficiently and giving people the best care they can get.

There is no need for me to say much more. There is an awful lot of good in this bill, and I'm looking forward to the vote so that we can get these measures in place for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 419. (Interruption)

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[2:37 p.m.]

[The division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The House will come back to order.

Are the Whips satisfied?

The Clerk will now conduct a recorded vote.

[The Clerk called the roll.]

[2:40 p.m.]

YEAS

Hon. Brad Johns
Hon. Tory Rushton
Hon. Barbara Adams
Hon. Kim Masland
Hon. Tim Houston
Hon. Allan MacMaster
Hon. Twila Grosse
Hon. Michelle Thompson
Hon. John Lohr
Hon. Colton LeBlanc
Hon. Timothy Hallman
Hon. Kent Smith
Dave Ritcey
Hon. Brian Wong
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek
Hon. Brian Comer
Hon. Brendan Maguire
Hon. Trevor Boudreau
Hon. Greg Morrow
Hon. Becky Druhan
John White
John A. MacDonald
Hon. Keith Bain
Chris Palmer
Melissa Sheehy-Richard
Danielle Barkhouse
Tom Taggart
Larry Harrison

NAYS

Hon. Keith Irving
Hon. Derek Mombourquette
Hon. Zach Churchill
Hon. Kelly Regan
Hon. Iain Rankin
Claudia Chender
Susan Leblanc
Suzy Hansen
Gary Burrill
Lisa Lachance
Rafah DiCostanzo
Hon. Ben Jessome
Braedon Clark
Carman Kerr
Ronnie LeBlanc
Fred Tilley
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

THE CLERK: For, 28. Against, 17.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Private and Local Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 442.

Bill No. 442 - United Way of Halifax Region Continuation Act.

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

LISA LACHANCE: This is a bill being brought forward as a local bill on behalf of the United Way of Halifax. The bill removes the United Way of Halifax from private legislation, as it was originally founded, and will allow it to be placed under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. This will provide the organization with the necessary flexibility of governance, continuing to meet needs of an increasing, complex, and growing social sector.

Modernizing the United Way Halifax governance requirements under legislation opens up greater possibilities around collaboration with other United Ways, provincially, regionally, and nationally, depending on the initiative. I'm proud to bring this bill to the floor of the House. The United Way is doing incredible work in our communities across the province, and I'm glad to see them pursuing new ways of doing business.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the member, it will be to close debate on second reading of the bill.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I move to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 442.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close debate on the second reading of Bill No. 442.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Private and Local Bills.

The honourable Government House Leader.

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I'm looking for unanimous consent to bypass Committee of the Whole House and move this bill right through to the end - Bill No. 442. (Interruption) Bypass Private and Local.

THE SPEAKER: There is a request for unanimous consent.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Private and Local Bills for Third Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 442.

Bill No. 442 - United Way of Halifax Region Continuation Act.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I move Bill No. 442 for third reading.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I move to close third reading on Bill No. 442.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 442.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I have a Government Notice of Motion resolution for congratulatory messages that I would like to read.

[GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,108

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I hereby request that the following motion be adopted without notice, pursuant to Rule 32(5) of the House of Assembly Rules and Forms of Procedure.

Be it resolved that all the congratulatory motions deposited with the Clerk pursuant to Rule 32(3) of the Rules and Forms of Procedures of the House of Assembly from February 27, 2024 to the rising of the House today that have not been otherwise considered by the House of Assembly be approved.

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 Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, that concludes government business. I ask that we please take a short recess and await the arrival of His Honour.

THE SPEAKER: We are now in recess.

[2:49 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:15 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is without.

THE SPEAKER: Let His Honour the Lieutenant Governor be admitted.

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.

The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, preceded by his Private Secretary and by David G. Fraser, Sergeant-at-Arms, bearing the Mace, entered the House of Assembly Chamber. The Lieutenant Governor then took his seat on the Throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms then departed and re-entered the Chamber, followed by the Deputy Speaker, Nolan Young; the Chief Clerk of the House, James A. Charlton; and Assistant Clerk David Hastings.

The Speaker, with the Clerk on his left and the Sergeant-at-Arms and Assistant Clerk on his right, took up his position at the foot of the Table of the House.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that everyone present be seated.

THE SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the General Assembly of the Province has, in its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the General Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's Assent.

THE ASSISTANT CLERK:

Bill No. 404 - Energy Reform (2024) Act.

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

Bill No. 442 - United Way of Halifax Region Continuation Act.

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: In His Majesty's name, I Assent to these bills.

THE SPEAKER: Your Honour, having been graciously pleased to give your Assent to the Bills passed during the present Session, it becomes my agreeable duty on behalf of His Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, his faithful Commons of Nova Scotia, to present to Your Honour a bill for the Appropriation of Supply granted in the present Session for the support of the Public Service and to request your Honour's Assent thereto.

THE CLERK:

Bill No. 453 - Appropriations Act, 2024.

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: In His Majesty's name, I thank His loyal subjects, I accept their benevolence, and I Assent to this Bill.

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.]

[The Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour the Speaker.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: I would ask the members to please rise and join me in the singing of our national anthem.

[The national anthem was sung by the members.]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Please be seated.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Before I move to adjourn, I would like to thank a number of people who are in the House and made sure that this sitting moved along very smoothly.

Speaker, on behalf of all members of the House, I would like to acknowledge our Pages. Such an incredible, inspirational group of young men and women. (Standing ovation)

I would like to thank those at Legislative TV. To the Clerks of the House - I know as Government House Leader, I'm constantly referring to Chief Clerk James Charlton and Assistant Clerk David Hastings and their team - thank you so much. To the Office of the Legislative Counsel, which drafts the bills on this floor every day, thank you. To our Legislative Library, thank you so much for everything you do for all of us members in this House. (Applause)

Of course, our Hansard team, big shout-out to our Hansard team. They do a lot of work for us. Our House of Assembly Operations staff, our very capable and dapper Sergeant-at-Arms, our Commissionaires, whom we see every day when we walk in these doors. They keep us safe, and we appreciate them so much. (Applause)

Of course, our constituency assistants who make our constituencies run while we're here in Halifax. The entire public service - I know we've said this before, but the men and women who work in our public service here in Nova Scotia are the best in the country. (Applause)

Of course, the driving force behind all of us, our families who support us while we're in the House who are ensuring that things continue in our children's lives while we sit here for long hours. Thank you so much to our families for everything they do to support us. (Applause)

Just because I'm the Government House Leader, and the House Leaders never get recognized in this speech, I'm going to take the opportunity to thank the House Leaders. If anyone thinks being a House Leader is an easy job, they're so wrong. (Applause)

Thank you, everyone. I want to wish all of you a very safe and happy Summer.

I move that this General Assembly be adjourned, to meet again at the call of the Speaker. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now adjourn to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 3:27 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1,066**

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lydia Meyers for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,067

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate P.J. Meyers for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,068

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sarah Johnson for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,069

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Max Johnson for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,070

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lee Patterson for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,071

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lucy O'Reilly for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,072

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hunter Chown for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,073

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joseph Goodwin-Meekins for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,074

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Bella Patriquin for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,075

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Elliot Riehl for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,076

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cailee Patriquin for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,077

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Allan Taylor for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,078

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ryleigh Taylor for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,079

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lucas Alyward for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,080

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hunter Mills for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,081

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jake Fulton for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,082

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Darcie Fulton for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,083

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gracyn Hill for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,084

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hudson Carter for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,085

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kyla Trick for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,086

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Zane Trick for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,087

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Raylin Trick for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,088

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Levi Trick for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,089

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hughie Quinn for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,090

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lyle Quinn for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,091

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nelly McCulley for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,092

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jessie Rae Fisher for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,093

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Elijah Olynak for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,094

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate P.J. Meyers for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,095

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sophie George for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,096

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Claire Atkinson for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,097

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Keegan Beal for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,098

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cohen Beal for an outstanding year of hockey and skill development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,099

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers, and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank organizer and volunteer Jill Meyers for the outstanding community spirit shown for children and sport.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,100

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank head coach and volunteer Christopher Meyers for the outstanding community spirit shown for children and sport.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,101

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank coach and volunteer Dan Collins for the outstanding community spirit shown for children and sport.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,102

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank coach and volunteer David Atkinson for the outstanding community spirit shown for children and sport.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,103

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank assistant coach and volunteer Christopher Meyers, Jr. for the outstanding community spirit shown for children and sport.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,104

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas volunteers in the area of Parrsboro saw the need to organize a hockey program, organize fundraisers and apply for funding to get the youth involved in hockey; and

Whereas over 30 youth experienced this sport, many for the first time got to lace up the skates and learn many skills from the dedicated coaches with the support of volunteers; and

Whereas on March 10th, the players split up into two teams and played before a packed arena in Parrsboro and displayed their talents for their family, friends and community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and thank assistant coach and volunteer Anthony Benjamin for the outstanding community spirit shown for children and sport.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,105

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Ships Company Theatre has been home to many productions of different live arts and fostered as a place to visit and a place to preform; and

Whereas the theatre is still attached to the historic Kipawo vessel that was the original focal point for many years; and

Whereas the Ships Company Theatre Society recently held its 2024 season launch on March 23rd for its 40th season of productions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the dedicated volunteers, staff, and supporting groups of community involvement and congratulate the Ships Company Theatre on 40 fantastic years of entertainment and professional productions in the Parrsboro area for Nova Scotians and visitors from around the world.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,106

By: Hon. Becky Druhan (Lunenburg West)

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

Whereas Hillside Pines Home for Special Care in Bridgewater celebrated its 40th anniversary on August 17th with a garden party filled with music, cake, and merriment; and

Whereas Hillside Pines provides elders with a fun, friendly, safe, and comfortable place where they can create lasting friendships and enjoy amenities such as three dining rooms, four “neighbourhoods”, bright indoor gathering spaces and courtyards with an accessible swing, a fire pit, an electric trishaw, and a place for gardening and enjoying the outdoors; and

Whereas administrator Marisa Eisner says that: "our care partners are our most valuable resource", and Kelli Crouse, Valerie Greek, and Linda Reynolds are three of the incredible team who have provided exceptional care at Hillside Pines since it opened 40 years ago;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Hillside Pines Home for Special Care on 40 years of care, opportunities, friendships, and community involvement.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,107

By: Hon. Becky Druhan (Lunenburg West)

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

Whereas in February the John Howard Society of Nova Scotia officially opened Cedar Place, a Bridgewater drop-in center that is dedicated to making a positive impact on the lives of those who need it most; and

Whereas Cedar Place provides practical social, mental, and residential supports as well as access to washrooms, showers, laundry, and safe storage, and the John Howard Society works with incarcerated and released individuals and helps them transition back into society and move forward in life; and

Whereas the Executive Director of the John Howard Society, Leisha Seymour, says that: “We recognize the intersecting barriers facing folks who are homeless, criminalized, and at-risk and as Bridgewater is such a caring community, we are glad to do our part in ensuring it is healthy and safe for everyone”;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the John Howard Society of Nova Scotia for bringing hope and optimism to those who have grappled with our justice system and may we all continue to work together to build a better, stronger community.