



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2021

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2021

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, I'd like to request a moment of silence in recognition of the 100 lives that have been lost in this province as a result of the pandemic. That's 100 families, that's a number of communities across this province involved and touched in a very, very sad way by the pandemic.

I think in honour of those families and those victims of COVID-19, I request that the House offer a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES****TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act (IPTA) Review Board's Annual Report of 2019-20.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a matter that is deeply personal for many Nova Scotians: adoption records.

The new Act to open adoption records in Nova Scotia will take effect in Spring 2022. It allows adopted people, once they turn 19, birth parents, potential birth parents, and relatives to access more adoption information if they want to. This is a change from the current law, where parties to an adoption must consent to share their identifying information before it can be released.

I encourage adopted people who are 19 or older and birth parents to consider their privacy options before adoption records are opened next year. The province's Disclosure Program is now accepting disclosure vetoes and contact notices.

A disclosure veto is a document stating that an adopted person, birth parent, or potential birth parent does not wish to share information that can identify them. A contact notice allows people to share information that can identify them but states their preferences on if or how they want to be contacted.

It is important to note that the new law will apply to all adoption records in the province. People who have indicated in the past that they do not want their identifying information shared must file a disclosure veto if they want their information to remain private.

The forms to file a disclosure veto or contact notice are now available online at novascotia.ca/adoption-records-changes.

I recognize that Nova Scotians may feel strongly about the sharing of their information. We want people to have time to consider their options to protect their privacy if they so wish. I encourage anyone who has questions or concerns about an adoption record to reach out to the Disclosure Program by calling 902-424-2755 or toll-free 833-424-2755. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for sharing an advance copy of her remarks today.

When we passed this bill last Spring, Nova Scotia was the last province in the country to actually move in this direction. I really want to take time to thank all of the people who, when we went out to consult on this particular issue - whether it was in-person consultations or they wrote us a letter or gave us a call - I want to thank them, because it was a very sensitive issue. There were many people who had concerns around opening the adoption records.

I would just like to say, this is so important for so many people. We really did have a lot of reach-outs from people who thanked us for it. But there are some people who don't want their information shared, and I think it is really important that we ensure that those people know what's actually happening. I want to make sure - I just want to flag for the government - I want to make sure this is well-publicized. We have to remember that not everybody is on social media. The minister knows that I not long ago had a reach-out from a quite elderly person who was concerned about this. I just want to be really clear that we have to make sure that we do everything we can.

That's on us all as members here of this House, I would say, to make sure that our constituents know about it and whatever forums that we have to ensure that if somebody does not want to have their information shared or wants to choose how to have that information shared - if they want to opt out of this program - that they have the opportunity to do that. It's very important for those lives. It's very important for those families.

I would also like to say that I really appreciated the interjections when we were doing the bill that came from the NDP. I thought they were very thoughtful, and we incorporated those. With those few remarks, I'd like to take my seat.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, our caucus was pleased to support this Act to open adoption records in Nova Scotia. When the Act takes effect, it will finally allow adoptees greater access to their own social, cultural, and medical histories.

Nova Scotia is the last province, as it has been said, in Canada to take this important step. I think all of us in the House feel that it's unfortunate that it took so long, and for so long the province allowed automatic restrictions on sharing names or identifying family information with adult adoptees or potential siblings who were searching.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Nova Scotia Adoptee Advocacy Group that pressed the government to adopt its laws to catch up with the rest of the country. (Applause) Yes, big claps for them. It's an amazing job they did. Many adoption organizations and adoptees have pointed out that sealing adoption records risks perpetuating secrecy and shame about adoption and the adoption process.

We recognize that individuals have a right to their own information, especially as it relates to their own health and family heritage. Opening adoption records helps protect these individuals' right to information. It allows us to recognize more fully the role of adoption in so many people's personal experiences and stories.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 29

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

Whereas Dr. Robert Strang has led Nova Scotians through one of the most challenging times in our history with compassion, kindness, and honesty; and

Whereas every year the Nova Scotia chapter of the Institute of Public Administration in Canada awards one deserving Nova Scotian civil servant the Excellence in Public Administration Award; and

Whereas I am sure that all Nova Scotians would agree that there is no one more deserving of this award than Dr. Robert Strang who, in everything he does, embodies authenticity, dedication, and selflessness;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House show our great appreciation to Dr. Strang for his contributions to public service.

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)

[1:15 p.m.]

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 30

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

Whereas the 24th Annual Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Conference will take place both in person at the Halifax Convention Centre and will be livestreamed as a virtual conference on February 24 and 25, 2022; and

Whereas the conference is one of the largest seafood events in Canada and supports knowledge transfer and industry development for Nova Scotia's \$2 billion seafood sector; and

Whereas the conference, coordinated in partnership with the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia, will address key issues and opportunities facing our seafood sector, including topics such as innovative technologies, climate change, retaining and improving market access, e-commerce, and blue economy initiatives;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House thank the many dedicated people of Nova Scotia's seafood sector, and recognize their ongoing support and contributions to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture and Seafarmers Conference.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 31

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

Whereas for the past 50 years, our province has sent a beautiful Christmas tree to Boston to thank the city for their support following the tragedy of the Halifax Explosion; and

Whereas the Tree for Boston tradition is something near and dear to Nova Scotians, and it symbolizes appreciation, friendship, and unity; and

Whereas this year's 48-foot white spruce was donated by L'Arche Cape Breton, a non-profit organization in Inverness County that creates safe, supportive homes and meaningful work for people with disabilities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join me in thanking this year's Tree for Boston donors for helping us carry on this important tradition as we send the Tree for Boston with thanks and appreciation.

I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:

Bill No. 57 - Entitled the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. (Hon. Tim Halman)

Bill No. 58 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 203 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Homes for Special Care Act. (Hon. Kelly Regan)

Bill No. 59 - Entitled an Act to Establish the Agriculture and Food Security Secretariat. (Lisa Lachance)

Bill No. 60 - Entitled an Act Respecting Long-term Care Recruitment Accountability. (Hon. Kelly Regan)

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 32

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas healthy eating and good nutrition is crucial for students to learn and develop a healthy brain; and

Whereas school lunch programs have shown to be incredibly effective in reducing food insecurity and enhancing students' health and well-being, much like in Prince Edward Island, where they've seen incredible results; and

Whereas Cumberland, which, according to Engage Nova Scotia, has had the highest rate of food insecurity in recent years, already has a governance structure in place for a food school program and would be an excellent option for the Province to begin a pilot program;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House urge the government to commit to developing a school lunch program to ensure every student in Nova Scotia has access to a healthy school lunch.

THE SPEAKER: Is there a request for waiver?

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I could request, but I wouldn't expect. I request for waiver and passage without debate.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear some nos.

The motion is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

**U12 GUYSBOROUGH BROADHORNS GIRLS SOFTBALL TEAM:
COLE HBR. TOURN. WIN - RECOG.**

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I stand here to recognize members of the U12 Guysborough Broadhorns Girls' Softball Team on winning the recent Cole Harbour tournament to wrap up their 2021 season.

The Broadhorns came a long way during the season. They worked hard at practice and their games. There were some good wins, tough losses, and laughs along the way. Their dedication, determination, and desire culminated with their tournament win. They won their first two games to send them to the final, then had a thrilling walk-off win in the bottom of the sixth in the championship game the next day.

This was a true team effort with contributions from all players: great pitching, big timely hits, smart base-running, and some spectacular defensive plays in the field. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the hard work of the coaches, who volunteered countless hours of their summer to bring these girls along, both during the year and at this tournament. For that, we thank Nicole Cleary, Fabian Doiron, Melissa Richards, and Jeff Worth.

I ask members of this House to join me in congratulating the U12 Guysborough Broadhorns on their season-ending tournament win.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

**DOWELL, JAYMEE-LYNN: RECIPIENT OF COMMUNITY LEADER
FOR BETTERMENT AWARD - CONGRATS.**

CARMAN KERR: Earlier this year, Jaymee-lynn Dowell was selected as the Community Leader for Betterment at the 2021 Annapolis Valley Women of Excellence Awards. This award recognizes an exceptional woman who is dedicated to social change and improving the Annapolis Valley community and who is a champion for philanthropy and volunteerism. This certainly applies to Jaymee-lynn.

Jaymee-lynn is the founder and executive director of the Inclusive Opportunities Association, a non-profit with a mission to empower the development of skills for persons labelled with a disability and to build an inclusive community full of meaningful opportunity and connection. She also serves as an advisor to the Annapolis chapter of People First, a self-advocacy group for individuals labelled with a disability.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Jaymee-lynn Dowell on receiving this well-deserved award and thanking her for her important work.

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

**GARDINER MINES SENIORS AND PENSIONERS CLUB:
COM. SERV. - THANKS**

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize the Gardiner Mines Seniors and Pensioners Club.

I have had the distinct pleasure to meet with the club's members on a number of occasions to discuss the club's needs. The Gardiner Mines Seniors and Pensioners Club members are community-minded. They want to serve the community and they spoke with me about the need for more funding for non-profits.

These organizations like the Gardiner Mines Seniors and Pensioners Club are vital for community social interaction. Socializing promotes an active lifestyle which in turn keeps diseases at bay. Social interaction also provides seniors with opportunities to engage in purposeful activities and allows for the enjoyment of the company of others and helps create long-lasting bonds.

Please join me in thanking the Gardiner Mines Seniors and Pensioners Club for their hard work in keeping the doors open after COVID-19.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**DRUHAN, BRYAN/BRENNAN, LOUISE - CANDID BREWING COMPANY:
GRAND OPENING - CONGRATS.**

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Bryan Druhan and Louise Brennan, who recently celebrated the grand opening of Candid Brewing Company. Their brewery and tap room is located at 88 College Street, the former *Casket* newspaper location. Their website boasts of good beer and quality conversations amongst friends. Their hard work and entrepreneurial skills paid off with the opening of their business.

Bryan and Louise are Antigonishers, and it is exciting to see them choose Antigonish as the location for their business. They will be role models to others in our community who wish to stay here, raise our families, and open businesses, if they choose. Bryan and Louise celebrated their grand opening on October 1st with their children, Bennett, age 2; and Rosa, age 7 months; as well as family and close friends.

I wish Bryan and Louise every success with their new business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

**BARRETT, DR. LISA & TEAM:
PACKAGING OF HOME COVID-19 TESTS - THANKS**

HON. KELLY REGAN: In late September, Nova Scotians were asked to help package home COVID-19 testing kits for students who are too young to be vaccinated for the virus - currently those below the age of 12. Here in Metro, 60 people each day would be needed to put together 300,000 kits in Burnside, and people responded immediately and overwhelmingly.

I was recently with a group at the Halifax Regional Centre for Education packing up kits, and these folks packed so much so quickly that the volunteer effort actually had to be paused for a few days while the supplies caught up with our efforts. I had a chance to speak with some of the people there that day: a nurse, a primary teacher, and a retiree. All wanted to do their part to ensure our students who were too young to get vaccinated could have a safer school experience.

I want to thank Dr. Lisa Barrett, who is overseeing the testing effort here in the province, and her entire team, as well as all the Nova Scotians who stepped up to help prepare testing kits. Together, following the science, we can keep each other safe.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**BANFIELD, JILLIAN:
ADVOCACY WORK FOR CYCLING AND ACTIVE LIVING - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize Jillian Banfield, Halifax's bike mayor named by the Halifax Cycling Coalition. As a current member and past board member for the Halifax Cycling Coalition, Jillian sees cycling not only as a good exercise but in terms of social justice.

Advocating for cycling for all ages and abilities, Jillian herself has mobility issues from arthritis that can prevent her from walking on a sidewalk, but she can cycle for 20 km. Having adequate bike lanes and recognizing that those cycling are not necessarily able-bodied is important to Jillian. Of course, cycling is of great benefit to the Earth as well. As we work towards reducing carbon emissions, better cycling pathways and education around this form of transportation are good for everyone.

I ask all the members to help me recognize the advocacy work that Jillian has been doing all in the name of cycling and active living in Halifax.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**AUGUSTINE, LT. ROGER: ORGANIZ. OF FIRST NAT. DAY
OF TRUTH AND RECONCIL. WELLNESS WALK - THANKS**

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to recognize Lieutenant Roger Augustine of CFB Greenwood. Lieutenant Augustine was posted to Greenwood in May 2020 with his wife and four children. He's an active member of the Defence Aboriginal Advisory Group and took on the role of co-chair at 14 Wing Greenwood.

When it was announced that September 30th would be the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, he proudly put together an event that would resonate across the community of Greenwood. With a little more than two months to plan, Lieutenant Augustine successfully organized the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation Wellness Walk. It began with a walk of 6,126 steps to signify the children who did not make it home. It also featured speakers and elders who shared their experiences. I was proud to be one of the 500 community members who came together to offer support and show respect.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Lieutenant Roger Augustine for all his efforts in organizing this very important event in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place to recognize my friend and colleague the member for Halifax Atlantic. He is like a brother to me.

Last night, for me, to have his credentials questioned by the Premier for being in this House was one of the lowest levels of leadership I have ever seen.

I want to stand in my place to recognize him for the work that he has done, not only for his community but for this province. I rise in my place to recognize and congratulate the member for Halifax Atlantic . . .

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Members' statements cannot be partisan in nature.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Do you want me to rephrase it?

THE SPEAKER: If you want to begin again, but no partisanship shown at all.

The honourable member Sydney-Membertou.

MLA FOR HFX. ATLANTIC: COM. SERV. - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place to congratulate the member for Halifax Atlantic on his many years of service not only to the community of Halifax Atlantic, but as an MLA of this Legislature and as a Minister of the Crown. He is an outstanding citizen who, day in and day out, advocates for his community. Many of the successes in the projects and the supports that families have received, not only in Halifax Atlantic but across this province, are because of him.

I rise in my place today to congratulate him and to support him not only as his colleague, but as his brother.

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

**GASS, DAVID:
2021 RECIP. OF DR. CHARLES & MRS. JEAN GASS AWARD - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour the posthumous awarding of the Dr. Charles & Mrs. Jean Gass Lifetime Achievement Award from the Nova Scotia College of Family Physicians to my father-in-law, Dr. David Gass, on October 22nd.

So deeply was David involved in our everyday family life, it was easy for us to miss his professional impacts. In short, he is widely acknowledged by many to have reinvigorated and elevated the practice of family medicine in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

He was chair of the Department of Family Medicine at Dalhousie, a physician adviser and Director of Primary Care with the Department of Health and Wellness, amongst other milestones. He was also Vice-President of Medicine with the Cumberland Health Authority, close to his roots in Tatamagouche, Amherst, and Sackville, New Brunswick.

This diversity of roles reflects how David saw the potential for family medicine to be transformative in the well-being of Nova Scotians. You may have noticed the familiar name of the award, which honours David's grandparents, who made their own contributions to family medicine in Nova Scotia.

I humbly ask all members to join me in acknowledging this posthumous honour.

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

**CEC COUGARS FOOTBALL TEAM:
50-YEAR MILESTONE - CONGRATS.**

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the CEC Cougars football team in Truro on their impressive 50-year milestone. In fact, my late father Jed Ritcey served as the head coach for the first season in 1971.

The Cougars are known provincially as one of the most respected and competitive high school football programs in the province, having won many provincial titles throughout the years while promoting numerous players and staff to the university and professional levels.

The Cougar football program has continued to help grow the game at the grassroots level here in our community. The CEC Cougars football team embodies excellence, discipline, respect and tradition in the classroom and on the field.

I wish to congratulate the CEC Cougars football program on their 50 years of continued success both on and off the field in the years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**LEBLANC, MALACHI:
USE OF E-BIKE FOR LANDSCAPING BUS. - RECOG.**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I ask the members of the House to join me in recognize Malachi Leblanc, an amazing entrepreneur and nephew to the member for Dartmouth North.

This Summer, Malachi, at the age of 13, started a landscape company to provide lawnmowing services for the residents of Shad Bay, Bayside, and Prospect Bay. Using an innovative and creative system to run his business, Malachi built a custom bike trailer to carry his lawnmowing equipment and uses an e-bike to travel to his customers.

The serious concerns about global warming and the negative effects it has on climate change make the environmental benefits of using e-bikes undeniable. E-bikes run on clean energy and are considered zero-emission vehicles because they are battery-powered.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in applauding Malachi for his original and thoughtful planning to operate a business that respects the need to stop global warming and for helping to lead the way for a cleaner environment while running a successful business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**SACCARY, KEVIN & SCOTT - NEW SCOTLAND CLOTHING COMPANY:
DONATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH - THANKS**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a local and beloved downtown Dartmouth business, New Scotland Clothing Co.

Brothers and curlers Kevin and Scott Saccary started out by making unique clothes to wear at tournaments. Their business took off, and today you can spot a New Scotland tee in a crowd by its iconic rampant lion logo.

They have come a long way and now own a very successful clothing brand, a brewery, and a local bar and music venue. When Nova Scotia was in some of the darkest days of COVID-19, Kevin and Scott debuted the limited-edition Roar Back T-shirt to encourage Nova Scotians to take Dr. Strang's advice to heart and take care of their mental health and each other. This week they donated \$15,000 in proceeds from those shirts to the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia.

Please join me in giving a heartfelt thanks to Kevin and Scott for this generous donation and for working so hard to destigmatize the mental health struggles we all face.

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

**MAILMAN, LYLE:
RECIP. OF PROVINCIAL VOLUNTEER AWARD - CONGRATS.**

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate volunteer Lyle Mailman of Beaver Bank, who was honoured during a virtual ceremony for the 47th Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards. Lyle has been a significant community contributor, getting things done and initiating important conversations about mental health.

Lyle has a personal understanding of the impacts of mental health challenges and willingly shares his story of battling depression to encourage and support others coping with mental illness. Lyle says the best therapy is showing gratitude and living a life of service. He has provided his time to the Beaver Bank Kinsac Community Centre, Acadia Park Square Roots Program, and Beaver Bank Community Watch.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating Lyle Mailman on his well-earned Provincial Volunteer Award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

CHURCHILL, RICK: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I rise to recognize Yarmouth's Rick Churchill. Rick Churchill has been the face and driving force of 4-H in Yarmouth for more than 45 years, as a member, project leader, council member, and council president. His provides his dairy farm as a location for many 4-H events, including the dairy project, judging, clinics, barbeques, and more. His involvement with 4-H has spanned generations and many past and present 4-H members say that Rick is the reason they got involved in 4-H and also the reason that they loved it.

Rick, who also served and represented his district as municipal councillor for several years, is highly respected in the dairy and farming community. He was named the 2020 recipient of the Howard Roper Award, which recognizes a member of Holstein Canada who has demonstrated a leadership in Holstein Canada affairs, the dairy industry, and community involvement with an emphasis on youth. He was also recognized by the Nova Scotia Animal Breeders Co-operative for 50 years of work with them.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Yarmouth's Rick Churchill for decades of dedication to his community and his profession. He is truly an inspiration and I wish him and his sons, Blair, Steven, and Adam, who continue on the family farming tradition, many more years of success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**SEG. OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN INSTITNS.:
NEED FOR HOUSING - RECOG.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on October 6th this year, the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal found that the Province of Nova Scotia had discriminated against three people living with disabilities by keeping them segregated in institutions for years without medical or legal justification, when they wanted to be living in the community. The case also included a systemic discrimination human rights complaint brought by the Disability Rights Coalition.

The decision was a victory for everyone who has been fighting and on the wait-list for accessible housing options in this province.

The three individuals who brought the case against the province were Beth MacLean, Sheila Livingstone, and Joey Delaney. Both Beth and Sheila passed away before the court's decision, Beth just two weeks prior. The fact that these two fierce advocates died while waiting for justice is heartbreaking and unacceptable.

To ensure that we don't continue to violate people's fundamental human rights, we must increase the number of homes available for those with intellectual and physical

disabilities who are waiting for housing in the community. There is a road map in place. We must follow it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

**BROWN, MICHELLE:
SOLES SKATE SHARPENING OPENING - CONGRATS.**

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a true entrepreneur, Michelle Brown, on the opening of her new business, Soles Skate Sharpening in Head of Chezzetcook.

Mrs. Brown is providing a valuable service to residents and the numerous skaters, hockey players, and ringette players who call the Eastern Shore home.

The shop has a unique aesthetic and is designed to look exactly like a working ice rink, complete with sideboards and nets.

I ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating Michelle Brown on her new endeavour and wish her every success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

JOHNSON, ASHAYO: MISSING N. PRESTON BOY - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge Ashayo Johnson, the 10-year-old boy from North Preston who is still missing. I would ask that the House also acknowledge his father, Teshay Downey, and keep them in their prayers today.

Further, I want to thank St. Thomas United Baptist Church, which today will reopen a safe space for children after school, at 2:15 p.m., for anyone who wants to come and join in.

I just want to acknowledge the search and rescue, the many volunteers, and ask that this House continue to keep this young child in their prayers. (Applause)

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

**MARSH, AUVNEY:
DONATION TO ANGEL HAIR FOR KIDS - THANKS**

KENDRA COOMBES: My heart goes out to the family of this young child.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Auvney Marsh of River Ryan for donating to Angel Hair for Kids. Auvney grew her hair most of her life without having a real haircut, except for a few trims from her mum. When Auvney did cut her hair, she and her family decided to donate her hair to Angel Hair for Kids.

Angel Hair for Kids provides wigs or hair loss solutions for children who have lost their hair. This is a beautiful gift to other children who have lost their hair. Auvney's gift will allow children to be able to access wigs and hair loss solutions.

I ask the House to join me in thanking Auvney and all other individuals who donate their hair.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**DART. DIAMOND DAWGS:
RECIP. OF FIELD OF DREAMS GRANT - CONGRATS.**

HON. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the time today to recognize the Dartmouth Diamond Dawgs, a youth baseball association based in Dartmouth East.

In May of this year, the Diamond Dawgs were named as a winner of the Field of Dreams contest, sponsored by the Toronto Blue Jays through the Jays Care Foundation. The baseball organization was awarded a \$25,000 grant to upgrade its home field. The Diamond Dawgs used the money to improve the dugouts, wheelchair accessibility, and overall conditions at the Julieanne E. O'Brien Memorial Field in Dartmouth.

I ask that all members of the House join me in congratulating the Diamond Dawgs for being a recipient of the Field of Dreams grant and for making baseball accessible for all young Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

LEAHEY, DENNICE: 80th BIRTHDAY - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to wish a very happy birthday to Dennice Leahey as she celebrates her 80th year today.

Dennice has created quite a legacy. She's dedicated so much of her life to important volunteer work and advocacy. While her list of accomplishments runs very long, she is a recipient of one of the highest honours in our country, as she has the Order of Canada.

Dennice worked much of her life as a Senior VP and Ombudsman of the RBC Financial Group, and while she was there she focused on mentoring women in the industry.

She also devoted her time in her position to find opportunities for business projects in Indigenous communities and was an excellent promoter to lend to their great successes.

Retirement did not slow her down. She has remained a prominent, dedicated, and an unforgettable volunteer in our community, and I have the greatest privilege of knowing her and learning from her unstoppable drive to better our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

**STUDIO TEN EIGHTY-ONE:
STAYING OPEN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC - RECOG.**

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge a small business in our Cole Harbour community, Studio Ten Eighty-one. It's not only a vibrant small business hair salon, but also the neighbour to my MLA office, and I can see first-hand how they keep their customers safe.

The salon has been forced to close their doors more than once during the last year and a half, but always managed to reopen when it was deemed safe to do so. They have thrived despite setbacks due to strong dedication, not only of themselves, their families, but also their customers and community.

These are small businesses that are necessary for our communities. We need them to remain open to be successful. It's not cheap to renovate businesses in order to be able to reopen to follow COVID-19 protocols, so I applaud those who manage to do so to keep their small businesses alive.

I ask members of this House to join me in congratulating Studio Ten Eighty-one and all the other businesses.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**JOLLYMORE, JESSIE: RECIPIENT OF HONORARY DEGREE
FROM MT. ST. VINCENT UNIV. - CONGRATS.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jessie Jollymore, who has been chosen to receive an honorary degree by Mount Saint Vincent University on November 7th. Jessie is an amazing person who gives of her whole self to the community of Halifax Needham.

She is the founder of Hope Blooms, a youth-led social enterprise focused on food security, racialized poverty, education, and inclusion, Hope Blooms has been an important tool for youth in the neighborhood to find mentoring and strong support.

[1:45 p.m.]

Jessie's strong commitment to this project over the past 10 years is commendable, and the impact on our youth and their families is insurmountable. Jessie and her team of lovely staff continue to let the kids in our community feel a sense of pride in the work that they do in their social enterprises. They teach youth and community about food access and urban farming right in our own backyard, literally.

I could talk about Jessie and the great work that they do and the staff that are doing amazing work, but I would encourage us all here today to visit the new space in the garden. I'd ask the members to please join me in acknowledging the great work that Jessie continues to do and congratulate her on her honorary degree from the Mount.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

**SMITH, PENNY & GEORGIA:
DONATION TO TWO RIVERS WILDLIFE PARK - CONGRATS.**

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Penny and Georgia Smith, who are seasonal campers at Two Rivers Wildlife Park, Cape Breton. They donated \$250 this past Summer to the park.

The sisters, ages four and seven, decided to have a lemonade stand in their community and donate their proceeds to a place they both love. It was an easy decision, since the girls love spending time at the park swimming, camping, and participating in daily activities at the park for children.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Penny and Georgia on their contribution to a great community campground and park. I wish them all the best.

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

**SUTTON, DONNA & STAFF: BAYERS WESTWOOD FAM. RES. CTR.
30-YR. ANNIV. - RECOG.**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, the Bayers Westwood Family Resource Centre is celebrating 30 years of outstanding service to their community this year. The Bayers Westwood community is one of the largest housing communities in the region, making the resource centre one of the busiest. Although they are no longer geographically a part of Fairview-Clayton Park, I'm proud to still sit on their board.

Over the last 30 years, much has changed in terms of programming and needs of the community, but one thing that has remained the same is the exceptional support that

this resource centre and all of the staff have provided to more than 350 families that live in the area.

Since March 2020, when we entered our first COVID-19 lockdown, the staff have continued to expand their support beyond the Bayers Westwood community to ensure that anyone in need can access kind, caring, knowledgeable, and culturally sensitive support.

I want to thank my very good friend Donna Sutton, the executive director for the last 15 years, and her amazing complement of staff, who continue amazing us with the lengths they go to, to ensure that each member of their community feels that love and support every day.

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

KAVANAGH, JOHN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour the life of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island resident Mr. John Kavanagh. John started at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency in 1991 and worked his way up to become manager of advanced manufacturing. Described as a treasured colleague and mentor, he was also seen as a thought leader and the heart and soul of the agency. His contributions were instrumental in the success of the Centre for Women in Business, the Black Business Initiative Society, and the Atlantic University Business Development Centres.

He was a lover of arts and culture as well as an exemplary father, husband, and friend.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing Mr. Kavanagh's dedication to the economic development and prosperity of Atlantic communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

ATALANTA HOSPICE SOCIETY: RAISING AWARENESS AND FUNDS FOR FUNDY HOSPICE - THANKS

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to a great initiative. The Atalanta Hospice Society is a group of dedicated individuals who are raising money to establish a residential-style hospice in Cornwallis Park.

To be named the Fundy Hospice, this facility will offer services to residents of Clare, Digby, and Annapolis Counties requiring end-of-life care. This great group of individuals is in the process of raising awareness and funds in its effort to construct this much-needed resource.

The Fundy Hospice will become the fourth residential hospice within Nova Scotia and the first such facility in southwestern Nova Scotia once it's in place and in operation in 2025.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking the Atalanta Hospice Society for working to establish this facility in our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

FISHERS: CONTRIB. TO ECON. - THANKS

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, the last few nights, as we went to bed, the wind was howling and the rain was hard. We snuggled into bed and fell asleep and woke up the next morning safe. While we slept, our fishers worked in that dangerous weather on the high seas. Their families worried about their safety and lay restless in bed.

Those hard-working fishermen and women are the backbone of our communities. They put food on our plates and money in our economies.

I am grateful for all they do, and know that they are loved and appreciated. May your catch be plenty and may you return home safely.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**CLEAN FDN. CLEAN COASTS TEAM:
RECIP. OF CLEAN50 AWARD - CONGRATS.**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Clean Foundation's Clean Coasts team, who received national recognition for their salt marsh restoration program, Building Bridges.

The team replaced degraded and harmful infrastructure with a bridge that allows for proper tidal flow and improved seven hectares of salt marsh habitat at Marshalls Crossing in northern Nova Scotia. This work restored food, refuge, and nursery habitat for many fish species and opened up a migratory fish passage.

The team engaged with Mi'kmaw elders and community members to incorporate culturally important priorities and activities through the site selection and restoration process.

Please join me in congratulating downtown Dartmouth's own Clean Foundation and their project leads, Erin Burbidge, Charlyne Robertson, Allen Beck, Logan Horrocks, and Merydie Ross for being recognized as a Canada Clean50 winner and for leading the way in responsible ecological reparation in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**MACDONALD/NICOLE/HOLLY, JODY/REDDICK, LUKE:
INTRODUCING BRAILLE AND QR MENUS - CONGRATS.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place today to recognize three individuals from Pictou County: Nicole MacDonald, Jody Holley, and her 13-year-old son, Luke Reddick.

Luke has become well known in our county because he is already advocating for his independence in Braille literacy by writing stories to make things more accessible for those with visual impairments. Luke was born with optic nerve hypoplasia, a condition in which the optic nerve is underdeveloped. This presents a problem in many cases, in particular at restaurants.

Jody Holley, Luke's mom, often witnessed this while working at Jungle Jim's Bar & Eatery restaurant in Stellarton. This gave her the idea for menus written in Braille with accompanying QR codes. With great assistance from Luke's teacher Nicole MacDonald, menus were written in Braille.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Nicole, Jody, and Luke for introducing Braille and QR menus to assist customers with visual impairments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MELANSON, JACOB: DRAFTED TO SEATTLE KRAKEN - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Jacob Melanson of Amherst. Jacob was drafted into the NHL's new expansion team, the Seattle Kraken, in the fifth round on Saturday, July 24th. Jacob is the first Amherst native to be drafted into the NHL since 1993, when Jamie Matthews was drafted into San Jose.

I wish Jacob the best as he represents Amherst and Nova Scotia in a brand new NHL team in Seattle. I am proud of Jacob's accomplishments and know that he has worked hard and was determined to get drafted at the professional level. Jacob has made his mother, Jennifer Hayden, so proud. I love watching her as he continues to advance his professional hockey career. He's made our community proud, too.

Today, please join me in wishing Jacob the best as he trains with the Seattle Kraken and represents his community as he plays sports and makes us proud.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

KENWO GOLF CLUB: 100th ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, Kings South is home to KenWo Golf Club, one of the best courses in the Maritimes. Located in the heart of the beautiful Annapolis Valley between Kentville and Wolfville, the KenWo Golf Club boasts a challenging 18-hole layout over 6,300 yards.

This year, 2021, KenWo members are celebrating 100 years of welcoming guests to play on their course. KenWo is one of the oldest and best maintained golf courses in Nova Scotia and continues to offer top-of-the-line service, provincial tournaments, and special events. KenWo also has developed many excellent young golfers over the years through their well-regarded junior program.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Rene MacKay, director of golf, and all the staff and members of the KenWo Golf Club in celebrating 100 years of business and wishing them many more years of success.

If I may, I would ask them to change Hole 16 from a par-4 to a par-5 so that I may score a par some day in my lifetime.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**SACK. RIVERS ASSOC.:
WORLD RIVERS DAY CELEBRATIONS - THANKS**

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Sackville Rivers Association of Lower Sackville.

The Sackville Rivers Association celebrated World Rivers Day on Sunday, September 26, 2021. World Rivers Day, founded by conservationist Mark Angelo, is a celebration of the world's waterways to highlight the many values of our rivers and to increase the awareness and the importance of preserving the heritage and health of our rivers.

The Sackville Rivers Association hosted a number of activities in the community, including interpretive trail walks, fish ladder visits, fly tying, and fishing demonstrations.

I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking the Sackville Rivers Association for their efforts in keeping our rivers alive and well for our future generations.

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

**PELVIC HEALTH CLINIC BY ERIKA BURGER:
OPENING OF DART. LOC. - CONGRATS.**

LORELEI NICOLL: I rise today to welcome to the Cole Harbour-Dartmouth community the Pelvic Health Clinic by Erika Burger, which specializes in pelvic floor rehabilitation for women and men experiencing incontinence, pelvic pain, and prolapse.

As a small holistic clinic, they provide an exclusive focus on pelvic floor physiotherapy and treat people of all genders and of all ages who are suffering from a variety of pelvic dysfunctions, offering holistic solutions and alternatives to pelvic surgery.

Many people don't realize that pelvic floor physiotherapy is a highly specialized treatment option available right here in our province. Because the symptoms are often difficult to discuss and awareness of non-surgical options is low, people of all genders suffer needlessly. Many people resign themselves to living with these discomforts, believing them to be an inevitable part of aging or a natural consequence of childbirth.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Pelvic Health Clinic by Erika Burger on their new location and the role that the clinic will play in preventive health care.

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

RUSSELL, DANNY & PATSY: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: I wish to acknowledge the long-standing careers of small business owners in Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, Danny and Patsy Russell of Upper Stewiacke.

The Russells were the owners and operators of the small community business, Russell Bros. Fence Posts. Their quality service and attention to detail certainly didn't go unnoticed, as many customer reviews frequently commented on them going above and beyond for their customers.

After 53 years in business, Danny and Patsy Russell have decided it's time to retire. I'd like to congratulate the Russells on their well-earned retirement and hope they will work just as hard at relaxing as they did in their long-time careers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

SMITH, HELEN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, three months ago, the community of Halifax Armdale lost a loving friend. Helen Smith was a lifelong student of nature. She was an early member

of the Nova Scotia Field Naturalist Society and a founding member of the youth hostel in the Wentworth area.

Born in 1920 on Herring Cove Road, she spent almost her entire life in Armdale. She had many lessons for us about sustainability and recycling long before they became hot topics in society. Her commitment to ecology and bettering the lives of those in the community through her acts of charity and organizing green space will be missed.

I would like to remember Helen Smith as a treasure to Armdale and to express my deepest condolences to her family and friends.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**RINGUETTE, BROOKLYN:
REPLY RECEIVED FOR LETTER TO QUEEN - RECOG.**

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: We have one happy eight-year-old girl in Pictou West. Brooklyn Ringuette of Pictou recently received a royal reply from Buckingham Palace after Queen Elizabeth replied to a note she wrote to her after the death of Prince Philip.

Brooklyn's note to the Queen said she felt really bad because her husband died and thanked her for being the best Queen ever. The Queen's reply thanked Brooklyn for her kind words of sympathy and included a photo of Prince Philip.

Her parents, Jody Lynn and Matt, were happily surprised to receive the letter from the Queen as they had forgotten about the letter Brooklyn wrote to her back in May. Brooklyn says she loves writing letters, especially to her Nanna and Papa in Ontario and, of course, Santa.

I applaud this talented young lady and hope she continues to expand on her writing skills.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time for Statements by Members has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: We will begin at 2:00 p.m. and we will go until 2:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

[2:00 p.m.]

PREM.: RISING INFLATION - COUNTER

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is rising across the entire country. Inflation is over 4 per cent, but in the Atlantic Region and in this province it is actually even higher: over 5 per cent inflation and growing.

I would like to ask the Premier: What is he going to do to ensure that Nova Scotians can continue to keep up with this increase for all of their basic needs?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue, of course. The cost of living for Nova Scotians is on the minds of everyone who fills up their car or buys groceries or whatever the case may be. We understand the pressures that are already on Nova Scotian families and we are certainly sympathetic to the fact that they are increasing at this time.

The reality is that this is happening not just in Nova Scotia, as the member said: It is happening across the country and, really, around the world. Last year was kind of a strange year in many ways, but certainly we saw some deflation last year and things are starting to come back up now. We will do what we can to make sure that the cost of living is affordable for Nova Scotians.

People will have seen the housing plan we put forward. They have seen some of the other initiatives that we put forward. We share the member's concern about inflation.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, this is becoming an even larger issue. The member referenced the increasing price of gas: \$1.50. It hasn't been this high in a long time and it is continuing to go up. Experts think it may even reach \$2. This is an immediate need to help Nova Scotians, and the carbon pricing plan is set for renewal in 2022. We know provinces are signing on to new deals.

I would like to ask the Premier: Given the strain that this is having on Nova Scotian families and the increasing cost of fuel, will he consider ensuring that there are carbon rebates from this revenue from our carbon pricing plan or from general revenue?

THE PREMIER: The member is right. The existing program is expiring next year and there is a lot of work. I am very proud of the work that the minister is doing in his department - that the department is doing - to look at options for the province. We always have affordability at the front of mind. That is the lens we look at these issues through.

Affordability is something we are all concerned about. We also have to be conscious of the fact that there was a point last year when the price of oil was negative - people were actually paying somebody to take oil away. That is reversing back to - it certainly is not the case now.

There are lots of pressures around us, for sure, and we are focused on doing everything we can, as the government of the Province of Nova Scotia, to protect Nova Scotians.

IAIN RANKIN: We will be watching this very closely. We are hearing from a lot of families, particularly low- to medium-income families that are struggling to keep up now.

I am referencing carbon pricing, but also in 2022 we have the national government's Clean Fuel Standard that will come into effect, adding 11 cents per litre on fuel. This is something that the government needs to prepare for. We need to ensure that we have help for people who need it.

Nova Scotia has the highest percentage of homes that are on fuel for their heating source. I would like to ask the Premier: Will there be incentives to ensure that Nova Scotians have opportunities to go off from fuel to other sources of heat and make sure that they have the help they need to prepare for this shock?

THE PREMIER: What I would say is that nothing is off the table. We know that this is looming in front of us, and the members opposite know it was also looming in front of them just a few short months ago, but we are picking up that ball and we are running very fast with it to find a solution that is in the interests of Nova Scotians and protects the ratepayers of this province and finds the balance with our environment, as well.

"Nothing is off the table" would be my response to the member.

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

PREM.: FRACKING SUPPORT - YES OR NO

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, for several years Nova Scotia has had a ban on fracking that protects our environment from this harmful practice. Yet when the legislation was brought in to implement the ban on fracking, the current Premier spoke against it, argued against it, and voted against it. He said that it was bad for business, that it was an anti-business measure, and that it would block us from becoming a have province.

I would like to ask the Premier: Will he tell this House if he still supports fracking?

THE PREMIER: Well, I guess, Mr. Speaker, that's one of those "that was then, this is now" questions, but there is a moratorium on fracking in this province and that moratorium stands. There has not been any discussion that I am aware of - certainly not by me - to remove the moratorium.

What I would tell the member is the moratorium is in place and as far as I'm concerned it remains in place.

GARY BURRILL: The Premier will be able to understand why this is a concern for people. There was no mention in the Conservatives' platform about continuing the fracking ban. There's nothing in the mandate letters about continuing the fracking ban.

The public is aware that there are voices within the Conservative Cabinet that are pro-fracking. We know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, just a couple of years ago, spoke about how it was his view that the ban on fracking should be lifted.

I appreciate what the Premier has said about this and I just want to see if we can be as absolutely clear as we can about it. My question to the Premier is: Is it the case that the Premier commits that the ban on fracking will be in place while he is the Premier of Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: What I would tell the member is I can't speak to the Conservative platform or the Conservative caucus. The member knows full well I am the Leader of the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Party and that is the only party I'll speak for. He'll have to ask the Conservative Party if he has questions about their platform.

GARY BURRILL: The legislation regarding the current ban on fracking was never proclaimed by the previous Liberal government and this is a concern for a lot of people because it leaves the door open for a possible future time when fracking could be allowed.

My question to the Premier is: Will he commit to proclaiming the ban on fracking so that we can have this as a permanent feature of our legislative landscape?

THE PREMIER: I'm not sure why it was a former government's decision in proclaiming or not proclaiming. What I would be very clear to the member is there is a moratorium on fracking in this province and as best as I can tell, the Leader of the NDP is the only person talking about fracking.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - FRACKING: MORATORIUM - COMMIT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I might as well join that conversation. In June of 2016, the then-Tory finance critic, who is now the Premier, and his caucus repeatedly criticized Liberals for stifling business potential by not permitting fracking. The now-Premier accused the Liberals of letting politics get in the way of developing the industry. I'll table that.

We have a ban in place for fracking in this province. My direct question to the Premier is: Will he maintain that ban for the duration of his tenure?

THE PREMIER: Yes, I will.

IAIN RANKIN: I guess Nova Scotians will get used to having him say one thing in Opposition and a very different thing when he gets in government.

My question to the Premier is: We are dealing with a climate crisis. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that there is economic development in this province, at the same time ensuring that it's done responsibly. My colleague asked about ensuring that the Lahey report gets implemented. We know the Forest Management Guide is ready to go. The new bill talks about a far-off date. We want to make sure that we're implementing that report.

My question to the Premier is: Will they see immediate reduction in clear-cutting this year to ensure that we are getting that ecological approach to forestry?

THE PREMIER: The member references a far-off date in the bill that was tabled today. Well, we actually call that vision. We're looking forward to the future, to dates in the future.

I'm very proud of the legislation that my colleague tabled today. I believe it's fair to say it's the strongest piece of legislation laying out a vision for preserving our planet, of any jurisdiction in this country.

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

PREM. - INNOVATION REBATE PROG.: EXPANSION - COMMIT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: If it is strong, then he took the same targets that we had and the targets that we were going to put in through regulations, from the consultation that was taking place.

He may have a vision, but we know, because we were in government, that the new Forest Management Guide is ready to go. There should be nothing holding back the new government from implementing ecological forestry.

On the other types of resource-based industries that are the backbone of our province, we had in place a fund and a commitment to expand our sustainable Innovation Rebate Program to ensure that our agriculture sector was able to get funding to ensure that they could help extend growing seasons and help mitigate the impacts of climate change on their crops.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he commit to the same in ensuring that they have support as we get through this period of time?

THE PREMIER: I appreciate the member raising the issue, and if the member says that he knows from his time in government that there's nothing holding the movement forward on that particular report, I'd have to ask the member, something must have held him back. What was it?

IAIN RANKIN: The member knows that we had extensive consultations and there were a number of drafts. We were accused of not listening to Nova Scotians, but we were actually extensively consulting to ensure we got it right. We know it's right and we know it's ready to go.

On the topic of agriculture, ensuring that we had food security in our province, Mr. Speaker, I know that the bill does speak to that. All parties in the last campaign were interested, with the exception of the Progressive Conservative Party, in a lunch program in schools.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will they implement a lunch program while they're in office, for all schools?

THE PREMIER: I thank the member for raising this, and the member for Cumberland North for raising this earlier today. It is an important issue. It's something that we fully understand. Kids learn best when they're properly nourished, and it's a priority of ours, for sure.

We'll work with the department. We'll work with staff. Kids are kids, and the protection of kids and the safety of kids and the health of kids are always at the forefront of the mind of this government, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DOJ - STREET CHECKS: LOOPHOLE - ACTION

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I was encouraged last week to hear both the Premier and the Minister of Justice make this commitment to close this loophole for street checks. I was also encouraged by the NDP bill, although I would say they look like there's a little more work and also that already existing communities have been doing this work in consultation.

In the previous government, there was ongoing consultation with the community. There was an apology from the previous government, and then, also, we already have an independent legal opinion.

So, my question is: When are we going to see some action from the Minister of Justice in terms of closing the loophole on street checks?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: As I stated previously, we certainly respect the concerns of the community. We are continuing to consult the community as recently as late last week. Staff at DOJ were in discussions with members of the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent to consult with them as recently as last week, so hopefully we'll see that closed soon.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for Eastern Passage that, perhaps, maybe when I'm speaking, or if there's a question that might be redundant, to keep it to a low communication? Thank you.

Also to that - my question is to the Minister of Justice - excuse me.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Preston has the floor.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Thank you.

The question to the Minister of Justice is: Last week, I tabled the recommendations already by DPAD, and in the previous government, the member for Yarmouth within two weeks created a ministerial directive. So I'm asking the Minister of Justice, in position for the last eight weeks: When can we expect the directive?

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, this isn't about an individual, any individuals, and their wants and needs right now. It's about reaching a conclusion that's acceptable to all members of the community. We'll continue to consult, and I certainly thank the member for bringing these forward.

I guess, at the end of the day, what I would suggest is it wasn't this government that created the problematic language in this, so I guess some of these questions should be directed back to the member's own party.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

PREM.: URANIUM MINING - POSITION

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has continuously argued that his party is different from the federal Conservatives, who voted against a policy that stated climate change is real. However, it was under his leadership that the Progressive Conservatives called for a meeting of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee on uranium exploration in Nova Scotia.

Uranium mining has been banned in this province since 2009. The Premier's caucus argued that "debate was warranted given the large amount of uranium deposits in the province and potential for adding mining jobs." I can table that.

[2:15 p.m.]

Does the Premier support uranium mining in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: These things need to be discussed. Decisions are based on information and shying away from receiving information is never a good way to reach a good conclusion and have good decisions being made. We understand the obligation that we share in this Chamber to Nova Scotians to at least hear their voices, to process their voices and understand their positions. It doesn't mean we agree with them, but we should always listen in this Chamber.

SUSAN LEBLANC: At that committee meeting in September of 2019, our caucus put forward a motion calling on the committee - after hearing what the people at the committee had to say - to reaffirm their support for the ban on uranium mining in Nova Scotia. The Conservative members of the committee voted against the motion. Two of the members of the Premier's Cabinet have also spoken in favour of uranium mining. The member for Pictou Centre has said he does not think uranium mining is dangerous - and I can table that. The member for Kings North wrote that lifting the ban on uranium mining in Nova Scotia would transform the economy of this province - and I can table that.

Will the Premier confirm that his government will maintain the long-standing ban on uranium mining in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: Of course, the member references the votes of Conservative members. What I will confirm to the member is there are no Conservative members in this House right now.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PREM.: HEALTH CARE AUDITOR - TIMELINE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, it's just such a weird thing to say, I have to be honest. This government made very big promises to secure the votes of Nova Scotians when it comes to health care: 24/7 surgeries available in Nova Scotia, 300 doctors a year, 2,000 nurses. Another commitment that this government made was to establish a health care auditor, an individual who would be a new officer of the Legislature whose purpose would be to collect feedback from the public, use of the system, conduct performance audits and risk analysis, and any new innovation change plan for the system.

This government has been in for eight weeks, and while they're clapping, we haven't seen one initiative in this House that's going to help them achieve any of those initiatives. When can the Legislature expect the creation of this legislative office?

THE PREMIER: If the member hasn't seen any initiatives to improve health care in the short eight weeks that we've been in office, I would suggest to him he's just not looking.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I have been listening to some of the initiatives: expansion of virtual care; continuation with the capital plan that we created; commitment to take away non-emergency transport from paramedics. Every single initiative that this government has moved forward in this session came from this government.

The Premier sure is walking the walk when it comes to health care, but he's taking the exact same steps that the Liberal Party took when we were in government. When are we actually going to see something new from this government that's going to help Nova Scotians achieve 24/7 surgeries, 300 doctors a year, and 2,000 nurses?

THE PREMIER: It's remarkable to me that it's not lost on the member that we're actually doing what they wouldn't do. We will continue to take every step we can to improve health care in this province, because all the things that were on that former minister's desk that he looked away from, we won't look away from. We're getting it done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth, on a new question.

PREM.: HEALTH CARE - NEW IDEAS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm quite proud of the record of this government when it comes to health care. Let's review it: expansion of cancer care; expansion of primary care; more access for pharmaceuticals; expansion of Seniors' Pharmacare. Oh, and by the way, we fought back three waves of COVID-19. If the Premier ever wants to debate me on health care, I'm happy to do it.

He's been in office . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Yarmouth has the floor.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier has been in office for eight weeks, and we have yet to see one new initiative that wasn't started by the Liberal Party.

My question to the Premier is: When can we expect to see something new, something innovative, something visionary from this Premier?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, let's not make light of the situation of health care in this province. The health care situation in this province, the ability of Nova Scotians to access health care is terrible. It is terrible. We are on a negative train that has been building up momentum for eight years and I'll tell you, we are doing our very best to stop that train and move it back in a positive direction.

We're making significant progress. We are getting things done that that government refused to do. If there's any question about the state of health care in this province, I will leave the former Minister of Health and Wellness with one number: 78,000.

ZACH CHURCHILL: While we expanded access to primary care through doubling the number of nurse practitioners in the province and utilizing pharmacists, we did have a hard time with patient attachment to physicians, even though we were recruiting 120 a year.

My question to the Premier is: If patient attachment is the big issue that he wants to tackle in health care, where is the plan to get us more doctors and to attach more patients to family physicians?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take this opportunity to speak directly to Nova Scotians because I want Nova Scotians to know that we hear them, we hear them when they talk about their concerns about their ability to access health care and we are doing everything possible we can to fix the situation in health care in this province.

It will take time. It will take money, but I promise Nova Scotians - those Nova Scotians who are listening today - that I will give them everything I personally have to fix health care in this province. I won't stop until people can access health care in this province.

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

MAH: AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN - CLARIFY

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, housing is part of health care so in their new housing plan this government announced that they are committed to the creation of over 1,100 new, affordable units in communities throughout Nova Scotia but there has been no mention of how much these - and I'll use air quotes because apparently that's parliamentary - "affordable units" will cost tenants. I will table that.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is: What does this government define as affordable housing?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question. The member is referencing the quick start program, which I am very proud to say was a \$20 million program which we upped to \$34 million. Four hundred twenty-five of those units of 1,100 are rental supplements, which I am very proud of, too. The remainder will

be new buildings. They will fall within the category of what the department defines as affordable.

LORELEI NICOLL: I was wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the minister could table this information that he just spoke of because I am of the understanding that the quick start program has not been implemented or used at this point in time.

My question wanted to know about this information, that the Affordable Housing Commission report defines affordable housing as housing that is adequate, suitable, accessible and costs less than 30 per cent of the household's pre-tax income.

We also know Nova Scotians' median family income in 2020 was \$52,200, meaning that 50 per cent of Nova Scotian families have an income less than that. I will table that.

My question to the minister is: Knowing this information, how does the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing plan to ensure that these 1,100 new, affordable housing units are actually affordable?

JOHN LOHR: What I would like to say about the quick start program and the announcement of that is one of the things we've been waiting for is our federal partner to have a new Minister of CMHC. We now have that. We look forward to actually getting those announcements out to contacting the - we have been in contact with the individuals and the organizations that we are partners with, so we're looking forward to making those announcements.

I realize we haven't given out the specific details on those, but we look forward to doing that as soon as possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

NRR: MOROCCO OIL & GAS PARTNERSHIP - EXPLAIN

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. For all the money spent to attract oil and gas exploration to our offshore, there has been very little interest from the industry in recent years, yet our offshore growth strategy continues.

An aspect of the strategy has been a partnership with Morocco, which is hosting a conference in Spring 2022 around several geological themes, including petroleum prospectivity. Nova Scotia is highlighted as the mega-sponsor, and the conference links to a web page praising Nova Scotia's offshore oil and gas potential, and I can table that.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think that Nova Scotia's status as an oil and gas mega-sponsor sends the right message in a climate crisis?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: We have a great resource in our offshore oil, and we also have a great reputation worldwide about the safety of our offshore oil. There's going to be the attraction to get to the 80 per cent renewables. There's still a 20 per cent gap there that we need to have reliability on the system.

Just because we're involved with the programs with offshore oil and such does not mean we're going to implement it. As Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, we need to know what our resources are within our province, what we have access to, so we can better educate ourselves and understand the safety aspects and what we would have at hand.

SUSAN LEBLANC: It is about safety, but it's not about safety, Mr. Speaker. It is about greenhouse gas emission reductions at this point. The Earth is burning.

The current minister's briefing binder from the department clearly states: 2021 represents a year of change for the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area, and new exploration activities are limited. We do know that there are unlimited opportunities for growth in renewables, and we will need to do this if we're going to reach the climate targets that have been tabled today. We know that there are unlimited opportunities. We just need investment.

Will the minister commit to immediately ending all subsidies for fossil fuels, including research, promotion, and mega-sponsorships, and redirect that funding to renewable energy?

TORY RUSHTON: I take it by the targets that we set out in our bill today - the most aggressive bill in Canada to date - with the targets that we set out today, I would expect the members in that opposite party to support the bill that we table today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

PREM.: HALIFAX ATLANTIC MLA - APOLOGIZE

HON. KELLY REGAN: Yesterday, we were treated to the unusual sight of the Premier coming into this House to speak in Committee of the Whole House on Bills. He decided at the end of his remarks to take aim at one of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues who really has overcome a lot of obstacles to be here in this House, a colleague who was dropped off at the shopping mall by his parents never to be picked up - grew up in care, lived on the streets.

The Premier decided that he was going to question the credentials of my colleague. I would ask the honourable Premier to do the honourable thing and apologize to this House now for questioning his right to be here.

THE PREMIER: Here's what I would say to the honourable member. There's no question that the decorum in this House can be raised. I have a role to play in that as the Premier of the province. I will tell the member I will do my best to raise the decorum in this House and that I will try to lead the way in that situation.

[2:30 p.m.]

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I have heard about poor losers, but I have never seen quite the same example that was shown here in the House yesterday of being a poor winner. I did not hear an apology from the Premier. I heard excuses, et cetera. The fact of the matter is, he questioned my colleague's right to be here in the House, his fitness to be here in the House, and it's not the first time that someone on that side of the House has done that. In fact, we have had instances where the Minister of Justice . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I think the discussion now is going more on a point of privilege than it is a question to be answered. If it is a point of privilege, we will certainly take it under advisement.

The honourable member for Bedford Basin. I'm sorry, your microphone wasn't on there.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, earlier one of my colleagues stood in members' statements to make a point about what happened here yesterday. That's always happened here in this House. Suddenly, we've been told we can't do that in members' statements, number one. Number two, now we're being told that we have to only do this as a point of privilege?

I'm asking for clarity from the Speaker, I guess, since we're not going to get an apology from the Premier for his behaviour. He is first among equals and he should be better than that, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: For the benefit of the member, that really wasn't a question. It is not a point of privilege, either. It's a point of order. That's duly noted. We will get back to you on that.

The honourable member for Preston.

OEARI: LAND TITLE APPLICATION PROCESS - ACCELERATE

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I previously asked the minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives how many land titles clarification applications were completed. I've spoken about this in the House before. The minister responded with 251 properties. However, I would say that is very inaccurate, because what I asked at that time was not to include probate or migration lands.

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. There have only been three successful applications under the Land Titles Clarification Act. How will you accelerate the application process?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I signed off on a few when I took over office. That timeline to fast-track the process has been moved over to the other department, so it's not with my department right now. I will do my best to get an answer for the member opposite with the other department.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I'm excited to hear that everything has been moved over to the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives.

My question again is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables: Does this mean part one of the LTC application where the staff will also be moved over and transferred to the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives?

TORY RUSHTON: No, I don't believe that the staff's going to move over completely. I can get the briefing note update for the member opposite to understand how that exchange is going to take place. It's certainly our government's hope to fast-track that whole process. This is a project that is going to get completed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

FTB: GROWING INFLATION - MITIGATE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

The economic risks are far from over due to the global pandemic. We're seeing inflation rates increase and many believe that this is going to continue as a result of the federal monetary policy. Everyday Nova Scotians, including in Cumberland North, are paying more for food, gas, and everyday necessities.

My question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: What measures is the minister taking to mitigate the effects of growing rates of inflation here in Nova Scotia over the upcoming months and years?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: We always must think about Nova Scotians. For people who are wealthy, the increase in price of a loaf of bread is not a big deal. For somebody who's on a fixed income, inflation hurts. We see with gasoline prices the impact that has on people.

We've seen it with building material supplies and the impact that's had on housing. We see supply chain problems that are causing a shortage of goods, which is also contributing. We look at car lots. Many car dealerships now have many fewer cars on the lot. We're even hearing of companies in Ontario bringing used vehicles from Ontario into our economy.

We've seen a lot of strange activity in the last two years. Some of the statistics we're seeing now, we must keep in mind that they are compared to last year. Last year, things like the price of oil went down so significantly and they are such a driver for our inflation numbers here that - and it is difficult to answer in such little time, but we have to keep in mind the statistics. There is a wild swing in some of the statistics right now, but there is no question that many Nova Scotians are feeling the pinch of inflation.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Really, the core of my concern is our debt and the cost of our debt - servicing our debt here in Nova Scotia. Our debt has grown to be estimated at the end of this year to be around \$18 billion and over the last few years we've paid close to 10 per cent to servicing that debt. I am not sure if that 10 per cent is just interest payments only, or does that include paying down some of our principal?

I would like to ask the minister: Is he concerned, as inflation rates grow, about servicing our debt and is our debt locked in to low interest, or are we looking at paying increasingly high interest on our debt for the Province of Nova Scotia?

ALLAN MACMASTER: The debt-to-GDP ratio has always been trumpeted. You know, when governments have taken on debt that if we are okay - you know, if the debt-to-GDP ratio - but we have seen the GDP with the pandemic plummet in some instances and that's affected that ratio. So we always have to be mindful of debt.

Lucky for us, we are in a low interest rate environment. I don't think the central banks will want to be raising rates. I think they are looking at it today in Canada, but I don't think they are going to be wanting to raise rates in the short term because of the economy. There are sectors of the economy that remain uncertain and so that's a big help.

Lucky for us, any debt we are rolling back over into new debt. As bonds mature and we continue to carry the debt, we are locking in at historically low interest rates. We are lucky, but we must be mindful of the debt because it does chew up over \$700 million a year in our provincial budget that could be going to other things like health and housing.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MAH - RENT SUPPLEMENTS: NUMBER - BASIS

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, part of the government's housing plan included an additional 425 rent supplements. I would like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: What is that number based on - was it based on available supply or what the government is willing to spend?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question. That number - really, to my knowledge, everyone who has applied for a rent supplement has received it. The number is based on the amount that we could include in the quick start program and to my understanding it averages \$373 per recipient.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I will now turn my question to the Minister of Community Services. Considering the increasing cost of living for Nova Scotians, will this government consider more rent supplements, increased minimum wage, or increasing income assistance, as a means to help Nova Scotians get by?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I think all Nova Scotians and those who are on income assistance were very pleased when the Opposition had increased by \$100 the income - and those discussions are always ongoing. We know that this was an initiative that you guys took on - oh, sorry, that that government took on in the Spring during a pandemic, which was very grateful. I can assure the member that those discussions are always happening to see where we can make improvements in the services that we provide.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

PREM. - HEALTH AUTH. BD.: BIPOC MEMBERS - REDRESS

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, Black, Indigenous, and other racialized workers have raised concerns in the health care system about how it has been governed. Doctors Nova Scotia said, ". . . health-care institutions are largely governed by white people, despite the fact that health-care systems and practices rely on the labour of BIPOC health-care providers, support staff and researchers. Not having a seat at the table means health-care policies and practices don't support BIPOC physicians nor patients." I will table that.

Before this government took over, the Health Authority had the most diverse board, including Black and Indigenous representation . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Is there a question?

TONY INCE: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Those voices have been removed from the place.

My question to the Premier: If he is in fact listening to the voices of the community, Mr. Speaker, how would he know that this decision - would he know that this decision was wrong, and how will he redress this decision?

THE PREMIER: I do appreciate the member's question on this important issue. We are listening. The fact of the matter is when we took government, we were very focused on health care. There's a lot of changes that are needed in health care, and we wanted to move quickly and act quickly on those.

We removed the entirety of the board of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. There was no in-between step. It was all or nothing, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, we made the determination as a government that to move with our agenda, we need to start fresh with the Nova Scotia Health Authority board. That's a decision we took. We didn't take it lightly, but we had to take it.

TONY INCE: I know the Premier and their government have indicated that they are speaking to the community. I ask that they don't just speak to a couple of people, that they speak to everyone.

My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, is: How will the Premier ensure that Black and Indigenous people have a voice at the decision-making table in the Health Authority, actually, which is going to be quite challenging given that I don't see that diversity sitting over there?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'd like to thank the member for the question. Since I've taken this role as Minister of Health and Wellness, we have done some stakeholder gatherings. I have been in touch, once, with the Health Association of African Canadians, and have committed to continuing the dialogue with them, and they've asked for that. They've asked me very sincerely to continue the conversation with them.

I've also been in touch with the Nova Scotia Association of Black Physicians as well, and, again, committed to understanding experiences of racialized health care workers, and ensuring that barriers are reduced. We need to do this work in step completely with racialized communities, and I am committing to do that. There's much to learn, but I want to assure the member that it's important, and the work that started in the equity, diversity, and inclusion department in the office prior to the election continues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

ED - PROV. LOYALTY PROG.: GOVT. REV. - DETAILS

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Economic Development.

So, the government's proposed loyalty program will allow Nova Scotians to pay for government fees and services with points that they collect on local purchases. The example that they use in their platform, which I will table, for instance, is that a \$20 basket of blueberries would be credited for \$2 in points.

My question to the minister is: What does the minister anticipate will be the loss of government revenue from fees and services as a result of this program?

[2:15 p.m.]

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member across the aisle for that question. Of course, it sounded like one of those questions I never liked in school where you were taking a canoe this way down the river, and then you had to do a car up that way. The point is this: that we are going, we are seeking to nudge further, to give tangible rewards to Nova Scotians to make sure that that \$20, however many pounds of blueberries, were grown in Nova Scotia.

We have to look, first of all, at our opportunities to work with producers. That groundwork has started. We will have a firm budget in terms of the anticipated costs against services at places like Motor Vehicles.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear to me that the minister does not understand this program whatsoever with the answer that I received about a canoe. I asked about blueberries.

I'm asking this question to the Premier. Over time the costs of these government fees and services will continue to rise. My question is: Will the Premier guarantee Nova Scotians that they will not see an increase in fees and services in other programs or at our government agencies to offset this loss in revenue?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: To the member, what I was not clear about is that we are making an investment, and this must be looked at as an economic investment by our government to provide once again a tangible incentive - not just the heartstrings, not just the facts - though we do grow the best blueberries in the world and I'm happy to talk Nova Scotia blueberries. But equally, I have worked in the boat-building industry, and we make some pretty great canoes as well. We will make an investment that will grow our economy and within a period of seven years will pay for itself.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

NRR - POWER RATES: CONSISTENCY - PLAN

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, for the last several years, Nova Scotians have had the financial security of consistent power rates, but with the cost of living rising, as we

have spoken about earlier, Nova Scotians cannot afford to see their power rates climb. May I ask the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables to elaborate on the plan to protect Nova Scotians from rising rates and to keep power rates consistent?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I think this was one of the very first steps that our Premier took and invited the Leader of the Official Opposition and federal MPs at all levels after the federal election to the Premier's office to meet and discuss the Atlantic Loop. I believe after that meeting - it was an all-party, all elected officials in - that this was a needed option for us to remove ourselves from coal.

I don't think it's a debate in this House that when we're debating the electricity needs of Nova Scotians, first and foremost, we need to get off the coal and have 80 per cent renewables. The second major thing that we're always thinking about is the ratepayers of Nova Scotia.

CARMAN KERR: Speaking of the Atlantic Loop project and drilling down a bit, can the minister promise this project, being at \$5 billion, will not result in rate increases to hard-working Nova Scotians?

TORY RUSHTON: As the leader of his party would understand from that meeting that day, this was the ask of the federal government. We needed to go to the federal government to ensure that this Loop takes place. It's not just our province. It's all the Atlantic provinces that have to take part. They have to have the initiative.

We had the commitment from the federal government different times before that we need to get off coal, we need to have renewable energy. I celebrate the fact that Sean Fraser was announced to the Cabinet at the federal level because Minister Fraser, as we now can say, is at that level where he can be the ambassador for Nova Scotia on this project. I know it's not a political issue on the floor because we've all bought into it. We all understand it. We look forward to having these conversations so we can share it and make sure that the ratepayers of Nova Scotia are getting what they need in their electricity bills.

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

FTB - NSLC REV.: SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGS. - COMMIT

LISA LACHANCE: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Yesterday, the NSLC released second-quarter results. Sales were up another 5 per cent after sales increased last fiscal year 22 per cent. Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit a portion of increased NSLC revenue specifically to support some programming for people who are living with substance use disorder?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, a very good question. As we know, we have a minister dedicated to addictions and mental health now. This is something that

we talked about, I think it was over a year ago. We now have a minister dedicated to that. While I would not make a commitment that the specific increase in profits at the NSLC - the revenues were up by about 5 per cent, but the profit margins were quite low; it was less than a 1 per cent increase in actual revenue back to the province's coffers. While I wouldn't commit today to it specifically being attached to addictions and mental health and some of the issues that come from the use of alcohol and cannabis, I would say that our government is committed . . .

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

If I could, before I recognize the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I just want to reinforce again the fact that electronic devices are not to be used during Question Period, even if it is to have your question there. Please print off your question. Electronic devices are a no-no.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising on a point of order. I'm looking for some clarification in a ruling. We had two instances today in Members' Statements where I was providing a member's statement and I was overruled in the context of what I was saying. The reason I rise on my feet is because I could probably provide boxes of members' statements from Hansard where political statements were made or there were conversations happening between parties.

I rise on my feet on a point of order just so we can get an official ruling on what the rules are around members' statements again. I've been here almost seven years and I've seen many members' statements, hundreds of them, that I was ruled out of order on today, so I look for an official ruling from yourself.

THE SPEAKER: We will certainly take that under advisement and report back to the House.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business,

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 56.

Bill No. 56 - Affordable Child Care Accountability Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise and start the debate on this bill for second reading: An Act Respecting Accountability for Affordable Child Care. It is something that I look forward to hearing the comments from my colleagues.

The reason why we brought this bill forward was essentially based on the mandate letter coming from the department with the new government - and I can table that if necessary, Mr. Speaker, the mandate letter for the new minister. I can do that momentarily, I'll just pull it out.

Essentially my concern was that there was no mention, really, of child care at all in the mandate letter. You look like you want to say something, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There is no need of tabling that letter, unless you are quoting directly from it.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: No, it's just more for reference. So, that was a concern for me, based on the work that has been done to get Nova Scotia to the point now where our new child care deal is considered by many to be the best in Canada.

A lot of work went into that plan and I do recognize the staff. I recognized them the day of the announcement and I'll do it again for Hansard, so they are recognized forever in the records of Hansard for delivering \$10-a-day child care to Nova Scotia: Cathy Montreuil, Janet Lynn Huntington, Denise Stone, Sarah Melanson, and Beth Kelly.

They deserve the recognition and the applause in this House because ultimately, from a staff perspective, when we had the opportunity and we knew that the federal government wanted to move on a new child care plan for provinces across Canada, staff worked day and night on the staff side. Of course myself, with the leader of the party, we worked on the political side negotiating the deal for families across Nova Scotia.

It's a deal that we know is going to cut fees in half by the end of next year, by 50 per cent. It is a plan that is going to see greater access in communities across Nova Scotia. Particularly, one of the building blocks for us was ensuring that in rural Nova Scotia, which many of the members represent, access to child care is very difficult. We know that even in doctor recruitment, it was a conversation that we were having, ensuring that as we

brought medical professionals into Nova Scotia that barriers to child care was a major stumbling block for many of these communities to recruit and retain medical professionals.

We know that the program is built on accessibility. It's built on families having not only access, but flexibility around the program to ensure that we're supporting as many families as possible. It's built around the fact that we have so many Nova Scotians who want to be early childhood educators who may have had financial barriers to fulfilling their dream of being that educator. We also built in tuition incentives, and we have built in incentives to help with the other costs of education.

It's very important. This was a historic agreement - one that we should all celebrate because we know that it's going to help tens of thousands of families moving forward. Every child, regardless of whether they live in Yarmouth, Halifax, Guysborough, Antigonish, the Strait, or Sydney, is going to have the same opportunity. That really was the building block for it.

We moved quickly on it because for me at the time as minister, the concern was that we were hearing that the federal Conservative Party was not in support of a universal system; they were in support of a tax credit. We knew that we had to move as quick as we possibly could to ensure that we could put this program in place. We knew that we had an election looming, but there was also a federal election looming, so we wanted to get a deal in place.

Fortunately, because of the hard work of everyone and the hard work of staff within the department, we have one of the best deals in Canada. It has been referenced as that. It has been referenced by all of the major advocates across the country that Nova Scotia now has become a national leader in early childhood education and child care.

It's a really amazing story. It's a plan that was designed and developed by the sector. We went through extensive consultation with the childhood sector, the advocates - this is their plan as well. Many of the things that they talked about: better wages for our ECE workers, better training opportunities for our ECE workers, better working conditions, and expansion of programs.

Also, and this was an important piece of it, a lot of the programs were based just solely on public non-profit. Families will actually have access - not only if your child attends a public or non-profit centre, but for the private centres, too - they have access to all of the training opportunities. They also have access to the funding when it comes to wage increases and all the incentives and rebates that families can receive.

Again, I put this bill forward because it was a concern for me that I didn't see it in the mandate letter for the minister - something as historic as this and as impactful as this is going to be for families knowing full well - and I heard the comments from the government saying that they would support any deal that came forward and that they would continue to

support the deal that we actually signed, was important here. When I don't see it as one of the main focuses of the mandate letter - there was a lot about the education side; the P-12 side, but there wasn't anything really regarding the early years for our children from infancy to 4-year-olds and to eventually entering the school system. That's why we brought it forward.

I'm really proud of what we were able to accomplish as a government. Pre-Primary was really the building block for all of it. We know that only one in four or one in five 4-year-olds were accessing some sort of early childhood education at the time that we implemented pre-Primary. Now as a result, over 15,000 children have accessed that program.

[3:00 p.m.]

I've seen my children go through it. It's been an amazing journey for all children to do that. Also, we were hearing from the experts that the pre-Primary program is building this foundation and is helping so much for children to make that transition from the pre-Primary program into our school system.

I look forward to hearing the comments from the other speakers on this. This was a landmark deal. This was over \$600 million. It was done by some really amazing people who work within our government. A lot of political will, both on our end and on the will of Mr. Hussen with the federal government, who was the minister at the time, to see this become a reality for our children.

As I said, this was a deal that was designed by the sector. A lot of the building blocks are based on what they told us they needed to help not only support our children but also expand their career opportunities and also expand the opportunities for people to enter the sector, because we are going to need many more ECEs in the system. We're opening 9,500 seats, we're building a full program for three-year-olds, and we're putting in a number of training incentives to make sure that people have that opportunity.

My colleague for Halifax Atlantic was a huge champion of this as well. He followed the Quebec plan and really was a huge advocate for this as well, so I want to recognize him.

This is something we all agree with. We all want the best for our children. There's no question. I know that, in talking with many of you on all sides of the floor, this was important. Child care and the challenges that were there, because there are challenges that are there - there were challenges around staffing. There were challenges around access.

Just before the election, I used the example of Guysborough. We started building the program, utilizing the school there, because Guysborough is legitimately having an issue recruiting and retaining medical professionals, because the people they were bringing

to the community needed child care and they couldn't get it. For many of you who represent rural Nova Scotia, this is based on access for everyone. As we get to the five years and we get to the average of \$10-a-day child care, all of these things have been taken into account.

I will stop there. I look forward to hearing comments from the minister and others of my colleagues around the House, but again, I want to recognize and thank everybody who was involved in delivering a historic deal for our children. I'll stop there.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Madam Speaker, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to this bill. The Affordable Child Care Accountability bill calls for the government to provide an action plan for the delivery of the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

I'm happy to speak in support of this bill, absolutely. As a mother of seven, I completely understand child care and ECEs and teachers and all of the people who take care of our children, so I truly understand that this will benefit all of us parents. I will say one thing, though: Liberals sure do love child care during the elections, and apparently when they're in Opposition.

The Liberals have promised a national child care program in advance of elections since 1993 and have not delivered. They promised in 1993, again in 2004, and again in 2011. But sure, maybe this time it will really happen, and I hope that we listen to all of the comments and concerns and all of the pieces that can add to this bill when we decide to make the decisions to bring it forward.

If it does, I'd be happy to applaud that investment and would certainly encourage the government to put forward a clear action plan with targets and timelines. We know that when affordable and quality child care is readily available, everyone benefits: children, parents, workers, and the economy as a whole.

Child care is a service with multiple goals. While it is a program with child development goals for children, it also a program for parents, especially mothers, who rely on child care to go to work or prepare for work through training and education. I know this all too well.

Nova Scotia does not have a provincial system of affordable quality child care, and we all want the best for our children, as was mentioned by the member previous.

For many years, families and child care providers have struggled with the shortage of child care spaces, high parent fees, low wages for early childhood educators, and insufficient, grant-based funding. We know that the implementation of pre-Primary intensified worker shortages. ECEs working in pre-Primary classrooms have access to

affordable health and dental benefits, which are not available to many ECEs working in licensed child care. Extending health and dental benefits to all early childhood educators would be an important step towards recognizing the value of the work ECEs do.

In the first wave of the pandemic, child care was an afterthought for the Liberal government. They did nothing to support the child care needs of essential workers and suggested that child care needs were dealt with organically. Sadly, there was nothing about universal affordable child care in the Progressive Conservative platform, which I know you will consider as we move forward.

Our caucus knows that investment in a sustainable, accessible, universal public system of child care is an essential part of our COVID-19 economic recovery plan. This system needs to include supports for quality and affordable school-aged care for before and after school, school holidays, and PD days. Every parent will benefit from this.

For every \$1 invested in the child care sector, there is a \$2.23 increase in the GDP. More parents will go to work, which grows our economy. This is 67 per cent higher than the GDP multiplier for construction - better for our economic growth. On top of that, per dollar, the child care sector creates more jobs than any other industries. Expansion in the early learning and care sector in Nova Scotia can provide more short-term economic stimulus than investing in other major sectors of the economy.

During the pandemic, we saw more than \$1 billion in additional appropriations - \$1 billion spent without legislative oversight, without clear goals or reporting on the potential return on investment. Although the government did provide funds to the licensed child care providers so that parents did not have to pay fees during a time when they could not access that particular care, many parents still had to pay for other, often more expensive, child care arrangements or had to take unpaid leave or miss shifts.

There was no acknowledgement from the previous government, and there has been no acknowledgement from the Progressive Conservative government that they have a responsibility to recognize these impacts and provide needed supports. In fact, while our caucus has been calling for compensation for families to help them with the extra costs and low income due to COVID-19-related school closures that I had mentioned a few days ago, the Liberal government used \$17.4 million in federal funds to reimburse themselves for the funding they had provided to licensed child care providers.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I would like to be clear on a few key points. Our NDP caucus has been strong and consistent in our support for universal, affordable, accessible child care. These investments are necessary and will have significant and long-lasting impacts for children, families, and especially our economy.

I think it is a very reasonable expectation that the government should provide an action plan for the delivery of the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and

Child Care Agreement so that all members of this House and members of the public can hold them accountable on this very important project.

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

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I thank the member opposite for bringing this important issue and important topic forward. I also appreciate the sincerity and good intentions of the Opposition as they relate to the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

I want to echo their gratitude and accolades to the team at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development on their hard work and dedication to bringing this agreement into place. They were instrumental in the negotiation and in the acceptance of the agreement. We greatly appreciate the work that the team has done.

As the member opposite is aware, this historic agreement was signed in the Summer between our federal and provincial governments. It represents a groundbreaking opportunity to change the economic and social narrative for families and women especially, in Nova Scotia. Through this agreement, Nova Scotia will receive \$605 million in federal funding over the next five years to participate in a Canada-wide system for early learning and child care.

The funding will allow our province to significantly reduce child care costs for families and to expand access to high-quality learning and child care programs, with a focus on greater availability of licensed child care spaces in communities and across the province.

For families, this will mean a 50 per cent reduction, on average, in family fees, based on 2019 rates for all regulated spaces by the end of 2022. By 2026, families will pay on average \$10 a day for regulated child care.

Over the course of the agreement, Nova Scotia commits to create 9,500 new spaces for children from birth to age five. Just as importantly, we will remove barriers so that families and children will have access to inclusive, culturally responsive, and flexible child care that meets their needs

To do this work, we need a strong workforce, so the Province has committed to providing the supports and resources to ensure that appropriate training and development are available for our early childhood educator workforce.

Madam Speaker, our workforce strategy, called Excellence in ECE, commits the province, with the federal financial support, to provide better pay and benefits to early childhood educators. As part of compliance with the agreement, and because it is a strategic

and beneficial step in workforce development, we will introduce a regulated certification process for ECEs as well.

We will provide free education and upgrades for certifications and we are currently providing more than 300 bursaries for existing students, especially those from equity groups. The end result of this work will be a province that offers quality progressive child care and early learning everywhere in Nova Scotia. We will be a province that, in the words of the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, is a leader in Canada.

I want to read you part of the statement issued by Ms. Norrie McCain after the signing of this historic agreement. I apologize - I will have it in a moment for tabling. Ms. McCain stated: "Nova Scotia is Canada's new leader in early learning and child care. Today's announcement contains all the elements needed to convert child care from a market service to a public good in the service of young children and their families."

She goes on to say, "Nova Scotia knows educators count and will support them with higher wages and benefits, free education and a workforce strategy to ensure they can stay and grow in their profession. . . . From this foundation Nova Scotia will benefit with stronger families, a stronger economy and a new generation better able to take on the difficult world challenges they will confront."

I can't agree with Mrs. McCain more that this agreement will transform our early learning and child care sector. More importantly, it will transform the opportunities for children and families and women in this province. The evidence and research reinforce this point. Every dollar invested in early childhood education has a yield of \$6 to tomorrow's economy. Every dollar helps children get a better start in life, no matter their socioeconomic status or where they live.

This agreement means families can be confident in their access to quality care, no matter how much money they have or don't have or where they live, and it means that women will be supported to re-enter the workforce or to go back to school. We know that quality child care and early learning improves long-term social and economic outcomes. It increases labour force participation of women and it boosts economic growth.

The near-term impact is that families will save money. Thousands and thousands of dollars spent every year will be cut in half by the end of 2022 and reduced to \$10 a day, on average, a few years after that.

But we know this. We know the benefits. We are in agreement with the benefits. The question is how we get there.

My department has a plan. We have targets in the agreements and we have a workforce strategy, and more than that, we've already made progress on these fronts. This legislation takes what is already under way, what is written and shared with the sector,

what is currently in the federal-provincial agreement, and puts it in a piece of legislation. That is really the heart of this bill.

The Opposition wants us to legislate a work plan. They want us to put in legislation that already exists in the agreement. They want us to put in legislation that exists already as a workforce strategy. The agreement is on the department's website. It speaks to targets of affordability, accessibility, quality, inclusion, data-sharing, and reporting. We have shared our workforce strategy with the early learning and child care sector and we continue to engage with the sector as we grow and create and meet the needs and outcomes of the agreement. Expressions of interest have already been issued.

Madam Speaker, we commit to and are dedicated to accountability and transparency. The prior government may have required legislation holding them to their targets, but we do not.

I appreciate the good intentions behind the agreement and solidly support them, but I submit that this bill does not meet the standards of the House as it relates to legislation.

[3:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I want to thank the Liberals for tabling this bill. Taking care of our children is really the most important thing in our society. There is really not a more precious gift for any of us. As a mother of four, I know first-hand the importance of having someone there to help me take care of my children so that I could go to work day in and day out.

I wanted to stand today just to highlight a gap that currently exists in our child care services, and that is for traditional roles for professionals like nurses. That was highlighted just this week in a conference that nurses held.

I'd like to see the government address that gap to ensure that health care professionals like nurses have better access to child care services.

During the pandemic, when we had the shutdown, many nurses had nowhere to take their children and we brought together a special team in Cumberland, in the Amherst area, to help our nurses. It was led by an incredible child care provider named Tonia Hyslop. I want to say thank you to Tonia for doing that. She found people in our community who were willing to step up to the plate and take care of the children of our nurses, our paramedics, and our physicians so they could go to work.

There is much more work that needs to be done, Madam Speaker, and I'm looking forward to seeing what the government will be doing in the future and once again, thank the Liberals for tabling this bill.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: It is a pleasure to be able to stand today to speak to what I feel is a common-sense bill that we've called the Affordable Child Care Accountability Act.

On July 13th, our Liberal government made an historic announcement. We signed an agreement with the federal government to institute affordable, local, high-quality child care for all Nova Scotian children. This government partnership is designed to halve child care costs by 2022 and bring about \$10-a-day child care by 2026. They were the second province to sign onto that agreement and I can't overstate how much of an important change this will be, particularly for the women of Nova Scotia.

As a young woman - I have a girl gang - they're not really a gang, they're like a bunch of girls that have hung out since we were four - we talk about a lot of different things. We started our careers together, took on different professions, rose through those professions, and as my friends started to have kids, the conversation changed to, do I have a second child or do I go back to work? A lot of the time the cost of child care for that second child was going to be more than they would make in their salary.

We can talk about the pay scale and the glass ceiling for women and we can talk about all the inequalities that we face as women - that's not to the nature of this bill - but child care is one of those main things that I know each of us at some point, particularly the women - and I'm going to point out the women, even though I know that this impacts some men as well, have to make decisions that most people would never even think about making.

Again, not to generalize, but in my experience, my male friends have not had these conversations. My male friends have never had to make a decision to grow their family or to continue working. My male friends have never been in situations where they have left the workforce for an extended amount of time because they chose to have children, only to then come back into the workforce and be basically back at ground zero, or explain away the five years of gap in their resumes.

This is something that is very common that most people recognize and see. Most women feel this every single day. Women are currently feeling this. I currently have friends who are either pregnant or just giving birth to their first or second child and questioning what that means for their employability.

I come from a community that has, like, we take - "It takes a village." We live by that mantra of "It takes a village." There are always cousins and aunts and uncles and people willing to help you and lift you up. But even in those situations, even in a community that is as supportive and as wonderful as my own, there are struggles. You can't help everybody. You can't do this for everybody.

I was actually at the announcement at the Mount. I remember being very overwhelmed just thinking about the impact that this child care agreement was going to have on people. We can debate what the eight years of a Liberal government did or did not do and we can debate the best of those or the worst of those, but truly personally speaking, I would say that along with the pre-Primary Program, this was single-handedly one of the best initiatives that is a legacy moving forward.

As it has been pointed out, it doesn't matter if you live in Halifax; it doesn't matter if you live in Glace Bay; it doesn't matter if you live in Ecum Secum; it doesn't matter if you live in Cole Harbour; it doesn't matter if you live in Yarmouth. It doesn't matter where you live. Wherever you live in this province, this is something that's going to impact your kids, it's going to impact your families, and it's going to impact your women.

It's going to impact these women, whom I know all of you love - your mums and your sisters and your wives. People who really are the backbone to most of our homes and take on so much. This is something that's going to give back to them. It's going to strengthen them.

If this agreement is implemented, future generations won't be able to believe how expensive child care used to be. It's going to be one of those things where you talk about it. The kids that we're talking about right now, when they're parents, they are going to think it's crazy. It doesn't make sense that child care would have cost this much.

We want to eradicate that. We want this to happen so that you have a whole new generation of kids who don't have to worry about child care, a whole new generation of women who don't have to have this conversation and don't remember. It's so much like women not being allowed to vote. There are certain areas in this world where women's rights don't exist that we've eradicated in North America. That we've eradicated in the province of Nova Scotia.

The decision to either go back to work or to have another kid is going to be one of those bygone conversations. The decision will be a personal one; it won't be based on finances. If you choose to not have kids or you choose to have kids, it's not going to be because of economics. That's a very liberating thought.

When our government signed this agreement, the current Premier was actually pretty quiet about it. By the time the provincial election campaign came around, he couldn't

ignore this child care topic anymore. I was happy to see him support the agreement that we signed with the federal government.

On July 22nd, when the Premier unveiled his platform, he confirmed that he would honour the agreement that had been signed with the federal government. He said, “We’re not looking to unwind anything.” I can table that quote.

On September 5th, when the Premier was settling in and the country was in the middle of the federal election campaign, the Premier again stated that he hoped that any new government would honour the deal - and I can table that quote.

I’d also like to thank the Premier for his endorsement of the Liberal Party, because I voted Liberal too. That was supposed to be funny, guys, like a little laugh. Pay attention, jeez Louise. (Laughter) These don’t land well. I have to practise the delivery. It’s been a while since I’ve had to speak to these bills.

On September 21st, the day after the federal election, the Premier once again said that he expected the agreement to stand. He agreed that it was in the best interests of the province - and I can table that as well.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development supports the agreement. Earlier this month, in a press release, she was quoted as saying - I think I might have tabled two different things, but I just gave you this last one: “Safe, affordable, quality child care should be available to every family in Nova Scotia . . . Our goal is accessible child care in every community at a price that is affordable to all.” I completely agree with her 100 per cent. Safe, affordable, quality child care should be available to every family in Nova Scotia.

The Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development have repeatedly stated that they support the child care agreement. All that we’re asking for in this bill is for the Progressive Conservatives to stand by their word and have the minister publish her plan to implement affordable child care for all Nova Scotians.

The Premier is a big fan of developing and publishing plans like the one that is required in this bill. In each of the mandate letters the Premier prepared for his Cabinet colleagues, he included the line, “Within the first 90 days of your mandate, prepare a timeline for completion of all tasks below over the next four years. The initial timelines are to be updated quarterly thereafter.” I can table the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development’s mandate letter just as an example.

I think that’s a great idea. The Premier clearly believes that it’s important for his ministers to follow through on what they have been asked to do and to be accountable to the people of Nova Scotia. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, here in Opposition we are big supporters of holding ministers accountable. We were over there, too.

When the Premier was putting together the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development's mandate letter, he must've forgotten to mention that she should implement this child care deal that the Premier had committed to. That's an easy mistake to make. He had a lot on his plate. We're just trying to go back and correct this mistake in this piece of legislation, and make sure that the minister has a plan to implement the agreement.

We have established that the Premier and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development believe in the child care agreement that we signed. We have established that the Premier supports his ministers developing and publishing their plans. I don't see how the Progressive Conservatives could possibly be opposed to developing and publishing their plan to achieve something they support. It's entirely common sense. It's the entirety of this bill.

Make no mistake, we as a province cannot afford to go back on this agreement. The women and the families of this province can't afford to go back on this agreement. I have heard from so many women in my constituency who talk about what this agreement would mean to them.

I have heard from mothers who had to move their children to expensive daycare outside of their area because there was nothing else available; a mother who had to quit her job at Costco because daycare was taking more than half her paycheque. There are mothers who do shift work but have to pay for full daycare - five days a week - to keep their spots. There are families dealing with daycare fees that go up every year.

Most of all, I think what this will mean for the stay-at-home mother of five kids under 10 years old. Daycare for her kids would be up to \$2,500 a month. She can't go back to work because her family would be losing money, so she stays at home. When child care is affordable, she'll be able to pursue her career again.

Madam Speaker, the women of this province are relying on the government to implement affordable child care. This shouldn't be controversial and even though there are still major questions that need to be resolved on the implementation of the agreement, we need affordable safe child care to be accessible in every part of the province for people with every kind of work schedule.

We need this agreement to be implemented as quickly as possible. We need to know where the spaces are going, and what sort of assistance model the government is planning on using. The women of Nova Scotia deserve to be kept informed on what's going on. The only way that's possible is for the minister to publish her plan.

Madam Speaker, I take the Premier and the minister at their word that they support the affordable child care agreement in principle, but I'm still going to work as hard as I can to make sure that the government can't back out of it if they change their minds. I'm going

to work as hard as I can to make sure that the families of Nova Scotia can see what actions the government is taking to implement the agreement we signed to make child care in this province more affordable, safe, and inclusive.

The people of Nova Scotia need this agreement. Transparency demands that the plan be published. I'm hopeful that this bill will pass, and I look forward to reviewing the minister's plan to implement this historic program.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

[3:30 p.m.]

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I would like to take a few moments to talk from the heart from my experience as a multicultural mother who was lucky, actually, after university to find a very good job in Halifax. Once I got married, I was making more than my husband when I first finished university. But as soon as I had my first child, life changed.

The look on life and how the two of us can work full-time and look after the kids and the expense and who - there was no question that Rafah was going to stay home to look after the kids. His career was to be the career because I come from a multicultural that the man is the bearer. I look back at that sometimes and wonder what would have happened if I stood my ground and worked.

However, child care was a lot more than what I was making after I delivered the kids. Because I wanted to be an entrepreneur and to work part-time so I could look after the kids at the same time. It was my responsibility. I actually paid more for child care than what I was making. Right after deciding that I was going to open a travel agency, I went back to school to take the course. You are paid so low, and at the time I believe child care was \$15 an hour, and I wasn't making that much.

Then I had a second child, and that made it even more difficult. My revenue, until I made money in my new business, as a new entrepreneur in a new business - I would never be able to support the child care. It took me years before I had the money to open that business, just because of child care.

It is a very difficult thing and I worked three jobs in different things, as a medical interpreter as well. My heart goes out to all the newcomers, especially women who are from different cultures where women are in charge of looking after kids. I would talk to them, please, make sure as soon as your kids are in school, you go back to work. But child care was the big determinant of them all staying home because they look at it as, how can I afford to work and pay more for child care?

When my colleague, the member for Sydney-Membertou, was talking about the deal, I was so excited for all women, especially multicultural women. To be able one day

to go back to work and to do more than what I did. I look forward that one day my two girls will never have to make the decision that I had to make, working part-time and working less so that I can afford to look after my kids at the time.

Nowadays, child care is actually \$40 and \$45 a day. It is very expensive for families, and I look forward that this bill goes through, and we support the accountability part of the bill. Child care at \$10 a day is a dream. Canada is one of the best countries in the world, the most advanced countries in the world, and women make more than 50 per cent of the labour force. This is an economic success once we have this. We will have a lot more women working and contributing, and it will pay back all the investment, just by having more women in the workforce.

Thank you. With that, I take my chair.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to add my voice to those of women, or men, who are talking about child care in the Legislature here today, because for so many of us, it was a really difficult thing to find. I actually left the workforce for 10 years and stayed home because for many of us, once we get over that two-child mark, forget it. It was also difficult because in my particular case, my husband - my second husband - travelled, so it really was me. I was it. Before that, I was a widow, so again, it was me. I was it.

I had the additional challenge of working strange hours. For many years I was employed in the television industry, so I didn't work the bankers' hours or a 9-to-5 existence. I couldn't put my children in daycare. I think that is still a hurdle that we have to overcome. There's still that issue there for people who do work non-traditional hours. Sometimes, I would be going to work at 4:30 in the morning when Breakfast Television first went on the air - a blast from the past.

For me, child care was always a big concern and really for many people once you have children - and my leader is about to find this out very soon - once you have a child, if you want child care, it's going to cost. In some cases, we actually see people putting more out in child care costs than their mortgage, or what they pay in rent. When you stop and think about what that costs, it's a huge burden for young families to bear, I would say. That's why having affordable child care and making sure that it's available throughout the province is a huge deal.

I loved working. I loved my job. I directed all kinds of news programs. I really loved what I did. I loved getting up in the morning and going to work and planning shows and things like that and I hated to leave but like so many women before me, I had to make a choice. What I want is for my daughters not to have to make that choice. I want my son not to have to make that choice, because nowadays people are starting to think about it a

little differently and more men are taking time off with children. I want for my children and for my grandchildren, who at this point are just a glimmer in my eye and a thought for the future, I want their parents not to have to leave the workforce because they can't find quality affordable daycare and child care.

When I am an old lady - and no cracks about saying I'm there already - I want to be sitting in a rocking chair and know that I was part of a government that made fundamental changes here in this province long after the members on this side of the House are dead and buried or cremated or rolled off a boat or whatever. Long after we're gone, we will know, and our descendants will know, we were part of a significant thing that changed.

When we think about the early learning, the free pre-Primary program, and what a difference that has made for so many young people, I often talked about the fact that it was actually an anti-poverty program when I was Minister of DCS because many families could not afford to send their children to early learning. What we do know is that children who have that opportunity tend to do better in school. If they do better in school, they are more likely to stay in school and to complete some post-secondary education.

If they complete post-secondary education, they are more likely to earn more, they are less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system, they're more likely to have better health outcomes. There are a whole lot of things that come out of things like the free pre-Primary program and access to quality child care and daycare.

Throughout so much of this world, we know that if you lift up a woman, you lift up her entire family. If you educate a woman, you educate her entire family. That's why ensuring that women have the opportunity to continue working because they have access to good quality child care can make such a difference in the life of a family. When we lift each other up through programs like this, we all do better. Here in Nova Scotia, we will all do better.

Now I will just point out we could have had a child care program back in 2006. My friend Ken Dryden had gone across the country and negotiated agreements with every single province. We were all set to go. But the federal Opposition - the Conservatives and the NDP - brought down the Paul Martin government and that child care program went out the window. What did we get? I think it was \$100 per child that went to everybody - it went out the window. It was not even comparable, what we ended up with.

So here we are, 15 years later. Finally it is going to happen because of the hard work of my seatmate here and the excellent people at the Department of EECD - the name hasn't been changed, has it? Okay, good - and the federal government. Long after I am no longer walking on this Earth, I know that we were part of this and it'll be good for Nova Scotia children and their children and their children because we're lifting people up.

With those few remarks, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I can't resist just saying a few words, having spent a great deal of the last four years advocating for formal child care. I have now left that file in the able hands of my colleague, the member for Halifax Needham.

I do want to say at this moment, as we are still in the throes of COVID-19, as we think about things like an economic recovery, and we'll debate this, I think, on the next bill around gender equity and gender-based analyses, but this is something whose time has long since come. In Dartmouth South, just in the last year, we lost two child care centres. In my immediate neighbourhood, which will seem very small geographically to those of you probably in more spread-out ridings, but we've lost two neighbourhood daycares. There is no regulated daycare in downtown Dartmouth right now. That is because of the lack of stable funding.

It's because, obviously, of a lot of things: It has to do with housing, it has to do with the real estate market, it has to do with COVID, but it has to do with the lack of stable funding. That's something we've advocated for, for a long time. I think it's also worth noting that Quebec did this a long time ago. The notion that the federal government tried it in 2006 and then we never could have done it again until the federal government saved us, now I think is a little bit simplistic. We have been pushing for a provincial solution which, quite frankly, I think, should have come a long time ago.

We know that there was action taken on this file and we appreciate that action, but the reality was, and until we see more movement still is, it has been incredibly difficult for child care centres to operate, and it has been incredibly difficult for the folks who staff those centres to have a decent life. Most of them make far below a living wage. There is a wage floor that has helped somewhat, but there's so much work to be done there. We saw in the government platform during the election this idea of a pension for doctors. We've been asking for a pension for early childhood educators for years.

While we know that there are issues with physician recruitment, quite frankly, one of the top things I hear from early childhood educators when I speak to them is if I stay in this job, I'm going to retire in poverty. That's how low the wages are. For me - we're all sharing our personal experiences a little bit - I had three kids in 18 months. I know, people always try to do math when I say that, but true story, all mine.

I paid for those three kids to be in daycare and it was punishing. It was more than my mortgage by a long shot, and we've had this conversation on the floor of this House, but can you afford to work? Does it make sense for you to work? That question became so offensive to me, because the answer, quite frankly, is no, but I did it anyway because it was important to me.

As my colleague for Clayton Park West has pointed out, not all women have that agency. Not all women can make that decision. That decision is made easier when as government we create the framework that allow those choices to be made by women, by families. I think it is incredibly important that we continue on this path, but I don't want to lose the thread as we talk about this of how we move forward out of COVID.

Not only is this an important program and priority generally, but it is imperative right now. We've seen women's labour force participation drop. It has not recovered at the same pace as men's, and this is a massive issue. I was listening to the radio, I think this morning or yesterday, and the former CEO of Pepsi was on. They said to her, how did you make it this far? How can we make sure that more women break this corporate glass ceiling? One of the first things she said was child care, which if you haven't been thinking about these issues might seem like it comes out of left field a little bit, but it doesn't, it really doesn't.

[3:45 p.m.]

I would urge this government to do everything they can, not only to honour this agreement but to acknowledge the provincial responsibility, frankly - an agency that we have in going even further and in making sure that we move towards not only ensuring that everyone has quality, safe, accessible, affordable child care but that the workers in those child care centres are paid a living wage, that they don't retire in poverty. That is part of a piece of understanding that the economy of the future, I think - and I am not the only one who thinks it - is really the caring economy, which is part of the green economy. Those are the CCAs and the ECEs and the folks who are taking care of people, because that is a really difficult thing to automate. It really is. I am forever quoting the economist Armine Yalnizyan in this Chamber, but these are the new middle-class jobs.

This is really the backbone of our economy going forward, and I hope that the government takes all of that into account. I hope that they don't - I'm glad to see that we are moving past some partisan divisions in terms of this government not aligning themselves with their federal - I don't know what they would call them - third cousins. I don't know what they are. (Interruption) Whatever it is, those people with a similar name in the federal Parliament.

You know, I have taken a very strong position against this approach. I am glad that this government has not followed suit and I hope that it will remain that way.

I hope that these other issues that I have pointed to are also taken into account, because not only is this good and laudable and important, but it is absolutely vital if we want to move forward as a province, if we want to thrive, and if we want to come out the other side of this pandemic with any semblance of equity - sort of gender equity, in particular, in the workforce. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I will just take a few moments to talk about this very important bill and program that Nova Scotians will be taking advantage of in a very short time.

When the current Leader of the Liberal Party decided to run for Leader of the Party, I had a pretty frank conversation with him. One of the things that I said to him was that I was going to support whoever brought forward real child care for Nova Scotians.

We go back to what the member had said about the federal government and the missed opportunity where both the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP federally voted down universal child care, and I think of the impacts that that's had on millions of Nova Scotians - sorry, millions of Canadians. Because of their short-sightedness and their wanton ability to try to grab federal power, Nova Scotians, some Nova Scotians, a lot of Nova Scotians live in poverty. A lot of our mothers and sisters and friends missed out on opportunities.

I don't have to look very far than my own house, where we have three children and my partner, Rena, decided she wanted to stay home and it essentially ended her career. She is just now, eight years later, getting back to where she was eight years ago.

Madam Speaker, I have heard some of the conversations that were had, so before I move on to that, I do want to thank the member for Timberlea-Prospect and the member for Sydney-Membertou. You know, this is big. This is big for Nova Scotians.

There was a bit of information that was said by the member for Dartmouth South about the wages for ECEs. I would remind her that when the Liberal government came into power after five years of the NDP, early childhood educators were the lowest paid in all of Canada. They had five years to do something about that. They had five years to implement universal child care.

There were comments about the funding and the money and why we shouldn't have done - or why we could have done things or didn't do things. I would argue that investing \$45 million to get \$650 million is a darned good investment for Nova Scotians.

When the Leader of the Official Opposition saw the opportunity to get universal child care, he jumped on it. I think most of us would. I would hope that most of us would. I look forward to this rolling out. I know we're not supposed to look back. People say don't dwell on the past, but I do on this one because I think of all the lives this would have changed federally if all of our - some of those - federal colleagues would have had the foresight. I know that the new government - I look forward to them rolling this out. I look forward to it.

I know at first, we sat in this Legislature and we were attacked for pre-Primary. We took weeks and weeks of how it was going to fail, how it wasn't going to be a success, how if they came into power, they were going to pull that program, how it was being rushed out. We do now know - and, again, hindsight is 20/20 - that that is one of the most successful child care programs in all of Canada.

This is an extension of that. It is the continuation of that. It's giving the opportunity for every household to succeed, not because you have a lot of money in your pocket but because government is putting in place programs that include everyone, not just the few. I would hope that they will continue on.

One of the things I know the member for Sydney-Membertou and the Leader of the Official Opposition fought for was a higher wage and higher pay for ECEs so that they can make a living, so that they're respected, and so that they can raise their own families. I hope that the government of the day is respectful of that agreement. I know that the Premier has committed to that program, and I hope that as it is written, therefore it shall become.

With those few words, I'll sit down.

THE SPEAKER: The time allotted for consideration of the bill has expired.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 15.

Bill No. 15 - Gender-based Analysis Plus Implementation Act.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: I'm very excited to stand up today to discuss a bill on Gender-based Analysis Plus Implementation Act, Bill No. 15.

It's so important to me and to many, titled as I just said, and it will be important to ensuring that the policies, programs, and initiatives brought forward by our government are analyzed through the lens of diverse women, men, and people with other gender identities to ensure that systemic inequalities are minimized and mitigated entirely.

In this Act, gender-based analysis plus means the analytical tool used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of women, men, and people with other gender identities. GBA+ acknowledges that the way that we each experience things is not solely based on our sex or gender but also on multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to who we are. This tool will also include an

examination of a range of other intersecting identity factors such as age, sexual orientation, disability, education, language, geography, culture, income, ethnicity, race, and religion.

GBA+ is an analytical process that provides a rigorous method for the assessment of systemic inequities, as well as a means to assess how diverse groups of individuals may experience policies, programs, and initiatives differently.

This Act would mandate that the Public Service Commission ensures all employees of the Province receive training on gender-based analysis plus and that all policy program and legislative submissions to the Treasury and Policy Board and to the Executive Council include a gender-based analysis plus assessment.

Since 1995 the Government of Canada has been committed to using GBA+ in the development of policies, programs, and legislation. This implementation has provided federal officials with the means to continually improve their work and attain better results for Canadians by being more responsive to specific needs and circumstances.

If the federal government has already implemented gender-based analysis plus into their policies and programs, it only makes common sense that the provincial government follows suit and adopts the same framework, as the tools for implementation already exist.

We are seeing a similar framework adopted municipally, as well. Before I left HRM council, I was successful in having council's approval for its very first Women's Advisory Committee. (Applause) Thank you. You can see by my standing here today it's an extension of the work that I did on HRM council. Yes, I've given everyone the heads-up in that regard.

This committee of diverse women has moved and recommended the creation of staff reports regarding implementation on GBA+ as part of the councillor training and orientation, which was passed by the Executive Standing Committee of Halifax Regional Council.

We're seeing the federal and the municipal governments adopt the training necessary to promote inclusive policies and programming, Madam Speaker. I stand here today encouraging this government to move forward with this bill to ensure that all three orders of government are participating in this movement of inclusivity. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Madam Speaker, this bill calls for employees of the Province to receive training on GBA+ and for policy, program, and legislative submissions to Treasury and Policy Board and to Executive Council to include a gender-based analysis plus. Of course we support this bill because it's something that we've been arguing a long time for.

As mentioned in the bill, gender-based analysis can be used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs, and services on diverse groups, in particular women and people who are gender-diverse. This is work we need to do. So many of our laws, institutions, and programs continue to be gender-biased and either exclude or not meet the needs of more than half the population, and I think we were just discussing that.

We were also just discussing challenges around women in the workforce. Despite closing the gender wage gap, we know that women in Nova Scotia still only earn 73 cents of every dollar earned by men in the province. The government has a huge role to play in that in terms of our policies and what they enable or don't. We know that trans and non-binary people in Canada continue to face underemployment, barriers to health care, and fear of harassment.

[4:00 p.m.]

Over the past eight years, we in the NDP have asked the Liberal government many times to table their gender-based analysis of legislation. We asked in Question Period, we asked in budget estimates. We filed FOIs. We asked in committees. We didn't get much back, Madam Speaker.

I know that the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth wasn't there at that time, and I'm glad to see this bill come forward, but I will say that this is not the first time that this idea has occurred. Certainly it's something, like child care, whose time has more than come.

We have lots of examples of programs that could have benefited from this kind of analysis. We just talked about child care, the fact that up until a few months ago, there was really no movement on child care, particularly affordable access to child care, as well as ECE wages. That is a gendered issue, Madam Speaker.

We also would have been really interested to see a gender-based analysis of the elimination of school boards. As I think we were discussing yesterday, school boards were the only elected body with gender parity and the entry point for many women, in particular, into political office.

We've seen prenatal classes cancelled in Nova Scotia, inexplicably. I wonder if a gender-based analysis was done of that decision.

But looking forward, Madam Speaker, I think it's really imperative to pick up where I left off a few minutes ago, to say that since 2020, since the pandemic struck, our caucus has continually advocated for an economic recovery task force that is made up of all parties and of all sectors of the economy. The reason we have done that, in part, is to ensure that stimulus spending, in particular, as we move out of this pandemic and into whatever our new economic mode is, is subject to that gender-based analysis so that we

can rebuild a different and more equitable economy than the one that we have in some ways left behind.

We have fared better than many of our other provinces and countries around the world when it comes to the last few waves of COVID-19, but we didn't escape the disproportionate impact of this pandemic on women. We also did not escape the disproportionate impact on women of the stimulus spending to date.

We filed an FOI asking if any of the appropriations related to COVID-19 and that were done by the previous government were subjected to a gender-based analysis and, just as a refresher, most of that money was spent on building highways, so - spoiler alert - no, it wasn't.

We know that the government spent money to keep child care centres open. There's work that was done so we're not saying that work wasn't done. It was. The point of a gender-based analysis is really to reveal unconscious bias. It's so that when we're doing things the way that we've always done them and in the way that we think they are important - we are all smart enough in this Chamber to know that we're going to miss stuff - we're not going to be able to take things into account. That's why when we talk about an analysis or a lens, we are creating a system that can reveal some of those unconscious biases. I would suggest that those biases are really alive and well in the way that the government operates.

We've come a long way, but we have a long way to go. In our caucus we brought forward a number of pieces of legislation designed directly to impact this: paid parental leave for municipal councillors and MLAs, which we were glad to be part of that conversation that led to a change in both legislation and in policy for this Chamber and for municipal government. We have continually advocated for set sitting hours - so far, so good, this session, but we'll see. We've also advocated for a legislative calendar, so we have - we're talking about fixed election dates. We all really disagree on July but we all agree on fixed election dates. We agree with the government's rationale on fixed election dates - it gives us time to plan.

Similarly, if we had a legislative calendar, like most other legislative bodies, we would also have time to plan. It would make it remarkably easier, in a disproportionate fashion, for the women and gender-diverse folks in this Chamber, or who aspire to be in this Chamber, if they knew when they were going to have to be here.

We've advocated for affordable child care, free birth control, free menstrual products and expanded access to trans-health care in Nova Scotia.

It has been noted already that the Throne Speech we heard just a couple of weeks ago didn't mention women at all. I know, again, that that doesn't mean that no action will be taken or that there won't be any emphasis on equity, but it is something that we are alert

to. It is something we are watching and thinking about because we know that we can't have a healthy economy - forget the economy, we can't have a healthy society without women. We can't have a healthy economy without women and gender-diverse folks, and we know we need a government right now, at this moment in time, that will put the needs of women and gender-diverse people at the forefront, including prioritizing child care, health care, and better wages for low-wage workers.

This is the care economy. This is what we have been talking about for some time now. It isn't pouring money into the same old - I'm not trying to pick on Public Works - sort of shovel-ready projects and overpasses and roundabouts and highways that we can pour money into. That's not because it's not important. Of course we need roads. I'm sure we'll spend lots of time talking about roads. But the reality is that when the pandemic hit, what did we do? We defaulted to what we have always done to stimulate the economy. We put money into shovel-ready projects. But if we had just taken a minute and thought about what else we could have done, I think we could have come up with some pretty great ideas. The great news is it's not too late.

We support this bill. I would urge the government to pass this bill. We think that progressive feminist gender-based analysis should be at the core of the government's work as it is in ours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I wish to thank the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for introducing this bill as well as the member for Dartmouth South for their comments and passion around this bill.

A couple of things that I would like to address - I won't speak long. The Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives has actually been mandated to create an equity impact assessment tools guide on decision-making processes that support anti-racism, accessibility, gender equity, social equity, and inclusion in government budgets, policies, and programs. Status of Women will collaborate with the office in the development of this tool and training with a gender lens.

I know that the bill speaks directly to changes with the Public Service Commission, but I felt in my place that I should acknowledge that because I think it's really important for all of us in this Chamber to realize that there has been a lot of great work that was started under the Liberal government. We continue to evolve as a society, and the only thing that is absolute is change.

We're constantly working together and collaborating together to address these issues. The GBA+ has been on the agenda for annual meetings of both the Atlantic and FPT forum of ministers responsible for the status of women over the last several years. Again, I recognize and give a lot of credit to the past ministers responsible for the Status

of Women and Community Services. We know that in Nova Scotia, gender is a policy lens that's considered for decision-making at the Executive Council.

The Status of Women has been championing and coordinating approaches to GBA+ and working with departments over many years to build an understanding and support training and develop resources. Training for public servants has been developed and is being considered as part of the diversity and inclusion certificate program offered by the Public Service Commission. I would go as well to say that just in, I think, the next week or two, the first pilot of the refresh GBA+ training is scheduled for early November - that's what it is, November 2021, with the PSC policy staff.

We know that this is an important bill. I acknowledge it being an important bill and one that certainly addresses an issue that has to be constantly on our radar. Constantly. If it's not, then we're losing focus of what humanity is.

I know that policy development should be inclusive of many points of view to ensure that government programs and policies are developed with all Nova Scotians in mind. We are, as a government, committed to decision-making that is respectful of gender diversity and inclusive of demographic, cultural, and ethnic identities. While many advances have been made toward gender equality, it is a continuous process.

As I said, it has to be on our radar all the time. We recognize that there are gaps. As we move forward, we will continue recognizing that there are gaps, because continuously things are always changing. A centralized approach is being developed to ensure that gender and equity impacts are considered in policy development and decision-making right across government.

Again, I think some great steps have been made with the previous government, and I believe that a lot of the bills that have been introduced by the NDP have been addressed with the past government. It is my goal, and our Party's goal, to continue that good work and ensure that gender equality, equity, benefits everyone, because everyone does matter.

Again, I just want to thank the member for the bill, as well as the member for Dartmouth South for their comments as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Madam Speaker, I must say that it is lovely to see you up there, because for many years we didn't see women up there. In fact, yesterday I read a letter from Francene Cosman, who was in fact a Deputy Speaker of this House. That was back in the 1990s. But we have not yet had a woman Speaker.

Last night, I was talking about looking around this Chamber and seeing lots of middle-aged white men who made decisions for people, and really to this day that

continues, in large part. It's funny, I was flipping through our Rules and Forms of Procedure earlier this session, and it's clear to me that parts have been cleaned up, but then I started looking, and Page 16, "Pecuniary Interest of Member in question": "No Member is entitled to vote on any question in which he has a direct pecuniary interest." Then we go along to 24: "Every Member desiring to speak is to rise in his place and address himself." It goes on. Point of Order: the Speaker, "before giving his decision, but his decision . . ."

[4:15 p.m.]

We go on and on. I've got a bunch clipped here, because one day I was in here looking through here, and boy, if you ever wanted any clear indication that women were not imagined to have a place in this place, then this green book is it. I would suggest that a good place that we could start is actually revamping this book and putting it in language that is not so gendered. I often think that this must be what it's like for people who are Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, people of colour, folks who are non-binary. So much of the time they must go through life and know that they're not part of the imagined mainstream.

When we look at gender-based analysis, the reason we're trying to do this is to level the playing field and make sure that we don't overlook things along our way, we don't overlook gendered impacts on the people we serve.

For millennia, men have been the default. You think of the quotations that have struck many of us: "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." "Man does not live by bread alone." All of these are about men. Men were assumed to be the default. What we do know is that's not actually the case. When we don't look at what the gendered impacts are when we're making policy, when we're making determinations, we make mistakes. We overlook things.

I've been reading this book *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Pérez, who was responsible for actually getting Jane Austen on the 10-pound note in the U.K. She talks about what happens when you don't consider women in policy-making in a pandemic or an epidemic. It talks about women dying from Ebola because nobody actually stopped to think about what were the needs of women who were actually giving birth in the middle of a pandemic.

There are so many instances where we don't consider the particular situations of women. Even to this day, most medical drugs are not tested on women. They're often not tested on women at different stages of their menstrual cycle. A drug can act differently in a woman's body when she's menstruating, when she's ovulating, when she's passed her fertile years. Still to this day, that persists. It can have consequences for women.

Think back to the '60s to when there was a drug that women were getting to help them with morning sickness. The name of it just went out of my head - thalidomide. Thank

you very much to the Minister of Health and Wellness. I should have known that the honorable minister would remember that. When we think back to what happened - they didn't test it out, so we didn't know. The result was that many children were born to women who had been taking thalidomide who had great, great difficulties. Some of them didn't survive because of the birth problems that resulted.

Several years ago, our party introduced gender wage gap legislation. That was because we were acknowledging that the situation for women was, in fact, different. A few years ago, Engineers Nova Scotia actually published a study. It showed what women engineers and men engineers were making at every step in their career. From the time they graduated and then every year, they would look at the average salaries.

Without exception, from the minute women graduated, they were making less than the men. What the sunshine of that particular study enabled women to do, when they were interviewing with an engineering firm, was to say yes, I would like the salary that men get. So sunshine is a good disinfectant.

I did want to thank the Minister responsible for Community Services and the Status of Women Act for her complimentary remarks about the work that was done previously. It was something that I pushed. I wish we'd gone further.

I can tell you that there are civil servants who are trained in GBA+ now. They went to Ottawa to receive the training so they, in fact, can train other civil servants. Rather than just having a box on our submissions to Cabinet or to Treasury Board to tick that says that there is a gender lens, but that there's actually an established process and that people understand exactly what it is that we're looking for. So we understand that as policies, as programs move forward, they are given a good, thorough review, because sometimes things are inadvertent.

I'm sure it was inadvertent that the word "women," or "woman," does not appear in the Throne Speech and that blueberries got more mentions than women did.

I would like to let my colleague from Dartmouth South know that there were projects during COVID-19 that absolutely affected women. For example, the decision to pay the daycare fees for parents, when we had to shut down daycares during that first wave when everything was shut down, that was huge. In fact, when I was meeting with Status of Women ministers, we had some experts in on the gendered effects of COVID-19 and we asked, what's a good example of a program that helps women?

That was the first one she mentioned, and she mentioned Nova Scotia. She said that particular program was huge, and it was only done, I think, by one other province but it had a big impact. So, I wanted to be clear that in fact during COVID-19, we did do things that were important to women and that had huge impacts on families.

I did also want to mention that there are projects that we supported. For example, the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association is looking to build a healing lodge and we worked with them and gave them financing to develop their proposal, et cetera, all during that time. So, there were projects that did receive funding that were not sort of the normal shovel-ready projects, that did receive funding from the provincial government.

I will just say that if we want to continue to improve life for Nova Scotians we have to stop and think about how things affect different communities, including the community of women, the community of gender-diverse persons, visible minorities. We have to not just think about the white male majority, which isn't a white male majority because women outnumber men.

We have to view things with a different eye and that's what this bill is about. That's why I'm so pleased that my colleague has put it forth and I would ask my colleagues on all sides of the House for their support. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'll just say a few words on this bill. First, I want to thank the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for introducing this bill on gender-based analysis plus.

I wanted to start by saying probably many of my colleagues here in the House also get the same question, but I often have people asking me, why did you go into politics? Why are you serving in this way? Sometimes I'll share a story.

When I was 16, I remember looking at a newspaper and it was the results of a municipal election. The picture of the election results was of six white men, all aged probably 70 and up. I just remember the visual and looking at that as a 16-year-old teenager saying this is wrong. This is fundamentally wrong. These are probably all men to be respected but they don't reflect our community. They do not reflect the diversity, whether it is through gender or ethnicity, of the community in which I lived. I knew from that moment on that there needs to be change.

Sometimes in life when you see a change that needs to happen you have to get in there and try to make that change yourself. That was one of the first times that I remember feeling motivated, that I wanted to be part of that change. I am so proud to represent the people of Cumberland North here in this Legislature.

There's a lot of work to be done. A couple of years ago I joined a national organization called Equal Voice. (Applause). Yes, they do a lot of great work. They tabled a document, or they prepared a document which I will table here in the House. It is called *Women's Underrepresentation in Politics: Systemic Change Initiative Briefing*. One of the quotes is:

The systemic change initiative is a three-year project funded by the Department of Women and Gender Equality. The goal of this project is to identify and address some of the key systemic barriers with the Canadian legislative assemblies that contribute to the underrepresentation of women. Specifically, this project is striving to achieve gender-sensitive parliaments and a culture conducive to retaining more women in politics.

I won't go into all the details, but this document highlights some of the areas where we need to see change if we are to truly create a gender-balanced government.

The first one is harassment and sexual harassment policy and looking at the issue of imbalance of power and political dynamics.

Second is security policy - looking at improving workplace safety for legislators and their staff. I remember the first, probably six months as a legislator having several threats - one was a death threat - my staff included. I have had a male constituency assistant for the last two years, and I have had zero threats. It makes a difference. But you shouldn't, as women - we shouldn't be exposed to the level of harassment and threats that we face.

The third one is the legislative decorum, and I won't go into more detail about that. We have all witnessed that first-hand.

Pregnancy and parental leave policy - making legislation around that to make it easier and more attractive. I'm so proud of my MLA just across the border in New Brunswick, MLA Megan Mitton, who had a baby just this year. She still serves. She's a member of the Green Party and represents the people of the Memramcook area so well.

Child care arrangements and infrastructure - the last bill that we debated here in the House addressed that specifically. Will we see a day when there's a daycare right here in the Nova Scotia Legislature? We do tend to see the traditional roles of women that it would help, but I remember the last four years, in my former political party, two of the single parents were dads. It's not going to just help the females, but as roles change and evolve in our society, a daycare would help both women and men here in this Legislature.

The sixth one is family travel arrangements.

The seventh one is parliamentary calendar and sitting hours. I know we have had some colleagues here table legislation in the past sessions asking for set hours for this Legislative Assembly. I have to say, as a registered nurse, I was shocked the first session that we had and just what an unhealthy workplace we work in as MLAs, whether it be looking at the hours that the Legislature was sitting - we get up in the morning and respond to our constituency work. We would have our caucus meetings, and we would come here

to the Legislature and we would be here until midnight and then go home, sleep for four or five hours, get up and start all over again.

A lot of the work that I did, consultant work before becoming an MLA, was around healthy workplaces and making sure that there's balance. I can say even for all the legislative staff here, I'm sure that it's challenging for them to perform to the best of their ability when they're working in a workplace that maybe isn't the healthiest. It's important that we look at that. If we want to have the best outcomes and produce the best legislation, we need to create the best workplace environment for each one of us to work in every day.

[4:30 p.m.]

I believe that our House Leaders and our Leaders should always be looking for how we can improve these sessions so that each one of us can perform to the best of our ability with a proper healthy balance. That's the nurse in me: I had to just share that - a parliamentary calendar and sitting hours so that we know when we are expected to be here in the Legislature.

Modernization, a proxy voting policy, and remote participation policy - coming into this session, one of the things that I suggested that most members wouldn't know, only the House Leaders, is I'm double-vaccinated. So I had no problem with asking people to have their vaccinations, but I also suggested, why don't we give the option for all MLAs to join virtually in the event that you wake up in the morning and you have a COVID-19 symptom?

In the past, we would all push through and we'd come here if we were dying, we would show up for work. We all know, now more than ever with COVID-19, that we shouldn't be doing that. If any one of us has symptoms of COVID-19, we should not be here in this Legislature. So we are encouraging all workplaces to make it easier for their employees to be able to still do their work, whether it is the work-at-home option. We want to try to make it as easy as possible, yet we aren't willing to do that for ourselves. What kind of message is that sending to Nova Scotians, when we are not giving each other the option of joining the legislative sitting in a hybrid model if we have COVID-19 symptoms?

One of the suggestions that I had was to give MLAs the option if they are having any symptoms of illness and offer testing twice a week. So before you go home to your families, you can have a test to know that you're not taking COVID-19 back home to your family or to your community. Having a remote participation policy - we all know, since this pandemic has occurred, that it's possible - why are we not setting an example here with our Legislature? Even caucuses. You know, people driving all the way from Sydney once a week for two- or three-hour meetings - should there not be a remote policy there?

The ninth one is fixed election dates. We know that's already continuously being debated here in the House. And the tenth one is staff support and compensation. I just

wanted to highlight those, the great work of Equal Voice, both here in Canada and throughout Nova Scotia as well.

The last comment I will make on this bill before I sit down is I want to make note of - the gender-based analysis plus is not just looking at gender. We are looking at the other factors such as age, sexual orientation, disability, education, language, geography, culture, and income. I will say that the people I represent in Cumberland North - well, throughout Cumberland County an assessment was done and I believe the assessment showed Cumberland - 26 per cent of people who live in Cumberland identify as having a disability and I believe the provincial average is something like 11 or 14 per cent. I will table those documents.

We have a high percentage of people who identify as having a disability and that is going to factor into what type of work they can do. Are we ensuring that what we are able to offer in the workforce is reflective of those disabilities?

I want to say I support this bill. I support us doing a better job of doing a gender-based analysis, and a great place to start is right here in our own workplace, right here in the Legislature. Thank you again to the member for tabling this bill and I look forward to more comments.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Going from the honourable member for Cumberland North's comments about what we can do today or as part of our workplace in this House, I also thought it might be helpful to offer some background and context of actually working with gender-based analysis, both with international projects and within the federal government.

The idea of gender-based analysis and doing an assessment based on gender actually came out of the world of international development. Post-World War II, there was a great concern amongst the world to support what was called development in terms of increasing economic outputs and improving social conditions. Early on, that focus was actually just on the economics. So like, let's build the roads, let's build the buildings, we'll set up some school systems - whether this was in Europe post-WWII and then expanded to areas such as Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America - so we'll build things and that will create an economy and people's lifestyles will improve and life will be better.

Fairly early on, people figured out that in fact that wasn't what was happening. Despite millions of dollars of investment in infrastructure, for instance, actually the standard of living and people's social and health outcomes, weren't improving.

Early on, people started to look at what would make the difference in social development. So if building roads isn't equalling that people get better and healthier lives, what else can you do? That's when people started to think about health care issues like

basic vaccinations, other things like that. Even with those programs, still the outcomes of those programs, the outcomes of those investments from around the world into different programs wasn't very good. So people started to look at the issue of gender, and it was really in international development where this idea of having a gender analysis developed.

I could actually speak for a very long time on the different types of systems and processes that exist, but I can say that since the 1980s, any international development project, whether it is funded by Canada, whether it's through the World Bank or the UN, has a gender lens applied to it, and organizations such as UNICEF, for instance, have a very well-developed approach to looking at questions of gender.

I think one of the things we need to consider when we look at this bill is that it is very simple in its wording but it's also very doable, so it's easily actually operationalized. I think too - I reflect on my experience in the federal government. In the federal government, this idea of a gender-based analysis really started to come forward in about the last 20 years. Now, in a memorandum to Cabinet - so when proposals go forward - in fact, they have to include gender-based analysis. When it started, it sort of elevated the issue of gender up to issues like regional impact and francophone impact, so all the other things that are sort of elevated, I guess I would say, in federal policymaking - gender was added to those.

What this means is that Cabinet expects to see fairly sophisticated analysis of what programs and policies and laws would have impact on, in terms of gender.

I think too, just to comment on the GBA+ - the idea of gender-based analysis or gender development, I mean, there has been a 60- to 70-year progress in terms of the theory and the practice. The plus is particularly important because that adds the idea of intersectionality. I think folks were referencing that earlier. That's the idea that, in fact, people experience the world in very different ways based on the different types of oppression or discrimination they might face, and that that oppression or exclusion is not only along the lines of gender. It can be gender identity, sexual orientation, race, class, religion.

And it's contextual, so that someone's experience - so my experience, for instance, as a genderqueer person, might be different in this House than it is out on the street. Recognizing, too, that the very specific parts of our lawmaking, our policy-making, our program-making, have to take into account this type of analysis that's contextual, and again, completely operational. There's a whole body of research and there's a whole body of analytical tools that are available for folks to use when adopting this practice.

I guess I would just say, too, that as we think about this going forward, like I said, I'm not going to say it's easy to operationalize, because in a lot of cases actually what you're asking for is a cultural shift, a new way of thinking about programs and policies. So also thinking about things like, what sort of training capacity building is needed in this

House and in government writ large? What sort of research can we access, and also the creation of assessments that folks in government are supported to use.

That's all I have. Thanks.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the comments. Just a clarification with the Clerk - on this particular bill we haven't run out of the allotted time. I just want to make sure that I'm following the proper procedure before I close debate on this bill.

THE SPEAKER: We have until 4:53 p.m.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm going to conclude this bill. Before we call our next one, I want to thank everybody for their feedback, of course, as always. I now, Mr. Speaker, close debate on Bill No. 15.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I adjourn debate on Bill No. 15.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 15.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 29.

Bill No. 29 - Green Jobs Training Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: It's a pleasure to rise to say a few words on a bill that was proposed by my colleague, the member for Kings South, our Critic for the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

I know other members in the House have tabled in the past green job bills, so I know the member for Halifax Chebucto and probably others as well are interested in the sustainable revolution and the opportunities that are before the province of Nova Scotia.

This is a phenomenon that is happening all over the world, but certainly we have those opportunities standing right before us.

The bill that we're proposing is looking at ensuring that we are as prepared as we possibly can be to take advantage of that opportunity that is being spoken about and that economists all over the globe, people like Mark Carney, are singling out as potentially the biggest opportunity of a lifetime right now.

Certainly, in a province like Nova Scotia, which is similar to other provinces in our country, we are still largely based on resources. Our resource-based economy is still important to Nova Scotians from coast to coast: fisheries, agriculture, mining, forestry. These are important sectors.

The opportunity that we have if we're going to invest public funds and prepare our workforce is to ensure that we are not leaving any opportunity behind in terms of how we transition some of these resource-based economies to ensure that they are sustainable in the long run. It's in their interest, I would submit, to ensure that government works with them, to ensure that they are sustainable and have future-looking, forward-looking policies in how we train people.

For example, the initiative that we brought forward through the transition fund with the forestry transition team led to a new forestry program in the Nova Scotia Community College in Truro. That's an opportunity to train Nova Scotians to ensure that they are able to take advantage of the paradigm shift that's happening within that industry: a reduction of clear-cutting; less reliance on high volume, low value and ideally more reliance on the higher-value, lower-volume opportunities that are in front of us. There are many opportunities in that sector, whether it's mass timber or other types of quality products that can be made from the products that we have right here.

In the bill we talk about energy a lot, because after all, we still are 55 per cent, give or take on the day, reliant on coal. That's been spoken about in this House a lot in this session, which is good.

We talk about ensuring that we have training for solar energy installation, wind energy installation, and then on the demand side of electricity, of course, the opportunities to train Nova Scotians for heat pump installation, home efficiency programs, and battery storage.

These are some of the programs that we see having a lot of demand right now, but they're not limited to these professions. Why we cite these is because we know as we transition away from coal and we see the opportunities in these alternative-energy, more-renewable energy sectors that we simply don't have enough people trained to fully take advantage of that opportunity.

We know that with the tender that's out there alone, that we're hoping the government comes out with soon, that there are 4,000 jobs calculated to be associated with those 350 megawatts of what's going to end up being wind, because wind is the cheapest form of electricity in the province.

This is how Saskatchewan and other provinces were able to get the lowest-cost energy based on tenders that went out. But 4,000 jobs in rural Nova Scotia is a good thing. Do we have enough people? Do we have enough people trained? is the question.

[4:45 p.m.]

The bill talks a lot about the opportunities for newcomers being trained, for young people, people of different backgrounds who have been left behind, I would submit, in other past economic recoveries. That's why this is not just a new idea. This is something that people are talking about all over - build back better is a term that's used a lot - ensuring that we have equitable access to these types of programs.

That's why it's important to look at that when you're putting new programs in place, when you're looking at tuition models, ensuring that all Nova Scotians have an opportunity to take advantage of these job training opportunities. That tender constitutes 10 per cent of our total electricity in this province. A huge, huge opportunity.

It's not just the people who are directly in the renewable energy sector, who install the wind turbines. This is the forestry sector that's involved in ensuring that they have the work and the land preparation before hundreds or thousands of these wind turbines are installed.

Likewise with solar energy. We obviously have the direct impact of the installers of solar, which is in huge demand due to some of the programs we came out with under our government, solar gardens that are now approved for Antigonish, Mahone Bay, Berwick. These are job opportunities that will allow for those who are installing solar. There are ancillary jobs that are associated with those energy sectors as well.

Even more so on the efficiency side, experts have been talking about the thousands of jobs that are associated with efficiency today in the province. If we move toward net-zero buildings, as the new government has today committed to with their new legislation, we need more people to be able to do some of this work. This is carpentry work. This is HVAC work. This is people working on windows.

This is trades across the whole board, Mr. Speaker. That's why we proposed a lot of money being spent to re-evaluate looking at our Nova Scotia Community College delivery model and how we would ensure that we're able to deal with the long wait-list that we see in a lot of these trades.

I very much believe that training and access to skilled, trained labour is what's holding back some of these opportunities. It's not that companies are looking for significant tax cuts, which will impact our ability to invest in seats in these post-secondary institutions. It is that they need people available, trained to work in these fields, to ensure that we are making the most out of these types of investments that are happening.

We have a strong efficiency program in our province. It was a pioneer under our previous government. It was put in place as an independent utility that actually competes with Nova Scotia Power and does a lot of good work. We can build on the progress that's being made with that utility. Other provinces have emulated that model as well. Those thousands of jobs are there for the taking and I know all members care about jobs. There are a lot of opportunities in rural communities to look at that.

There are companies that are doing that already in Nova Scotia. They are in the traditional sectors, but they're also in some of the more emerging sectors in clean energy. We have CarbonCure in Dartmouth, a company that looks at ensuring that we have innovation, where we can reduce the carbon footprint by injecting it into concrete while simultaneously making a stronger product. That's a value-add, that's a win-win. They are exploding with job opportunities now, winning international awards for carbon reduction, and other associated types of awards in the green economy.

I think of Sustain when we think about zero waste and moving towards that objective. I know there's legislation that talks about solid waste in their new legislation and how we have that opportunity to reduce the amount of solid waste that's used in Nova Scotia and maximizing the caloric value that's in our waste stream.

We have companies like Ecopilot and others that I think of when I talk about efficiency and that opportunity to reduce costs for business, to grow jobs, and reduce our environmental footprint.

There are many examples that are already under way. What this bill speaks to is ensuring maximum preparedness for that opportunity. That is somewhat already organically happening. It's now not an either/or, I would submit. We no longer have the problem of renewable energy being more expensive than fossil fuels. I know in Question Period I have referenced this a number of times - how coal and other fossil fuels are reaching the highest price they ever have.

Now it's an economic imperative for all of our businesses in Nova Scotia, no matter what field you're in. You have utility costs and other types of fixed costs that you have to take care of that are projected to rise. That's notwithstanding the carbon price increases that we know are scheduled beyond 2022 that will provide even more higher costs, and I referenced the Clean Fuel Standard today. Those are important to deal with the market externalities that are associated with carbon fuels in the air.

Notwithstanding all those things, even if you don't think that environment is a priority for you, you should be advocating for it. I'm sure that you care about the businesses in your constituencies and the costs that will be incurred. I'm sure that you think about all those workers who are working in the mines and coal-fired generation plants and working in traditional sectors who need a plan to move forward on how they can adapt to the challenges of our time to confront those challenges of our time, but also seeing the opportunities for retraining.

Government has the ultimate responsibility to look ahead to represent the future to the present. That's what training is about, Mr. Speaker. We have post-secondary institutions across every corner of the province. All constituencies, I think, benefit either directly or indirectly from having them in their region. We can do that. We can train people who are hands-on doing the physical work in all these fields. We can ensure the sustainability of these traditional sectors that we all care about.

We can ensure that we look at best practices in agriculture and ensure that we have longer growing seasons like you see in places in Europe for strawberries or for blueberries or for all these crops and ensure that government supports them. It's going to take more people. We all want to see more people, to grow our population. We all want job opportunities for people who live here, people who want to come here, and again for people who have been systemically left behind in past economic recovery efforts. That's why people talk about this as an opportunity.

Nova Scotia probably has a unique opportunity, more so than any other province, I think, based on our scale, based on the fact that we still are so reliant on our fossil fuels, on our coal. We need to get this work done soon. This bill is one way you can enshrine it in legislation, but the focus really is to ensure that it's on the government's radar. I know some members on the other side of the House do see that opportunity, and I know they see the value in protecting the environment. We on this side of the House are prepared to work with the government. We have proposed some ideas on how we would take advantage of this opportunity. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that they understand that there is so much value in the training and to be prepared for the sustainable revolution that's before us.

With those few words, I'll take my seat. I look forward to support from my honourable colleagues on the other side of the floor.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to speak to this bill. I agree with my colleague to the right, the Leader of the Official Opposition, that there are enormous opportunities for the green jobs sector, for folks to be employed in the green jobs sector. We in the NDP have been tabling green jobs plans since 2019, so I'm glad to see the Liberals take up the cause here, as it were.

Although the bill doesn't really define the sector of green jobs, I understand the bill to be referring to green energy jobs - to adjust transition to clean jobs, jobs in industries and practices that are not going to tax the environment. They're not going to increase greenhouse gas emissions; in fact, they're going to do things to relieve those issues.

As my colleague has mentioned, efficiency is a big, big, big one in this, Mr. Speaker. I have said it before and I'll say it again. We know that investment in deep energy retrofitting has several implications that are all positive. Number one, it is the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Investment in deep energy retrofitting also has the very practical effect of making people more comfortable in their homes, so people can be cooler in the Summer, in the very hot Summers that we're now experiencing, and cozier in the Wintertime.

This will go a long way to alleviating energy poverty, Mr. Speaker. For those folks who don't have jobs that pay a living wage, energy poverty is a real issue. Deep energy retrofitting, the jobs in that sector will contribute to that.

I'm a big fan of Efficiency Nova Scotia. I have said that before and I'll say that again. Only today, Efficiency Nova Scotia came to my home and removed a refrigerator. I'm going to get \$50 for that because I got a new energy-efficient refrigerator. Those programs are amazing. The work that Efficiency Nova Scotia is doing towards us meeting our targets, though they need to be improved, is really essential in this province.

The other kinds of jobs that we're talking about on the very surface are solar energy, battery storage, and wind. All of these are extremely important if we are going to have a just transition away from more polluting industries and resource-expensive industries.

It's important to talk about the idea of just transition, of course. That is because there are many folks in this province who rely on resource extraction, like coal - there's fewer now - and like oil and gas as we discussed earlier in Question Period. Those people need to have jobs that are just as good, if not better, good-paying jobs, jobs that they can retrain in for that time when we do phase out coal and, God willing, phase out oil and gas, fracking, liquified natural gas, et cetera.

I just want to expand the discussion a little bit, Mr. Speaker, and talk about other sectors that are also green sectors. My colleague from Dartmouth South alluded to it earlier today. The caring economy is also a green economy. Teaching, early childhood education, health care work - so CCAs, nursing, physicians - all of those sectors are green jobs. God knows, we need more workers in those industries as well. I would love to see this bill be expanded to include training and bursaries for CCAs and those folks, and early childhood educators. We need more of them, and we need them to be paid more. I think that we should expand this idea to those parts of the economy.

We also need to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that the kind of retraining that is talked about in this bill is implemented in an equitable and a just way. I have talked to folks in industries about job retraining, and I really do think that, in terms of community college training and other post-secondary education training, we need to reserve spots for underrepresented folks. We need to make sure that in every sector, we have spots reserved for Black, Indigenous, people of colour, gender non-conforming folks, folks who suffer or experience equity issues in their daily lives. We need to make sure that those folks are getting trained in jobs that they want to be able to do and, again, jobs that are going to pay them well.

[5:00 p.m.]

We should also look at free college tuition. This was part of the NDP platform definitely in 2017 - not sure if it was this time. I think it was. Let's just eliminate the barrier of getting training altogether by making community college free. Let's extend it as part of our public school system.

Universal child care - we've talked about that today - with enough spaces that anybody who wants to go back and take training can do it. When I was a child in 1975, I would say, when I was a toddler, 1975-1976, my mother went back to school. She went back to the Mount. I was put in the daycare at the Mount. I was studied by the people who were learning to be early childhood educators - I was a test subject, I suppose. It was a great opportunity for my mom, who after having her fifth child was able to go back to school and retrain, while her youngest, who was the only one at home still - not in public school - was able to be cared for. That is essential.

We also need more affordable housing near campuses. We've heard a little bit about the housing plan, that there will be some new residences built at community colleges. This is great news, but also, let's expand that need. If we're going to attract people to our province, if we're going to bring people here and build our economy and grow our province and grow our population, let's address the elephant in the room. We need housing for all of those people, and not just while they're training. We need more housing, and affordable housing.

When we're implementing these training programs, we also need to make sure that they are in communities, that they're designated to communities that have suffered injustice and inequities in general. Let's make sure that we're putting training programs in Cape Breton so that folks who need to transition out of the coal industry by 2030 will not have to leave Cape Breton to go and get retrained. We want to make sure we're bringing the training to them.

I also want to say that another sector that is a clean and green sector is the arts sector. Let us invest properly in the film industry. Let us train up a third crew in Nova Scotia, but let us make sure that if we do that, there are film jobs for that third crew to work

in. That means we have to make sure we expand our incentive fund. We need to bring back the Film Tax Credit. We need to build a soundstage. All of those investments will create clean, green jobs and keep our artists - who are important taxpaying citizens - in Nova Scotia instead of sending them down to Toronto or Sudbury or Winnipeg or wherever they've gone to work in the film industry.

The Premier said yesterday that the film industry is booming. It's booming compared to what it has been for a long time, but we still only have two working crews now. We used to have three. There are still productions that cannot come to Nova Scotia to shoot because we don't have the people to work in them. Let's make sure we train up more crews, but let's make sure they have jobs to go to.

I will tell you this: There is not a problem with training arts workers at universities. Dalhousie University and Acadia University and, to some extent, St. F.X. University are churning out professional artists, and it's great but also sad, because there are often not jobs for those folks to go to. When I look at my graduating class from Dalhousie from the theatre department, the acting program, I think maybe three or four of us out of 15 are still working - hang on now, I was counting myself. I'm not really doing that anymore, either. I sometimes do.

My point is that literally people move on to other careers because they can't find work in the arts, so let us talk about true investment in the arts and culture sector in Nova Scotia. It is not taxing on the environment for the most part. They are clean, green jobs. Say, for instance, we made an investment of 1 per cent of the total budget of the Province and put it into the arts sector. We would expand the arts community and the possibilities for employment - good paid employment - in Nova Scotia artists by a huge amount.

Like I said, I appreciate this bill very much. I think it's essential. We do need to be ready - in fact, we needed to be ready several years ago - for the transition away from fossil fuels and resource-heavy industries. But let us expand our vision of what green and clean jobs are, remembering not only the things that my honourable colleague has talked about - the traditional idea, the energy efficiency solar wind - but also caring economy - teaching, early childhood education, health care, CCAs - and artists and film workers.

With that, and those many words, I will take my seat.

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

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I will say that there is one thing where I do agree with our Opposition, the Liberals. We do agree on a definition of what green jobs are, and a green economy. On the other hand, I'm not quite sure what the NDP definition of a green economy is.

I am very pleased to speak on this bill because we just introduced a groundbreaking piece of legislation that we in Nova Scotia are the leaders on climate change, and of course education is a big part of that.

During my first few weeks as Minister of Advanced Education, I did have the opportunity to travel and to speak to universities, to speak to community colleges. I also had the opportunity to have meetings with ACOA and Research Nova Scotia and to really see the advances and what was going on with our green economy.

The wonderful thing is that within my mandate letter, I am responsible to consult and work with my colleagues the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and the Minister of Economic Development in order to move these things forward, so that we're all moving together at the same time.

What I was amazed to find out is the amount of innovation in the private sector that is driving the innovation in the research and post-secondary and also within Research Nova Scotia and within government. I truly believe that if we have a problem, if we have something that needs to be solved, we need to look to the private sector. The private sector is the one that is going to hire our post-secondary graduates.

Some of the neat things I found out: There are actually people in the private sector out there trying to figure out what to do with all this biomass that we have in Nova Scotia, not just through forestry. We tend to believe that biomass all has to come from waste from trees, but in actuality we have millions of tons of fish waste, which is biomass, that is put in disposal sites every year. What happens when you put something into a disposal site? It creates methane gas.

So one of the benefits of all of the fish biomass is that we have the private sector working - even using Research Nova Scotia in our post-secondary as researchers in this - in order to take all that biomass and turn it into green energy. That's not something that came from government. That is something that came from our private sector.

So the key thing is that in order to get jobs, we need to increase what's going on in the private sector, but we also have to convince students to go into that particular type of program to be qualified for that job.

If I look at the type of students or the number of students who are looking to go into some of our post-secondary institutions and look at some of the programming, there are lots of environmental studies. There are things that are very specific, but specific to our Nova Scotia Community College right now, we have coastal protection environmental technologies, where you get the training you need to address contemporary issues in the coastal environment.

We're very fortunate to be in Nova Scotia where we not only have a fishing industry or industries that are centered around the oceans but also have woodlots and whatnot that other areas in the country don't have. We have lots of opportunity. The ocean cluster that was put together a couple of years ago is just massive and the opportunity there for green jobs is big. Environmental engineering technology, energy sustainability, engineering technology - there's NSCC and there's many more.

One of the programs at COGS, which is NSCC in Lawrencetown, has some really neat research going. When I was speaking to the lead researcher, who was doing some things on drone technology, I said, what are you doing with the drones? He said, let me explain this. We're dealing with Christmas tree operators. I thought, well, that's kind of neat. What on Earth would a drone do for Christmas trees? Apparently, if you grow Christmas trees for a living, you have to go by foot with a stick through terrain that's very difficult to manage to get the height of the Christmas trees so you know what your inventory is going to be. That's how they know what the supply is going to be. A task that takes many, many hours - an arduous task. A drone can do probably 50 acres within an hour, and not only measure the height of Christmas trees but also the quality of the tree.

I took that a little bit further. One of the issues we have in Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank is that we have blue-green algae. We have that also throughout the province, throughout Canada. I said, do you think that drone technology might be able to detect blue-green algae? He said absolutely. You could get it from the air, but blue-green algae also is underwater. Further on our tour, they have underwater drones. Simply by speaking to the lead researcher, we came up with an idea that, you know what? We may be able to detect blue-green algae by using drones and really mitigate an awful lot of risk.

When I think about it, who knows? When you're coming out of high school, who knows about jobs like this that are going to exist? A lot of these programs are offered through NSCC, private career colleges, some of our universities as well, that offer very specific research-type jobs. If you look at the curriculum in our secondary schools and elementary schools, they all have an environmental component in the science curriculum, and it's very important. However, there are so many jobs out there, and it's massive. How do we actually connect students to those jobs that are so important for us to fill in the future? We've done a pretty good job identifying skilled trades. We knew that we had a big ships project on the go and that we need people - we need welders, we need pipefitters and all of those - to fill those jobs. When you turn to green, it's not quite there.

One of the things that's in our mandate letters is that we need to increase the number of trades-oriented programs in high schools. We are looking at that, and one of our concentrations is on trying to get more diverse students into those programs as well. Instead of just looking at traditional trades, we need to figure out a way to get them access and to start believing what's going on out there environmentally. Our trades need to reflect that as well. We have to start in elementary school, go through to secondary school, go on to

post-secondary, attach to the private sector, use all of our research partners that are out there to try to make sure that we can fill these jobs.

One of the neat things that I did as an educator is that we used to take a group of 20 or 25 students to a place in Bear River. It's called Stone Bear Tracks and Trails. It's run by a former chief of Bear River First Nations, Frank Meuse. We would spend three days and two nights really learning about Indigenous cultures, Indigenous beliefs, and whatnot. When we think about Mother Earth and we think about all of those things and the beauty and how important and whatnot, I think a lot of the Indigenous culture is reflected in our environmental practices today. That's a good thing.

One of the neat activities that we would do is walk through trails in our bare feet and really understanding the different types of plantation and stuff and the things that we were walking on and how much Mother Nature actually offers to us. We built wigwams, and in order to build the wigwams, to put them up, we didn't use traditional rope. We actually dug into the ground, into the - I forget which type of tree it is, but it's like a spruce tree that has a root system that you can actually use to bind things together and use as rope. We were pointed to traditional medicines that we could choose. There were all these things with nature that we need to understand and have a better understanding about what goes on.

How do we engage kids? Well, that's how we engage kids. There is no doubt in my mind that experiential education is the number one way to do it. Bringing trades and increasing the trades in our school system is the way to do it. Making sure that those trades are environmental, that we're going to interest our kids to go out into a world where there are jobs that are the green economy.

Do I believe that every kid is going to look at that and say they want to be part of the green economy? Maybe not, because we still need traditional-type jobs, but we need to offer it and we need to do a good job. I would look forward to feedback no matter what party people are in, to get feedback on how to go forward with that.

I would just like to finish up by restating that I believe the belief is there. I believe that our society absolutely believes, and Progressive Conservatives believe, that there is an environmental emergency. All departments and every person in Nova Scotia need to start working towards finding solutions for it.

It's going to start in our education system very young. It's going to work all the way up through elementary school, middle school, high school, all through post secondary. We have to believe in our private sector and we have to support them because they're the ones who are going to create the jobs and find the solutions.

With those few words, I do now move, Mr. Speaker, to adjourn debate on Bill No. 29. (Interruptions)

[5:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I have been informed that the member is allowed to make the motion to adjourn debate. It can be voted on. If it's defeated, everything still goes on. The honourable member still had time on the clock for his session as well.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Just a point of clarification: We adjourn debate on this bill, but we can still call other bills with the time allotted. Very good.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 29.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to join the conversation on the Green Jobs Training Bill, following our Leader who explained the bill quite eloquently, I think, and in fact really led this issue during the campaign with a very ambitious skills training program as part of our platform.

We're in the very early stages of a major transition. It's a transition that should have started quite some time ago, but here we are on this planet trying to take urgent action on climate change. This is the greatest transition in a century. It's really not since the Industrial Revolution that the planet has gone through such a dramatic transition and needs to go through such a dramatic transition. Change is required urgently and it's coming fast. It must come fast.

This change can be very disruptive, but it can also be an opportunity for Nova Scotians, and that's at the heart of what this bill is about. This is an opportunity for young Nova Scotians to gain the training that they need to take advantage of this opportunity and the important work of a just transition for those in dying sectors.

I'm reminded of the Industrial Revolution and the speed of the change that happened. There was a photo in New York City in 1905 of a street in New York City, and it was full of horses and there was one car. A photo 12 years later in New York City, a busy New York City street, had one horse and the rest were cars. In 12 short years there was such a dramatic change during the Industrial Revolution, and we are about to embark on a similar change that needs to and must move at that kind of urgency.

That change that happened in 1905 to 1907 changed the economy, changed the jobs. So instead of production of hay and farriers, we had new jobs for mechanics and gasoline production. We're about to see another decade of transformational change. The question is: Is Nova Scotia ready to seize that opportunity?

Now a key measurement of our success will be whether our young people are ready for these green jobs. A key measure will be whether our displaced workers from jobs of the past can justly transition to the jobs of the future. This is where government comes in. Government has a responsibility to all Nova Scotians to help Nova Scotians be prepared for the jobs of the future.

What will this transition look like? We need to get 48 per cent of the homes in Nova Scotia off oil. That has to happen. We need people to do jobs in solar, jobs in heat pump installation - my colleague mentioned Efficiency Nova Scotia and all the efficiency programs and the technicians needed for that.

We have the opportunity for 350 megawatts of wind to help get us to the 80 per cent renewables, which is in current regulations as a commitment by our government. That 350 megawatts of wind will create 4,000 jobs in the wind industry. Let's have those jobs filled by Nova Scotians.

Home efficiency in building retrofits. We need specialized technicians and skilled trades. There's a company in Kentville, Equilibrium Engineering. They're doing a \$1 million retrofit of a 12-year-old seniors facility in Windsor. It's hard to believe - only 12 years ago and we weren't building to the proper standards. That \$1 million project will return \$90,000 a year in savings. Those are the projects that we need technicians, we need engineers, we need the skilled labourers to execute building retrofits throughout this province.

Electrifying our transportation system. A friend of my son who is a mechanic had the opportunity to buy a local garage. He chose not to because he saw that a traditional garage is not the jobs of the future. We will be transitioning from mechanics on combustion engines to mechanics and electrical technicians to deal with EVs. My colleague mentioned ocean technology and the need for green jobs in that sector. It is much broader than just those that I touched on this evening.

The other important element that I mentioned earlier is the just transition for workers in the non-renewable sectors. Of course, that affects many Nova Scotians in rural Nova Scotia. We need to ensure that we have the training programs because some of this is extremely scary for people who are in traditional sectors in the rural economy. They look at the bill that was put forward on the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act and they are very, very nervous about what is going to happen to rural jobs, so we really need to be there for them to ensure they have training to transition to the new jobs in the renewable sector.

How do we do this? Obviously, my colleague from across the aisle talked about this, and it's mentioned in the bill. Our key assets in this, where government will play the roles in our secondary school system, where we can create interest and reveal the opportunities for young Nova Scotians that the jobs of the future are there - we want to create a curiosity in them to pursue those sectors.

Of course, one of our most important assets in this province is the Nova Scotia Community College. NSCC can develop programs. Our platform, and this bill, indicate a wealth of programs that need to be developed to ensure that we are meeting the job needs in this province, in the green economy.

In the same way that Nova Scotians, particularly young Nova Scotians, are asking for urgent action on climate change, government must also take urgent action to capitalize on the economic opportunity by ensuring Nova Scotians are trained for these green jobs. This bill talks about and lays out the requirement to develop and implement a policy to enhance green energy training in this province.

This work is urgent, this work must happen now, and this is the opportunity of a generation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I only have a few minutes here, but I want to rise in my place. I was passionate about being the former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, but I had the privilege of being the Minister of Energy and Mines and the Minister of Lands and Forestry for a number of years. I actually talked to the ministers about this - I think there are some really great opportunities that we can capitalize on.

I do want to recognize Efficiency Nova Scotia, because during my time we became number one in Canada for efficiency work and training, and we also were the number one residential solar program. We had a six-month wait-list. We went from 13 companies to 70 companies in a year in solar installation, but there are two opportunities.

It's in the bill - I was hoping I had more time. The first one is the deal we signed with the Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia: 2,500 homes are set to be retrofit over the next 10 years. It was a \$40 million deal that we signed.

Tie that into your school system, tie that into your trades programs. The work is already done. Students across Nova Scotia have the opportunity now that they can learn green energy training. We already talked to the community college, to the Minister of Advanced Education. We actually have a deal with the community college. We were talking with them as well.

We have an opportunity to create a whole new generation of entrepreneurs in Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia. They should be doing the work in their communities, and we should be helping to train them along the way.

The other one I'll say very quickly, and it goes back to more of the traditional work, because it is a concern for rural Nova Scotia. Rural Nova Scotia has over 5,000 mining professionals. They have families that are involved with oil and gas that are in communities across Nova Scotia, so it's always a concern for them when we talk about the transition. In my conversations with Nova Scotia Power, we wouldn't budge. I wouldn't budge as minister until I knew what the plan was for those workers, because they need to be transitioned into the new economy.

One of the biggest opportunities I think we had at the time, and we pushed it very hard with my colleagues at the national energy level, is that similar to what they did in Alberta with the oil reclamation, the drill holes - we were pushing to do that with mine reclamation in Nova Scotia. We have almost 70 mines. There is a huge opportunity there as well, and I would be pushing with my colleagues on the other side.

These are the conversations we already started with the federal government. The mine reclamation idea is a massive opportunity, hundreds of millions of dollars that could put people from Inverness to Dominion to everywhere in between, that could be going to work to reclaim these mines - similar to what they did in Alberta with the drill holes.

I've got 10 seconds left. I could go for an hour on this stuff, but it is a great opportunity for this province and it's a great opportunity for students.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We've reached the moment of interruption.

The House now stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, October 28th, from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

We are adjourned.

[The House rose at 5:30 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 33**

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas Basma Kavanaugh, resident of the village of Canning, excels as a writer and visual artist; and

Whereas Basma Kavanaugh, a rural Nova Scotia writer, connects with people through her writing and is becoming known and recognized in the Canadian literary world; and

Whereas Basma Kavanaugh has received national recognition for her essay entitled *Bone Shadows*, and has also written three books of poetry: *Distillo*, *Niche*, and *Ruba'iyat for the Time of Apricots*;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Basma Kavanaugh on her recent nomination to the longlist of the 2021 CBC Nonfiction Prize for her essay *Bone Shadows*, which reflects on the many forms of grief.

RESOLUTION NO. 34

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Village Coffeehouse was established in 2018 by Alice Hartling on Main Street in the village of Canning as a community gathering place; and

Whereas The Village Coffeehouse is a beautiful addition to the village of Canning, providing a welcoming atmosphere, amazing coffee, delicious treats, and local artisan products; and

Whereas the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce is a strong united voice of business and works to ensure that business thrives in the Annapolis Valley;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Alice Hartling of the Village of Canning as the Chamber of Commerce Valley's Best 2021 winner in the category of Best Cafe in the Annapolis Valley.