



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Danielle Barkhouse

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First Session

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

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HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Danielle Barkhouse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Lisa Lachance, Nolan Young

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. It is quite hot in here today and we do have a dress code, but due to the heat, we've decided to allow members to take their jackets off if needed. (Applause) That's the biggest clap I've had since I sat here. I'll do that again on a later date.

We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, I would like to present a petition which reads this way:

Whereas over a quarter of those who are homeless for the first time are over the age of 60; and

Whereas nearly 6,000 people are on the waitlist for public housing, with an average wait time of 2 years;

Therefore be it resolved that the provincial government ban evictions of seniors whose incomes would qualify them for public housing, until there is a place in public housing for them to go.

This petition has been signed by a number of residents of Edward Arab Avenue and George Dauphinee Avenue in the Westmount subdivision of Halifax Chebucto, and I have also signed it.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition with the operative clause:

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to:

Support the non-market housing sector to leverage federal funding by prioritizing the use of prefabricated/modular construction and enable the rapid expansion of non-profit and co-op housing projects in the province;

Expand the current Down Payment Assistance Program from 5 to 10% of purchase price up to \$50,000 and extend the repayment period from 10 to 25 years and;

Establish real rent control and create a renters' tax credit for low and middle-income households to help offset the rising costs of rent.

It has been signed by a number of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island residents on Hollis Street and I have affixed my own signature.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on Community Services, I am pleased to submit the annual report of the committee for the period from September 2023 to August 2024 of the 64th General Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following Bill:

Bill No. 487 - Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre Continuation Act.

and the committee recommends this Bill to the favourable consideration of the House without amendment.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that this Bill be referred to Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: As Chair of the Committee on Private and Local Bills, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 469 - Hunter Church Building Fund, An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the (amended).

and the committee recommends this Bill to the favourable consideration of the House without amendment.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that this Bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. KENT SMITH: Speaker, I beg leave to table for the consideration of the House the 2023 Annual Report of the Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Board of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, on Friday, the Minister of Community Services asked me to table some documents. This comes from a DCS worker from Eastern Passage: “Good afternoon, Kendra. I watched the Legislature and heard what the minister said to you. Well, I for one am sending you this email that I can’t count the ways . . .”

THE SPEAKER: Order. I ask you not to read the document. I ask you just to table it.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: As I said on Friday, the Minister of DCS asked me to table documents regarding bullying at DCS. This is one those documents.

THE SPEAKER: The document is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Again, the Minister of DCS asked me on Friday to table documents regarding bullying at DCS. This comes from a worker in the Western Zone.

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: On Friday, the Minister of DCS asked me to table documents regarding bullying at DCS. This also comes from a member in the Western Zone.

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: The Minister of DCS on Friday asked me to table documents regarding bullying at DCS. This is a document from a member in Northern Zone.

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled, but I ask if there's more than just one concerning the same item, please - for everyone going forward, please table them all at once.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Again, on Friday, the Minister of DCS asked me to table documents regarding bullying at DCS. This also comes from Northern Zone.

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BARBARA ADAMS: I would like to draw the members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery, where we are joined by Land Titles Initiative commissioners retired Judge Corrine Sparks, Darlene Lamey, and Douglas Ruck. They play a significant role helping residents in the communities of North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, Lincolnville, and Sunnyville get clear title to their land. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in giving retired Judge Sparks, Ms. Lamey, and Mr. Ruck the warm welcome of the House. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome, and we hope you enjoy your time here.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,164

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

Whereas the Land Titles Initiative under the Land Titles Clarification Act is addressing the legacy of systemic racism in land ownership by helping residents of historically African Nova Scotian communities secure clear title to their land; and

Whereas under the Land Titles Initiative, 399 land parcels have been registered to date, community members have accessed \$2.4 million in government-funded legal services, and a \$3 million compensation fund has been established to resolve disputes involving competing claims; and

Whereas the Land Titles Initiative commissioners ensure fairness in the Land Title Initiative by registering competing claims and safeguarding opportunities for all interest holders to be heard while maintaining public confidence in the program;

Therefore be it resolved that we, members of the Legislative Assembly, celebrate the progress of the Land Titles Initiative and express continued support for the Initiative and the commissioners

whose work is essential to promoting fairness, addressing historic injustices, and securing land titles for historically African Nova Scotian communities.

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 Economic Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,165

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas between 2010 and 2014, the Government of Nova Scotia provided tax incentives to film and television productions, which averaged about \$21 million each year, leading Nova Scotia's screen industry production activity to be the fifth largest in Canada in 2014; and

Whereas, despite the success of the growing film industry in Nova Scotia, the Liberal government of the day recklessly slashed the Film Industry Tax Credit, instantly killing at least 420 jobs and putting the future of the sector in jeopardy by signalling Nova Scotia was closed for business; and

Whereas, thanks to enthusiastic support from this government and tenacious work from members of the province's film sector, the film industry has rebounded and is thriving, bringing major productions to the province and attracting international interest;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature congratulate members of the Nova Scotia film industry for riding out the harm done by the previous government and having confidence in the promise of Nova Scotia.

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.

[1:15 p.m.]

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,166

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

Whereas Lori Kennedy, co-owner of Louisbourg Seafoods, received an honorary degree from Cape Breton University during Spring convocation in May, recognizing her leadership in business and in community; and

Whereas she and her husband, Jim, are former fish plant workers who started their business in 1984 with a small crew of six, unloading boats, and today the family-owned company has grown into a seafood operation with 500 employees; and

Whereas Lori serves on the board of the World Ocean Council, which has a focus on sustainable development and stewardship; is a member of the Women Presidents Organization Atlantic Chapter, promoting the advancement of women in all industries; and is active in community organizations such as United Way Cape Breton;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lori Kennedy on receiving an honorary Doctor of Laws degree and thank her for her commitment to the seafood industry and her many contributions to her community, our province, and beyond these shores.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver. Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 492 - An Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Residential Tenancies Act, Respecting Comprehensive Eviction Control. (Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 493 - An Act Respecting a Homelessness Task Force. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 494 - An Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 1996, the Sales Tax Act, Respecting Necessary Medical Devices. (Hon. Zach Churchill)

Ordered that these Bills be read a second time on a future day.

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1,167

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

Whereas the federal government adopted Bill C-233, Keira's Law, amending the Criminal Code and Judges Act to establish seminars for judges on sexual assault law, intimate partner violence, and coercive control, and allow judges to order electronic monitoring for offenders posing a safety risk to intimate partners to ensure the judiciary can make informed decisions that prioritize the safety of victims and their families; and

Whereas the Mass Casualty Commission's final report identified gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence is an epidemic, and the Nova Scotia Legislature passed Bill No. 482 declaring domestic violence as an epidemic, given the province having one of the highest rates of intimate partner violence; and

Whereas the Ontario Legislature adopted Bill No. 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, and now requires all provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace to be educated and trained in intimate partner violence and coercive control;

Therefore be it resolved that the government of Nova Scotia prepare and table a Bill by the next House session to adopt Keira's Law and require all professionals who deal with domestic violence - including police officers, judges, lawyers, child protection workers, and doctors - to attend educational seminars on matters related to domestic violence and allow judges to order electronic monitoring for offenders posing a safety risk to intimate partners.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver. Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, before I read my statement, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BECKY DRUHAN: Joining us today in the Speaker's Gallery is Bob Henderson, Korean War veteran and a dedicated community volunteer. It's my great pleasure to introduce Bob and to ask him to accept the warm welcome of the House. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House. We hope you enjoy your time here and thank you for your service.

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HENDERSON, BOB: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, I rise today to honour Bob Henderson of Bridgewater, whose service to his country and community has been long and distinguished. Bob is a Korean War veteran who served with the Canadian military for over 20 years, spending time with the Royal Canadian Air Force and Navy. He also served with the US Navy Seabees.

Bob has also been a great community volunteer. He served as an auxiliary officer with the Bridgewater Police Service and dedicated 20 years with Special Olympics. At age

90, he retired as the Sergeant-at-Arms for both the Branch 24 Royal Canadian Legion in Bridgewater and District 12.

On Remembrance Day, Bob served as Parade Commander and then assumed command of the Colour Party. On November 11, 2021, he was honoured at a Halifax Mooseheads hockey game. At the six-minute mark of the first period, his image was displayed on the big screen. The announcer was quickly drowned out by over six thousand fans who gave Bob a standing ovation. Recently retired Honorary Colonel Dan Hennessey said, “Bob Henderson took his place next to those who have served their country with distinction and deserves the title as a true Canadian hero.”

I ask the House to join me in thanking Bob Henderson for his service to community and to country.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

COMEAU-SURETTE, TINA: NEW FILM - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize Tina Comeau-Surette and her son Jacob for their profound and moving work. Tina’s tribute to her late son Justin is a powerful reminder of the pain that addiction inflicts on countless families in this province and beyond.

Justin Surette, a bright and compassionate young man, tragically lost his life through an accidental overdose just two days shy of reaching a 100-day milestone of being sober. Despite his struggles, Justin never lost hope and dreamed of one day helping others battling addiction. In his memory, Tina and Jacob have created a film titled *No Family is Immune*, which was released this month for International Overdose Awareness Day. This film is not just a tribute to Justin but a beacon of hope and awareness for others facing similar battles.

I want to thank Tina and Jacob for their compassion, concern, and strength. Your story will undoubtedly inspire and support many. Their efforts to raise awareness about addiction are truly commendable and will have a positive impact in others battling the life-threatening challenges that addictions bring.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction relative to my member statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LISA LACHANCE: Joining us in the West Gallery today, we have Tanya Myles and her partner, Lester Myles. I welcome you to the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. We hope you enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MYLES, TANYA: IWK NICU WORK - THANKS

LISA LACHANCE: I rise to congratulate Tanya Myles, Care Team Manager of the IWK's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. With a 25-year career in neonatal care, Tanya is known as an inspirational leader and passionate advocate. She has championed, comforted, educated, and raised both awareness and funds for families of critically ill babies.

Tanya's pivotal role in redeveloping the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, the NICU, has earned her the prestigious Canadian Impact Award from the Children's Miracle Network. Nominated by the IWK Foundation, this award celebrates her significant impact on children's hospital care.

On behalf of this Legislature, I extend heartfelt congratulations to Tanya. Her dedication to our most vulnerable newborns is truly commendable. Thank you for your tireless efforts and the profound difference you've made. Your legacy will continue to shape neonatal care for generations to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Permission to make some introductions.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: In the East Gallery and in your gallery - the Speaker's Gallery - we have some incredible coaches and athletes, who you will soon hear are making an incredible contribution to basketball and bringing the sport of basketball to a whole new level. Daneesha Provo, Danny Castillo, Ian David, Ailiyah Fraser, Lonnie States, Louis A. Gannon, Jr., Douglas Hill, Kendra Slawter, Bev Greenlaw, Colter Simmonds, Dante Provo, and Megan Neaves. I'd ask you all to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome and enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

PROVO, DANEESHA: WOMEN'S BASKETBALL WORK - RECOG.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Today I stand to recognize the work of Daneesha Provo Canadian Basketball Academy Inc. DPCBA was created by Daneesha and her father Danny Castillo. Together with her team, Ian David, Ailiyah Fraser, Lonnie States, Louis A. Gannon, Jr., Douglas Hill, Kendra Slawter, Bev Greenlaw, Colter Simmonds, Dante Provo, and Megan Neaves, they provide young women with opportunities to achieve success at the highest level of the game.

Daneesha experienced first-hand how limited opportunities are for women who come from a small town to play at the professional level. She has made a name for herself by being selected for the Canadian Women's National team and playing professionally all over the world.

Daneesha created this association to share her wealth of knowledge of the game and help mentor young women to achieve their potential. Her elite teams have just returned from a trip to New York City, where they attended a WNBA game and played in a tournament in Manhattan. These are opportunities that will not only highlight the skills of young Nova Scotian athletes but also serve as an experience of a lifetime for these young athletes.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing Daneesha and her team and congratulating them for their excellent work in women's basketball.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: May I beg leave to make an introduction before my member statement?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

KEITH IRVING: I'd ask all members of the House to point your eyes to the West Gallery, where we're joined here by some inquiring young students, inquiring minds from Landmark East School, the Citizenship Class in Grade 9. I'd ask each to stand as I read your name: Colton Schofield, Carter Levy, Mitchell Reid, Lauren Mastovak, and Luasi Yululusi. They're also joined by their teachers, Wayne Alders and Ms. Makaiwa Westergard.

They've been here to tour the Legislature this morning and are joining us for Question Period. I ask all members to be on their best behaviour during our 50-minute Question Period. Please join me in welcoming them to the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House, and I'm sure you will enjoy Question Period.

The honourable member for Kings South.

[1:30 p.m.]

LANDMARK EAST SCHOOL: 45TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I rise today to congratulate Landmark East School in Wolfville as it celebrates 45 years of transforming lives. Since 1979, Landmark East has been a beacon of hope for students with learning differences such as dyslexia, ADHD, and other challenges. Through individualized programs, small class sizes, and a nurturing environment, the school has empowered students to achieve their full potential, both academically and personally.

I want to thank the dedicated staff, board members, students, and families of Landmark East for their commitment to educational excellence and inclusion. Over the past four and a half decades, the school's unique approach has had a profound impact, fostering confidence, resilience, and lifelong success. Many graduates have gone on to achieve incredible accomplishments thanks to the solid foundation laid by Landmark East.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Landmark East School on 45 years of life-changing impact, and best wishes for continued success in the future.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I beg leave to make an introduction relative to my member's statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LISA LACHANCE: Today I would like to welcome members of the Elderberries to the Legislature. The Elderberries is a community group for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals age 50 and above, although membership is flexible. In your Speaker's Gallery today, we are joined by Lynn Murphy and Howard Heyman, and in the West Gallery, the current chair, Barend Kamperman. (Applause)

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

TAAVEL, RAYMOND: 60TH BIRTHDAY MARKED - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise today to remember Raymond Taavel. Raymond Taavel made Nova Scotia his home, starting in the 1990s. He very quickly became involved in, as he said, community to become, to be the change. He served on Halifax Pride and was co-chair with two early victories, such as convincing HRM to declare Pride Week and to

fly the Pride flag at Grand Parade Square. He was a part of NSRAP, InterPride, and a founding member of Fierté Canada Pride. Raymond died in an attack in 2012.

This past Summer, the Elderberries honoured what would have been Raymond's 60th birthday in the park that bears his name in Halifax, Raymond Taavel Park. It was a time to remember his former accomplishments, but also his spirit, courage, and community-building. I ask that we all take to heart his motto: Be the Change.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Thank you, Speaker. I beg leave to make another introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BECKY DRUHAN: In the Speaker's Gallery we are joined by Dan Hennessey. Dan is a warm, passionate, energetic volunteer, whom I also consider to be a real friend. Dan, I ask you to rise, please, and accept the warm welcome of the Legislature. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HENNESSEY, DAN: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Thank you, Speaker. I rise today to recognize Dan Hennessey of Bridgewater, a family man, a selfless volunteer, and a community advocate with a quick wit and a warm, friendly, demeanor. Dan is often called upon to emcee local receptions, ceremonies, and community events. He's also a published author of *With the Snap of a Glove*, a book that chronicles his battle with prostate cancer. He is currently the president of HB Studios Sports Centre.

Dan served for nine years as the Honorary Colonel of 14 Construction Engineering Squadron, RCAF, from 2015 until just this June. During his tenure, he organized a very successful yellow-ribbon campaign in Bridgewater and spearheaded a memorial to Cpl. Paul Davis, a local casualty of the Afghanistan mission. He also hosted the RCAF 100 Golf Tournament at Osprey Ridge Golf Course this June and is co-hosting the Canadian Walk for Veterans on September 21st at the Emera Oval with Terry Kelly. Dan was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal and most recently the RCAF Command Commendation, recognizing his work with the RCAF and community.

I call on all those in the House to join me in thanking Dan for his dedicated service. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MITCHELL, JACK: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to pay tribute to charismatic former councillor for St. Margaret's Bay-Prospect Jack Mitchell. He recently passed away and his celebration of life was today.

Jack loved his large family, his community of Bayside, and his hunting and fishing expeditions. He was one of the most knowledgeable people in the commercial fishing supplies business in Atlantic Canada. He took great pride in and was a dedicated and committed member of council for District 23 in the 1990s, and after retirement he served as the chair of the Community Monitoring Committee for the Otter Lake Landfill.

In his time in County Council and also in the regional HRM Council, Jack was successful in many projects: the West Dover ball field, Shad Bay soccer field, Brookside Junior High soccer and ballfields, Prospect Road Elementary tot lot, Terence Bay launchway, Coolens Beach in Shad Bay, Hubbards ball field, Village Green in East Dover, HRM parkland in East St. Margaret's, Hacketts Cove parkland and HRM parkland in Tantallon schools and the Johnnie Mitchell Memorial Park with boat launch in Bayside.

He had many accomplishments but is first known as a family man. Please join me in remembering the legacy of the late Jack Mitchell.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

OSBERG, LARS: BOOK RELEASE - CONGRATS.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, I'd like to extend the congratulations of the House to economist and Halifax Chebucto resident Lars Osberg on the release last week of his new book *The Scandalous Rise of Inequality in Canada*. Building on his earlier work, including *The Age of Increasing Inequality*, Osberg's new book examines trends in the stagnation of middle-class income, the erosion of income at the economic bottom, and the strong income growth in the uppermost decile.

In the process, Osberg outlines a range of proposals for countering inequality in our country, from inheritance taxes to full employment to a compelling variant of basic income, participation income.

Lars Osberg has become a Professor of Economics at Dalhousie. *The Scandalous Rise of Inequality in Canada* is published by Lorimer and it is to be recommended to the public discourse of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

HON. GREG MORROW: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

GREG MORROW: Speaker, in your gallery, the Speaker's Gallery, we are joined by Jude Avery, who has been recognized for his tremendous work for the Acadian community in Guysborough County. Jude is a community pillar and certainly a driving force, along with Jennifer Delorey, in the establishment of École Belle-Baie in the Tor Bay region.

I extend the warm welcome of the House to Jude Avery. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome, we hope you enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

AVERY, JUDE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. GREG MORROW: Today I rise to recognize Mr. Jude Avery of Larrys River. Two years ago I congratulated Jude for receiving the Lieutenant Governor's Award of Excellence for contributions to l'Acadie et la francophonie de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

A retired educator, Jude has continued his passion for his Acadian history, culture and language by being a champion for the Acadian community. He applied this extensive knowledge while writing two books on Acadian history.

Jude has been one of the key founders of La Société Acadienne de Torbé and of course their annual Festival Savalette, which brings home family and friends for four days of celebration. Jude has been the backbone of the efforts to bring the CSAP school, École Belle-Baie, to Larrys River. It opened last year and his daughter Nicole, also an educator, is the Principal.

Speaker, Jude is a dedicated husband, father and grandfather. His passion for his culture, community and family has lit a spark in the youth of his Acadian village, which has extended even further into the county. A true role model and leader, we thank Jude for inspiring so many people. Your community and province are forever grateful.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DAUGHTER, EMILIE SARAH - BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, I am just rising on my feet to wish a little girl a happy 10th birthday today. Emilie Sarah came into the world 10 years ago. She's wonderful and kind. Many of the folks might know her in here. She's got a big day planned with her friends. She's at school right now. She's going to watch this member's statement so I'm going to take over and trump her mother and tell her she can eat all the

ice cream sandwiches that she wants. Mom is home planning a big day for her with Allie and I rise on my feet to tell my daughter I love her and wish her a happy birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DOWNEY, DAVID SR.: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to celebrate David Downey, Sr., the patriarch of the Downey family and the descendent of George Downey. The Downey family has a long history in Nova Scotia, specifically in the north end of Halifax, known to all of us as the Fighting Downeys, with a huge impactful history of boxing in Nova Scotia, Canada and the world.

David Downey, Sr., has been recognized and inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame. The Downey family has a strong history here in Nova Scotia, from George Alexander Downey serving in the No. 2 Black Battalion, decorated boxer Robert “Bobbie” Downey Sr., serving in the military as a military chef, Graham Downey being the first Black Councillor in Halifax and the first Black Deputy Mayor in Nova Scotia and Billy Downey owning the Arrows night club.

Between the military, city council, middleweight champion of Canada and the hottest nightclub in Halifax, the Downey family are highly respected for their service to their country, to the province, and to the city in which they live - Halifax on Creighton Street. With eight generations of history, the Downey family has contributed in many ways to Canadian history and society.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: In the Speaker’s Gallery today, we are joined by the head of Softball Nova Scotia, Chris Hopewell. I would ask Chris to rise to accept the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Hants East.

HOPEWELL, CHRIS: SOFTBALL WORK - THANKS

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I rise today to extend my congratulations to Chris Hopewell on his remarkable leadership as the head of Softball Nova Scotia, and for his outstanding dedication as the coach of the U11 East Hants Mastodons.

Chris's commitment to developing young athletes and fostering a love for the game is inspiring. Through his guidance, countless players have grown not only in skill but in confidence and teamwork. Chris's passion for softball and tireless work have had a tremendous impact, both locally and provincially.

I ask the members of the Legislature to join me in thanking Chris for being a positive force in the sport of softball and in the lives of so many young athletes. Here's to his continued success in shaping future stars.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

HOUSING DEVT.: LACK OF TRANSPARENCY - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, the people of Clayton Park West elected me as their voice. It will always be my privilege to do so. Yesterday, we heard from the Minister of Community Services regarding the Pallet shelters being erected at the Canada Games Centre. The minister stated that the councillors, the Canada Games Centre, and the BMO Centre all knew about the development. It's strange that the only person who was not included was the MLA and the constituents of Clayton Park West.

Clayton Park West is a welcoming community. We are not NIMBYs. We recognize the need for temporary housing for those who need a hand up. What we are upset about is the lack of transparency and consultation. I would have been happy to have sat with the minister to look at several locations in our neighbourhood where the Pallet shelters would have been much more suitable.

I want to thank the constituents of Clayton Park West for reaching out to me via emails and with their comments on Facebook. I will advocate and be their voice for as long as I can.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

PERIOD POVERTY PROGRAM: 5TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Period Poverty Program, which runs at a Highfield Park PharmaChoice. The Period Poverty Program, which began with a Facebook post, marked its five-year anniversary this past April 2024.

That same month, Cassidy Bellefontaine, who started the program in 2019, received a Halifax Volunteer Award for District 6. It was a very exciting time for the program.

The Period Poverty Program's goal is to ensure that no one who has a menstrual period can't afford the proper supplies due to financial barriers. The program provides full boxes of pads and tampons and reusable options like menstrual cups as well. The program is funded by donations and fundraisers that Cassidy runs, such as bake sales, cake and pop sales, yard sales, and the like.

I ask the House to join me in acknowledging the very good work of the Period Poverty Program, and to congratulate Cassidy Bellefontaine on receiving the Halifax Volunteer Award for her work on this vital project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

HON. GREG MORROW: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

GREG MORROW: Also in the gallery today, we're joined by Allister Chisholm. Allister and his wife Nancy have been recognized in the community for being exceptional volunteers. Allister is also a pillar of the community and a masterful storyteller. He has worked in, I believe, 39 countries across the world in many dangerous situations, but none more dangerous a job than being the only Tory in Larrys River. (Laughter) Please welcome Allister Chisholm to the Legislature. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome, and we hope you enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

CHISHOLM, ALLISTER & NANCY: COM. SERV. - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: Speaker, I rise to recognize Allister and Nancy Chisholm of Larrys River. Allister and Nancy's families' roots are strong in Guysborough County. Allister grew up in Guysborough Interval, and although Nancy was born in Ontario and raised in the Bahamas, her dad was from Larrys River.

After 25 years of living in Singapore, they moved home to Larrys River and built a home. Since that time, they have become enthusiastic volunteers in the community and have been embraced by the local residents.

Allister is a member of the Larrys River Volunteer Fire Department and a 911 responder. He has been a passionate supporter of École Belle-Baie and worked hard behind the scenes to keep the momentum going for this very important project. He is always there

to help at community events, and he's known as a "get it done guy." Nancy, who is also a huge community volunteer, is often the first to be asked, but usually she has already volunteered before the ask is even made.

[1:45 p.m.]

Allister and Nancy were just inducted into the honour roll during the most recent Festival Savalette celebration. They were recognized by their community for their endless volunteer time and their remarkable kindness to their neighbours and their village.

Allister and Nancy Chisholm are certainly a couple who go above and beyond without asking for anything in return. I ask that members of this House join me in applause to congratulate them on their honour roll induction. (Applause)

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

PORTLAND ESTATES RES. ASSOC.: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Portland Estates and Hills Residents' Association, which has been an active, vibrant, and diverse organization of volunteers for over 30 years. Their common goal is to enhance the lives of their residents by promoting community spirit through a variety of community events. The association also acts as an environmental watchdog. They have been instrumental in the building of an extensive trail system that exists in the community for all to enjoy.

One of their most anticipated events will take place on September 26th, when they once again will be holding their movie night in the park. The Birches Park Playground field will be the location of this much-loved free community evening with the screening of *The Jungle Book*. This family-friendly event will have no shortage of popcorn and movie watching snacks. It's a BYOBC - bring your own blanket and chair. We wish the community much success in this event under the stars.

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

VOLUNTEERS: TERRY FOX RUN - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I rise to recognize the amazing volunteers of the Terry Fox Run hosted in New Waterford over the weekend. Every year, Bobby Aucoin gathers his volunteers for the community's annual Terry Fox Run, and every year the community turns out. Bobby is deeply committed to the Terry Fox Foundation and a need to raise money for cancer research. I want to thank him, his crew of volunteers, and all the individuals who came out in our community to support the Terry Fox Run.

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

JOHN WHITE: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

JOHN WHITE: Speaker, in the East Gallery today is an incredible coach, Nick Bonnar, who is not only a long-time coach but a true long-time friend of my mom and dad, so it's a special day for me as well. Joining Nick is his wife of 51 years, Donna, and just one of his committed organizers, Darlene Close. Missing with them is Robyn Burke. I ask if they'd stand and take a warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. We hope you enjoy your time here. It's interesting.

The honourable member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

BONNAR, NICK: COACHING SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

JOHN WHITE: Nick Bonnar - or Coach, as he is known - has been volunteering for 55 years, coaching hockey and baseball. Coach works with youth from tots to Junior A and from T-ball through to university baseball.

Through his Learn to Skate program, he teaches children of all ages how to skate. In his 18 years coordinating the pre-school skate program, Nick has had three-year-olds go from crawling on the ice to full-on skating. He is also a past president of the Glace Bay Minor Hockey Association and has volunteered for 30 years refereeing floor hockey tournaments.

In Major Little League, Coach has led two Glace Bay teams to national titles, while his university baseball team, the Capers, won the 2005 Canadian championship. He has also rebuilt the Glace Bay Antonians minor baseball team. Nick has a remarkable record. He participated in 18 national championships and founded two annual tournaments that provide scholarships for Glace Bay High School students.

Literally thousands of children, across multiple generations, know him as Coach and have benefited from his unwavering commitment to our youth. His dedication to hockey has earned him the respect and assistance of organizations such as the NHL Players' Association.

I ask all members to congratulate Coach Nick Bonnar.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

HORGAN, JOANNE: CA WORK - THANKS

FRED TILLEY: Speaker, today I rise to thank my CA, Joanne Horgan. As we're all here doing our work in the Legislature, our CAs are back home looking after the office. Joanne is an exceptional CA. When we got together before the election and we talked, both our goals for the role of MLA was to get involved and help out in our community. Joanne takes that to the nth degree.

Joanne attends so many events. She has such conscientiousness with each constituent who comes in the office. I just want to thank her for the work that she does in our office for the seniors, for the families, and for the youth of our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

AUTUMN HOUSE: LILAC PLACE OPENING - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Speaker, today I rise to recognize the team at Autumn House in Amherst on their recent grand opening held at Lilac Place, a resource centre for women.

Autumn House is a member of the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia. They provide an invaluable service to those in our community who have been abused by an intimate partner. Recognizing another unique need, the team established Lilac Place to serve all women by offering a variety of services beyond emergency support, counselling, and advocacy, which they have traditionally offered to those experiencing the challenging and often emergency life situations. Just a sample of the activities hosted at Lilac Place include a recent clothing swap, education and tools for navigating menopause, a biweekly knitting club, poetry and creative writing sessions, and support for accessing all kinds of other services offered in the community.

Please join me in congratulating and thanking Executive Director Dawn Ferris and the board of directors of Autumn House for being forward-thinking and opening Lilac Place in Cumberland County.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

ORGANIZERS: BRAITHWAITE-DOWNEY REUNION - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to extend my congratulations to Rosalind Braithwaite Wornham and the organizing committee for such a successful reunion. On August 24, 2024, the Braithwaite and Downey family had their family reunion with the theme of Our Roots Run Deep.

Bringing together families is a huge feat, especially when you have to organize large families. I was there, and it was such an amazing job that was done. Their family ties to Nova Scotia run deep and have made a huge impact on the fabric of our daily lives and the history of Nova Scotia. I was very honoured to recognize their family at the reunion on August 24th.

I would just like to say that I was very pleased to be able to see so many people from the community, and I know that this is not the only reunion they will have. They will be continual. I was very grateful to be able to be in attendance. Congratulations on celebrating your family and the reunion.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I draw members' attention to the gallery, where today we have Mike Harlow, president of the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia, and Murray Crouse, president of the Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers' Association. I see they have both risen, and I ask that members please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. We hope you enjoy your time here. It's nice to see you both.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

CHRISTMAS TREE COUNCIL: HOSTING CONF. - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate staff and volunteers of the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia and our own Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers on hosting an incredibly successful international conference this Summer.

Everyone in this House already knows that Nova Scotia produces the finest Christmas trees in the world. Our beautiful balsam fir are the centrepiece of holiday celebrations across North America, into the Caribbean and further abroad, offering the quintessential sight and smell of the season.

Last month's conference attracted delegates from across the U.S. and Canada, with the furthest travelling from Puerto Rico and the U.K., to explore topics ranging from climate change adaptation to the race to the super-tree - and by the way, we are in that race.

Plus, they learned about Oak Island treasure and were invaded by pirates. A great week by every measure.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

LIND, TED: VOL. RECOG. CEREMONY NOM. - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: Speaker, this year, the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council nominated Ted Lind for the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony. Ted has volunteered with his arts council for over a decade, and for much of that time, he was on the board of directors. He currently serves as chair of the program committee and is deeply involved in the film committee, the digital resources committee, and the exhibition committee. Ted also contributes through writing grants and funding proposals and has recently been playing a key role in the newly established digital arts platform ArtSeen.

Recently, Ted and a number of other artists donated their artwork to the Annapolis Community Pool for their fundraising auction, and I was able to secure the winning bid on one of Ted's pieces.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Ted Lind on being nominated and celebrated for this year's Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

DIONNE, CODIE: CA WORK - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, I rise today to say a few words about my now-former constituency assistant, Codie Dionne. Codie has worked with my office since October 2023, when my longtime CA of 11 years, Kelly Gomes, decided to retire.

I am sad to announce that Codie has moved on to a new job. Codie has been invaluable in our office since she started. She has participated in numerous community events, and our community will miss her greatly. She's always put people in our community first. Her love for community has shone through in her actions and words.

Thank you, Codie, for all you have done, and welcome back, Pat Langley. I am lucky to work with both of you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RECIPS.: PARENT VOLUNTEER AWD. - THANKS

RONNIE LEBLANC: Madame la présidente, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour remercier un groupe spécial de bénévoles, les parents bénévoles qui s'efforcent à garantir une expérience d'apprentissage enrichissante pour tous les enfants de nos écoles. Chaque année, vers la fin de l'année scolaire, le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial et la Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Écosse honorent un parent bénévole de chacune des écoles du CSAP avec le Prix d'appréciation des parents CSAP-FPANÉ. En juin dernier, Nicole Boudreau de l'École Joseph-Dugas, Laura Comeau de l'École Stella-Maris, et Michelle Reddick de l'École secondaire de Clare ont été reconnus pour leurs contributions.

Je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour remercier ses trois parents bénévoles et tous les parents bénévoles qui donnent généreusement de leur temps et énergie à nos écoles et à nos enfants.

Speaker, I rise today to thank a special group of volunteers: the parent volunteers who strive to ensure a meaningful learning experience for all our children in our schools. Each year, near the end of the school year, the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial and the Fédération des parents acadiens de la Nouvelle-Écosse honour one parent volunteer from each CSAP school with the Prix d'appréciation des parents CSAP-FPANÉ.

This past June, Nicole Boudreau from l'École Joseph-Dugas, Laura Comeau from l'École Stella-Maris, and Michelle Reddick from l'École secondaire de Clare were recognized for their contributions.

I invite all members to join me in thanking these three and all parents who volunteer for their generous dedication to our schools and our children.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

WHITE, GERALD DUNCAN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, I want to rise today to recognize the recent passing of Gerald Duncan White - or Gerry to his friends - who passed away September 12, 2024, at the age of 69, when he laid down his workman's tools.

Gerry's life of service and adventure: He was sworn into the RCMP on his 19th birthday and eventually joined the Royal Canadian Navy. His personality was larger than life, and his positive outlook and keenness to seize the day led him to a wide variety of experiences.

Gerry had the gift to build strong, lasting relationships, and his good-natured personality, sense of humour, and quick wit changed all those he met. Gerry was a member of the RCMP Veterans Association, the Veterans UN-NATO Canada military group, the

Blue Knights International Motorcycle Club, the Nova Scotia Mass Choir, John Albro No. 122 lodge, and the Order of St. George.

You'd often see Gerry at any events across this province, leading "O Canada" or telling stories about his teddy bears. I just want to send condolences to his wife Jane and his daughter Linda Lee.

[2:00 p.m.]

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: REGISTRY NUMBERS - RELEASE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: This Saturday marks the beginning of Fall, and unfortunately it will also mark a full season of the year that this Premier has hidden the family doctor wait-list from the public. The last time this was updated was on June 9th.

When this Premier was in Opposition, I'll remind him that when that number was below 70,000 a year, he said it was a health care crisis. Now that the number of people who need a family doctor has more than doubled under his watch, what does he do? He hides these numbers from the public.

My question to the Premier is: When will he release the numbers from the Need a Family Practice Registry, and why has he been hiding them for a full season of the year?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Most people know I'm an accountant. I like data. I really like data, but what I really like is good data, and I know the Nova Scotia Health Authority is making phone calls to people on the list to see if they're still attached or to understand their health conditions.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority is making those calls. I think it's a good thing and we'll get better data for sure.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'm sorry, Speaker, you can't say on one side of your mouth that you like data and then on the other hide data from the public that hold you accountable to your commitments to the people. Last week at Public Accounts Committee, the interim CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority told reporters that it could be months before the doctor wait-list is released.

THE SPEAKER: Order. It's 45 seconds. The clock went to zero. Okay. The clock didn't run properly, so we will start over your time, if you'd like to.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition with his first supplementary.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'm sorry, but the Premier can't say he likes and cares about data, and then keep that information, that data from the public. Last week at Public Accounts Committee, the interim CEO said it could be months before the public knows what the numbers are on the need-a-doctor wait-list. I think this is a product of putting a partisan lawyer in charge of our health authority. It ensures that politics come before people in health care, and this is another example of that. While the Premier can review these numbers, there's no reason he can't release these numbers to the public as well. Why isn't the Premier releasing these numbers even while his department is auditing the list?

THE PREMIER: The member, a former Minister of Health and Wellness, knows what's happening in the health care system. When he was minister, he was pressed on the doctor shortage of the day that his government had, and as he said at that time, "We're training more doctors than ever before." There's no easy solution. Let me ask, did he open a medical school at Cape Breton University? No, he didn't do that. Did he fight with health care workers for his entire term in office? Yes, that's exactly what he did. Speaker, we're fixing the mess that that member left us with.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I think it was Jay-Z who said, "Men lie, women lie, numbers don't." And that's why we want to see the numbers. This government has claimed that they have brought in 300 net new doctors this year, but the math works out to only 10 net new family doctors - another example of the Premier caring a lot about data. At the same time that that's happened, the Premier has increased our population by close to 40,000 and the family doctor wait-list grew by nearly 30,000. These numbers don't add up. I'll ask the Premier now: Does he regret promising Nova Scotians he could fix health care, because it's clearly a promise he can't keep?

THE PREMIER: We have an expression for what the member is doing. It's called opposition math, Speaker. The reality is that first we have the Leader of the Opposition supporting the federal carbon tax, then he supported the federal government on asylum seekers, then he sided with the Liberals on the Isthmus yesterday. He continues that. I just have one question for the member: Is there one single issue he would stand with Nova Scotians on as opposed to the Liberal Party?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the NDP.

PREM.: HOGAN COURT PATIENTS NUMBER - DIVULGE

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Earlier this year, the Auditor General described the government's original purchase of the unfinished Hogan Court hotel as "highly unusual" and concerning. The deal included negotiating with a developer who didn't own the property, payment of that developer's tax Bill, and forgetting to include the driveway in the final agreement, among other irregularities. This project has been plagued from the start. Can the Premier tell me how many people have received care at the Hogan Court facility?

THE PREMIER: This is a new initiative in health care. It's one I'm very proud of. New initiatives are hard. Big initiatives are hard. Big, new things are even harder, but you know what? We are doing the work. We are transforming health care, and 68 people will be receiving care in that facility in December. I would encourage the member to challenge those 68 as to whether they're happy to be there. We'll see.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The government has had an expert opinion from the start that this was an ill-suited and unfit location. Patients, as it turns out, are not hotel guests. After project delays, challenges, and criticism, the Province was approached with a sweetheart deal by Shannex to buy the building. The catch? We pay their mortgage and construction costs, and they don't pay us for the building for two more years. Is this "More, faster"? How many people right now are benefiting from this new, exciting facility?

THE PREMIER: Yes, we are embarking on big projects. We're transforming health care in this province, and that's a new thing. You know, we didn't see the prior government do that. We didn't see the NDP do that when they were in government. You know what the NDP did when they were in government? (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable Premier has the floor.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Do you know what the NDP did when they were in government? They actually cut health care spending, and now they complain about the state of health care. They didn't act on a report they had in their hands about a looming retirement crisis for doctors. Instead, they cut funding from health care. We're investing record amounts, and I am not ashamed to invest in Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians have a right to expect that their government cares enough to invest in their health care, not cut health care spending.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Do you know what the NDP did when they were in government? They brought in collaborative emergency care - the first province in the country. The Auditor General's February report also found a laundry list of misuses of procurement, processes, and public dollars associated with this project - a laundry list - including a questionable \$18 million to an advisory firm, part of which was to advise on

the purchase and development of Hogan Court, even though the government already knew from another firm that it was a bad idea. Now, with millions spent and no value realized, this government just gave another million-dollar, untendered contract to that same advisory firm. This project clearly isn't good value for money. How can the Premier continue with a straight face to assure Nova Scotians that this project has any value . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: . . . for them?

THE SPEAKER: Order.

THE PREMIER: These projects take time. We didn't break it. We're fixing it. We're investing in health care, we're building, we're investing in people, and you know what? We're seeing the results. Today, more doctors than there were three years ago. Today, more nurses than there were three years ago. We will continue to invest in Nova Scotians and not cut health care like the NDP did when they had their chance with the keys.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DHW: NO. OF NEW RESIDENTS WITHOUT FAMILY DOCTOR - REVEAL

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I think one of the reasons we're seeing our health care system get worse is because we have a Premier who's looking back 14 years instead of focused on his own record here in the present, and also a Premier who doesn't care about the facts in the situation. This is a Premier who assured this House that his attempt to double the population is bringing more health care workers into the province, but data according to his own department show that last year, health care professionals made up less than 10 per cent of the Premier's own nominations to come to Nova Scotia. My question to the Premier is: You brought in more than 30,000 people last year; how many of those new Nova Scotians are not attached to a family doctor?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Immigration is an important part of our health care strategy. We know that 28 per cent of 185 doctors who came to Nova Scotia last year were internationally educated medical graduates. Those individuals are either working in specialties or they're working in family practice, and they're caring for Nova Scotians, not only new Nova Scotians but Nova Scotians who have been here.

There were 619 internationally educated nurses who are also part of the solution for us to fix health care, to expand programs. We can't complain about different things and then say that we're not addressing the workforce. We need immigration. We're building our own workforce, but we're also bringing people here who are coming mid-career with the essential skills that we need to care for Nova Scotians.

ZACH CHURCHILL: This government brags about how many doctors they're bringing in. There were 10 net new doctors last year when our population grew by over 30,000 people. If the government looks at doctors per capita in this province, data that is available in their own government briefing notes - I wish they took some more time to read them - you will see that doctors per capita are plummeting here in Nova Scotia.

Instead of taking real action to attach more patients to family doctors, including those whom they're recruiting to come here, this government hides the Need a Family Practice wait-list from the public for months. Why won't they release that list so the public knows the truth of the matter?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: If the member opposite was so worried about a doctor for every Nova Scotian, perhaps he would have hired a few before he left government. There is a very clear path for us to have more physicians. First of all, we're training more physicians than ever before. We've opened a medical school. We have a common-sense credentialing process that was not complicated, but it was obviously outside the reach of the former government. We have done everything we can. We are identifying Nova Scotians who want to live and serve in their community as physicians. We are finding people on the ground who have languished in positions that did not use their full scope of practice, and we are now bringing them up to their full credentials in order to care for Nova Scotians. There's so much more. I cannot wait for the next question.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DHW: WORSENING HEALTH CARE SYSTEM - ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The numbers don't lie. Whether you need a family doctor, whether you're trying to access emergency care, whether you're waiting for an ambulance, all of these things are getting exponentially worse under this government. No matter how much money they spend, no matter how much back-patting they have - the government brags about having more surgeries being done. There has been an increase of surgeries by 2 per cent over the last five years - 2 per cent. Unfortunately, the government's population growth targets have seen an increase of 10 per cent of the population over the time. That means fewer Nova Scotians are able to access the surgeries they need, which is why wait times are getting longer.

My question to the Premier is: Why does he say one thing when the opposite is happening?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, we were very fortunate to hear from EHS at Public Accounts Committee recently - I believe it was last week - to say that response times have been halved as a result of the interventions. We have 30 paramedics who are coming from Australia. Our courses are putting out more paramedics than ever before. We now have emergency medical responders who are contributing to our health

care system. We have transfer operations: 86 per cent of transfers are now happening, allowing our paramedics to respond.

There has been so much effort and money spent, and for the first time in a very long time, health care workers feel valued and heard.

[2:15 p.m.]

ZACH CHURCHILL: We have a doctor wait-list that is at record levels in this province. Surgeries are not keeping up with the government's own population growth targets. We have the highest wait times to see specialists in the country. Instead of showing a shred of humility, we have a government that is obsessed with past governments and laying the blame on other people instead of taking responsibility.

This minister has bragged about virtual care. That's great, but guess what? You can't have virtual surgeries here in Nova Scotia. Virtual care does not help people who need the physical assessments of a family doctor.

This Premier promised to fix health care. My question to the Premier is: Why is he bragging about a situation that's getting worse by the week?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: In fact, there's been a 25 per cent reduction in the surgical wait-list since we formed government, just to be clear. We've done this by extending OR hours. We've also had designated surgical beds in the province, which are essential in order for us to ensure that we have beds available to people having surgery.

The same-day cancellation rate in our surgeries has steadily dropped over the last number of months because we have these designated surgical beds. We are looking at every asset. We are now meeting benchmark for cataract surgeries in all zones. There has been a shoulder to the wheel. The teams have done an incredible amount of work. They are working so hard to serve Nova Scotians every single day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DHW: BREAST SCREENING MEETING - COMMIT

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, in March this year, the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness promised 70 women who were here in the gallery that they would look into what is happening in other provinces when it comes to policies for breast screening for cancer.

I requested a meeting with the minister in April to help her and the Premier understand what is happening in other provinces. I received a response from the minister on April 23rd - which I will table - to say that they would not meet with us. My question to

the minister is: Will she commit to meet with me, Dr. Iles, Dr. Gordon from B.C., and Dense Breasts Canada, where they are ahead of us in finding four times more cancers?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I did commit that I would meet with the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program, which I did. I was able to meet with Dr. Iles and the team in June. We met for an hour. We talked about the success of the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program. We are one of only two provinces that has high-risk breast screening in place, and the program has shown to be very effective.

I did meet with Dr. Iles. I asked specifically about some of the questions. The evidence is emerging. There is no clear clinical pathway at this time, but we will continue to work with the experts in our province in order to best serve and treat the women in care in the province.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I thank the minister for meeting, but the issue is that we are still behind other provinces. My sister can get an MRI, but I can't get it, and I had the cancer here. There are women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer - four or five a week - who are in Stage 3 and 4. We are terribly behind other provinces.

Why aren't we trying to learn from B.C. and Ontario and moving on from our experts here who are looking into our mortality rates? They are waiting for us to die before they do something for us. I apologize, but I think we're behind.

I'd like the minister to explain why we are finding less cancer here.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I do understand that this is a very personal issue, and I in no way mean to dismiss it. I deeply understand the passion that the member opposite has for this issue.

What I want to assure the member is that we are working very closely with the experts in our province and that this is a very reputable and respected program that we have. We continue to monitor the evidence. The program itself is under scrutiny at all times to make sure we are providing the right screening and the right care to patients. I will continue to work with Dr. Iles and the team in order to move forward.

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

DHW: PHYSICIAN RETIREMENT FUND - DELIVER

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We know how important it is that we retain family doctors in this province. With so many unattached patients, we can't risk adding more to the list. One of this government's key plans to retain family doctors in their 2020-2021 platform is to create a physician retirement fund. The retirement fund has not been delivered, but the

government did commit to providing Doctors Nova Scotia an update on March 31, 2024. Speaker, can the Premier confirm that this deadline was met?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to work on a regular basis with Doctors Nova Scotia, not only about this issue, but around other issues as well. We certainly appreciate the work that happens with them, not only around the settlement of a very competitive contract, which has actually resulted in more attachment and access for patients in Nova Scotia. We do know that is an outstanding item. There are conversations under way and there will be more to say to Nova Scotians in positions soon.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The commitment wasn't a conversation. It was a retirement fund, and that contract stipulates that the update was in March.

We have a FOIPOP that shows that not only was this deadline missed, but that any movement on the creation of a physician retirement fund has been stalled until correspondence reveals the gravity of the situation. The department heard from Doctors Nova Scotia that a lack of details by the deadline would be "Seen by physicians as a failure on the Premier's part."

It was also heard that two emergency physicians said that if the promise wasn't kept, "It will be the nail in the coffin," as they would be moving back to Ontario to practise. I've tabled those documents and, anecdotally, these doctors are not alone. With 160,000 unattached patients and doctors leaving the province, why won't they keep their promise?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: That wasn't an item in my mandate letter, and to my knowledge, my mandate is not yet over, so we will continue to work with Doctors Nova Scotia. We want to deliver that for physicians. We're not going to impose something. We work back and forth with Doctors Nova Scotia. We know it's a pressing issue. We've also settled a very good contract. We work very hard to make sure that physicians across all practices and specialties are compensated well. We value physicians. We're recruiting more, we're retaining more, and we'll continue to work with Doctors Nova Scotia and physicians to make sure they have the practice environment that they enjoy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DHW: ER PETITION - ADDRESS

CARMAN KERR: In the Spring of 2023, I initiated a petition asking government to develop a comprehensive, targeted plan to return the emergency room at Soldiers Memorial Hospital back to 24/7, like it was in August 2021. I tabled the petition that had nearly 7,000 signatures from those in Kings West, from Annapolis, from Digby-Annapolis, and beyond. From 24-hour, seven-days-a-week service in August 2021 to removing all evenings in October 2021 to hardly any service now. My question for the minister: Is there a specific plan to return Soldiers Memorial emergency back to 24/7?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: In each of the zones across the province we work within communities, we work with the leadership in the zones to understand where the assets are and where the barriers are to recruitment. Absolutely, we're working with local leaders as well as local physicians to understand how best to support the emergency care needs in Western Zone and specifically in Soldiers Memorial, and we will continue to do that. We've recently implemented urgent treatment there as a way to support the community as well. We'll continue to look for solutions. Recruitment is top of mind, and we really appreciate the community's efforts to assist us in recruitment of physicians in the area.

CARMAN KERR: The petition also goes on to ask for quarterly public information sessions. The emergency room has been closed so much it's hard to count: on January 26th, 27th, 28th; February 2nd, 3rd, and 4th; February 23rd, 24th, and 25th; May 4th, 5th, 11th, 12th; June 28th, 29th, and 30th. I can go on and on, but again, I don't have enough time.

People are anxious. They're stressed. I know the minister understands that. They don't have enough information. A simple ask is to have quarterly public information sessions so they can have their questions answered, and they also have an opportunity to give comments. When can we expect public information sessions to be offered in the Middleton catchment?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, throughout the zones, it is an expectation that folks in the Nova Scotia Health Authority, particularly, go into communities and speak about the needs, and give them updates.

I don't have in front of me the last time there was a community session, but I do know that the folks in the Western Zone have been working very hard. There are a number of initiatives under way, not only in the member's area, but across the zone. I can check on that and get back to him.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

DHW: AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES - EXPLAIN

HON. TONY INCE: A constituent in my riding wrote to me to share her story about calling 911, and I'd like, with her permission, to share the story with the House.

She called 911 for her husband who was ill and struggling to breathe. She was told that an ambulance would be there in an hour. It took 10 hours for the ambulance to show up. Thankfully, my constituent was okay.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: How can we possibly explain to constituents that in Nova Scotia in 2024, they may have to wait 10 hours before an ambulance shows up?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I certainly don't have the specifics of the case. If the member opposite would like to speak to me about the specifics, I'm happy to do that.

What I can say is that over the last number of years, there has been a great deal of work in improving access to patients to paramedicine services. There are physicians who work in the call centre, in dispatch, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those individuals are available to patients.

Patients are triaged. There's no question about that. Sometimes they have access to physicians, sometimes they have access to registered nurses, sometimes to clinical paramedics. At times there are planned transfers; other times there are emergency calls. It really does depend on the need of the patient. This is a community-based organization now, and it has broadened the scope of the way in which they care for Nova Scotians.

TONY INCE: The current government told the Health Committee last year that the government would start fining the ambulance service company if they did not meet performance targets. I'll table that. That includes having 80 per cent of the response time on target. My question to the minister is: Is a 10-hour response time for an emergency situation within target for ambulance services, and if not, what is the department doing to fix this service?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I certainly can't, again, comment on the specifics of that case. I really don't know the situation, so it would be very premature for me to weigh in on that case in particular. What I will say is that the Department of Health and Wellness is working very hard within the confines of a historical contract.

We are working very hard to hold EMCI's feet to the fire in regard to delivery standards. We have data now. We've moved from a contract manager to a regulator in this province. We have seen marked improvement as a result of our regulatory approach. Again, if the contract was stronger when it was signed by the former government, I would have more teeth to be able to address some of the issues that are longstanding with EHS.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DHW: DOCTOR WAIT-LIST NUMBER - CLARIFY

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, when the Premier was in Opposition, he liked to say in the House that the doctor wait-list underestimated the true number of Nova Scotians without a family doctor. It was probably double the wait-list number. I have a quote here from 2019 to table, where he says this. We know that the Premier refuses to release updated doctor wait-list numbers, but I think it's important for Nova Scotians to have a full picture of the health care doctor wait-list. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: There are 160,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor, or is that number closer to 320,000?

[2:30 p.m.]

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I thank the member for the question because it gives me an opportunity to underscore how important it is to have actual data when you're managing the health care system. We know that as a result of the Need a Family Practice Registry, there are individuals who have put themselves on there because they can now actually access care. We inherited a list that had no information. It was actually useless. It was not being managed. Nobody was looking into these patients' conditions. Nobody was finding out where they were. We didn't even have postal codes about the patients who were on that list. Now we have a registry. We have a registry that tells us exactly where Nova Scotians are. We understand the health condition, we understand the care that they require, and we are managing that registry by attaching them . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: What's amazing is that this wait-list that has exploded in numbers is the same list that the government used to actually get to government, and now that the wait-list has more than doubled, it's okay. I've been here long enough, and I've seen it all, but to get that answer after they used this wait-list time and time again in Opposition is amazing to me.

The Department of Health and Wellness is calling Nova Scotians on the Need a Family Doctor wait-list to try to reduce the number of Nova Scotians on the list, but we're also hearing that when a patient is called to enroll in the wait-list, they're being reminded of the length of the list. My question to the . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. (Interruptions) Shall we take the minute just to yell back and forth? (Interruptions)

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I can appreciate that the list prior to us forming government was a very difficult thing for the government of the day to talk about. We now have the ability to give those 160,000 people 840,000 opportunities to access care in this province on an annual basis. It allows us to reach in and look at those individuals living with chronic disease and attach them to care providers, such as diabetic education centres. It allows us to identify people who are in the prenatal period in order to attach them to prenatal care. It allows them to have in-person primary care. It allows them to meet with pharmacists.

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EECD: NEW SCHOOLS IN HRM - BUILD

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. This Spring, on the subject of the four missing HRM schools, the minister said, “The focus right now is securing the land and as soon as that’s done, the rest will flow.” It’s been over a year since this was announced. How many of the four plots of land have been purchased for these schools?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I very much appreciate how eager communities are to understand exactly where schools will be built. I am as eager as each of them to be able to share details, and when we’re in a position to share details on the specific locations of the schools in HRM, I will be the most excited in the room. I can assure the member opposite of that.

We have invested in a historic \$1 Billion capital plan to address the growth needs in education in HRM and across Nova Scotia. Yes, that does mean four new schools in the HRM - which we will be announcing as soon as we’re able to - but it also means medium-term and short-term solutions to address this issue.

SUZY HANSEN: I just want to make a suggestion: Don’t make announcements without details. People are going to ask questions. Earlier this year, the Premier said that the department already knew where the schools needed to go. HRM submitted their list of locations in 2022 that showed exactly where six to eight schools were needed to accommodate a growing student population. My question is: What is the holdup, and when will the minister actually have an answer?

BECKY DRUHAN: Just to remind the member opposite, we are in a very different real estate environment now than we have been in years past, and to be able to secure land in the rapidly growing and expanding area of HRM, we needed to do things differently. That meant announcing the new schools but allowing the Department of Public Works the opportunity and time to secure the lands that are needed for those schools. As soon as we’re ready to announce those, I will be so excited to do that.

We are not waiting, though. In addition to Public Works working to secure those lands, we have added dozens of new classrooms in modular spaces across this province and specifically in HRM. We’ve also added 46 new capital repair projects to ensure that we preserve our existing school infrastructure.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DHW: ENDOMETRIOSIS CARE - IMPROVE

HON. KELLY REGAN: As we've heard here in the House, endometriosis is a disease that causes severe pain and fertility issues, and it affects one in 10 girls and women across Canada. One of our province's most critical resources for endometriosis care is the IWK Endometriosis and Chronic Pelvic Pain Clinic. Patients are currently facing wait times of up to 18 months or more, depending on the urgency of their particular medical situation. Does the minister think it's acceptable that women have to wait up to 18 months for help with this disease?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: It's something that we've had the opportunity to talk about on several occasions in the House before. The IWK Health Centre does have a chronic pelvic pain clinic that offers a 12-week program that is available to individuals. I do appreciate that there are wait times associated with that. We are also looking at how we can create a hub-and-spoke opportunity and education with our regional OB-GYNs in order to service women, particularly in rural Nova Scotia, and take some of the pressure off. In addition, there is a Maritime Centre for Pelvic Floor Health, which is a multidisciplinary clinic that focuses on self-management. We are looking at this issue. It's a very specialized area of medicine.

KELLY REGAN: The big issue is that the clinic, which was heralded with much fanfare in this House, only operates one day a week due to the team's additional duties. As a result, patients are waiting. Endometriosis advocate Maggie Archibald wrote to the Premier and the Minister of Health explaining the importance of the clinic and how increased funding could be used to improve this essential service. Funding is needed to expand clinical services, support research and innovation, recruit and retain specialists, enhance education and training, and promote public awareness. Will the Minister of Health commit to adding more funding for this important resource so more women can get the help they need?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We do work and meet with the IWK on a regular basis in regard to offering services to women across the province. I am aware that there are some pressures on that clinic. We do wonder and talk to the IWK about what would help. Some of it is recruitment issues. It is a very specialized area of medicine, as a specialty, but we continue our conversations with them. As we go through the budgetary process, any business cases that are brought forward from the IWK will be reviewed.

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

DHW: MEDICAL TEST WAIT TIMES - IMPROVE

LORELEI NICOLL: We know that we need world-class health care facilities in Nova Scotia, and we also need the staff to operate them. Constituents are writing to me, concerned about being able to get medical tests in Halifax. Ultrasounds, in particular, have

wait times in Halifax of more than 100 days. Does the Minister of Health and Wellness acknowledge these wait times, and is there a plan to improve wait times of 100 days for ultrasounds in Halifax?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We know that across the diagnostic imaging spectrum of care, there have been some deficits. There's certainly end-of-life equipment that had to be replaced, which we have invested in. We are also looking at the appropriate staffing across the province in order to provide those. We understand that there are wait times. Those tests are triaged. There's absolutely no question.

We continue to look not only at the workforce but also to make sure not just our tertiary hospitals have the equipment they need but also our regional hospitals as well. That work is ongoing, and there is a commitment to reduce those wait times.

LORELEI NICOLL: According to the NSGEU, staffing of ultrasound technicians is at a critical level. I'll table that. Ultrasounds can help patients get diagnosed early, saving our health care system resources in the long run. If the Minister of Health and Wellness agrees - and I believe she did - that inventory and early diagnosis is the need to increase the number of technicians to perform these necessary tests, then what is the actual plan to do so, resulting in shorter wait times for ultrasounds in particular?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: There has been a 28 per cent increase in the number of ultrasounds that were completed in 2023-2024. The contract that was just settled with the health care bargaining unit will be a significant step in order to not only recruit but retain. We're also looking at how we train ultrasound technicians across the province, so we understand that there has been a lack of attention to the workforce. We also know that wages were frozen under the former government and really were not competitive. We have fixed all those things and we expect to see recruitment and retention improve over the coming months.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DPW: CHIGNETO ISTHMUS OFFER - ACCEPT

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is to the Premier. The Chignecto Isthmus - not the Chebucto Isthmus - is the trade corridor connecting Nova Scotia with the rest of Canada. Yesterday, the federal government offered \$325 million towards building the dikes stronger and building the dikes higher to protect the critical infrastructure here and to prevent Nova Scotia from becoming an island. Yesterday, we saw our neighbouring Premier, Blaine Higgs, accept the offer while still pursuing a legal challenge to the feds. My question the Premier is: Now that Premier Higgs has accepted this offer, will he do the same?

HON. KIM MASLAND: I have mentioned in this House several times now that we know the significance of this project. It literally connects Nova Scotia with the rest of Canada. Quite frankly, to receive an ultimatum on a corridor that is so significant to Nova Scotians and to Canadians, to receive an ultimatum from a federal minister to say “Take the money and run” is absolutely disgusting. It’s shameful.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: The reality is we do not have time to play partisan politics. This government has been in power for more than three years and we have not made any progress. We still see things being tied up in the courts. Thankfully, Premier Higgs has accepted the deal. I don’t know, it seems to me and it seems to a lot of people that we’re seeing partisan politics at play. The reality is that when people elect us, people expect better. The lives of Nova Scotians, the people of this province deserve better. When will the Premier accept this offer and get the work started?

KIM MASLAND: We will continue. We’re doing work on this project now. We’re committed to completing this project for Nova Scotians. When the member across the aisle talks about partisan politics and playing politics with the Chignecto Isthmus, the only one in this House who is playing politics with the Chignecto Isthmus is that member. I will continue to do the work we need to do, and I would encourage the Liberals to stop nickel-and-diming us.

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

DCS: BULLYING WITHIN DEPARTMENT - ADMIT

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. Last week I made mention of workplace bullying that is occurring in the minister’s department. In response, the minister dismissed this as unfounded accusations and suggested my comments were bullying government employees. Earlier today, I tabled several emails from DCS workers highlighting the workplace bullying they’ve experienced. Will the minister admit that this is a problem within the department?

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: First and foremost, I did not dismiss what she said. We know that there’s ongoing work in all departments when it comes to the safety and the importance of all our employees. We want them all to feel healthy and come to work feeling hopeful. There is more work to do, and we’re going to continue to do that. I did not dismiss that outright, and I can assure her that every member of the Department of Community Services, if they are feeling that they are bullied or not appreciated, they have an ear in this minister and this department.

KENDRA COOMBES: First, I’m glad that the minister has changed his tune. Second, workers can’t go directly to the minister, actually - they’re not allowed to. I want to read some excerpts from what some of them said. One former employee says the double standards, bullying, and the constant threat of being reprimanded kept them up at night and

that they had them in tears on the way back to work in the morning. Another said very often workers are so afraid they push it under the rug and accept this treatment as they need their jobs. Another likened it to schoolyard bullying. How is the minister addressing this work culture in the department?

[2:45 p.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Just let me be clear, Speaker. Just like I was as MLA, just as I continue to be as MLA, anyone can approach me. I've had all kinds of employees in the Department of Community Services approach me. Maybe if that individual was minister, she wouldn't want the employees to approach her, but they can approach me, and many have. It's an open-door office. We are doing lots of things. Employee appreciation is going on right now. We have staff going across the province talking to our employees, not just the management, not just the middle management, but most importantly, the frontline workers. We want to hear from them. I'm meeting with them, staff is meeting with them, and we'll continue to listen to them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DHW: RAPID COVID TESTS - DISTRIBUTE

HON. KELLY REGAN: It's now September, and students recently headed back to school. Many MLA offices are experiencing a run on rapid COVID tests. In fact, government MLAs have actually posted that they've been reduced to limiting them to one box per family. One post said, "Please remember others because we don't know when the next tests will be available." Can the Minister of Health and Wellness please advise when Public Health will distribute more free rapid tests to MLA offices and other locations?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We are in a very different stage now, where we are all learning to live with COVID. We can expect that we will see seasonal outbreaks throughout the course of the year. We do appreciate that there is more COVID in communities now that we are moving back inside and maybe back to school or back to work after vacations in the Summer.

What's important is that people stay home if they are sick. That is the most important thing they can do. Whether they have COVID, whether they have RSV, whether they have influenza, the most important thing people can do is all those things that we were taught so carefully to do during the pandemic. If people are in a high-risk category, they can actually get PCR testing through Nova Scotia Health, and they can also access Paxlovid through an online process.

KELLY REGAN: Many of us who have good stores of those are finding that the tests we do have are about to expire, and many hospitals are already above, at, or near capacity. Encouraging Nova Scotians to stay home when they are sick is a good way, as

the minister said, to keep the population healthy, but without rapid tests, people may think they just have a cold or allergies - that was the case when I had COVID; I thought it was allergies - and they may continue to go to school, to work, to visit long-term care homes. The PC platform says this party would focus on prevention, and I'll table that. The federal government has already provided us with tests in the past. Will the Province, now getting \$100 million . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

KELLY REGAN: . . . extra from the feds . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, I will go back to the message that it's so important that people stay home if they are sick. Just because you don't have COVID, because your test is negative, doesn't mean you don't have RSV or influenza or other things that are very contagious.

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

The member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, during Question Period tabled documents that were unattributed letters and e-mails. You are not allowed to table documents that are unattributed to anyone. You can re-table these in the future if you'd like to, but you cannot redact the information. We'll return the tabled documents, and we will ask the member to retract the quotes from Question Period.

The member from Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier tabled the papers that she has now received. I'm asking her to stand and retract those papers from Question Period - specifically the quotation.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Thank you, Speaker. I retract.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I do stand on a Point of Order and maybe some clarification. I first want to say that obviously as a Minister and MLA, but most importantly as a father, I take bullying extremely seriously, but also, Speaker, I just want . . .

THE SPEAKER: Just the Point of Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The documents that were tabled during member statements were not attributed to anyone, and I'm just asking that the House reject them outright.

THE SPEAKER: Again, unattributed letters and emails may not be tabled or quoted in the House. The tablings are rejected and shall be returned to the honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier. The honourable member is free to table them without redaction at a future time.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 479.

Bill No. 479 - Rental Fairness and Affordability Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, I'm happy to move second reading of Bill No. 479, the Rental Fairness and Affordability Act, as it has been introduced in its present iteration by the Leader of our party.

One thing that is striking about the difference in the conversation around Nova Scotia to do with the government's current rent cap proposal and the conversation that took place around the province four years ago when the Liberals first brought in the rent cap, in November 2020, one difference in these two moments seems to me to be that in November 2020, when that first rent cap was brought in - members will remember it was retroactive to September at that time - that Rent Cap 1 was really received with a lot of public enthusiasm.

Whereas it seems to me that the present Rent Cap 4, the Progressive Conservatives' rent cap - while not substantially different in its structure from Rent Caps 1, 2, and 3 - is being received strikingly in a way that calls for an explanation in an entirely different way, a way that could be best described not, I don't think, as excitement or enthusiasm, but in a

way that's much more tepid and lukewarm. I think that there's an instructive reason for this.

That is that the subject of rent control was largely something that was unfamiliar to an awful lot of people in Nova Scotia four years ago so that in Fall 2020, Rent Cap 1 was being compared by people to the alternative of the Wild West of the totally unregulated rental market. Whereas we're in a different situation now.

In 2024 - four years later - there is in fact a pretty widely shared understanding of the difference between an interim rent cap and an actual real rent control system. People have come to understand in a way that was not at the same level, I don't think, the case a few years ago, that it is an actual rent control system, as we in the NDP are proposing with this piece of legislation, that our province really needs.

I want to speak this afternoon for a few moments about the difference between an interim rent cap - the system that we are operating under at the moment - and the system that is being proposed by our party in Bill No. 479 of actual rent control. I want to set out before the House that a real rent control system differs from a merely interim rent cap in four main ways.

One is a rent control system that is permanent. Nova Scotia has been living with the anxiety-inducing ebb and flow of the temporariness of the present rent system for the past four years. I think we are all familiar with this ebb and flow. A cap moves towards expiring, and the worried calls to constituency offices begin to increase. Another temporary cap is introduced, people naturally breathe a bit of a sigh of relief. Then six or eight or ten months go by and the calls begin again. The uncertainty and the insecurity begin to dredge up another time. I want to propose, Speaker, this is no way to treat one-third of the population of our province. We distinguish an interim rent cap from a permanent rent control system by the fact that a rent control system, is, in fact, exactly that: part of the landscape, a feature that is permanent.

Two, the rent control system that we are proposing in the NDP is comprehensive. That means it includes all rental units, not just those with continuous tenancies, and it does not - unlike the current regime - exclude new tenants.

How often do we hear about tenants who have enjoyed a pretty good relationship over a bunch of years with their landlord, but to whom the landlord has come in recent times and said, Look, I know you've been good tenants, and I'm truly sorry, but I need to make some improvements, and you'll have to move because it's the only way I can stay in business - a decision which is catastrophic for the tenant and often painful - one would hope - for the landlord, but which is entirely predicated on the current regime's exclusion from the rent cap of the next tenant, the new upcoming tenant in that unit. The Rental Fairness and Affordability Act outlines a rent control system which does not have this weakness.

[3:00 p.m.]

Three, the rent control system we advocate for is universal. A universal system: That means it covers every kind of lease so that it won't matter whether you have a periodic lease, or you have a fixed-term lease, or any other kind of lease which the landlord lobby in its ingenuity may be able to conjure up. The system is simple: 12 months, X amount of increase, capital R regardless, end of story.

Now, I think it's worth remembering that the broad use of fixed-term leases first came about - and this is a point that has been made by landlords actually quite candidly before the Standing Committee on Law Amendments - first came about as a way of countering provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act. A central defining feature of the Residential Tenancies Act when it was established in 2010 was that it included what was called security of tenure. This was a big thing 14 years ago.

Tenants had lobbied long and strenuously for it, and the principle was included in the current Act, the 2010 Act, out of a recognition by the government at that time of what is required to redress the imbalance of power of landlords and tenants in a rental market such as we have in Nova Scotia. When security of tenure was brought into the Act, this was received 14 years ago as a real victory for tenants until, not too long after, it began to become clear that "security of tenure," unfortunately, was actually in Nova Scotia only words on a page as long as landlords could get around it with an exception, with fixed-term leases.

When we say about this current Bill No. 479 - the rent control system in Nova Scotia - that the rent protection offered by this Act is universal, we mean that its principles are not to be undermined in this or any other way and that the protections that the Rental Fairness and Affordability Act offers to renters apply to every conceivable kind of landlord-tenant contractual arrangement.

One, permanent; two, comprehensive; three, universal; and lastly, the rent control system we are proposing is transparent. That is, the amount by which rents may increase is on the basis of a formula which is public, which is legislated, which is unarbitrary, and which is clear - namely, Statistics Canada's Consumer Price Index.

Both tenants and landlords lost a lot when we lost in the 1990s the transparent rent control system we enjoyed in Nova Scotia until that time. That system, it should also be noted, included too, as would the system that the NDP is proposing, transparent grounds for exemptions so that landlords who face extraordinary expenses would have clear, transparent criteria on the basis of which to make their case for a rental ceiling exemption rather than the current recourse which they have, which they are pointed to and incentivized towards by the current regime as the government is operating it at the moment, the recourse they have being to subject their people to the violent displacement of eviction.

I'll say in conclusion that 2024 is not 2020. It's not even 2018 when we, the first time, introduced legislation. The reason that it's not 2020 or 2018 is because there is now in our province a broadened understanding of the difference between a rental regulatory set-up like the current one, which is temporary, which is partial, which is exclusive, and which is arbitrary - there's a difference between a temporary, partial, exclusive, and arbitrary system and a rent-control system, which would be, as I have explained, permanent, comprehensive, transparent, and universal. That is the difference that we offer with this Bill.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Speaker, I'm pleased to get up and speak on Bill No. 489. Today I would like to say the importance of affordable housing - no one seems to know what affordable housing is these days - to the person who's speaking and to their individual needs - but there are some very positive aspects within Bill No. 489.

Housing affordability is a critical issue for many Nova Scotians. The member for Halifax Chebucto said that when the rent cap was introduced, it was much-needed and welcome, but now, in our current situation with the housing crisis, we need a real rental management system. Bill No. 489 aims to improve affordability by increasing the number of affordable housing units. The Bill targets existing shortages in the housing market. By addressing these shortages, we can better support low-income individuals and families.

Increased affordable housing can lead to reduced homelessness. Improving housing conditions contributes to overall community well-being, stability, and quality of living. The Bill emphasizes inclusivity, ensuring that housing solutions are accessible to those in need. It reflects a commitment to addressing the diverse needs of our communities.

Did I say the wrong Bill number? Is that why everybody's - I'm speaking to the proper Bill. It's Bill No. 489?

THE SPEAKER: Bill No. 479.

LORELEI NICOLL: Bill No. 479. It was a typo.

Speaking on that, I'm going to end this and say that we support this Bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

TOM TAGGART: Speaker, I think that we would all agree that the housing crisis is creating real hardship for Nova Scotians. We may disagree on how to resolve these issues, but we all know it needs to change, or needs change.

The NDP believe the answer is for the government to legislate rent control in this province. Every single rental unit should have rent control, with rent increases tied to the Consumer Price Index. Landlords who want an increase would have to go to the government to apply for an increase.

I kind of want to add here that, as I said in the beginning, we agree that there is a crisis here and we need to deal with it. Like in every other instance or debate we have here, I guess, or whatever, there are good - in this case, we'll say tenants and landlords. There are great tenants and great landlords, and there are very poor tenants and very poor landlords. It would seem to me that this Bill, and the speaker for Halifax Chebucto who spoke first here on this Bill, believe that the landlords are the villains. I just don't know where we'd be without landlords. We would have nothing but public - we have to try to meet the challenge, the housing challenges before us, but certainly I don't think we want the government to build all the housing. Those landlords are very important to us.

I wish the solution to the housing crisis were that simple. Our government is all about solutions, but we believe that permanent rent control would make the housing crisis worse by driving small landlords - very important people - out of the market entirely.

I often like to tie policies to personal stories and so I want you to imagine a small landlord. Maybe you bought your first home as a multi-unit property thinking that your tenants would help to pay a bigger mortgage, or you bought a property that someday you plan to use for your kids or your aging parents and you are renting it out in the meantime. It's worth doing because you can cover the mortgage and pay the bills, but you might not have a lot of wiggle room when the roof leaks or the furnace breaks. Now imagine that the Province brings in rent control. For a small landlord, the financial risk they have taken on would probably feel unmanageable.

You'll never be able to raise the rent more than the Consumer Price Index, no matter what repairs you need to make or large bills you need to pay without making a case, and actually have to go to the government to ask if you can do necessary repairs or pay those large bills. What are small landlords going to do in that circumstance? They are going to sell it. Why, as a government, do we worry about that? Because that eliminates rental housing for people who desperately need it. The last thing we need to do is encourage small landlords to sell their properties. We need them to stay in the market. We need the housing they provide. The last thing we want to do in a housing crisis is to remove those options.

For me, for three years of being a member of this government, listening to my constituents, both tenants and landlords, as well as debate in this Chamber - additionally I was part of the Law Amendments Committee on Monday. I listened intently to both sides really - tenants and landlords - to try to determine the right way forward, and I can tell you, it's a challenge. After all that time, I can tell you quite confidently that there are no easy solutions to the housing crisis. Every action we take with residential tenancy leads to a reaction in the market, and it's often not the one we might expect or the one we might want.

One thing I learned early on in my municipal career about was unintended consequences. They are critical. I think the unintended consequences of this rent cap are tied to the Consumer Price Index and it would have some real significant, unintended consequences.

Instead, we as a government are working to increase overall housing supply. Our government has a housing plan, and it's working. The housing starts are up, and we are creating tens of thousands of new units. These include affordable housing, supportive housing, and the first public housing units in 30 years. Our government has invested in tiny home units. Tiny home units were put in places in Lower Sackville at the end of August. Shelter homes with 96 transitional home units for those experiencing homelessness are open in Kentville, Dartmouth, and Sydney - and we are supporting the most vulnerable.

At the end of August, 32 new affordable townhouses in the Mount Hope area of Dartmouth opened and residents have already moved in, including a family of six who were living in hotels. We have partnered with community housing organizations to build more affordable housing in Antigonish, which we're expected to open in late 2025. We have invested in municipal water and wastewater infrastructure so communities can support more development. We are creating up to 10,000 more rent supplements for eligible Nova Scotians, investing more than \$69 million in rent supplements alone - and that's just what we have announced in the last month.

We're encouraging young people to go into the skilled trades. We're offering bursaries to NSCC supporting more people who want to mentor apprentices and encouraging more skilled trades people to immigrate to Nova Scotia. We're supporting young trades people through the More Opportunities For Skilled Trades program when they start work. We do this because we need them to build more housing, and it is working.

Nova Scotians need more choices. When demand outstrips the housing supply, rent is naturally higher. It just stands to reason. We are working hard and as fast as we can to get more housing built in this province so that renters have more choices and more affordable rents.

When we were elected, we said pretty clearly that we didn't believe a rent cap was a long-term solution to rent prices. We still believe that, so we are working towards a place where we won't need a rent cap at all. In the short term, while we work at creating more housing, we need to protect the most vulnerable Nova Scotians. That is why we have extended the rent cap until December 31, 2027, at 5 per cent.

We felt it was the right balance to allow smaller landlords to continue to do maintenance and repair their properties while giving Nova Scotians predictability on rent increases. That protection of Nova Scotians continues until the end of 2027 while we continue to build more housing that will reduce the pressure on the housing market overall.

[3:15 p.m.]

We have introduced legislative amendments and approved a Residential Tenancies Program so that it will be quicker and easier to get these issues dealt with. In July, the department launched a new online service that allows tenants and landlords to deal with claims on security deposits without requiring a Residential Tenancies hearing. A tenant who hasn't received their security deposit back can apply within 10 days of the end of their tenancy. They can also use that form if they disagree with the landlord's decision to keep any portion of the security deposit.

We are amending the Residential Tenancies Act to clarify the rules around when a landlord can end a tenancy for bad behaviour - a change that helps both landlords and their tenants, as well as their neighbours.

We are working hard to address the housing crisis and to get Nova Scotians the choice they need and deserve as renters. We don't believe that the solution to rising rents is more bureaucracy, more government control, and less choice for the renter. We believe in more options, and that's exactly what we are doing as we strive to build more homes faster.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank our NDP colleagues for introducing this Bill and members opposite for speaking on this as well. I just wanted to get up for a few minutes to lay out my views on the situation as it relates to rent control, rent caps, and rental increases - all this stuff that we've been talking about during this House session - and why I think our position as a party is the one that is the most balanced and would have the best outcomes over the longer term.

On this issue, I honestly think that the government has taken the path of political least resistance. It has avoided making difficult decisions and has punted the issue down the political calendar over and over again, and has done so again recently, until the end of 2027, which, as the member for Halifax Chebucto said earlier, is arbitrary, is random, and is not based on anything within the rental housing market.

Also, as we heard, members opposite talk about 5 per cent. As I've said before, 5 per cent is the highest rental increase in the country for any province with a rent cap or rent control. I can deduce, based on comments from the member for Colchester North and others, that they want to consider the cost increases for small landlords and so on.

I have sympathy for that. I think that's a legitimate point of view, but there are other ways to do that than just setting a somewhat random number. In other provinces, such as Ontario, if a landlord is dealing with a major cost - maybe there was a flood, or the roof needs to be replaced, or there are major electrical issues, whatever the case might be - the

landlord can apply to the relevant agency in Ontario to ask for a higher increase than is allowed, to cover those costs. In this case, in Ontario, it's 2.5 per cent, I believe, this year, which is more reasonable, in my view.

I think in general, the government has avoided, as much as they can, making difficult decisions on this issue. I don't think that's the right way to approach this, because this is complicated and nuanced.

With respect to my colleagues in the NDP - and I respect that they've been pretty consistent for a long period of time with regard to their view that permanent rent control is the solution here - I don't agree with that necessarily. Primarily because to me it seems as though something like this should be used in moments of crisis.

If you think back four, five, six years ago, and for a long period prior to that when the rental market in Halifax, and Nova Scotia in general, was much healthier, CMHC looked at about 3 per cent and above as healthy. In those kinds of markets, the tenants certainly have more options, and therefore more power, relative to landlords. Because you can move, you can have more options. If you have issues with your landlord, it's not a crisis necessarily, because maybe down the street or down the block, you can find an apartment for what you're paying now - maybe a little less, if you're lucky. That was the case in Nova Scotia for quite a period of time prior to, as we all know, the last few years.

So I don't dispute the need for a rent cap system at the time. Now we have legislation on the floor that we've talked about that would continue a rent cap system, which I think would be based on analysis from an independent expert body - not the government - which is the case in other provinces. It would also tie the rent cap system to the vacancy rate, which in my view is a much more logical way to do it than to tie it to a date, which makes no sense.

We have said in legislation that the rent cap should continue in Nova Scotia until we reach a vacancy rate of 4 per cent - which, by the way, would take years, more than likely. That's not going to happen in 2025 or 2026, or probably 2027 either. So that's a medium-term goal.

I would encourage members to look at a study that was done by CMHC in December 2020 on the topic of rent control and the issues in terms of how it impacts rental prices. It's an interesting study. I wish we had something from last week as well that was more current, but we don't at this time. But the results of the study suggested that it's not clear. (Laughs) I wish it were clear. We'd love to have black and white things in politics, but oftentimes it's very nuanced. It was not clear in the markets they studied in Canada, five or six cities, what impact the rent control regimes in Toronto or Vancouver - I forget the others off the top of my head - had on rent prices. It wasn't clear if it was making prices lower, if it was keeping them steady, or if it had minimal impact.

In cases like that, where the evidence is not overwhelming one way or the other, I think it makes more sense to take a temporary approach that we've put forward that is not based on political considerations or on electoral calendars or the whims of Cabinet but is based on evidence and fact. That's what we should be doing when we're dealing with an issue as complicated and as multi-faceted as housing.

I just wanted to get up on this Bill and lay out my position, and in general, our party's position on this issue, as well, with respect to the positions of the others. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'd like to thank the folks who have spoken to this Bill so far. I just want to say a few words on the Bill, as well, and a couple of points in reaction to what I've heard today.

Just to be clear about what this Bill is. This Bill is not the moral police. It does not contemplate bad landlords, good landlords, bad tenants, good tenants, bad neighbours - as I heard the Premier say the other day - good neighbours. This Bill has nothing to do with that.

This Bill has to do with implementing a regulated system with which to regulate the price of rent in Nova Scotia. That's all it does. I would suggest that - my colleague for Bedford South mentioned his idea for a system. It's a system. It's a regulated system. It might not be the exact one that we're presenting in this Bill, but it's a heck of a lot better than the Wild West, where there is no system and we haphazardly address the issue of the time with a slipshod cap of some kind that makes some people happy, makes other people irate, and actually doesn't really work.

I buy what my colleague from the Liberal Party is saying in that way that he sees a place, and he sees that maybe something tied to - or the NSUARB decides or whatever or tied to vacancy rates - is like, okay, fine, sure. I take that over what we have now, but I still would suggest that what we have in front of us is an actual real system of rent control like other provinces in that we can make sure that people are not priced out of a rental situation.

Speaker, I don't need to remind you - and I'm sure you're all sick of hearing it - but I represent Dartmouth North, and Dartmouth North has the highest percentage of renters in the province. I represent people who rent - a lot of people who rent. I represent people who rent, who spend lots of money on their rent - more than I could spend. I represent people who spend a little bit - not a little bit; it used to be a little bit - a reasonable amount of money on their rent. Then I represent a lot of people who live on very low incomes, on income assistance. They either have a rent subsidy, or they struggle like crazy.

I also represent people who just can't manage it and become homeless. That happens on a regular basis in Dartmouth North. I also represent lots of homeowners. I also represent lots of landlords, to be honest. All of these people have something to say about the situation. I would say that all of the people I represent don't want to see people homeless. It is not an exaggeration to say that the policies of this government are causing homelessness.

If the member for Colchester North can talk about the - I'm losing my train of thought. Oh, yes. Pardon me. He said a lot of things. All of the things that this government is doing for homeless people - okay, great, because the alternative is not doing anything, and we'd have people literally dying in the streets. Great that we're putting people into Pallet shelters. That's awesome - or putting people into hotels.

The fact that they're bragging about that, about how much money - historical amounts of money - that they're spending on homelessness is infuriating, because it is their policies that are causing the homelessness in the first place. If they do not change the policies that are causing homelessness, the pathways that experts in our province - because they have been working in housing for 30 years - have said are leading directly to homelessness, then there is, No. 1, no point in spending all that money on homelessness, and No. 2, it's just throwing good money after bad.

This Bill actually - if we implemented a real reasonable system of rent control - would tie the rent control to the unit, which would disincentivize landlords from using fixed-term leases to kick people out so that they can raise the rents. That's what we are seeing happening. This government can say: That's just a couple of landlords, or that's not the big landlords. I don't care who it is. It's happening. Housing experts can prove that it's happening because they are working with people living in tents who used to be able to pay their rent and now can't. That's a real problem.

Because of fixed-term leases and, before we had any kind of rent cap, because we had no control over rents, people were just getting slammed with \$500 rent increases. That was happening before all this discussion was taking place around the rent cap that the Liberals brought in - literally \$500, \$600, and \$1,000 rent increases happening in my community, which is impossible to deal with, obviously. A system of rent control would ease that in some way.

Tenants are faced with great instability, and so are landlords, with the system that we have now, because there are landlords - this is where I want to get back to my friend from Colchester North. He gave a great example of a mom-and-pop landlord situation. You buy a house with a rental unit in it. The roof starts to leak. Oh my God, we can't make the payments because we can't charge more rent.

The fact is that this Bill contemplates that exact situation. Read the Bill. It does. It contemplates it. There is a system in which landlords go and apply for a bigger rent

increase. Right now, landlords are going to the Residential Tenancies Program for all kinds of things, so they know how to do that. It's not a foreign situation. You fill out a form. You say, My roof caved in. I need to raise the rent to pay for the roof. Can I do that? Yes, you can. Here's your rental increase. That tenant may or may not be able to deal with the increase, but you know, that's the way it goes.

[3:30 p.m.]

This idea that the NDP wants to make it really difficult for landlords is just not true. It's just unfounded. Landlords face great uncertainty because, in some cases, their operating costs are increasing faster than the rent cap - totally true. The Rental Fairness and Affordability Act actually balances the rights of both parties, and it does it in a simple way.

As I said before, it ties the rental increase cap to the unit, not to the tenant. This automatically reverses the current incentive for landlords to use fixed-term leases and get around the rent cap. Whether a tenant stays in a unit or vacates a unit, the landlord can only increase the rent of that unit by a set amount. This is not rocket science, and it's also not unusual. This is the way rent control works in, I would say, every other jurisdiction, although I don't . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: The majority.

SUSAN LEBLANC: . . . majority of rental jurisdictions. Second, the landlord, as I've just said, can raise the rent each year. The amount by which a landlord can raise the rent is kept at a low, manageable rate. We're suggesting it get tied to the Consumer Price Index, but as I said before, show me a better system. We'd probably say sure, but a "no system" is not a better system.

Third, in cases where a landlord finds their operating expenses exceeding the amount of rent taken in, they can apply through the official channels for an above-guidelines rental increase - a common-sense, humane way to handle what's increasingly becoming a painful issue for too many.

We have a vacancy rate of just 1 per cent, and in that case, Nova Scotians on the regular are choosing whether to buy food, pay for their medications, or become homeless. That's the choice in Nova Scotia right now for - I'm not kidding - a lot of people. On top of this, now we're having rental costs increase by 5 per cent.

I remember when the first rent cap came in, when the Liberals brought it in. There was a considerable amount of celebration in my community, Oh, we did it. We got rent control. We got a rent cap. That's awesome. Sue, this is awesome. I was like, Yes, it's great because now your rent can't increase more than 2 per cent. Now it can increase 5 per cent. Who the heck knows if we keep it on past 2027?

By the way, it's not legislated - I don't believe - the rent cap. It's in regulation, so it could go up more. It's just - 5 per cent is actually too much right now. Incomes aren't going up by 5 per cent every year, that's for darn sure. On top of this, having rental costs increase by 5 per cent or more - if you're on a fixed-term lease, of course - is continuously pushing individuals and families closer to the edge and, I would say, into homelessness.

This past Winter, a CMHC report reported that Halifax's overall average rent increase of 11.9 per cent was the highest single-year increase and four times the average historical growth rate - four times.

We know we've seen increasing levels of homelessness and we know the problem will only continue to balloon until we fix the issues that are causing the homelessness - historically high rent increases, fixed-term least loopholes - that's why we need to implement real rent control.

In my last minute or two here, a final PSA to anyone who is watching: we do not have rent control in Nova Scotia. Rent control has not broken the system, because we don't have rent control, Speaker. I heard that a lot. I heard many people at Law Amendments Committee the other day say, We told you that rent control would fail and you can see now it has failed.

It hasn't failed because it doesn't exist. We think it should and we will show you that it can work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I'll stand and provide a few remarks on the NDP rent control Bill, Bill No. 479. I'll start off by saying that every action has a reaction. I'm standing on my feet to share a few thoughts or perhaps a response to some of the commentary from the member for Dartmouth North.

I think as a leader in this Chamber and a leader in this province, the member should be ashamed to insinuate that anybody on this side of the House would support Nova Scotians being homeless - absolutely ridiculous. (Interruption)

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: She didn't say that.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Absolutely ridiculous.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The Minister of Service Nova Scotia has the floor.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: The member opposite criticized our government's actions to support people living in homelessness. It is a reality that we have a housing crisis in this province. It is a reality that people are struggling to make ends meet. On one hand, we're being criticized for increasing our budget significantly under the Minister of Community Services to provide a roof over the heads of people who need it, to provide the wraparound services that you need, to provide funding to community organizations that are providing an invaluable service to Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other.

To make a joke, a mockery of government investments to support people who are facing tough times, the member should be ashamed. Every single day - and the members opposite may not agree with that, but it is a fact, Speaker.

There's questioning from members opposite about the decisions made of government - not as easy. Every single day, there are tough decisions being made in government, for the betterment of the lives of Nova Scotians, regardless of where they live, to try to make it better.

Previous governments sat on their hands, turned away federal funding, neglected to see that on the horizon there was a housing crisis, continued to support policies being downloaded by their federal cousins who actually are making it tougher for Nova Scotians.

You can't say on one hand, Oh, do more, and then on the other hand, Do less, and on the other hand - I guess you've got three hands, juggling - continue to support a carbon tax because I think that would be the single biggest initiative that members opposite could stand up and actually support us on this side of the House and actually call on their federal cousins to remove.

There is clearly a difference of opinion on how we address the housing crisis. Members opposite believe that a rental control regime, whether it be temporary rental control regime or a permanent rental control regime, will be the absolute solution to the housing crisis.

They are missing the boat. The boat has set sail, Speaker. What we need is more housing. I wish that the previous governments had started actions years ago that we are taking now as a government. Whether it be in housing, whether it be in health care, we are faced with a number of challenges in different situations in different sectors of this province that yes, they're broken. Guess what? We didn't break them, but we're certainly trying hard to fix them.

As minister, I can assure all members of this House and say quite confidently that there are no easy solutions to the housing crisis. Every action we take with residential tenancies leads to a reaction to the rental market, sometimes from the members opposite, actually, and it is often not one we might expect or want. But when you are dealing with one-third of the population who are tenants across the province living in different

situations, some of whom are privileged enough to rent a more luxurious apartment or a home and others who are struggling to make ends meet, that is the truth.

Then, recognizing that there are landlords across the spectrum, and far too often it is painted with a big, wide brush that all landlords are corporate landlords and they're there to take advantage of their tenants. That's not true. There are a number of great landlords in this province who are there to support their tenants and to be part of the solution, and we need landlords to be part of the solution.

I get that it is politics and at times there's some political posturing, and it is a shame that there are members of this Chamber who take a part of the rules that they want to promote or take part of the rules that they want to criticize and present situations of constituents - of Nova Scotians - who are in difficult situations, in vulnerable situations. I will give the example - I believe it was a member of the NDP talking about changes that we are bringing forward on rental arrears that after three days you are out. Not true, Speaker.

It's a shame that there is misinformation being spread on the floor of the Legislature that is being shared with Nova Scotians, and it is my hope that that information is not the information being shared in constituency offices. It is, in this rental market, of the greatest importance that as MLAs, regardless of what political party you are, whatever your stance is on rental cap, rent control, and other issues, that you share the truth about the process. Share the truth about the Residential Tenancies Program.

I will take a quick moment on the three-day rental arrear changes that we are bringing forward. The process is changing. Your rent is due September 1st, on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th - on the 5th a landlord can provide notice . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Point of order, Speaker. I wonder if you might consider that the present discourse being offered by the minister is, in fact, about another Bill which is before the House - the Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap Bill - and not Bill No. 479, which is before the House now.

THE SPEAKER: The door is a little bit open from a whole bunch of different people speaking, but I do ask the minister to stay on the Bill.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

COLTON LEBLANC: I will bring it back to the Bill, but we are talking about residential tenancies. Over the last couple of weeks here in the Chamber, there are a number of Bills on the floor of the Legislature, and during Question Period I have graciously answered and provided responses to questions to Bills that are on the floor of the

Legislature. I will bring it back, but I do want to clarify the point that the member for Halifax Chebucto about rental arrears changes. I believe he was the one who asked me about this actually during Question Period about a Bill that we are debating on the floor of the Legislature. He did ask, and he did bring it up.

I want to clarify the misinformation that has been shared by the member opposite. After three days brings you to September 5th. The tenant has a choice to either pay their rent, leave, or actually file an application for a hearing, which then stops the clock on the eviction notice. The fact that the member opposite is saying that after three days a tenant is going to be on the streets is simply not true. Again, I want to clarify for the record that no member on this side of the House supports Nova Scotians to be living in homelessness. We want to be able to be providing them with the supports that they need and a roof over their heads.

[3:45 p.m.]

Again, our position on addressing the housing crisis is more housing. It's not permanent rent control. We have a plan. We are making historic, significant investments in Nova Scotians. Sure, it comes down to nickels, dimes, and dollars, but those dollars are to support Nova Scotians. Those dollars are investments in Nova Scotians. We're making investments in affordable housing, in supportive housing, and the first new public housing units in over 30 years.

Thirty-two new affordable townhouses opened in the Mount Hope area in Dartmouth at the end of August. We're partnering with community housing organizations to build more affordable housing in the Antigonish area. We're expecting those to open late next year. Part of the solution is making sure that our municipalities and towns have the resources and the infrastructure required to grow. We're building our province. We're supporting our municipalities with water and wastewater infrastructure so that they can continue development. We're creating up to 1,000 more rent supplements for eligible Nova Scotians, investing more than \$69 million, and that was just what we announced last month.

We know that we need to build more homes. We know that to accomplish that, we need more Nova Scotians to be part of the skilled trades. We're investing in the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades Program. We are offering bursaries through NSCC, supporting people who want to mentor our apprentices, encouraging more skilled tradespeople to immigrate to Nova Scotia, and encouraging folks - our next generation - to enter the skilled trades in our high schools. Why? Because we need them to build more housing, and it's working.

I think I've made my point. Our government's position on the rental issue in this province - on the housing issue in this province - is we need more supply. Nova Scotians need more choices to decide where they want to live, whether it's down home in Southwest Nova Scotia, here in HRM, or in Cape Breton. We need more supply. We have a plan. It's

working. It's across government that we're working. It's not just one department, it's not just one initiative, and it's not just one solution.

Again, I'll remind all members of the House - I sound like a broken record - we did not get here overnight. We saw this coming on the horizon. Again, I wish that previous governments would have taken the bull by the horns, but we are.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I think I'm in order to adjourn debate on this Bill and then call a new Bill.

THE SPEAKER: Unfortunately, someone else has to do it because you've already spoken.

If I am to recognize the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, it will be to close debate on Bill No. 479.

KENDRA COOMBES: I wish to adjourn debate on Bill No. 479.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 479.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable House Leader for the NDP.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 325.

Bill No. 325 - Residential Tenancies Enforcement Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm happy to move second reading of Bill No. 325.

We'll be talking today about the importance of having a residential tenancies enforcement unit in place, and I think the conversation around the room is really on fire today about some of the things that Nova Scotians really need.

As the recently released Davis Pier report explains, a Residential Tenancies Act tries to ensure compliance by intervening early in landlord-tenant disputes and discouraging bad behaviour. As the report shows, an enforcement unit would ensure that any party who is not obeying the Residential Tenancies Act is brought into compliance.

This would be achievable by forcible measures such as investigations, charges, or financial penalties.

The enforcement unit was recommended because, in practice, our voluntary approach offers little to no deterrence of offences and lacks the teeth on contentious issues. The report goes on to explain that there are inherent power imbalances. We've heard that from our constituents. We've heard it in Law Amendments Committee. We've heard multiple times in many different ways that there are socio-economic conditions and access to resources that result in imbalanced power between tenants and landlords. We are seeing first-hand the consequences of a combined lack of teeth in our enforcement efforts, as we have right now, and the imbalance of power relations.

To quote Mark Culligan - and I do have all the papers to table. I just want to keep talking. To quote Mark Culligan from Dalhousie Legal Aid: "Right now in our current system, tenants always have the threat of eviction dangling over their heads, but landlords suffer no consequences if they break the rules." We've heard that in the Law Amendments Committee. We hear it in our offices. We talk about it here on the floor. Landlords are seeking increasing rents and fees that are contrary to what is set out in our Residential Tenancies Act with no penalty. I stress that: no penalty.

The Residential Tenancies Act prohibits application fees, yet we've heard from Dalhousie Legal Aid that landlords are still trying to charge these fees to unsuspecting tenants. The Residential Tenancies Act also stipulates that where a lease contains a provision for a monetary penalty for late payment of rent, that penalty shall not exceed 1 per cent per month of the monthly rent. I know that that is something that is ongoing. I hear from folks all the time how they are paying over the exceeded amount and have to go through Residential Tenancies and go through all of the additional hoops in order to do the right thing, yet we're hearing of landlords charging standard fees without any consideration of what 1 per cent of the monthly rent is.

In some instances, tenants do not know what their rights are. For example, first-time renters, such as post-secondary students, will be unfamiliar with what the Residential Tenancies Act has to say about application fees, and thus may think that they are required to pay a fee to even have their rental application considered. We hear that often as well. Only a system that includes deterrents, with the ability to enforce financial penalties against landlords, will be able to protect tenants who do not know their rights.

In other instances, tenants are fully aware of what their rights are, yet they choose not to pursue matters through the Residential Tenancies Program because they fear that their landlords will retaliate against them. That happens often - way too often. We heard from Nova Scotians this week in Law Amendments and every day in our offices.

I say because it should be a no-brainer - it's actually common sense. I heard the government side say, We do things in a common-sense manner. So this is what we're

asking: Can we use our common sense, actually do the right thing, and do the right thing for all Nova Scotians?

We've increasingly been hearing about tenants accepting illegal rent increases and not reporting maintenance issues because they want to be able to stay in their home on a long-term basis. Tenants have good reason to fear retaliation from their landlords. Just last year, it was reported that a family of five was evicted from their home after they refused to accept a rental increase above the rent cap.

Only a system that includes ongoing enforcement of the Residential Tenancies Act will ensure that tenants are fairly treated by their landlords. At the present moment, there is unquestionably a lack of deterrence and a lack of enforcement of these rules that is giving landlords an upper hand over tenants, who are being stretched thin by greedy behaviour.

Perhaps the most striking example of why a residential tenancies enforcement unit is needed is because of rising incidents of discrimination against families. We've heard from countless single moms who have had their rental applications denied by landlords simply because they have kids, simply because they have pets, simply because they have teenagers, simply because their hair is purple, or simply because they're Black or of another ethnicity. Despite how the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission has clearly stated that declining someone's rental application because they have children or all of these other things goes against provincial law, there is nothing - nothing - in place to stop this practice from continuing.

With such unequal power relations in such a tight rental market and an environment of rising levels of homelessness, landlords are acting with impunity because housing options are slim. By not moving forward with the recommendations made in the recent Davis Pier report, this government is turning its back on the renters and siding with the landlords. If this government is truly about all Nova Scotians as they say, this Bill would be one that should pass through this House unanimously.

I also wanted to mention that this Bill that we put forward is also educating landlords and tenants on rights and responsibilities, mediating disagreements, receiving and investigating complaints, and any other duties that are assigned by the minister. It's always interesting to see that - when we were asked why this enforcement branch wasn't put in place, the minister said red tape and adding more bureaucracy. In all honesty, it's actually relieving some of those things, to make it easier for folks to go through the residential tenancy enforcement process to be able to get the things done - minor or major.

I also want to point this out because we're noticing far too often that folks are talking about fixed-term leases and how that is impacting them trying to find a home, or trying to figure out where they're going to be after their lease is up. The minister is criticizing us, saying that we should be ashamed of all of these things. At the same time,

the minister has the option to open up the Act and do a robust look and scan of all these things.

There was a report done that said all of the things that we have in our Bill. It says exactly that. There's an agreement on all the sides here that say that this is important. There's an agreement by landlords and tenants that says this is necessary. When we talk about people being ashamed, I think the government side should really look in the mirror, because they're also making these decisions for Nova Scotians, unanimously, against doing the right thing, i.e. passing a Bill that will help Nova Scotians with all of these other problems that are happening when it comes to residential tenancies.

I'm only going to use a couple more seconds, but I also want to say it's really interesting how the government side always talks about everyone else being the reason for these issues - either federal cousins and your mom and dad over there - instead of taking ownership of the issues that the government actually can change and not looking at their own party for the power that you hold, to make sure that all Nova Scotians aren't struggling.

Something like this would help, tremendously. We've heard it from the Law Amendments Committee, and we've heard it in our own offices. I know each and every one of us in here gets calls about these exact same issues. This government can make the changes, and yet they do nothing.

This is an easy thing that they can do that already has a report. It has already been consulted on. We are just saying that this is something that's important for Nova Scotians. They all want that. I can't wait to hear the rationale from any of the sides, but, as well, hear the rationale based on the fact that the enforcement unit wasn't something that this government didn't want. I really would be interested in knowing why they don't want to pass this Bill.

I would love if we all come in agreement, and we just say, You know what? Let's do what's right for all Nova Scotians and for the one-third of renters in Nova Scotia who need our help right now.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: It's my pleasure to be here to speak on this Bill, and Bill No. 325 as well. It should come as no surprise to the House that I certainly support this Bill. I've introduced legislation very similar on this very topic. It has obviously been an issue that has taken up a lot of time in this session, I think for good reason.

As the member for Halifax Needham mentioned, there are 300,000 renters in Nova Scotia. Maybe one-third or so of the population rents. The thing that has always struck me about this issue from the beginning is that we have enforcement units, enforcement divisions, in so many other aspects of life. The Department of Environment and Climate

Change has significant enforcement. Our Department of Natural Resources and Renewables has an enforcement unit and mechanism as well.

[4:00 p.m.]

The food we eat - we want to make sure that's safe. The water that we drink - we want to make sure that that's safe. We want to protect natural spaces and wildlife. We want to make sure that we live in a safe environment. To do that, we have enforcement divisions in various departments of the Province, and yet when it comes to the place where you live, for whatever reason, the government doesn't think that deserves enforcement. I very strongly believe it does, which is why we support this legislation, and the legislation that we have on the floor as well.

This is a rare situation where there is a report that has been commissioned, which we all have seen and we all have access to, that recommends exactly this: a compliance and enforcement unit. I know that there was some back-and-forth from the minister about whether or not that is what it recommended, but that is what it recommended.

The idea that it's a duplication, that it's more bureaucracy, that it's more red tape - that is not borne out by the facts. That's a talking point.

If you look at the Davis Pier report, the idea of a compliance and enforcement unit is that it would be a separate stream from the existing residential tenancies process. Specifically, compliance and enforcement would be for egregious, serious cases of repeat offenders, whether they be landlords or tenants. To be clear, bad people can exist on both sides. But it's for egregious offences. It's not for the routine proceedings that might be handled better through the existing residential tenancies process.

So it's not a duplication, it's not more bureaucracy, it's not more red tape, and it's a very small ask in the grand scheme of things. It's \$1 million startup costs and \$1 million operating costs per year, and 10 FTEs - 10 employees. That's not a major ask for what I think would be a significant return on investment.

As others have mentioned today - I believe Mark Culligan from Dalhousie Legal Aid Service was mentioned earlier. As he said, the threat of eviction or housing insecurity is corrosive. It's terrible for your mental health. It's terrible for your physical health. It's terrible for your family cohesion. It's terrible for your job prospects and your life in general. It connects to every other piece of your life, and to take what I think is a pretty cavalier approach to that and just say, Well, what we have now is working fine and we don't need to do anything, I think, is pretty disappointing.

We all have stories. We all have hundreds, in some cases thousands, of renters. I know there are thousands of renters in my constituency of Bedford South. We all have stories, but I mentioned earlier a situation that I've been dealing with where a tenant has

been out of their unit for 14 months now after a pretty minor kitchen fire, with no timeline - repairs haven't even been done - for when they'll be back in the unit. There's been a judgment through Residential Tenancies in favour of the tenant, my constituent. That has been appealed to Small Claims Court, and the process goes on.

I said to my constituent - we had a meeting on this - Well, hopefully you get the result you want at Small Claims. What will you do at that point? And my constituent said to me, Well, I'm not going to go back.

That might seem strange to people. Well, you've been working on this for 15 months, why would you not go back? And the reason why is what the member for Halifax Needham and others have said: You don't want that hanging over your head - retribution, right? I don't want to use the word "revenge," but almost to that level, where you move back into a unit, you've obviously had a dispute with your landlord, and you're walking around on eggshells. And if there's an issue with the door, if something needs to be repainted, if there's an issue with the garbage, you're not going to complain, because you know that the landlord might have an issue with you and might be looking for a way to get you out of the unit - which we know happens as a result of the fixed-term lease loophole, which is another connected issue here.

It's not just the obvious signs of issues. It's not just the unlawful evictions that might be happening. It's not just issues that landlords may have with problem tenants, as well. It's not just those problems that go to the end. It's also those that are kind of invisible: the person who's worried, who won't go to the landlord to get their stove repaired because they're worried about how the landlord will react; or the landlord who has gone through months and months trying to deal with a problem tenant and has gotten no results either. I know the members earlier have talked about that. I think that's a legitimate point as well. It is true. There are many, many small landlords who rely on their rental properties to pay their mortgage, to fund their retirement, to send their kids to school - whatever it may be. That's legitimate as well.

This compliance and enforcement unit that's contemplated in Bill No. 325 would also help and support landlords and small landlords as well. This is an issue where there's not often agreement between landlords and tenant groups. This is an area where they agree. To ignore that agreement, to ignore that consensus, I would say - from landlords, from tenants, from Davis Pier - basically everybody who has looked at this issue says, Yes, do this. The minister and the government seem to be the only ones that have missed the boat. I don't understand why. It's extremely disheartening because I think there should be issues in this House that we can debate and come to a consensus on. This is one that I think we should have consensus on, and we don't. It's very disappointing.

I just wanted to get up and say those words, Speaker, and say that I do support this legislation - obviously support the legislation we have put forward as well. I hope the

government at some point in time reverses course to help the 300,000 renters and the 6,000 landlords in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to say a few words about Bill No. 325, the Residential Tenancies Enforcement Act. After perusal of this Bill, discussion and examination with a few of my colleagues, we understand why the NDP supports the aims of this Bill. We also support many of these aims.

However, we differ on whether or not we need another layer of bureaucracy to achieve these goals. The government gave serious thought to what would be needed to establish a compliance and enforcement unit, and more importantly, to whether a compliance and enforcement unit would work in this province. One way to predict that is to examine how the system works in other provinces in this country.

Having said that, in British Columbia, they have an administrative penalty model. In 2023, B.C. was turning away about 40 per cent of complaints. Why? Due to a high volume and lack of staff. That doesn't sound like a quicker resolution of tenant or landlord issues.

Moving on down the line, in Ontario, the compliance and enforcement unit can lay charges. At first that sounds great, sounds okay. But once they finish their investigation, the wait time is about a year before a charge can be laid - 85 per cent to 90 per cent of disputes are resolved voluntarily between the parties. That's part of the service our Residential Tenancies Program already provides.

I can say a few words about Manitoba - nice province in our country. Their unit conducts 300 to 400 investigations every year, but they have only laid eight charges in four years. Imagine. Most issues, again, are resolved through voluntary compliance. There isn't a compliance and enforcement unit in New Brunswick, our neighbouring province, but they can use existing legislation to send repeat offenders to prosecution.

Speaker, government concluded - again, with perusal, examination, discussing this particular Bill with my esteemed colleagues - a compliance and enforcement unit would be just another layer of bureaucracy that ultimately wouldn't give people the solutions we are hoping for. The experiences of other provinces absolutely, definitely show that.

In the case of a compliance and enforcement unit, this government did what Nova Scotians expect their government to do: consider the ideas put before us to resolve issues, research them, give them serious thought from all angles and then make the decisions that are in their best interest. The government determined we could achieve quicker resolutions for Nova Scotians through our existing Residential Tenancies Program. We have worked hard to streamline our hearing timelines - and that's quite evident - which now sit at 4 to 6

weeks, among the best in the country. I must repeat that - among the best in the country. You have to work hard here to get applause from your colleagues.

However, in July a new online service was launched that allows tenants and landlords to deal with claims on security deposits without requiring a Residential Tenancies hearing. A tenant who hasn't received their security deposit back can apply within 10 days of the end of their tenancy. They can also use that form if they disagree with a landlord's decision to keep any portion of the security deposit. They don't need to have a hearing, which frees up residential tenancy officers to deal with the issues that do need a hearing. Work is under way to triage emergency issues and to modernize the tenant information management system that helps deal with the cases that arise.

There is a Bill before the House to amend the Residential Tenancies Act to allow publication of the director's orders at discretion. This means more transparency for the program which both landlords and tenants have been asking for. We are looking after it. Department staff work hard to help both landlords and tenants solve their disputes. There are real solutions available. If a landlord hasn't made repairs, residential tenancy officers can award what is known as rent abatement, a break on the rent until the issue is fixed. That's money in the tenant's pocket and a financial incentive for the landlord to do the work.

Let's compare that to what happens when a compliance officer issues a ticket. The revenue from that ticket goes to the Province, not the tenant. In 2021, this government made amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act that helped support tenants being renoevicted. Tenants must be given at least three months notice of a planned rental eviction and they must give tenants between one and three months' compensation, depending on the building size. Again, that's money in a tenant's pocket, better than a ticket whose revenue doesn't go to the tenant.

I know that Nova Scotians are worried about the rising costs of housing. It is quite obvious to everyone in this House and across the province that our government is working as hard as we can to increase housing supply so tenants have more choice in where and how they live.

We have a housing plan and it's working. Housing starts are up and we have created tens of thousands of new units. This includes affordable housing, supportive housing, and the first new public housing units in over 30 years. I'm not too sure what has happened over the last number of years, but we are certainly facing this problem, and we're going to fix it.

I understand people are frustrated and they want quick fixes. I wish there was one quick fix to end the housing crisis. That's not the case. People are experiencing it across the country. However, we are working as hard as we can on all fronts to support Nova

Scotians while we work to create more housing and give Nova Scotians the choices they need and deserve.

[4:15 p.m.]

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm happy to stand and speak in favour of a residential tenancies enforcement unit. There's a fundamental imbalance of power between tenants and landlords that is only worsened in our current rental market that has a vacancy rate of just 1 per cent. That is not something the government should be clapping about and be proud of because this has been the lowest vacancy rate we've ever had in a very long time.

I remember when I became an MLA - literally, we could get people into housing. Now it's becoming very difficult. The Residential Tenancies Act requires landlords to keep the rental premises in a good state of repair and fit for habitation during the tenancy, but we know that too often this does not happen. In some cases, tenants are raising alarms but to no avail. The system we have now is not working, and yet the government's thoughts are to continue to do nothing, to not fix the system.

A 92-year-old woman renting in New Glasgow sought help from Residential Tenancies to get a leaky ceiling in her building repaired. After a month-long process, the tenancy officer dismissed the claim, stating Residential Tenancies does not have the authority to order remedy or repair for common areas, only for the unit the tenant is renting. To me, that's shameful. That is the structural integrity of a building, and yet Residential Tenancies doesn't want to deal with it or can't deal with it.

Others are seeking the support from the Residential Tenancies Program for issues in their units like gaping holes in their ceilings and mushrooms growing from the mouldy floor. Imagine living in your home and you've got mushrooms growing because of the mould in your unit. This is what people in Nova Scotia are living in. They've had this unfortunate experience of being passed between the province's tenancy board, which claims that the municipal by-law enforcement officers should handle the case, and the municipalities that say that no such by-laws or enforcement officers exist. I'll table those documents.

In other cases, tenants are not raising alarms because they fear that doing so will result in the landlord serving them with an eviction notice. That happens. Then you have to go through that process because there's no other remedy. Trust me, I know. I've sent many of them to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. Tenants on fixed-term leases have said that they do not report unmet repairs because they fear that their leases will not be renewed. Others have said they do not report unmet needs even in the extreme cases where their personal health is impacted because they know that they will not be able to afford anywhere else to live if their landlord decides to evict them for complaining.

Nobody should have to live like that. Nobody should have to live in fear that if they make complaints about reasonable things - mould? Leaky roofs? The door being taken off by the landlord? The water being shut off by the landlord? The power being shut off by the landlord? Nobody should have to deal with all of that and nobody should have to be afraid to go and make those complaints.

In both these cases it was clear that this government needs to step up and protect the right to safe housing. We need an enforcement unit that can require landlords to make necessary repairs without unjust penalty to the tenants who live in the units. Tenants should not live in fear of their landlords.

We need to work toward a real balance of power by establishing a residential tenancy unit because right now, there's an imbalance of power. With that, I move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 325.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 325.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

SUSAN LEBLANC (NDP House Leader): Thank you to all those who joined in that debate.

I ask you to call Bill No. 489 for second reading.

Bill No. 489 - The Affordable Housing Programs Act.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am pleased to move Bill No. 489 for second reading.

It's been an interesting conversation this afternoon. I think at the heart of why we have focused our Opposition Day on moving these housing Bills is because of the contention that we have heard through this session that the plan is working. Based on the conversations we have with our constituents, that just isn't the case for so many Nova Scotians.

We want it to work. We want everyone to remain housed. One of the challenges that we have is that when this government talks about supply, which is the only word they can use - we're speeding up evictions? Supply. What about affordability? Supply. What about rent control? Supply. Well, let's dig into that. What does supply mean?

Yes, we need supply. We need tens of thousands of housing units, but when we hear announcements about units being built, about housing starts - not housing completions, by the way, housing starts - we often hear the term "affordable." Then we get the question from our constituents, from the public, from the media: "What does 'affordable' mean?" We are not able to give an answer, because there is not a single definition of affordability when it comes to housing.

It's very clear that this government is committed to primarily easing the path for construction for the private sector. That's the path this government has taken to housing. I think it's great to have more supply. We know we need it. We need it at all ends of the spectrum, but we also know that trickle-down housing isn't really a thing.

When we're in this Chamber advocating for real people, real human beings who are concerned about the price of housing, who are concerned about finding homes they can afford, who are concerned about keeping homes, those people will not be impacted by this mythical supply. They will not be impacted even if the gamble that this supply is going to lower prices in 10, 20 years - those are the horizons we're looking at.

The thing that will impact their lives - the kind of supply that will impact the lives of people in this province in real time - is housing that they can actually afford. The question is: What does affordability mean? Well, as members on the government side have said, that's different for different people. Not everybody needs public housing, not everyone needs social housing, and we absolutely agree. So if it's different for different people, then common sense should prevail.

What our Bill says is that we should define affordability, and we should define it based on all different people. We shouldn't have a blanket definition, so we'll define it the way that the Province itself defines it when it comes to provincial housing, the way that mortgage companies define it when it comes to stress tests: 30 per cent of your take-home income. That's what's affordable.

I would venture to say that 90 per cent or more of the people in this Chamber are homeowners. All of us would have gone through the mortgage application process where we needed to get that mortgage, and we needed to show that no more than 30 per cent of our income was going to our housing costs. So we are asking government to take a common-sense approach and to use a single definition of affordability when all of the affordable housing announcements are made.

We also know that affordable housing is, in fact, best built by the non-market housing sector. There are jurisdictions around the world - Vienna is the most famous, people talk about it - where over 50 per cent of the rental market is non-market housing. That doesn't mean it all looks like public housing as we have here, but the reality is that developers themselves are in business. They're in the business of housing, and we have all kinds of businesses in this province, in our districts. We have fisheries, and we have

forestry, and we have small businesses, and we have tech, and we have all kinds of things, and all of those businesses have budgets and bottom lines, and sometimes shareholders. Housing development is no different. They're a business.

The idea that the for-profit housing sector is going to build the amount of affordable housing we need is just nonsensical. The private sector has told us as much. One landlord organization, speaking on behalf of some of Canada's biggest landlords, recently told the CBC, "We're not tasked with building deeply affordable or social housing. We can't be there. We're in business. Let's draw a line between these two." I'll table that after my colleague takes a look at it.

The thing is, they're not in the business of doing that. We need supply, we need homes that people can afford, so who could help make that happen? Well, government could help make that happen, and the non-market housing sector could help make that happen. That's why this Bill specifies - and this is at the request of many non-market housing providers that we've spoken to - that when the government who - you know, the minister really likes to talk about all of their country-leading affordable housing programs. Well, when they disburse the funds from those programs, non-market housing providers in this province should be prioritized. The scoring system should prioritize those providers.

Those providers will often work in partnership with the private sector. They'll use innovative building methods. They may not go it alone. Many are not primarily housing providers or builders. There are not-for-profits that do a lot of different things, but we think it stands to reason that if, as part of its push towards supply, the government is genuinely trying to preserve and build affordable housing, then the non-market sector should be prioritized in that regard.

I think the best example of this - and we've talked about it in this House before - is what's happened in my district in the Southdale-Mount Hope special planning area. In March 2022 - end of the fiscal year - out of the blue, this government announced that they were giving Clayton Developments \$22 million to build affordable housing. It was a little bit hard to figure out what that meant. It certainly didn't, as far as we could understand, mean rent geared to income, as we've suggested today. I think it was a percentage of market rate. At the time, we had so many questions: Where does this announcement come from? Why Clayton? What does "affordable" mean?

They said that they would build 373 affordable homes with that money. I've tabled the document. At the time, the minister told reporters: "This project will produce more affordable housing units than all our programs have produced in the last three years combined." Sounds amazing except that it didn't happen. The developer gave the money back. They gave the money back. When they tell you they are in the business of housing, believe them. They didn't give the money back. It was a forgivable loan, and they didn't take advantage of it.

[4:30 p.m.]

The point is, they didn't want the money. They said no, thank you, we don't want your money, because they are in the business of housing. They are not in the sector of creating homes that people can afford. If people can afford their homes, great. I am sure they are very happy to. I will say we have many landlords in this province who work with organizations like ISANS, AHANS, Adsum, and others to make special arrangements for people who need affordable housing, but those are one-ups. We believe that we could see so much more leadership in this House to make a systemic change.

We have so many people sleeping rough right now. We have so many thousands more people whom every single one of our offices hear from, I guarantee you, and who talk about how difficult it is to balance the budget at the end of each month. Housing is the biggest stressor.

In the end, just to finish this story, in Southdale-Mount Hope, the YWCA partnered with Shaw Group in using panelized, flat-pack, off-site housing techniques - which many non-market housing providers have used, from AHANS to Adsum at the Sunflower to North Preston in Dartmouth - to build for and house 32 families. The Province stepped up and they donated - or they funded, with other orders of government - \$2.7 million or \$2.9 million, something like that. So \$22 million to a private-sector developer - nothing, years later - but \$2.9 million to a non-market housing provider that innovates the project themselves and partners with the private sector themselves, and we've got 32 families with stable, affordable housing that they are not worried about getting kicked out of.

These are the things that this Bill aims to replicate. These are the kinds of arrangements that we want to see more of. We hear in this Chamber all the time that the solution to the housing crisis is simple: Build more homes. But it's not simple. Again, in our MLA offices - contrary to the assertions of the Minister of Service Nova Scotia - we spend an enormous amount of time educating people about the Residential Tenancies Act, sharing information about government programs, and helping them to try to afford the homes they need, and it is getting harder and harder.

According to the 2022 Census, 32.2 per cent of Nova Scotian households rent, and 25 per cent of renters are in poor housing need. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Halifax right now is \$2,669. Can you imagine: \$2,669? You can't save for a down payment when you are paying that much rent and when the average price of a home is \$435,000.

In 2021, the Housing for All Working Group called on the provincial government to build or acquire 33,490 units of non-market, affordable housing in the next 10 years. We've heard an announcement of 273 public housing units; 7,300 people are on the wait-list for public housing. That's a lot of numbers. But at the end of the day, what we want to

impress upon the government - to anyone who's listening - is that this housing crisis is not a simple problem. It is a multi-faceted problem, and we need a multi-faceted approach.

Our Homes Within Reach plan, of which this legislation is a part, attacks this issue from all angles - from supply to making rents more affordable to making home ownership more achievable. I think all of us in this Chamber want to make Nova Scotia a place where everyone can thrive, from families to seniors to students to everyone in between. We are calling on government to actually make that a reality.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'm pleased to rise just to say a few comments on the purpose of the Bill. I think it's a novel idea to put this forward at this juncture, since we are really looking at a crisis for many Nova Scotians who need adequate housing that is permanently affordable. We have many organizations that are doing the hard work already in this area.

Looking at the legislation - I know that when you're in Opposition, this is one of the few tools we have to actually get an idea on the floor of the Legislature for debate. This could be a policy the government has when they're looking at investing public funds into big programs. I think that looking at a minimum percentage of affordable units - whether it's 30 per cent or another figure, or bonuses for 50 per cent - is getting at something that is missing in terms of the plan of the government moving forward.

I do hear a lot of rhetoric from the current government. Their talking point primarily is around being the first government to invest in affordable housing in 30 years, which we know isn't true. That is common for governments to say. It does no justice when the government pretends that they're doing everything, and all governments in the past - which I guess would include Tory governments if you're going back 30 years - did nothing.

As the member said, 273 public housing units - which I think is the shade of truth within that talking point they use - were announced. Congratulations, you accepted federal money and leveraged a little bit of provincial money to build 273 units. Just imagine and wonder what could be accomplished if that government worked more collaboratively with the federal government, a major funder of things that are major infrastructure - like how we twinned highways, like how we brought affordable child care to this province, like how we had an affordable climate change plan that met the context of what we are dealing with in this province.

Of course they said yes to funding from the federal government for affordable housing. Of course they said yes when we quite literally have tent cities across HRM that we did not have in the first couple terms of the McNeil government. Yes, that was coming on fast when the pandemic hit and the government had to make some quick policy changes around rent caps.

I was never in the department that was specifically dealing with housing, in terms of being a minister, but yes, I did have some time as the Premier of this Province when we were facing a difficult time in 2021. We did make investments during that time - investments that were reannounced by the current government, such as the purchase of the Travelodge hotel, where in 2021 it was actually approved for \$3.5 million and another million and a half for wraparound supports - supports for mental health and all the rest. The Minister of Community Services, Karla MacFarlane, actually announced that that purchase was happening, but the funding was already in the budget that predated that government.

AHANS was the organization. These are the types of non-profit organizations - the YMCA is another one that has a good project, and Adsum for Women and Children, as was mentioned - that are ideal to do the kind of work that this Bill, and the ideas around this Bill, will help. The parameters around setting a specific percentage of affordable units will ensure that public funding that's coming from our taxpayers is targeted at a public interest thing that we're dealing with today, which is housing - not padding the bottom line of developers.

I would agree that the programs and the emphasis are mostly around private sector development. I asked the question in Question Period around the Trusted Partner Housing Program - only eligible for private companies that are developing across the province - and there was no commitment to open this up to groups like Adsum for Women and Children, which has a 25-unit project in Lakeside and has land for another 25 units, deeply affordable permanent housing. They had \$2 million ready to go, and they have funding that they could use from the federal government active Rapid Housing Initiative. Obviously, they'll be eligible, with being eligible the prior time. The federal government gave \$1.5 billion for 4,500 new permanent units in 2021.

This government likes to pick and choose when they want to fight the federal government but they'll gladly go - what is it, cap in hand? I think that phrase was used before by the current Premier, that he would not go cap in hand.

Should the prior government have invested more in housing? Perhaps. Did our government not do enough? Perhaps not. Did our civil servants - the same civil servants who are largely operating under this current government - not predict a worldwide pandemic that brought an influx of people who wanted to live in the best place in Canada and perhaps the world coming to our shores?

Nobody accused us, certainly, when we were in government, that we weren't investing enough in infrastructure. We were setting records in terms of our spending in making our highways safer and the multi-billion-dollar QEII redevelopment plan. The only project, by the way, from that plan that is built is one that that party opposed in Bayers Lake. They were glad to cut the ribbon at that one - by the government that apparently sat on its hands according to the member for Argyle. I think the words used were, This is how

we're going to fix health care - same as the words that the Premier said about the CBRM change, This is how we're going to build up Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Unfortunately for you, no one has opened up the door, and so therefore I ask that you keep it on the Bill.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

IAIN RANKIN: In terms of the Bill that seeks to create more affordable housing on every project that has to do with public money - as I understand it - that is something I can get behind. That is why I have always supported trying to build more houses across the whole continuum. Shelters are better than tents, but shelters aren't permanent housing for people to live with dignity. Nobody can argue that we're continuing to see an increase in people who are living in these circumstances. All the blame isn't on this provincial government. There are challenging times across the country and, indeed, the world.

I do think that the widespread poverty and the camps that didn't exist at the scale that they did under the former government - they aren't by chance. The member for Dartmouth North alluded to this. These are policies that create the kind of conditions that people are living in in society.

There was work done by prior governments. As I said, we do need more permanent non-market housing. Some of the programs that were recommended by the independent panel, the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission, where they asked for \$25 million, which the prior government said yes to, and the current government reannounced it and just made it \$35 million. The purpose of this Bill is to make sure that the funding goes to projects that actually have a certain percentage that are affordable for at least 25 years, according to the Bill. I'm not sure why that's the years. Maybe it's based on CMHC or some other statistic, but in terms of the spirit of what's in the Bill, I think it is worth looking at.

There's no doubt that this government supported projects that this government is bragging about. That government didn't put a dollar into The Sunflower in my community. I will celebrate the day when they come out to the community and announce the other 25 units on land that used to be HRM land where the old Lions Hall was. That's an important project for me, and I will always give credit when credit's due. I think that's what we should do in this House.

I don't see it at all on the other side of the House. Apparently, they have all the answers, and nothing was done in the past. I want to raise my voice just to remind the members opposite - some who were part of all the budgets, who approved these things - that there was some good work to do and that they can build on the good work that was happening before they came into government.

[4:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak, and get an opportunity to speak, to Bill No. 489 - The Affordable Housing Programs Act. It also gives me opportunity to speak to the successes of the government's affordable housing programs.

As the members opposite have indicated, Nova Scotia is experiencing an unprecedented growth that we haven't seen in many years. Our government realizes that there's not one singular solution to the housing crisis. The solutions that we have created are a suite of solutions across the entire spectrum of housing. We are taking actions through multiple departments to address these issues, and we have not waited as other governments have. We have not projected decline, but we started right away, digging and building strong foundational programs. They're not limited to just what's included in this Bill today before us; they are programs that have been created to support new housing opportunities as well as to preserve housing that already is in existence.

Maintaining housing stock is every bit as important as creating it. Our government has been making historic investments in finding innovative and different ways to remove barriers and come up with solutions that are used to increase affordable housing stock and preserve it. There is no sense in building more on one end while we're losing it on the other end. This is a framework and a solid plan for Nova Scotia's future. The problem wasn't created overnight, and it will not be fixed by one government alone. We are working with all orders of government and partners - both private and not-for-profits - and in conjunction with our other municipal partners and federal government to find frameworks that work for everybody.

I know that my municipality received some of the federal funding, and they're looking at ways to cut fees on permitting to encourage more growth in our own communities because sometimes that's a barrier and one size does not fix the problem for everybody. That's why the housing task force was created - to bridge gaps and move construction projects along in HRM that were bogged down by red tape and bureaucracy. I sat at Law Amendments Committee and listened to developer after developer speak about how they've had planning proposals before council, some for upwards of ten years. We needed to move some of these things along.

Let me just highlight, in particular, this Bill does speak to the specific programs within the department, so I want to speak to each one individually. Number one is A, the Community Housing Acquisition Program, otherwise known as CHAP for most of us who speak with it in our office. It was launched in July of 2022, and what it did was it enabled community housing organizations to preserve already affordable housing units with over

\$25 million invested into this program, and they preserved 483 affordable units - 187 of those are supportive housing units for the most vulnerable.

Already, in 2024-2025's fiscal year, we will be preserving an additional 33 units in HRM and in the beautiful Annapolis Valley - 79 percent of those loans have been issued in conjunction with the great partners at the Department of Community Services for supportive housing projects that are so important and needed in all our constituencies.

This program, Speaker, is 100 per cent affordable, all of it - 38.7 per cent of the supports in that 100 per cent affordability range are for our most vulnerable constituents. I would call this a success. I would recognize it, and it has been recognized nationally. To say that we need a points system to determine whether or not that investment has been a success, I would beg to argue on that one.

Other projects include Dartmouth Housing - there are 18 units there, nine of them are affordable; One World Building Association - 32 units, all 32 affordable; Affirmative Ventures - six units and all six units are affordable. I'm talking about the Community Housing Acquisition Program and whether or not the points system in the Bill is needed to determine whether or not these programs have been successful.

Again, some of these investments through CHAP, through this program, were Valley Roots Housing Association - 24 units, 24 affordable; Antigonish Affordable Housing Society - 14 units, 14 affordable; Metro Premiere Properties, Sherwood Street - 180 units, 90 of them are affordable. All are within the same program that the NDP caucus feels needs a points system to determine whether or not these programs have been a success.

I'll continue on. I think Spryfield Development Limited IQ Group - that has 198 units; 60 of them are affordable. None of these would be approved under an NDP group program. ARC Developments, Bridgewater - 50 units, 10 of those are affordable; Metro Premiere Properties - 308 units, 136 are affordable.

Speaker, we also have two additional projects not yet announced from this program that will total 143 units and 42 of them are affordable. I don't see how a points system is needed to determine the success of that program. It's a solid program. It's successful. It's so successful, in fact, that the federal government has finally announced a few available parcels in Nova Scotia to try to duplicate our success.

Program B, the Land for Housing Program. This is right. Property Opportunity Notices wrote that our Province looked around to find out what parcels of land we own that could suit as housing. Eleven of 13 proposals came in and account for 973 units and 423 of those units are affordable. That's 43.5 per cent of that program.

I'll move on to Letter C, the Affordable Housing Development Program. To date, in 2024-25, nearly \$13.5 million has been approved for seven new projects; 128 units - of those, 113 units are affordable. That's 88.8 per cent of that development.

We also have projects that deliver. Another includes \$25 million to create new modular housing supplies in areas that have limited opportunities for key workers. These units are affordable for health care workers; \$32.5 million was invested in eight community housing projects that developed 203 units; 171 of those were affordable, Speaker. That's 84.2 per cent of that project.

Where was I? Number D. (Interruptions) Thank you, Minister. All right, so I lost my train of thought. All good. Take a breath.

I also heard from members across the aisle - I really want to stress about AHANS. I sit on the Human Resources Committee, Speaker - as you are the Chair. In December of this past year - December 5th, in fact, in Hansard - the MLA for Halifax Needham, who tabled Bill No. 489, asked Michael Kabalen from AHANS if she felt that calling on the government for more money - and Mr. Kabalen's quote from Hansard is:

MICHAEL KABALEN: I don't think calling on a government to make investments is necessary. We've been doing that for years now, I think. What's necessary is additional investment. I think, just to pause, this government has made some of the most significant investments in generations in affordable housing and toward resolving homelessness. The challenge has been after many years of relatively low and no investment. It's almost like we have to play catch-up, and to do so, it needs more investment. That's where we're at.

There are lots of metaphors and similes you can use to that, which I don't like to get into, but we've been doing a lot more than we've been doing, but it's still not having the impact that's needed to turn the crisis in the direction where we're making progress.

THE CHAIR: MLA Hansen, do you have a follow-up?

SUZY HANSEN: No, I'm okay.

I do want to talk about a couple of other things that are of significance as to affordability in our province, and one of those programs is a Secondary and Backyard Suite Incentive Program. These units are being built on land that is there, has services, can have capacity, and for the individuals who live in these homes, especially if they're a family member - are affordable. Most times, for a family member, there's no rent included at all.

As of August 2024, there were 200 applications; 198 units have been approved since the launch in November 2023. In my community alone, the Planning Department - as I mentioned earlier in my remarks - has removed the fees on these units. These are popping up so fast in my constituency that the Planning Department is struggling to get them permitted in time to get them started.

People are enjoying making different kinds of housing investments. We are going to continue working with our community partners. I know that Harvest House in my community recently purchased a church. Through the Department, they have received funding for that church. They're offering 10 beds - shelters in the church - to help individuals, while these other programs in my community can build to capacity to house the individuals that we need.

[5:00 p.m.]

Back to Bill No. 489: When we talk about introducing some kind of a point system to determine whether or not we need - that these programs have been a success, I would just go back to the quote from Hansard. I think just to pause, this government has made some of the most significant investments in generations in affordable housing and toward resolving homelessness. The challenge has been after many years of relatively low and no investment, it's almost like we have to play catch-up, and to do so, it needs more investment, and that's where we're at. With those words, pardon my stumble, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise to speak to this Bill, and I want to start by just thanking my MLA colleagues in the NDP caucus for bringing these three Bills forward today on their Opposition Day. We all know here in the House that housing and issues between landlords and tenants - these issues are only growing in our province. I really appreciate their efforts in bringing this topic here to the floor of the Legislature so that we can debate it and give it the oxygen that it should have.

I will say I'm not an expert in this field. My area of expertise is health care, so I'm going to just share for a couple of minutes what I'm seeing in Cumberland North on this issue from my constituents. Before the pandemic, rarely did I have a constituent contact me about housing or problems living unsheltered, but things have drastically changed. In our area, it started during the pandemic. There was a boarding house that burned that about 20 people lived in. They were people who were vulnerable, who needed supports, and that private boarding house burned to the ground and left about 20 people displaced in our town.

Thankfully, we had some incredible community members step up and work with the Department of Community Services to find shelter for those people. It was a local hotel that gave them a place to live, and we were grateful for that. Over the next 12 to 24 months,

we saw a big influx of people moving to our area during the pandemic. We welcomed the people. We had a lot of people move to Amherst in Cumberland County from Ontario especially. The effect of that really drove up the price of housing.

The consequence of that is that a lot of the people living in our communities who were vulnerable, who were low-income, who had some personal challenges, were left without a place to live. All of a sudden, there was little to no low-rent housing. All of a sudden, for the first time, I believe, people in our area saw people living in tents. People were contacting me saying: "We've got to do something about this." I'm thinking: "What am I going to do about this?" It was a big problem and people were not used to seeing it.

Working with my municipal partners and other community leaders, we met, had several meetings and talked about what we could do. One of the first things was when Hurricane Fiona happened and we very quickly mobilized and put together an emergency shelter for that weekend for those people who had no place to live. I want to say a big shoutout to Hannah Landry, who worked for me. She was my legislative assistant at the time and she worked day and night for 72 hours without sleep leading up to that hurricane to make sure that we had an emergency shelter. Aiden Kivisto as well.

That was the beginning, and after that was a very successful time. Our local law enforcement was there supporting us. It was just an incredible feat for us. That led to us having a meeting shortly after. We brought 50 people together from our community to say: "We need a shelter. We need to have a place for those who are living unsheltered before Winter comes." We made a commitment that no one was going to die in our area because they didn't have a roof over their heads that Winter.

We just have incredible community people. I want to say a shoutout to Sharon Bristol, Michael Wilson, Vanessa Knock, Corey Hunter-Chiasson, and many others. The Cumberland Homelessness & Housing Support Association came together. We had meetings and opened the first Winter emergency shelter that Winter.

I want to say thank you to the Department of Community Services that funded that wholly. Hannah and Aiden and I sat down for several hours, we put together a budget that was about \$320,000, we submitted it, and we were given full funding to be able to have a Winter emergency shelter two years ago. It was encouraging and the people who worked with our community members from the department did a lot to support us.

I think that department has grown a lot. Like every project, there are bumps, and I remember asking someone from the department if they could provide more support and they said, "Elizabeth, we are a department of two." I think there were two people at the time for the whole province that worked on the homelessness issue, and so I think that has probably grown significantly.

That has moved forward and the next Winter we also had another Winter shelter and now there is a permanent shelter in the Town of Amherst that also has temporary housing for six people. Trina Clarke, who is the CEO of the YMCA - she and her board had been working towards getting a supportive housing unit built for the Town of Amherst and that is hopefully going to lead to construction very soon, and that is also being supported through the government through some provincial funding.

Those are just some good things I want to share that are happening in our community. It is heartbreaking, and I am sure every MLA here in this place experiences the same, when we have people come to our offices who do not have a place to live, and those who do have a place to live but are struggling to afford it. Really, for the first time as MLA, I have seniors - like the MLA for Halifax Chebucto has brought up in this session several times.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I've been watching time. It is over six minutes now. I ask that you please tie this back to the Bill.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I will just finish up by saying this is an important topic and, once again, thank my colleagues in the NDP caucus for bringing these Bills forward to give us an opportunity to debate these important topics here on the floor of the Legislature.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill No. 489, the Affordable Housing Programs Act. The simple fact is that more Nova Scotians are struggling to find housing that they can afford today than they were in the recent past. I hear it regularly at my riding: that the cost of housing is increasing and out of reach for many. I hear from seniors, students, young families, young professionals, folks who would like to retire to the area, and all of them are finding that they can't find places they can afford.

In my riding, CMHC figures put average rent in 2023 at over \$2,000 for a two-bedroom apartment. For a three-bedroom apartment, it is a startling \$2,840, and I will table that. These are well above provincial averages and put my area as the most unaffordable for renters in this province. The government's *Housing Needs Assessment Report* found, for instance, that in 2022 the median rate of a studio apartment exceeded that of a two-bedroom apartment in 2016, and I will table that as well.

Since the time of these reports in 2022 and 2023, rents have only continued to increase. We know the cost of rental housing is rising faster in Nova Scotia than at any other time since publicly available data began in 1979. We hear in this House a lot of, I

would argue, pretty simplistic reference to demand and supply as the answer to the housing crisis: “We are going to build more houses and that is going to solve the housing crisis.”

I think all the speakers have recognized that, in fact, the housing crisis is quite multi-faceted. It is not just the question about whether there is a house to buy. There is the question about whether you can afford to buy that house and there is a question about whether you can afford to be in your rental accommodation on a safe and secure status.

I am not an expert in specifically demand and supply economic theory around the housing market but I know a few things. One is that this is not demand and supply. If you have widgets and you make four widgets and the cost of widgets goes down - in fact, I would argue that we don't actually want that to happen, right? We want a stable housing market. None of us in this Chamber who own a house want to see the price of that house decrease. It's an investment. We want stability, but we also know that in terms of the housing market, it's deeply affected by other economic factors like inflation, interest rates, wage rates. It's not as easy as people keep talking about - increasing the supply.

As well, what we see happen if there is an oversupply in the rental market is the increasing financialization of rental incomes. We've seen the stats across Canada but certainly here. It's been happening in my riding extensively, where real estate investment trusts are taking over buildings. For instance, according to research, financialized landlords purchased 90 per cent of all rental stock that came up for sale in Toronto in 2020.

The thing is, I'm not actually saying that that in and of itself is a bad thing. The bad thing is they're not interested, nor should they be, in providing affordable housing. That's not what they're in the business for. I would argue that developers who are developing rental accommodation and folks who are buying into that market don't want to see a situation where their investments actually decrease - where they take a loss in their investments. I find that government members often refer to the supply in housing and will have more, and the cost will decrease, and I really would argue that that's not actually in the best interests of Nova Scotia.

One of the REIT managers was quoted also in this article saying, “We've offered to engage with the federal housing minister.” “The human right to housing is a government obligation . . . let's define this . . . What does this mean for us in the private sector? We're not a social agency.” I would argue that private sector developers don't want to be involved in the provision of affordable housing. What we need is affordable housing that is secure and adequate over the long term.

The Province's *Housing Needs Assessment Report* says: “Even a well functioning market will not be able to adequately address the needs of individuals or households who are earning lower incomes and thus increasing and supporting long-term affordable housing is essential.” I've already tabled that document. It is true. I think we could probably all agree that, in hindsight, when the federal government got out of the business of

supporting non-market housing in terms of co-ops and other types of investment throughout the 1990s, that probably was a mistake. Our hindsight is strong. We know that government shouldn't have gotten out of this business. So our argument is that we actually need government to get back in the business and keep supporting the development of more non-market housing.

I know that the members on the other side like to take some time and enumerate all of the various non-market units which have been developed. What we're saying is that's not enough. What we're also saying with this Bill - and this is going to come super-new to folks on the government side about having a program - is that actually most of the times in government programs that are in good public administration, you would have an evaluation and criteria by which you would make decisions. This is the point that we're talking about that seems so confusing on the other side.

[5:15 p.m.]

I know that this government has favoured, in fact, sole-source contracts to a bunch of different organizations, maybe even starting to transfer money before the contracts have been signed. But in good public sector management, what you do is you design a program with policy aims and you then might invite people to participate in that and you would, in fact, have criteria. You would assess people's readiness to take on that project, and you would hold them to account for the public investment that you have made over time. It's not to penalize, but it's the type of responsible decision-making that we should be doing with the money of Nova Scotians in this House.

That's what this Bill is doing - simply trying to recognize the reality that private sector development and private sector housing is not going to get us out of this housing crisis. We need other types of housing. We need more non-market housing, and we need to do it in a way that's consistent. Using inconsistent definitions of affordability, for instance, that don't match the CMHC's well-accepted definition isn't going to produce the kind of housing that so many can afford.

This Bill amends existing housing programs to ensure that houses are created and offered on a rent-geared-to-income basis, and it ensures that those units remain affordable for a minimum of 25 years. The Bill also prioritizes applications from non-profit developers who are more likely to ensure that the affordable units created are kept permanently affordable. These measures will ensure that those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless have a place to turn that isn't a temporary shelter or a tent.

We all want all kinds of housing in Nova Scotia. What we're saying with this Bill is that we're not doing enough in non-market housing, and that we need to strengthen our public administration of such funding and programs. That's why I support this Bill, and I hope others will too. With that, I would like to adjourn debate.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 489.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Earlier this afternoon in debate on Bill No. 479, the Minister responsible for Residential Tenancies alleged that in Question Period, I had said that under the government's current residential tenancies legislation, tenants could be evicted after three days of rental arrears.

I'd like to ask you to please direct that he table his evidence of this quotation.

THE SPEAKER: That's not a point of order. That's just a disagreement of facts.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Thursday, September 19th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Government business will include Committee of the Whole House on Bill Nos. 476, 471, and 467, Private and Local Bill Nos. 468 and 487, and Third Reading of Bill No. 455.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Thursday, September 19th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

All those in favor? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 5:18 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1,168**

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas Brenda Hattie has been named the 2024 Volunteer Representative for the Town of Yarmouth; and

Whereas Brenda has operated a free furniture bank for people in need for more than 35 years, and for 27 years she has organized a Christmas Day Dinner program for our community which provides a full free meal to those in need; and

Whereas Brenda is also the President of the Yarmouth Legion, where she plays a vital role in the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies and hosts lunches with entertainment for veterans;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brenda Hattie on being named the 2024 Volunteer Representative for the Town of Yarmouth and thank her for decades of dedicating her time and energy to others - she is an inspiration and perfect example of selflessness who truly makes our community a better place.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,169

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas Wanda Doucette has been named the 2024 Volunteer Representative for the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth; and

Whereas Wanda is a tireless volunteer in our community and is a valuable asset to the Greenville Community Centre Association as a board member. Her hard work with the centre was recently recognized when it was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award; and

Whereas Wanda was instrumental in the planning of the historical No. 2 Black Battalion Monument and she also volunteers with the ANS Service Providers Network, as well as other community organizations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Wanda Doucette on being named the 2024 Volunteer Representative for the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth and thank her for her many years of dedicated service to our community and helping others, all with her famous infectious smile and energy.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,170

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Board Chair of the Halifax Fringe Festival, April Hubbard, has actively made the theatre landscape in Nova Scotia a better and more accessible one, by ensuring that Fringe is a haven for those who don't see themselves reflected on stage in theatre, as well as an organization that champions accessibility, leading by example;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate April Hubbard on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,171

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Erin Desmond is the Manager of the Dartmouth Elizabeth Fry Society's Holly House, where she provides support, supervision, and guidance to the women and gender-diverse individuals who have experienced marginalization through criminalization and incarceration, and reside at Holly House;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Erin Desmond on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,172

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Elizabeth Fitzner is the Client Service Coordinator of TEAMWork Cooperative, where she has been an integral part of the FUTURE READY New Opportunities project, which helps people affected by COVID-19 to transition to new employment opportunities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Elizabeth Fitzner on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,173

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Hans Stokkeskog is the Lead Driver for the Bay Rides door-to-door community transportation service in St. Margaret's Bay, where he is also fleet manager for Bay Ride's 6-vehicle fleet;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hans Stokkeskog on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of his work and the scope of his contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,174

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Jarah Gregory is the Executive Director of Couch of Hope, a counselling practice in Dartmouth, Spryfield, and Truro, providing free mental health services to

approximately 1,000 clients, and which has expanded its services from a team of two interns to now a team of 12;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jarah Gregory on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,175

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Joy Power is the GED teacher at the Valley Communication Learning Association in Kentville, where her renowned dedication to the success of adult learners routinely includes, for example, meeting with students at 7:00 a.m. on the day of tests, to review materials and remind them of their potential;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joy Power on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,176

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax,

Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Kerrielynn Johnston is the Community Family Peer Support Network Coordinator for the Preston Area Food Hub Network in North Preston, where she goes above and beyond every day to ensure people can participate in programming from the Food Hub, thereby improving education and reducing food insecurity in North Preston;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kerrielynn Johnston on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,177

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Miranda Cain is the Executive Director of the North Preston's Future Community Organization Society in North Preston, which she founded and launched in 2015, working to build knowledge of the historical and current relevance of the North Preston community, encouraging youth to connect with elders to learn about Afrocentric forms of art and heritage;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Miranda Cain on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,178

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Marcel Visser, as Program Assistant with the L'Arche Cape Breton Community, provides a particularly excellent service to people with intellectual disabilities in L'Arche's Garden Program, ensuring that each member has a voice in what the garden plants and sells, and ensuring that every participant develops their gifts and takes part in meaningful activities and work;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Marcel Visser on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of his work and the scope of his contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,179

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Neville and Karen Provo, as founders of the North Preston Bulls Association, have invested countless hours in organizing basketball clinics, tournaments and mentorship programs tailored to the needs of Black North Preston youth, providing them opportunities to thrive through basketball;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Neville and Karen Provo on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of their work and the scope of their contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,180

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Awareness, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Roxanne (Roxy) Auger, NSTAY Outreach Worker with the YWCA Halifax, is a fierce advocate, amplifying the voices of survivors of human trafficking, and a recipient of the 2024 Invisible Champion Award;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Roxanne (Roxy) Auger on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,181

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Tina Riley is the longest-serving employee at 22 years of Alice House, where she is Operations Director, working to draw significant grant funding, train and orient new employees, and maintain a consistent standard of financial management, all on the basis of her abiding belief in the value of women-led and women-serving organizations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tina Riley on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,182

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas as the case manager for the YMCA in Middle Musquodoboit, Valerie Manuel brings to her work a deep knowledge of the local community and local issues, and places inclusion, wellness, and diversity at the centre of this important rural resource;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Valerie Manuel on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of her work and the scope of her contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,183

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the 2024 Bhayana Family Foundation Invisible Champion Awards were presented on the Community Impact Sector Day of Recognition, May 29th, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, at a ceremony at Emera Place, under the leadership of the United Way of the Maritimes; and

Whereas the Invisible Champion Awards recognize the contributions of individuals and organizations in the non-profit sector to advancing the life of the people and communities of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Vaughn MacLeod is the resident furniture repair and carpentry expert at the Parker Street Food Bank in Halifax, contributing his many mechanical, masonry, and maintenance skills to touch the lives of those whom Parker Street supports;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Vaughn MacLeod on receiving the 2024 Invisible Champion Award, and salute the importance of his work and the scope of his contributions to the lives of people in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,184

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas B.A.D. Dog Cycles Inc was founded in 2022 after the owners Bill Knowlton, Adam Pelley, and Danny Thomas realized there was a hole in the market for the full service people have come to expect, along with their passion for motorcycles, and each member of this trio plays a significant role in the operations, service, logistics, and management of the business; and

Whereas when you ride to their beautiful Timberlea shop located on Governor's Lake, expect to see modern service bays, branded clothing, the latest riding gear, and a place you can grab a fresh coffee or snack called the Naughty Kitty Cafe located inside; and

Whereas one of the greatest features of B.A.D. Dog Cycles are the exciting rallies, rides, and runs they organize for bikers and how these events positively impact and support our community, like their planned runs that have supported veterans, contributed to the IWK toy drive, brought awareness to intimate partner violence, and contributed to fundraisers such as the TD Ride for a Cure campaign;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Bill, Adam, and Danny for their many contributions to the community and wishing them continued success in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,185

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Cindy Donaldson, resident of Timberlea and franchise owner of the Pet Valu in Tantallon and the newly opened Timberlea location, is serving the rapidly growing residential communities in my riding and features an abundance of supplies for families who have furry companions; and

Whereas whether you have a dog, cat, bird, fish, or other small animal, Pet Valu offers a wide range of carefully selected items chosen for their quality and value for your pet's health and well-being and their knowledgeable staff recognize the unconditional love, trust, and loyalty of pet ownership and provide the essential items to keep pets healthy and happy; and

Whereas Pet Valu hosted a fundraising event for J&M Foster for cats and Furever Dog Rescue that included a dunk tank I was happy to participate in, and Pet Valu has given back directly to our community by donating dog and cat food to the BLT Community Pantry;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Cindy Donaldson and her team for their support in caring for our furry companions who are an important part of the family and give back to us immeasurably.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,186

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas our Bay Treasure Chest and St. Margaret's Bay Community Enterprise Centre lost a cherished member of the family on August 1st, Esme Malanchuk volunteered as a receptionist every Thursday for the St. Margarets Bay Community Enterprise Centre, a place where business and community come together as a resource to connect, engage, share experiences and expertise and most of all build on what is at the very heart of the CEC, "Bringing people together to create a stronger more vibrant community"; and

Whereas Esme welcomed and greeted CEC's members, visitors, and volunteers and went out of her way to be helpful and assist others in any way she could, and even when she finished her work at CEC, she continued volunteering behind the scenes as a key member of the Bay Treasure Chest Operations Team, as well as supporting various administrative and communications tasks for the Seniors Association of St Margarets Bay; and

Whereas Fred Dolbel, a fellow volunteer for both the CEC and Bay Treasure Chest, says Esme would offer her help before anyone might even think to ask for help, she was always well organized, brought forward great suggestions to streamline operations, and was able to easily cope with unexpected situations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in honouring the legacy of commitment and dedication of Esme Malanchuk.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,187

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Jenna Kedy of Timberlea is the recipient of the Eureka Fellowship, created to identify, spotlight, and amplify the incredible impact of inspiring young changemakers from across the country who are focused on tackling some of Canada's and/or the planet's biggest sustainability challenges, which has been a profoundly significant stepping stone in her life and is providing her with the opportunity to represent Nova Scotia at the One World Submit in Montreal; and

Whereas In 2024, Jenna completed 370 hours of volunteer work across various organizations, including leading Girl Guides, facilitating programming at Club Inclusion, and supporting special events with Special Olympics and Dreams Take Flight, while also engaging in fundraising and volunteer activities for organizations that support women and children with the Canadian Progress Club Halifax Citadel; and

Whereas in her role as a patient rights advocate and patient partner in the Canadian health care system, she has contributed to patient engagement projects at IWK Health, the University of Manitoba, and IMPaCT Trials, a clinical trials training platform;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jenna for her outstanding volunteerism and wish her well when she speaks on the panel at the Faces of the Future event, where she will discuss her journey in chronic illness advocacy at the Summit, hosted at the Palais des Congrès in Montréal.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,188

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Jessica Lee Brown, a young, strong, courageous resident of Whites Lake, beat ovarian cancer in 2011 but succumbed to a nine-year journey with brain cancer; and

Whereas Jess spent over a decade caring for and loving the children at Prospect Bay Children's Centre, and is remembered by our community as an outstanding childcare provider who was respected and credited with playing a personal role in helping families within the community raise their children; and

Whereas her constant curiosity and perseverance through serious medical issues, including two cancers, were characteristics that demonstrated her ability to work well with children and inspire them to always be learning and remain bright, focused, and hopeful about the future;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in honouring the memory Jessica Lee Brown and her many contributions to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,189

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Robert McNamara of Prospect started driving a school bus for the Prospect communities when he was 26 years old and recently celebrated the milestone anniversary of 50 years as a school bus driver; and

Whereas the 76-year-old says his favourite part of the job has always been the students, and has always related well to children, going out of his way to make them feel comfortable, and is best known for his heart of gold from the children he serves; and

Whereas he began his remarkable career in 1974 safely transporting over 5,000 children to school and back home again, and for generations has kindly and easily managed challenging situations with children on the bus with a gentle manner and lenient reminder to “just take it easy”;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Robert for his love and service to our community, as he has touched countless lives for generations in the Prospect neighbourhoods, and wish him well as he plans on continuing to drive a bus for years to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,190

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Sheila Harrie has a goal to raise awareness of the importance of breast cancer screening and testing, has taken part in Run for the Cure over the last 10 years, and the first one was to support her mother-in-law among others who had become diagnosed; and

Whereas 10 years later Shelia herself was diagnosed with the same type of cancer, which impacts one in eight women, and some men, and the age to typically get screened for breast cancer is age 40, but many become diagnosed before this in their 30s and even 20s; and

Whereas self-screening could be life-saving and there is a breast cancer screening available at Mumford Road, where you can go on your own or get screened with a friend for moral support;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Shelia Harrie and join me in recognizing the importance of Run for the Cure, whether that is participating, volunteering, raising funds, and spreading the word for all of those past, present, and future cancer warriors, taking place at the Garrison Grounds.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,191

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas two young siblings, Stella and Henry Slaunwhite, of Terence Bay, ages nine and six respectively, decided to help the residents of Terence Bay cool down from the heat while raising money for the IWK Foundation by setting up a lemonade stand at their grandparent's home near Government Wharf; and

Whereas with a homemade sign, colourful ballons and streamers, and a lemonade stand the young philanthropists attracted neighbours for a glass of lemonade, and their uncle Mark shared a photo of the stand on the community's Facebook page which helped to generate even more supporters; and

Whereas although the lemonade cost 25 cents per cup, people generously paid up to \$20 dollars, and within two hours the children raised \$93, along with additional contributions made online, the youngsters raised a total of \$220;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Stella Slaunwhite and her younger brother Henry Slaunwhite for their work and decision to help other children, youth, women, and families with their donation to the IWK Foundation.