



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Danielle Barkhouse

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First Session

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

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HALIFAX, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Danielle Barkhouse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Lisa Lachance, Nolan Young

THE SPEAKER: Order. We will begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I'd 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 has been signed by a number of residents of William Hunt Avenue and Peter Lowe Avenue in the Westmount subdivision of Halifax Chebucto and I have signed it also.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: I beg leave to introduce a petition:

Whereas workers need and deserve fair wages and safe working conditions and they have the right to bargain for them, and,

Whereas the use of scab labour prolongs strikes and lockouts and disincentivizes employers from reaching a fair deal with workers, and provokes violence,

Therefore, we the undersigned call on the Nova Scotia Legislature to pass the NSNDP's Bill 435, which bans the use of scab labour in Nova Scotia.

Speaker, there are 392 signatures and I have affixed my own, as per the Rules of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'd like to table a document relative to a Bill I will table for the benefit of members opposite, specifically Section 3.2 which outlines the cap and trade option for all provinces. It's an update to the *Pan-Canadian Approach to Carbon Pollution Pricing 2023-2030*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. KENT SMITH: I am pleased to rise to table the *Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board Annual Report 2023-2024*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. GREG MORROW: I beg leave to table the *Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board Annual Report 2023-2024*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,192

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

Whereas the annual Provincial Volunteer Awards held in Truro on September 18th recognized Nova Scotians who generously give their time to foster thriving, healthy communities; and

Whereas this year we are marking a significant milestone as we celebrate 50 years of formal recognition of volunteers who have been the backbone of our province, driving change and fostering a culture of giving and compassion; and

Whereas those honoured have shown resilience and innovation that will inspire future generations to pursue greatness and uphold our province's traditions and services of excellence;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate all volunteers, past and present, who have made our province a better place in all cultures and every community in 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.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,193

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

Whereas High Liner Foods began in Lunenburg as W.C. Smith & Company, a salt fish business founded by five brothers in 1899, and over a century has grown into a leading North American processor of frozen seafood with more than 1,100 employees around the world; and

Whereas while today the company operates in five countries, its ties to Nova Scotia remain strong with its head office and a processing facility located in Lunenburg; and

Whereas High Liner Foods will celebrate its 125th anniversary on September 23rd, showing its ability to navigate a changing seafood industry by building a strong brand, being committed to innovation, and finding opportunities at home and internationally;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly congratulate High Liner Foods on achieving this major milestone and wish the company and its employees continued success in the future.

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 Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,194

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

Whereas the province's first Nova Scotia Stampede will happen from September 26th to 29th with more than 3,000 people expected each day for exciting rodeo competitions and concerts; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Stampede will take place at the Truro Raceway with the benefit of the newly renovated grandstand and the Rustic Table restaurant, which focuses on promoting local Nova Scotia food and beverage products; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Stampede event is sure to generate significant economic activity for our rural economy while celebrating our agriculture industry;

Therefore be it resolved that members of this House recognize and thank the staff at Central Nova Scotia Sports & Entertainment for bringing a major event to Nova Scotia that is sure to become a popular annual tradition in our province.

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

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 495 - An Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 2006, the Midwifery Act. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 496 - An Act to Amend Chapter 194 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 497 - An Act to End the Carbon Tax by Implementing a Cap-and-trade Program. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for this bill to be read a second time today and sent to Law Amendments Committee for Nova Scotians to have their say.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver to read a second time. Is it agreed? It is not agreed.

[1:15 p.m.]

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

Bill No. 498 - An Act to Establish a Public Travel Nurse Incentive Program.
(Susan Leblanc)

Bill No 499 - An Act Respecting Solar Panels for New Government Buildings.
(Hon. Iain Rankin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: May I make an introduction before I move my resolution?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I would like to bring the House's attention to the West Gallery, where we are joined by Legion leaders from one end of the province to the other. These are the individuals who provide service and support to our veterans and all of our communities. I'd like these members to accept the warm welcome of the House after I announce them by name.

We are joined by: Don McCumber, president of the Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command - and please stand; Joanne Geddes, District F Commander; Darrell Leighton, president of Branch 9 Hants County; Ken Babcock, Deputy District D Commander; Murray Austin, president of the Fairview branch; Dean Austin, president of the Eastern Marine branch; Joyce Pitcher, president of the Bedford branch; Shawn Leveque, president of the Centennial branch; Ricci Hawkins, president of the Calais branch; and Bob Paddick, Poppy Chairman of the Calais branch. Thank you all for joining us here today in support of this resolution. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. We hope you enjoy your time here and thank you for everything you do for your communities.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,195

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

Whereas the decision to allocate long-term care community beds rests with the provincial government; and

Whereas there has been a significant decline in veteran occupancy in long-term care beds, along with long wait times for veteran admittance, due to the provincial government permanently filling vacant veteran beds with non-veterans; and

Whereas veteran facilities not only offer health care but also foster a sense of companionship among veterans, supported by nearby Legions that fund activities, social events, and additional personal comforts not offered by Veterans Affairs Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly direct the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care to table in the House or file with the Clerk within 30 days an action plan on prioritizing access for veterans to veteran beds at long-term care facilities.

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

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

There are several Noes. The notice is tabled.

The honourable member for Clare.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,196

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

Whereas the lobster fishery, a cornerstone of Nova Scotia's economy, contributing \$1.3 billion in exports in 2022 and supporting the livelihoods of countless coastal communities, is facing a direct threat to its sustainability due to thousands of pounds of lobster being removed from St. Marys Bay through illegal commercial fishing practices; and

Whereas the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, under Minister Lebouthillier, has failed to enforce critical federal fishing regulations, putting the future of the lobster fishery at risk and neglecting to engage meaningfully with local stakeholders to address the growing crisis; and

Whereas it is the responsibility of the Province to regulate seafood buyers and processors, with the Fish Buyers' Licensing and Enforcement Regulations clearly prohibiting the purchase of fish products from individuals without a valid commercial fishing licence, yet enforcement remains insufficient to curb illegal activity;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly instruct the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development to call an emergency meeting as soon as possible with the topic of addressing enforcement gaps in illegal fishing in Nova Scotia.

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

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

There are several Noes. The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction before I make my statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

THE PREMIER: I'm going to ask Gillian MacKinnon to please rise. I'm pleased to introduce Gillian MacKinnon, who is working to make sure our youth have access to sport in our community. She's doing incredible work. I ask Gillian to please accept the warm welcome of the Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: Welcome and thank you for coming. I hope you enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Pictou East.

MACKINNON, GILLIAN: COACHING WORK - THANKS

HON. TIM HOUSTON: I should note that her mom, Judy, is with her today as well. Thank you, Judy, for being here as well. I almost got in trouble there, didn't I?

Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Coach Gillian MacKinnon.

Gillian grew up playing baseball and basketball. She knows the importance of organized sports, so when she noticed the need for coaching staff at the local elementary school, she was quick to fill the role.

She also noticed that her very rural community has a baseball field, but it wasn't being utilized. Gillian offered to host weekly baseball games for any youth in the East River Valley area who wanted to play ball. Her resolve has created a wonderful opportunity in the community that just wouldn't exist without her support.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Gillian MacKinnon for helping to create more opportunities for youth to get involved with sports in our community.

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

PATRICIA ARAB: In your gallery, we have Natalie Brown, the executive director for the Fairview Resource Centre; and Latika Kumar, operations and program lead for the Fairview Resource Centre. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

FAIRVIEW RES. CTR.: GRAND REOPENING - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Fairview Resource Centre on their grand reopening this Summer following extensive renovations to enhance accessibility. With the addition of a new elevator, the centre can now better serve the community, allowing for greater participation in the many programs that they offer, from parenting support classes to senior programs, free community meals, and fitness and technology classes.

Since its establishment in 1986, the centre has continued to support an ever-increasing population within Bedford, Clayton Park, Tantallon, Lakeside, Beechville, Rockingham, and Fairview. Annually, it provides assistance to approximately 650 adults and 150 children and youth under 19, with a mission to remove barriers and offer resources to families and seniors alike. The centre's commitment to helping our community thrive is more evident than ever, and the renovations will ensure that they can continue their valuable work for many years to come.

Let us celebrate the Fairview Resource Centre's dedication to our community and the positive impact it continues to have.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

KENDRA COOMBES: In the gallery opposite, we have Shannon Sampson, Mackenzie MacDonald, Jess Garrett, Gary Wiley, Shelley Amyotte, Shauna Wilcox, and John Walsh. John is from the Local 2215 IMP Aerospace. The rest are Unifor members. I ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

ANTI-SCAB LEGISLATION: NEED - RECOG.,

KENDRA COOMBES: May 27, 2024, was a huge win for labour when federal anti-scab legislation passed third reading. Its passing will significantly level the playing field for workers' rights in the federally regulated sectors when it comes into force June 20, 2025.

Unions have been calling for an end to scab labour for decades. It undermines workers' ability to negotiate fairly. It prolongs strikes and lockouts. It disincentivizes employers from reaching a fair deal with workers. It raises the temperature around an already-difficult situation. Scab labourers are also open to abuse by the employer. Nova Scotia must ban scab labour and prohibit employers from firing, threatening to fire, or intimidating striking workers. Thank you to the unions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

ADAMS, CAPT. ROBERT: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, this week, a dedicated member of the Canadian Armed Forces and longtime aide-de-camp to three Lieutenant Governors of Nova Scotia passed away. Captain Robert Adams of Halifax served with the Canadian Armed Forces Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service and was also a staffing officer at Northwood home care.

He was appointed as an honorary aide-de-camp in 2007 first to support Lieutenant Governor the Honourable Mayann Francis, then Brigadier-General the Honourable J.J. Grant, and his honour Arthur J. LeBlanc in the exercise of their official duties. For 16 years, he served Lieutenant Governors of this province and worked alongside the household at Government House with a close attention to detail, dry sense of humour, and a bright smile.

Captain Adams was a recipient of the Canadian Forces' Decoration and the Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond and Platinum Jubilee medals. I join my colleagues in the House of Assembly in extending our sincere condolences to Captain Adams's wife, Karen; his brothers, Rick and Mark; and their extended family, along with the staff at the Office of the Lieutenant Governor and his colleagues in the Canadian Armed Forces.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, I ask that we revert to Government Notices of Motion.

THE SPEAKER: There's been a request to revert. Is it unanimous?

[GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, in the gallery today, we have two guests who, just a few minutes ago, were able to join our Premier to announce the expansion of 14 more community pharmacy pharmacare clinics in the province. I would ask our guests to please rise as I introduce them: no stranger to the members of this House - Allison Bodnar, the CEO of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia; and Alison Anderson, a pharmacist and the owner of Hammonds Plains PharmaChoice. I would ask the members of the House to welcome our guests. We're grateful for the partnership. (Applause)

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

[1:30 p.m.]

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,197

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

Whereas community pharmacies continue to play a pivotal role in the delivery of health care services like preventive care and referrals to other levels of support of primary care safely, privately, quickly, and close to home; and

Whereas this Fall, Nova Scotians will have access to 45 community pharmacy primary care clinics, thanks to the support of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia and pharmacy owners who have stepped forward to make primary health care more accessible in communities; and

Whereas to date, Nova Scotians have accessed more than 190,000 services at community pharmacy primary care clinics from Yarmouth to Cape Breton, allowing patients to receive the right care at the right time in the right place, helping to alleviate pressures in other areas of our health care system;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing the commitment and dedication of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, community pharmacy primary care clinics, and all pharmacists across the province, who each and every day help Nova Scotians receive the health care they deserve.

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.

[STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

CARMAN KERR: I'm awfully proud and excited to introduce my family in the West Gallery. I've got my 6-year-old son, Odin Kerr; my 10-year-old son, Eris Kerr; my wife, Melanie Besemer, age undisclosed (Laughter); and my mom, Lynn Kerr. I invite everyone to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Annapolis.

MOTHER, LYNN: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: Speaker, I rise today to honour my mom, Lynn Kerr. Lynn is an exceptional parent and grandparent, community volunteer, and leader and has excelled in her sport, work, and life.

As an athlete, she broke provincial records in track, earned her brown belt in karate, and performed water ski tricks and jumps to massive crowds along the Annapolis River. As a lifelong volunteer, Lynn has played a central role to several community hall, church and youth sport programming and fundraisers.

She developed palliative care programs and gave her free time to the Annapolis Royal Historical Association and the Annapolis Gardens. As an RN for 50 years, she has led teams in emergency, OR, and medical throughout the Annapolis Valley and beyond, from a maximum-security prison in Saskatchewan to the Sea Cadet camp in Cornwallis.

As my mom and a grandmother, she is the best there was and ever will be, according to my kids and me.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in welcoming my mom, Lynn Kerr.

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LISA LACHANCE: Joining us in the West Gallery today are members of the Turret Arts Space Society. I'd like to welcome Kortney Dunsby, Alexis Cormier and Annalise Prodor, and I'd like them to receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

TURRET ARTS SPACE SOC.: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the tireless advocacy of the Turret Arts Space Society to develop a sustainable, adaptive reuse plan for 1588 Barrington Street. The building is a heritage and cultural icon, with former beloved identities as the Turret Club, which was the community-led headquarters of the Gay Alliance for Equality and The Khyber Centre for the Arts.

The new Turret Arts Space will house a critically engaged community, where youth, artists, and the public can connect and thrive in a space that is physically, economically, and culturally accessible. Over the last decade, the society has secured \$1 million in public funds and achieved key milestones, including partial hazardous material abatement and designing and developing architectural plans and a 20-year sustainable financial model. The detailed plan for the Turret Arts Space will be publicly launched in October 2024.

I am excited to see the Turret Arts Space come alive in downtown Halifax.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HON. TWILA GROSSE: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction prior to my statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TWILA GROSSE: Thank you. Joining us in the Speaker's Gallery today is Jayrell Diggs, an accomplished young basketball star and businessman. Jayrell is joined in the East Gallery by his mom, Dolores Diggs; his pastor, Rev. Andrea Anderson; and family. I would ask you to rise to accept the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Preston.

DIGGS, JAYRELL: ACCOMPLISHMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. TWILA GROSSE: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jayrell Diggs, who in 2021 was a recipient of a five-year, full basketball scholarship from Saint Mary's University. Jayrell is in the Bachelor of Commerce program. While playing basketball at Saint Mary's (SMU), he has received several awards. In 2022, he was Rookie of the Year,

First Team All-Rookie in Atlantic University Sport (AUS), and named to the All-Canadian Rookie Team. In 2023, he was the SMU Basketball MVP. In 2024, he was AUS First Team All-Star, AUS Champion Tournament All-Star, SMU Male Athlete of the Year, SMU MVP, and Academic All-Canadian.

While attending university full-time, Jayrell started two businesses. J2 Mobile Detailing started in 2021, offering car detailing services at your residence. Then in 2023, with the support of the Arthur L. Irving Entrepreneurship Centre, he started SudDrop Laundry, a laundry service that services HRM.

I ask all members of the Legislature to please join me to congratulate Jayrell on his accomplishments and awards. Jayrell, your future looks bright. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Your history is bright as well.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FAMILY MBRS.: MILESTONES - BEST WISHES

FRED TILLEY: Speaker, normally I would do this in October, but I'm going to do it today, considering we're probably not going to be here in October. October is a big month in our household and our family. Starting off, I want to wish my daughter a happy 29th birthday in October, and also her and her husband Liam a happy first anniversary in October. I'd like to wish my parents a happy 59th anniversary in October, and to my wife Jean, a happy 31st anniversary in October. I love you all and I'll see you soon.

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

HON. BRIAN WONG: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRIAN WONG: Standing in the gallery opposite me, I would like to introduce my constituency assistant, Dani Squires. I met Dani in 2021 while I was knocking on doors, and managed to convince her after several months to come work with me - and as any good constituency assistant would do, she edited what I was going to say about her.

First off, Dani is an amazing and caring individual. She fits the job perfectly. If anybody is into social media, she is the person behind CravingHalifax, which really highlights a lot of the best restaurants in the area. Dani is the 2024 Vision Award recipient for the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia. She is the brain injury survivor representative for Nova Scotia through the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia. She is currently recording a 2025 TV show called *Market Day* with Whalesong Group Inc.,

which focuses on markets in Nova Scotia and provides a spotlight on local vendors. She got married about six weeks ago.

The best thing about Dani is that when people call or visit our offices - some days can be good days, some days can be bad days, but the most wonderful thing about Dani is that we measure success based on how many people we can help. Thank you, Dani. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

ATL. CAN. TABLE TENNIS CH'SHIPS: SUCCESS - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: Earlier this month - I think actually the first of September - I had a chance to attend the 12th Annual Atlantic Canada Table Tennis Championships. I was there with many athletes. The member for Bedford Basin and the member for Sackville-Cobequid were there as well. It's a really wonderful event that brings together ping pong players from all over Atlantic Canada, not just from Nova Scotia but P.E.I., New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

It was wonderful to be there for the opening ceremonies. Then after the opening ceremonies, we had a chance, as dignitaries, to play a little bit. I had a competitive match against Mayor Savage and then got my clock cleaned by a nine-year-old who is very good at ping pong.

It was an amazing event, an amazing group of people. I want to congratulate everybody involved.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

FRIENDS OF DART. COVE: EAC AWD. - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Friends of Dartmouth Cove on receiving the Danielle Moore Sunshine Award from the Ecology Action Centre at their AGM this week. This incredible recognition is a testament to their unwavering commitment to protecting Dartmouth Cove, a place we all hold dear. Their tireless efforts to defend the cove from harmful development, preserve its natural beauty, and advocate for thoughtful, sustainable growth reflect a deep love for our community and environment.

As the representative for Dartmouth South, I am proud to be part of a community that stands united in its dedication to protecting our shared spaces. The passion and perseverance of the Friends of Dartmouth Cove remind us all of the power of community action and the importance of safeguarding the environment for future generations.

Please join me in applauding the Friends of Dartmouth Cove for their dedication and passion in defending one of Nova Scotia's true treasures.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MARSMAN, DEVON: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Today I stand with mixed emotions. After days, weeks, months, years, Devon Marsman has been found. His disappearance has devastated the entire province.

Speaker, I want to speak directly to his mom, Theresa. As a parent, I cannot imagine the pain, the frustration, and agony you've had and are feeling. The strength and determination you have shown is unmatched. I can honestly say that most people, including myself, would have fallen apart a long time ago.

Life is not fair. Devon - by all accounts from everyone who has ever met him - was an incredible and loving young man. I sincerely wish we could take this pain from you, that we could do more. This is not the result anyone wanted. This is the one we all feared the most. Theresa, you will have your day, and you will now be able to lay Devon to rest. Know that as you go through it all you have a thousand shoulders to lean on. Rest in peace, Devon.

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

WORLD MENOPAUSE DAY: AWARENESS - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Speaker, today I rise to recognize World Menopause Day, an internationally recognized event established in 2009 by the International Menopause Society in collaboration with the World Health Organization. This day is dedicated to raising awareness about menopause and breaking the stigma that has surrounded the topic. Menopause is a natural transition that affects many around the world. For some it can be a positive experience; however, for many it can have significant negative impacts on their health.

It is essential to recognize that this journey is unique for each person and involves not just physical but also mental health. I call on my colleagues to join me in advocating for the importance of fostering open conversations and promoting awareness and access to resources that support individuals navigating this significant life transition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BRAITHWAITE, VERNOL JR.: 80TH BIRTHDAY - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to celebrate Mr. Vernol Braithwaite, Jr. I extend my congratulations to Mr. Vernol Braithwaite, Jr. on celebrating 80 years. What a blessing. I would like to wish him good health and God's blessing today and always.

On August 24, 2024, at the Braithwaite and Downey family reunion, I was able to spend time with Mr. Vernol and all of his family, give him his well wishes that are so deservedly due, and thank him for carrying on the legacy of Vernol Braithwaite Sr. I'd like all members of this House to join me in wishing Mr. Vernol Braithwaite Jr. a happy 80th birthday and many more.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction prior to reading my statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

KIM MASLAND: Joining us in the gallery today are Wendy and Megan Looke, who are volunteers with Log-a-Load for Kids Canada. I would ask you both to rise to accept the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Queens.

LOG-A-LOAD SOFTBALL TOURN.: SUCCESS - RECOG.

HON. KIM MASLAND: On August 17th and 18th, the 19th Annual Log-a-Load for Kids softball tournament was held in Harmony, Queens County.

The Log-a-Load for Kids Canada is a giving campaign initiative of the Canadian Woodlands Forum, and this year's tournament in Harmony was deemed an overwhelming success, shattering several records. Twelve teams from the Nova Scotia forestry industry participated, including contractors, local businesses, and community members, and they set a new fundraising milestone of \$32,000. This means that since its inception, this tournament has raised an incredible \$373,000 for the IWK Health Centre children's hospital.

Please join me in applauding the efforts of the tournament's organizing committee, participants, sponsors, and contributors, and in thanking them for their continued commitment to staging this successful fundraiser each year.

THE SPEAKER: Incredible.

The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

EPILEPSY ASSOC. OF THE MARITIMES: ADVOCACY - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Today I would like to recognize the important work of the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes. This association provides hope and support for individuals living with epilepsy and their families across Nova Scotia. This association is a strong advocate for research and treatment advancement, working closely with health care professionals to improve the quality of life for those living with epilepsy. Their dedication to raising awareness and improving the lives of individuals living with epilepsy in our region is truly inspiring. Therefore, I ask members of this House to join me in thanking the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes for their valuable work and dedication.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HALIFAX PUBLIC LIBRARIES: REOPENING - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Today, Halifax Public Libraries reopen after the majority of workers voted to accept their newly negotiated collective agreement. They had been on strike, in hopes of improving their wages and working conditions, for just under a month.

Being a library worker can be deeply rewarding, but also very difficult. Today's libraries are filling in the gaps in our social safety net and workers are supporting those who are bearing the weight of the affordability and housing crises. As one worker wrote, library staff can act as therapists, mediators, child care, security, first responders, tech support, educators, food providers, and on and on.

I'd like to recognize the staff who make the Dartmouth North Public Library the amazing place it is: Sandy Tober, Siobhan Wiggans, Carla Foxe, Kim Goldman, Darlene Kane, Duane Kaiser, Haley Parsons, Sarah Budgell, Olabisi Onasanya, and Stephania Keller. I'd like to thank them all for everything they do in Dartmouth North and for fighting to make sure libraries have the resources they need to meet the community's needs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

CHRIS PALMER: In the East Gallery, I'm very honoured and privileged to introduce to the House a good friend of mine, a lifetime friend of our family's and long-time teacher and community leader in our community. I'm going to read a member statement about her journey and some of the things she's gone through. She's seen all my children through school, and I just want to publicly apologize for any of their behaviour now. If I could ask all the members of the House to give my good friend Kim Nelson of Aylesford a warm welcome. (Applause)

She's joined today by her husband Kevin and her niece Alxys, and her daughter Finley. Welcome to the House.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

NELSON, KIM: BOOK PUBLICATION - RECOG.

Today, I would like to speak about an inspirational community leader from Kings West. Kim Nelson of Aylesford is a long-time educator, cancer survivor, and now a published author. Kim recently retired from teaching and working as a guidance counsellor after 26 years and started her own private practice: Hope and Strength From Within Counselling Services.

In 2018, Kim's life changed, as it does for so many, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Thus began a journey of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, along with the spiritual and emotional rollercoaster that comes from it.

This past year, Kim authored and published her first book, *Strength from Within: Surviving Cancer: The Power of Gifts and Hope*, which details her step-by-step journey. It is equal parts heartbreaking and uplifting. Her book discusses the loss of selfhood that accompanies cancer, the surprising joys of self-discovery, and the life-giving support of loved ones. Kim demonstrates to the reader the ways in which her community held her up during the most challenging times of her life.

At the heart of her book is a firm grounding in faith, possibility and gratitude. In writing the book, Kim reminds readers to know and appreciate what they have - embracing it with their whole heart - and offers comfort, compassion, and outrageous love to fellow sufferers when they need it most.

I would like all members of the House to thank my friend Kim Nelson for her years of dedication to her community, for sharing her story, and for her willingness to help others. Well done, Kim.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

BENJAMIN BRIDGE: B CORP CERTIF. - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I rise today to recognize Benjamin Bridge, a trailblazing winery in the Annapolis Valley, on achieving B Corp Certification as of February 29, 2024. This prestigious certification is awarded to businesses meeting the highest standards of social and environmental responsibility, transparency, and accountability. Benjamin Bridge joins an elite global community, becoming only the second winery in Canada to receive this honour.

Since its founding in 1999 by Gerry McConnell and the late Dara Gordon, Benjamin Bridge has remained committed to sustainability, from its regenerative farming practices to fostering strong community ties. Now led by Ashley and Devon McConnell-Gordon, the winery certification reinforces its dedication to employee well-being, local suppliers, environmental stewardship, and ethical governance.

Benjamin Bridge's partnership with Glooscap First Nation and ongoing investment in rural jobs, health benefits, and volunteer work highlight their impact beyond the vineyard. I congratulate Benjamin Bridge on this remarkable achievement and their continued contribution to their community and the land they so carefully steward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

NSUPE MBRS.: CONTRACT RATIFICATION - CONGRATS.

GARY BURRILL: I will add to the words of the member from Dartmouth North that we mark the reopening of Halifax Public Libraries today with a great congratulations to the members of the Nova Scotia Union of Public & Private Employees Local 14 following ratification on the weekend of their agreement after almost a month on strike.

The union was clear from the outset that the employer needed to understand the changing context of library work, which includes the deepening impact of the rising costs of living as well as the work of community social workers that library workers are increasingly being called to take on. The 340 members of the union - librarians, technicians, assistants, administrative, technical, and maintenance staff - placed better wages, increased sick time, and parental leave equality for adoptive and biological parents at the centre of their negotiations.

Union members voted 59 per cent in favour of the settlement, indicating that public libraries in Halifax, as they reopen today, have many issues with their workforce which still call out to be addressed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Permission to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: In the Speaker's Gallery, we have an exceptional basketball coach, Mr. Pat Havard. Pat, please rise and accept the warm welcome of the House Assembly. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HAVARD, PAT: BASKETBALL COACHING - RECOG.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Today I rise to acknowledge and celebrate Pat Havard, a 19-year coaching veteran. Pat is the coach of the girls varsity basketball team at Cobequid Educational Centre and the head coach of the Lake City 56ers in the MWBA. Pat has guided teams at the professional level to university and post-secondary play in five different provinces. For 13 years, Pat coached at the U SPORTS and CCAA level.

Pat guided the U18 Boys Basketball Nova Scotia team to a bronze medal at the 2022 Canada Summer Games. He was also the head coach of the Eastern Canadian Basketball League's Truro Tide. The MWBA has helped three players jump from the league to the professional ranks in its two seasons of operation. The league showcases many remarkable players, and Pat has made it his goal to help showcase that talent. Thank you, Pat, for all that you do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HATCHER, WAYNE: CANCER RECOVERY - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I rise to recognize the journey that Wayne Hatcher has been on. He is now resting comfortably in his Hatchet Lake home. Wayne was diagnosed with prostate cancer in June 2018, and following surgery later that year, he made a full recovery.

The follow-up to the surgery included a new testing program performed every three months to measure the amount of PSA in his blood. In September 2023, the test indicated the cancer had returned. In 2021, the QEII Health Sciences Centre Foundation funded a program that provides a new imaging tool in the detection and management of neuroendocrine tumours. The project was fully funded by generous donations to the foundation, allowing patients across Atlantic Canada to benefit. Thanks to this new scanning procedure, other tumours were detected. With early intervention, Wayne had surgery to remove the tumour from his lungs.

The most powerful benefit of this new imaging is detecting the recurrence and identifying the extent of the spread of cancer. I would like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the importance of early detection of cancer and the vital role the QEII Health Sciences Centre Foundation plays in the health and wellness of all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

BUSINESSES: HIRING OF NSCC STUDENTS - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Speaker, today I rise to recognize the many businesses across Nova Scotia that take students from NSCC into their workplaces to provide practical experience in their chosen fields. Thank you for believing in our young people and our youth, and for giving them a chance to learn and grow.

This past Spring, I was asked by Lisa Gower of NSCC Cumberland Campus to bring just such a student into my office for a five-week term. My team and I were delighted to have Robert LaPage join us. I have to say that, initially, Robbie was a little shy, but it didn't take long for him to demonstrate his research and tech knowledge, and he quickly was a strong member of our team. In fact, after five weeks, Robbie filled in for my constituency assistant when he took some time off. I wish Robbie the best of luck as he continues his study at Mount Allison University.

Speaker, I encourage my legislative colleagues or any business owner who has the opportunity to offer a student some real-world experience to do so. It benefits them immensely as they move forward in their careers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BECKY DRUHAN: I'll ask them to rise. Joining us in your gallery is educator Jane Berrigan along with students Walker Comstock, Jasmine Ghaffari, Prithviraj Singh, and Phoenix Wilkins. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

BERRIGAN, JANE: EDUCATION COMMITMENT - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: These are students who represented Nova Scotia at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in May 2024.

Speaker, Jane Berrigan has spent more than 25 years in education, bringing energy and enthusiasm to her role. She dedicated 12 of those years to teaching the O2 program, where she opened doors for students in rural Nova Scotia, helping them access opportunities that for some seemed out of reach.

Now, as an instructional coach, Jane works closely with teachers, emphasizing student-centered teaching and guiding new educators in building strong relationships and effective classroom management.

Jane has also played a key role in the success of science, technology, engineering, and math programming and fairs across the South Shore. In 2024, she was honored with one of Youth Science Canada Distinguished Service Awards, a recognition given to just nine educators nationwide. For Jane, the most fulfilling part of her work in STEM is watching the spark of curiosity ignite in her students and seeing them connect in learning their future careers.

Jane is one of the many educators across the province who impact our students every day. I ask the House to join me in expressing our deep gratitude to them for their commitment to education and promoting and delivering science education.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DENNY, CHIEF LEROY: HON. LT.-COL. - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, I opened the paper today, and I saw and I want to recognize that Eskasoni first nation Chief Leroy Denny has been named an honorary lieutenant-colonel with the Canadian Army Reserve regiment in Sydney. In his role, Chief Leroy will serve as a guardian of the regiment's traditions and history, promoting the values and identity of the regiment. Denny will also be an adviser to the commanding officer in all non-operational issues. Chief Denny is someone who is well known all over Cape Breton. I rise in my place to recognize him on his new post and wish him the very best.

[2:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. It is now time for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers. The time is now 2:00 p.m. We will finish at 2:50 p.m.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM: NOVA SCOTIANS WITHOUT DOCTORS - ADDRESS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, on the first day of this House sitting, I asked why the Premier was hiding how many Nova Scotians don't have a family doctor. He proceeded to tell us how important data is to him, while he hides that data from the public. On the second day, I asked the Premier why the Province wasn't taking action against illegal lobster sales on land where the Province has jurisdiction. The Premier simply blamed the federal government. On the third day, we asked why he gave Sobeys a million dollars for buying-local programs, where that is not where local produce is being sold. What was the answer? The minister told us about wobblers.

We're focused on serious issues. Why can't the Premier give us a serious, straightforward answer to any one of these questions?

THE PREMIER: Speaker, we give answers. The member just doesn't like the answers. The reason the member doesn't like them is because, on every issue of significance to this province, he just takes instructions from his boss, Justin Trudeau: the carbon tax, the Isthmus, and 6,000 asylum seekers his boss wants to send to Nova Scotia. Every single time the federal Liberals are calling Nova Scotians names and threatening Nova Scotians, what does he do? He stands with the Liberal Party. My question for the member opposite is: When will the member opposite stand up for Nova Scotians?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Par for the course, and my case is made by the Premier himself. Same as on the fourth day of this sitting: I asked the Premier about a report his government hid that recommended a tenancy enforcement unit. Instead of explaining why he didn't do it, he attacked tenants as being bad neighbours. On the fifth day, I asked about his plan to double the population when the housing market and government services are buckling. What does he do? Deflect and blame others. On the sixth day, the Premier didn't even show up to work to answer questions.

THE SPEAKER: Order. You are not allowed to state whether a member is here or not. I ask you to stand up and retract that.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I will retract that.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We can't get a straight answer. Does the Premier not think he owes Nova Scotians and this House more than deflecting two questions a day as the Premier of this Province with a majority government?

THE PREMIER: I know the member opposite says I'm focused on attacking, but really, let's look at what's happened here: When the federal government issued threats to Nova Scotians, who did he side with? The federal Liberals. When federal Liberals were calling Nova Scotians EI folks, who did he stand with? The federal Liberals. I'm standing up for Nova Scotians. I'm spending time with Nova Scotians and listening to them. I suggest the member spend a little bit more time with Nova Scotians over the next few months as well.

ZACH CHURCHILL: If one listens to the Premier, you might think he's not the Premier of this Province but that he's auditioning to be the Opposition against Trudeau in Ottawa. We see the same thing today that we saw on Day 7. I asked him about his plan to double the population - deflects and blames, just like we saw on Day 8, when we asked about why he still was hiding the need-a-doctor numbers. He deflected and attacked. Again, we see it today: a Premier who is quickly pointing the blame on other people and not taking his responsibility.

When you look at how weak this legislative sitting was, I have to ask the Premier: Is the only reason he actually brought us in here to gaslight, deflect, blame, mislead, and lie to Nova Scotians?

THE SPEAKER: Order. This is twice now. I asked you to stand up. I asked you to take that back, and I asked you to apologize. You cannot use unparliamentary words. I ask you to stand up, please. Retract the words and apologize.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I cannot retract those statements. It's the most honest thing that was said in that exchange. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order. I'm going to ask one more time if you would please retract that word. If not, then I will refuse to recognize you for the rest of the day.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I have to, with professional and moral obligation, stand behind what I said because my words were true and the Premier knows it, and those who aren't cheering from over there know it as well.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Unfortunately, then, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition will not be recognized for the rest of the day. We could spend 45 seconds yelling, or I can recognize the honourable Premier.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: What the member forgot to go through was on Day 4, when he was against population growth and immigration, and on Day 5, when he was all for refugees, and on Day 6, when he was back to grow the population. The people in this Legislature are elected to represent and stand up for Nova Scotians, and I have not heard an ounce of solidarity with Nova Scotians from that member in this whole sitting. What I have seen is Justin Trudeau's cheerleader, when he should be standing up for Nova Scotians. I hope that Nova Scotians . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. If the member for Fairview-Clayton Park would like to stand up on a point of order after Question Period, they certainly can.

I just want to make one more statement: The rules are the rules, and I ask that everybody stand by them and respect that.

The honourable Premier, with four seconds.

THE PREMIER: Let me just say Nova Scotians won't forget. Nova Scotians will remember . . .

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

PREM.: DOCTORS AGREEMENT DETAILS - CONFIRM

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Nova Scotians want doctors - the ones I talk to - and yesterday the Minister of Health and Wellness pointed to last year's new doctors agreement as a sign of progress in addressing the doctor recruitment and retention challenges. What the minister didn't acknowledge was that a commitment made in this very agreement specified the provincial government has confirmed that details about the retirement fund will be shared by March 31, 2024. I didn't get a response yesterday, so I'm hoping the Premier will be able to answer. Was this deadline met and, if not, why not? I don't think this has anything to do with Ottawa but correct me if I'm wrong.

THE PREMIER: What we've done since we've taken government is work with health care professionals. We haven't fought with them. We negotiated contracts with them in good faith. We have worked with them. The idea for a pension for doctors, that's pretty innovative - it's not happening anywhere else.

The member may not be aware, but every quarter, I meet with all the health care leaders from all sectors in the province. We talk about a number of issues. We talk about a number of opportunities. There are a number of discussions happening with health care professionals at any given time. You know what? They're excited. They're excited to have a government that supports them and has their back. We will continue to do that every single day.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The physicians and the Nova Scotians that I talk to are excited about the day, some day in the future, when they'll be able to stay and make a life here and actually have attachment to primary care. The Need a Family Practice Registry is growing. Over 160,000 Nova Scotians are not attached to primary care or have any kind of health home. Despite efforts to manage the list, Nova Scotia Health is internally preparing for a projected, unattached population of 200,000 within the next decade.

Meanwhile, despite inflated claims, last year there was a net increase of just 10 family doctors. How is the Premier going to attract and retain the number of doctors we need if he can't keep his promises to them?

THE PREMIER: The people who work in the health care system are hopeful for the first time. They see the progress, and they see what it means to have a government support them, unlike the last time Nova Scotians gave the NDP the keys to the province. You know what they did? They cut health care. Do you know what they did when faced with a report that there was a looming shortage of doctors? They ignored it.

Do you know what we don't do? We don't cut. We don't ignore. We invest. We build. We will continue to do that. I hear that the Leader of the NDP doesn't like political history, but you know what? Nova Scotians remember. They will be reminded, and they will hold to account.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The people who are being held to account is this government, and apparently, they don't like it. Doctors Nova Scotia cautioned this government that it would not ratify the 2023 agreement without the commitment to give doctors concrete details about this promised retirement fund by March 31, 2024. We know this didn't happen, and we've heard from doctors that they still have no details about this promised program. In the words of Doctors Nova Scotia: "If this was a misunderstanding, it's a fairly big one." The shortage of doctors, especially family doctors, is one of the key issues facing our health care system.

My question to the Premier is: Can the Premier explain to Nova Scotians why he broke his promise to family doctors when we need them so badly?

THE PREMIER: As a matter of fact, the agreement with Doctors Nova Scotia - with doctors - was ratified. You know what else? Do you know how many other agreements were ratified in this province since we've been government in just three short years? Two

hundred eighty-nine agreements - tough but fair - including agreements with doctors, nurses, paramedics, and teachers.

I could go on, but I just want to let this House know that we negotiate in good faith. We believe in the collective bargaining process, and that agreement was ratified because it was a good deal for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

AMH: MOTHERS GROUP MEETING - COMMIT

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, in the gallery are Nancy Saunders, Heather Spidell, and Cyndi Corbett. They are members of the Nova Scotia Moms for Compassionate, Collaborative Mental Health Care.

Last week, on September 10th, World Suicide Prevention Day, they joined us in the House to raise awareness about suicide and to advocate for important changes to our mental health system. The Minister of the Office of Addictions and Mental Health agreed to meet with these mothers. These mothers have let me know that they have not heard from the minister or the Premier to set up a meeting. My question to the minister or the Premier is: Could the minister or the Premier commit today to a meeting date?

HON. BRIAN COMER: The loss of a loved one, especially a child, is unimaginable. My condolences are certainly with the families. I did have the opportunity to meet with the members from this group on two occasions: once with the Minister of Community Services and once with the Premier. We certainly have offered to continue that dialogue with families, as we know this is a very important issue. We also have an obligation, as a government, to try to balance people's personal health information in a safe manner. That invitation certainly remains open to those families.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I am not sure if I heard any commitment. There were three bills that were introduced in the House . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I ask that the member speak through me.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I didn't hear from the minister's response that there is a commitment to a date, especially after three bills and really good information that was introduced here by the mothers. There were so many of them in the House, and they are just asking for a date to keep up this advocacy and to make a difference. My question to the minister and the Premier is: Can they commit to a date to meet with these mothers?

BRIAN COMER: As part of those conversations, we did extend the invitation to have a round table discussion with families, with clinicians, and with stakeholders across the province. To my knowledge, that invitation has not been answered. Certainly, we're

still willing to have a sit-down with the families and have conversations. I encourage them to reach out to me and to the government.

[2:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DHW: DOCTOR WAIT-LIST UPDATES - COMMIT

FRED TILLEY: Yesterday, the Premier didn't answer the Leader of the Official Opposition's question about why the doctor wait-list numbers are being hidden. It's been months since this data was available to Nova Scotians. It's important that Nova Scotians are able to understand the depth of our current health care crisis. I'll ask the Minister of Health and Wellness today: Will she commit to releasing the doctor wait-list numbers every month even if those numbers are being updated?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: As I've said before, we are undergoing a validation process. It is a very high-touch validation process. We are calling individuals, and it is a lengthy process. We are very committed to giving data to Nova Scotians. In fact, the Action for Health website has more data than has ever been shared with Nova Scotians about how the system is performing.

We release a number of updates, sometimes monthly, sometimes quarterly, sometimes annually. It depends on the metric. We'll continue to release information to Nova Scotians about how the system is performing, and when the validation is complete, we will release the numbers to Nova Scotians.

FRED TILLEY: These explanations are contradictory to what is being said by the bureaucracy. The Premier and the minister have said they're not going to release the numbers until they're finished going through them. However, last week, the interim president and CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority said that there could be progress reports while the department calls the people on the list. I'll table that. My question to the minister is: Will she commit to these progress reports?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We are in touch on a regular basis about the metrics that we're using to measure health care. The Need a Family Practice Registry is one of those metrics. The validation process is under way. There have been a number of phone calls made. I can't speak specifically about the information that the CEO has said that she will share. I can certainly check with her, but I will say that the validation process is under way to make sure that we better understand the needs of Nova Scotians in terms of their health care, whether or not some people are still attached, whether people have been attached and they're not taken off the list. This is a tedious process, there's no question, but it's very patient-centred, and I stand by the process. We will give information as soon as it's available.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

DHW: HEALTH CARE DATA - RELEASE

HON. KEITH IRVING: Speaker, it's not just the number of Nova Scotians without a family doctor that the Premier is hiding. All the data related to primary care, the number of Nova Scotians accessing virtual care, the number of Nova Scotians going to mobile clinics, even the number of Nova Scotians visiting the diabetes centre - all of this was last updated in May. I'll table what the dashboard looks like right now. What is the Premier hiding when he will not release these numbers?

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable Minister of Health and Wellness, I'd just like to say that we are very rambunctious in here today. We're finding colourful words, but eventually they will lead up to a very unparliamentary word. I ask that people stay above the boards.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: As I've said before, there's more data available than has ever been available before. Folks can go back and look at the previous day's performance in the health system, depending on what the metric is. We have a number of people who give us data around the care that they provide, and it comes in at different times. If you want to look at that, we have virtual care, we have primary care clinics, we have mobile clinics, we have urgent treatment centres, we have urgent care centres, we have primary care clinics. All of these 70,000 access points per month in our system feed in and tell us how our system is performing. I am sorry that sometimes it is a bit delayed, but I can assure you that those numbers are accurate and represent a transformed health care system.

KEITH IRVING: I would ask the minister to look at the document that I tabled in which every month data was provided to the diabetes clinic - except in May, it suddenly stops. I understand that the government is contacting people on the list. This does not impact the province releasing other primary care statistics, including how many Nova Scotians are using virtual care. These are statistics that the Premier and the minister usually like to highlight. My question to the minister is: Why can't Nova Scotians see them? When will she release them?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: As I've said before, there are metrics that go up on a daily basis. Some go up on a monthly basis, some go up on a quarterly basis, some go up on an annual basis. Sometimes, month to month, things don't change all that much.

Action for Health has a quarterly newsletter. I actually thought it went out last week, but I will double-check. Believe me, the successes of this government in health care are many, and we are not hiding them from Nova Scotians. We want them to know about

the care and the investment that we are making in infrastructure and in access to care for them. We are not hiding anything.

I can assure the member that I will hand-deliver any report that I have available to me about the statistics of the utilization of the health care system.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: JENNIFER BRADY - HELP

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The minister's department has been fighting Jennifer Brady in court for two years over a procedure that is covered by MSI. My question is: Why? Ms. Brady has debilitating lymphedema and there is no treatment currently available in Nova Scotia. The department is saying it won't cover out-of-province expenses without a specialist's referral made in the province, but no specialist exists here. Will the minister end this legal battle and allow Jennifer Brady to receive the care she needs?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I certainly know that this is a very difficult situation for Ms. Brady. This matter is before the courts, and I will not comment.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The matter is in the courts; it's also on national news as Ms. Brady has shared her story with the CBC. Without access to the care she needs, Ms. Brady applied for MAID earlier this year. The head clinician who reviewed her application found that it met all criteria except that the condition cannot be treated. There is treatment available. As the clinician told the minister's department in his letter: Your office can make that happen. We know it is within the minister's ability to help Ms. Brady and many others like her. Will she do that?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, I appreciate that this is a very difficult situation. Ms. Brady is free to share her personal health information. I, however, am not, and so I will not be able to comment any further on this situation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DHW: JENNIFER BRADY - CONTACT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I also saw the CBC interview, and I heard it this morning. I have to say that I was disappointed that the minister is unwilling to look into this issue with a 46-year-old mother who has actually applied for Medical Assistance in Dying because she cannot get the health care that she needs, and she is in excruciating pain. I want to ask the minister just a simple question: Has she has been in touch with Ms. Brady on this issue?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, this is information I'm certainly not going to share on the floor of the Legislature. This matter is between the Department of Health and Wellness and the individual. It is a matter for the courts, and I am not able or willing to comment publicly.

IAIN RANKIN: We're not asking for her to talk about personal health information, and I'm not going to talk about personal health information of other people who have accessed this care outside of province. Previous Ministers of Health and Wellness had authorized surgeries outside of this province.

The application to MAID is what caused the doctor to reach out to the minister's office to discuss her case. MSI requires a medical referral, and it seems to me that she has it. Will the minister use the authority that she has, based on significant clinical rationale as was used in the past, to help people in general in this situation?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: The members in the Chamber will know that there is a procedure that is available to all Nova Scotians if they are seeking care outside of Nova Scotia. That policy is there. If people do feel that the services they require are outside of the province, certainly they can work through their clinicians or they can contact the Department of Health and Wellness so that we can accompany them and make sure they have all the information they require. That policy has been long-standing. There has been no change to that policy. I cannot speak about individual cases.

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

DOJ: KEIRA'S LAW - COMMIT

LORELEI NICOLL: Yesterday, as you know, I introduced a resolution related to Keira's Law, which would give judges training when considering domestic violence as a factor in custody hearings. I was disappointed that members of the government refused to give the resolution unanimous consent. This law is named after Keira Kagan, a four-year-old child who lost her life to domestic violence. A similar law was adopted unanimously in the House of Commons. My question to the Minister of Justice is: Will she commit to passing Keira's Law?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: One of the things that everyone in this Legislature agrees on is that intimate partner violence and domestic violence are an epidemic. For the first time, our government, as well as the Opposition parties, recognized that formally in the Legislature. Certainly, as was evident from the Mass Casualty Commission recommendations, all levels of government need to do so. I hope that other levels of government follow our programs. In terms of the actions of our government in terms of domestic violence and intimate partner violence and all of the issues, there are a number of initiatives that we have undertaken. We'll all have more opportunity to talk about that in a minute.

LORELEI NICOLL: As we know, the more things change in this House, the more they seem to stay the same. To give the Premier some political history, back 17 years ago in 2007, the former MLA for Clayton Park introduced a bill to try to eliminate domestic violence. The PC government of the day did not adopt it after it had gone through Law Amendments. In the Spring, the former Minister of Justice had to resign after his comments on domestic violence - and yes, I'm tabling all of this. Just last week, the Premier hastily reversed course after opposing legislation to declare domestic violence as an epidemic. Now that the Minister of Justice acknowledges it's an epidemic, is it yes or no to passing Keira's Law?

BARBARA ADAMS: As all members of this Legislature know, when Opposition parties introduce legislation, the government of the day doesn't necessarily take that legislation and pass it right away, and I can think of a couple of examples - adoption disclosure legislation. There are other pieces of legislation that I introduced that the government of the day did not pass - the Liberal government - but in the next sitting or two of the Legislature, they took them, and they passed them. However, the recent events of last week - the Premier - who is more than willing to look at a situation and make a different decision based on new information - proudly supported the all-party passing of that legislation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

DHW: JAMES SKINNER CASE - INTERVENE

HON. KEITH IRVING: On the issue of Ms. Brady that the minister will not comment on, I have been working for 10 years with a constituent of mine named James Skinner, who has been desperately trying to get relief from a condition caused by a botched operation in 2011. He has been to Stanford. He's been to Vancouver. He needs a procedure, and he is continually denied by the Nova Scotia Health Authority and MSI to receive treatment that's very rare. He's one of five people who were studied in a Stanford study. Will the minister agree to look into this and resolve it?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: As I have said before, there certainly is a process that has been long-standing in the Department of Health and Wellness when people come forward with a variety of different treatments. There are a number of processes in place, and certainly some of the folks who served in Cabinet or as Ministers of Health and Wellness will understand. There is a very in-depth process in order to access treatments in Canada. It needs to be approved by the Canadian Drug Association, formerly known as CADTH. It needs to have an evidence base. It needs for clinicians to say that this is the expert pathway.

These are not arbitrary decisions that are made by the Department of Health and Wellness. The processes are there to guide us, to support us, and make sure that patients

are getting evidence-based care. And when there is a different model, we do our very best to accommodate patients, but we cannot do everything.

[2:30 p.m.]

KEITH IRVING: With all due respect to the minister, those procedures are failing Nova Scotians. Ten years my constituent has pleaded. He's gone to the press. He's gone to various ministers. I've written this letter in November of 2022. I hand-delivered it to the minister on April 3, 2023, in this Chamber. I hand-delivered it again to the minister on March 26th at 6:24 p.m. in this Chamber. My constituent got one call for information and never got a call back.

This is failing Nova Scotians. The minister has the power, as my colleague has indicated, to intervene. Will the minister intervene on these cases?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I think it is really important that those processes are in place. We don't rely on the judgment of politicians in this Chamber who are not qualified to decide whether or not things are appropriate or not.

We have experts in the department. We have experts in our Nova Scotia Health Authority. We have experts and evidence that emerges and helps guide our decisions. I know there are a number of emerging treatments. We are working very hard to stay on the edge of that. We are involved with Life Sciences Nova Scotia. We are involved with technology. We are doing the very best we can, but we need to ensure that the procedures that we send people for are evidence-based and will, in fact, help them. And there are some times when that cannot be proven. I know that is difficult, but these policies exist for a reason.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: BRADY APPLICATION DENIAL - EXPLAIN

SUSAN LEBLANC: Continuing with this conversation, the minister says that politics shouldn't come into play here, but there was a change to the Health Services and Insurance Act to give the minister discretion in these cases. In February 2023, following Jennifer Brady's advocacy with the department, the policy changed. It was quietly changed to allow referrals from other physicians at the minister's discretion.

Brady reapplied, hoping that these changes meant that a referral could be approved for future care, and yesterday that application was denied. The application could have been approved at the minister's discretion. My question is: Why is the minister standing in the way of this woman's care needs?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I appreciate the advocacy that is happening in the House. This is an individual case. The matter is before the courts, and I will not comment further on it.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, the matter is before the courts because this government is keeping it before the courts. They could settle it, and it would be out of the courts, and it could be over, and Jennifer Brady could have the care she needs. My question for the minister is: Despite recent media attention, Jennifer Brady's case has been on the minister's desk for over two years. Brady has corresponded over this time with both the minister's constituency assistant and the special advisor. Why hasn't the minister been looking for a path . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, I am not trying to be obtuse. There is a process in place for all Nova Scotians. There is a matter before the courts. It doesn't matter how many times I am asked, there is no way that I am going to disclose information on the floor of this Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DHW: HIGH OFF-LOAD TIMES - EXPLAIN

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, my question is around ambulance off-load times. In Cape Breton, at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital, the off-load time is 114 minutes. That's almost two hours that ambulances are waiting there, on average, to off-load patients. This is tying up resources and putting lives at risk. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Why are off-load times so high in Cape Breton? Why aren't Cape Bretoners getting the care they deserve?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Off-load times are something that we measure on a shift-to-shift, daily, and sometimes minute-to-minute basis, depending on the situation. We know that the system is interconnected. There would be a number of issues that would affect off-load times, up to and including staffing levels. It would include occupancy levels in the hospital. It would include a variety of different things.

In regard to Cape Bretoners getting care, we have invested millions of dollars into care for Cape Bretoners, and I certainly hope that is not the narrative that the member is promoting. We have invested in a PET scanner, we have invested in a cath lab, we have invested in physicians, and we have invested in a variety of different ways to make sure that Cape Bretoners have care closer to home.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The minister wasn't here in the last sitting, but her government . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Correct that. Thank you.

We stopped the clock, actually. As soon as I say “Order,” the clock stops. Well, it should have stopped. I don’t keep track of the clock. All right, will you please retract and rephrase what you said?

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Sure, I’m happy to retract. There was a miscommunication there. I’m talking about the last government when we made \$1 billion investment in health care infrastructure that the government of the day never supported. That’s true. The minister can go back and look at that.

Just to talk about the past: In January 2021, the average off-load time at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital was 32 minutes. It was 32 minutes back in 2001, and I would happily sit down and do a comparison on the primary care wait-list from those years compared to now. My question to the minister is: What is she going to do to help off-load times at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure the member that we are monitoring that. What have we done to improve off-load times? We have increased the number of nursing seats by 200. We have introduced EMRs - emergency medical responders. We have introduced a transfer plane that takes patients from Sydney and Yarmouth, putting over 10,000 hours of ground ambulance services back in. We are working with recruitment for physicians in Sydney and Cape Breton at large. There are a number of things we are doing. We have a medical school at the CBU that even the member opposite must have to clap for. I can assure the member opposite the care that is delivered at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital is top of mind, and we are focused on improving health care in Cape Breton.

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

DHW: NEUROLOGIST WAIT TIME - EXPLAIN

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Speaker, one of my constituents, Ms. MacDonald, wrote to me in June about a medical condition she is experiencing. She needs to see a neurologist. Unfortunately for Ms. MacDonald, she is being told that the wait time to see a neurologist in Nova Scotia is five years. My question to the minister is: Why does it currently take five years for Nova Scotians to see a neurologist, and why are wait times not listed on her department’s website?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Over the last number of years we’ve worked very hard to increase our specialty services in the province, not only in Central Zone but also across the province. One of the things we are doing is looking at where the referrals are coming from and working with our internal medicine and surgical teams in our rural hospitals so they are strengthened and rural physicians can then refer patients locally,

which will help take some of the pressure off our Central Zone specialists. There are a number of things that are happening. Recruitment continues to be a challenge. We know that we are competing globally, nationally, and amongst other provinces, but there are a number of initiatives under way, and the collective agreement that was settled with doctors is an excellent start.

PATRICIA ARAB: My office wrote to the minister in July, asking her specifically about Ms. MacDonald's case, and were given any information that we could give to her. It's been years that Ms. MacDonald has been experiencing symptoms, which have been escalating, and she needs to get a proper diagnosis and treatment. Nova Scotians can't wait five years. Will the minister commit to responding to Ms. MacDonald's letter forwarded to her office in July and taking action to improve neurological care in Nova Scotia?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I can't confirm whether that email was responded to or not. I will have to check, but if the individual wants to work with us directly, it will require that a consent is signed and forwarded to us so that we can look into the case more clearly. We are working very hard to make sure that people have access to the specialty services they need. One of the innovative ways we're doing that is through Virtual Hallway, so that physicians in their offices – GPs - can reach out to specialists to get support, physician to physician, in order to create care plans. There may be a number of innovative ways in which we can support the patient.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DOJ: NDA LAWS - CHANGE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Non-disclosure agreements are used in this province to silence victims of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual battery. NDAs empower criminals. NDAs silence victims and empower criminals to continue their cycle of abuse. It is wonderful to see a woman in a leadership role of justice in this province.

Through the Speaker, my question to the minister is: Will she make a commitment to change the laws of NDAs that continue to silence victims of sexual assault, battery, and abuse in this province?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I've been waiting for an opportunity to talk. This is such an important issue. What I can say to all the members of this House and to all victims of any type of intimate partner domestic violence is that there has been considerable work done across departments with the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. We have met with the Can't Buy My Silence organization. We have met with Unifor. We have met with our federal Minister of Justice. There are also another number of organizations that we've met with. We've reviewed all the legislation. I've also met with the Minister of Justice from P.E.I. as well as New Brunswick. I will have more to say about it in my supplementary.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question was very specific around the misuse of NDAs - non-disclosure agreements. What we've asked for in this Legislature, my colleagues and I here in Opposition, is for the laws to change in this province that continue to allow perpetrators the cycle of abuse. Those in the PC Party before the last election actually made a commitment to many people throughout this province that they would, in fact, change the laws allowing the misuse of NDAs in cases of sexual assault. My question, once again, is very specific to the Minister of Justice, who is a woman, whom I'm so proud to see in this leadership role: Will she help victims of sexual assault and change the laws around NDAs?

BARBARA ADAMS: What I can share with all Nova Scotians is that we have an FPT meeting of justice next month, and I have asked them to include this issue and this discussion in those discussions because, when I spoke to them, it isn't necessarily a national issue, but it needs to be recognized. The Uniform Law Conference of Canada has had a working group on NDAs, and I'm aware of the progress that they are partaking in, because we are aware of that process. We are hosting the Uniform Law Conference of Canada next August as well. I look forward to having more to update the House on once those sessions are completed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

RTA: FIXED-TERM LEASE LOOPHOLE - CLOSE

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. A community legal worker from the Dalhousie Legal Aid Service recently described fixed-term leases as a leading cause of rental instability and housing insecurity in this province. These leases have become the standard practice for landlords to evict renters and hike up the prices for the next tenant. Renters across this province are fearful that they will lose their home just because their landlord wants to get around the cap. My question to the minister is: Why does this government refuse to close the fixed-term lease loophole?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Of course, nobody in this Legislature wants to see Nova Scotians homeless. I spoke about that yesterday in debate. The fact is, and I have answered this question a number of times in the Legislature - about a housing crisis. We are in a housing crisis. We know that Nova Scotians need more choice, more choices of where and how they want to live. That's why we're creating the environment to build more supply. That is the solution to the housing crisis. We are making historic investments in housing in supportive, in affordable housing, in student housing - housing to support health care workers, removing the provincial portion of the HST on new builds, supporting skilled trades. We could go on. That is the absolute solution to the housing crisis. We're not stopping.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm glad the minister said he wanted to create an environment and a better system. We have a better system. It's sitting on the table. It's the rent control

system that has a robust number of options and safeguards and preventions and all of these things that are within that. The minister can make that choice.

[2:45 p.m.]

Chrissi Harper is a renter who has lived in Halifax for about 10 years. Next month, they will be forced to move out of this province because their fixed-term lease ended, and they can't find another home they can afford. Chrissi has worked hard to build a life in Nova Scotia and was looking forward to growing their family and putting down roots.

Speaker, what does this minister have to say to Nova Scotians like Chrissi who are being forced to leave this province because they cannot find housing they can afford?

COLTON LEBLANC: I will remind all members of the House and members of the NDP caucus that we do have a housing plan, a housing strategy. It's working. We're making those investments to support Nova Scotians. Speaker, do you know what housing activists said about the last NDP housing strategy? They said, and I quote: "The strategy completely misses the boat for people who are homeless or at risk of eviction," and that is not a strategy. The NDP didn't invest in public housing. We are. They didn't invest in affordable housing. We are. We're doing it right, and we're getting it done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DHW: DECEASED LEFT BY ROADSIDE - EXPLAIN

CARMAN KERR: Speaker, in recent months, a gentleman I know collapsed while taking a walk on a rural road in Annapolis. EHS was called to the scene, and they pronounced the gentleman deceased. After EHS left, family members remained with their family member for hours before funeral home workers arrived to transport the body. The deceased was covered, but in full view of several cars and passing traffic. Understandably, the family was quite upset by how long it took for their loved one to be transported from the scene. Does the minister believe that this is standard practice? If so, is it acceptable for a deceased person to remain in public view for hours before being transported?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: This sounds like a very difficult situation. I'm not familiar with it. I would have to double-check policies, but when someone is deceased when paramedics arrive, they typically would not transport that individual. It would be the medical examiner. I don't want to defer the question. I would have to find out more about it, but I do feel it sits under - I believe the Department of Justice with the medical examiner, but we're certainly happy to look into that for you.

CARMAN KERR: The minister just confirmed or acknowledged that she would double-check. More than double-checking and acknowledging that there are several groups

involved, I'm asking: Will the minister commit to a full review of policy, legislation, contracts - anything relating to handling a body in a public place?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, details about the individual would be the place where we would need to start to understand and interrogate the situation, the EHS call, et cetera, as well as the medical examiner follow-up. I can commit to looking into that case further and working with my colleagues in the Department of Justice to understand the process.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, as per our quick discussion, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRAD JOHNS: In the Speaker's Gallery today is my oldest daughter, Jenna Johns, and her friend Lydia Foster. Jenna and Lydia are both in their first year at Mount Saint Vincent University, and they're in the same political science class. They wanted to come here today to see the political process in action. I'd like to ask all members of the House to please give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. We sure hope you enjoyed your time here.

The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

KIM MASLAND: Joining us in the West Gallery today, we have two people joining us who are very special to me. We have Jamie Dawson and his son Lou Dawson, who is here visiting from Glasgow. Dr. Dawson is one of our new doctors whom we have recently attracted to Queens County. Jamie was my former CA and has now moved on to bigger and better things than working in my office.

I just want to say, Lou, welcome to the people's house. It's a pleasure to have you here. I know you have great love for Nova Scotia, for law, for politics, and I love the fact

that you follow all my social media. Thanks for putting those numbers up for me. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Speaker, permission to make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Speaker, in the East Gallery, we have two of the Dartmouth East constituency assistants, Emily Barnard and Lucie Richard. I ask my colleagues to please give a warm welcome to Emily and Lucie to the House of Assembly. (Applause)

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We'll have a short recess.

[3:11 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Nolan Young in the Chair.]

[4:25 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened with Speaker Danielle Barkhouse in the Chair.]

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

THE CLERK: The Committee of the Whole has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 467 - Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap Act (amended) and Residential Tenancies Act (amended).

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

Bill No. 471 - Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act.

Bill No. 476 - French-language Services Act (amended).

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

without amendments, and the Chair has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Address in Reply.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West. (Standing ovation)

MARCO MACLEOD: Speaker, one blistering cold morning when I was in Grade 9 or 10, I was in the kitchen at the farmhouse preparing my school lunch. Over the radio it was announced that due to school buses not being able to start in the cold temperatures, school was cancelled. All the kids in Pictou West rejoiced, except for those named Marco MacLeod, because with school being cancelled, it meant that I had to go work with my dad.

The work for the day involved going to a woodlot to repair a flat tire on a wagon. Having to take off our mitts to work on the tire, our fingers began to freeze. Once frozen, we jumped back in the truck to thaw our digits before repeating the cycle again and again until the job was done. There are many hard-working folks in Pictou West, and I am here on their behalf.

Many of us still work in traditional industries such as forestry, farming, and fishing. In recent years, the lobster fishery has been bountiful, and the owner-operator model has helped many families to do well. Now it is important for us to continue to support conservation in order to preserve this Maritime vocation.

I think we can all agree that we live in a beautiful province. Let's not forget who takes care of these landscapes. Forestry and farming have each had their own unique set of challenges. The Nova Scotia Loyal program is a great step forward to showcase what this province can offer. We need to bring consumers closer to producers. In forestry, there are a few projects that could potentially be on our horizon that could help us to manage our woodlots and our wood fibre responsibly. Farmers and foresters take care of our land, so we need to take care of them.

[4:30 p.m.]

Now, I could keep talking about the fine panoramas of this province, or I could just invite you to the beautiful Pictou waterfront to enjoy a cold beverage on a restaurant patio while viewing a gorgeous sunset. Pictou is the main town in the constituency, and it has seen a tremendous waterfront makeover. The recent developments include new restaurants, a cultural hub that also houses the library, a vendor village, museums, trail access, food trucks, and live music. This is all set around the historic Ship *Hector* - the *Hector* being a replica of the vessel that brought Scottish settlers to Nova Scotia, which gave Pictou the moniker "the birthplace of New Scotland."

Tourism doesn't stop at the town limits. Travel the shoreline and you will encounter Simpsons Beach, Waterside Beach Provincial Park, the Dragline, Toney River, MacDonalds Cove, Rushton Beach Provincial Park. I could go on and on. These are the best beaches in the province. I'd table that, but I think it's best kept a secret. With the warmest waters north of the Carolinas, these coastlines are worth the trip.

If you go inland, you'll find the Trans Canada Trail, the Greenhill Lookoff, Fitzpatrick Mountain, and the gentle rolling hills that make for a dreamy Sunday drive. You'll pass by the small businesses that keep our rural economy going - the small diners, the vegetable stands, the art galleries, the auto repair shops, the pizza shops, the hair salons.

It isn't easy to operate a small business, but I am encouraged by folks like my friend Smitty, who drove his welding truck back home from Alberta to start a metal fabrication shop in Pictou West. Why? Because it's a great place to raise a family.

I am encouraged when I think of my friend Kayla, who comes from a long line of strong women. Kayla and her mum now run three shops in downtown Pictou. Why? Because Pictou is home.

I am encouraged by businesses like Twin Rivers, who build mini homes and who keep investing in Pictou West and growing their business. Why? Because they see potential.

We also have world-class industry in Pictou West. We produce the best tires in the world right at home at Michelin Tire in Granton. Industry is important as it helps provide stable, well-paying jobs for Nova Scotians. But every industry or production facility has an expiry date. We need to make sure that big business keeps investing in new equipment and technology to keep pushing that expiry date further and further away.

The most valuable asset in Pictou West isn't the tires we build. It isn't the scallops we drag. It isn't the Airbnbs we rent out. It's the people. It's the hard-working, humble, and supportive people we have. It's those who volunteer, who keep our communities strong.

It isn't all hard work on the North Shore, as my Summer can attest. The River John Festival Days, the Pictou Lobster Carnival, and the Pictou-North Colchester Exhibition continue to see more and more people every year as they return to pre-COVID levels. These festivals are important to their respective communities as they offer a homecoming of sorts. They keep traditions such as the lobster-crate runs, bed races, and tug of war alive and well. There are also many community barbecues and breakfasts held at community halls that offer an opportunity to connect with friends and neighbours. They are staffed by volunteers: the women's auxiliaries, Lions Club, Rotary Club, 4-H. There are so many. But I can't say enough about our volunteer fire departments. Not only do they keep our community bonds strong but they keep our communities and our families safe.

I'm also excited to tell you, Speaker, about two grassroots projects happening right in my backyard. In Scotsburn, we have the Community Food Forest, where permaculture is practised and food is grown, free for the members of the community to collect, and where young children have the opportunity to get their hands dirty digging up root vegetables, while adults can attend workshops on preserving, fermenting and jamming.

In Meadowville, students can attend the Pictou County Forest School, an outdoor education organization that gets kids out of the classroom and into the woods, into canoes, into snowshoes, and into shelters. Lesson plans include photosynthesis, weather dynamics, learning to tie knots, and even analyzing fossils, but the real lessons teach resilience, confidence, and teamwork.

Pictou West is a rural riding. Folks are polite and tend to themselves, but we do like to stay connected. That means maintaining our roads. The Gravel Road Capital Program and the Rural Impact Mitigation Program are important to us. We need to keep them, and hopefully expand on them. These roads are part of our daily lives. They help to keep us connected to our friends and neighbours. These roads bring us to work, and for a lot of us, they are essential for our business.

Now, in the age of information, digital connectivity is just as important. The Cellular for Nova Scotia Program is a step in the right direction. We need to keep improving connectivity so that we can show the rest of the world what we have to offer.

Health care is a topic that came up on the doorsteps of Pictou West. Building a new medical school, common-sense credentialing, and digitalization of the system is a great launch pad to send our health care where it needs to go. This government has their foot on the gas pedal, and we cannot take it off. We need to keep pushing.

Speaker, my journey to Halifax didn't happen overnight. It took seven generations of farming MacLeod Meadows. Deux parents qui m'ont bien élevé, une famille qui m'aime. It took the best friends a fellow could ask for, an all-star campaign team, incredible campaign volunteers. It took a caucus that has made me feel right at home since Day 1 - strong leadership from the very top in my old pal Scotty MacKinnon.

I need to thank my dad too. He is 63 years old, and he takes care of 400 acres of fields and 500 acres of woods. He doesn't work on Sundays because my mom tells him not to. I didn't have time to help him for a single day this Summer. He never asked me to, and he never complained once. Thank you, Pops. To my little but mighty team at the constituency office, thank you. Thank you to Michelle and Sean for holding it down while I'm here in Halifax.

It really is an honour to be standing here. I am reminded of it every day as I walk past the statues and the portraits. We may not have great air conditioning in here, but we certainly have great history, great tradition, and a great foundation. I look forward to working with every single one of you. We may not always agree on priorities and solutions, but we are all here for the same reason - to represent our people, to represent Nova Scotians.

I'm especially excited to work with the under-40 crowd. Now, we aren't really young anymore, but we have what I call long-term perspective, and we need to be involved in the decision-making process because these decisions are going to affect us the longest. I have a lot of hope for Nova Scotia, and I have been really encouraged by the work that this government has done over the past few years. It's a big reason why I'm here today. I want to help get things done and to move this province forward.

A rising tide lifts all boats, and we have the highest tides in the world. This province has a lot to offer. It has a lot of potential. Let's harness that potential. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: It's an honour to address the House this evening. I learned a few hours ago that we're doing Address in Reply and that there might be an opportunity to say a few words. Not knowing when the next election is, this may be my last opportunity. I wanted to offer a few thoughts and reflections on my 11 years here and provide some

observations to the House that I hope might be of value as this Legislature continues with its important work for Nova Scotians.

The first topic I want to touch on was actually - I wrote some words for the House of Assembly Management Commission meeting that I attended a number of months ago with respect to our staff security and remuneration for our constituency offices to ensure that our staff are safe and that we are addressing the security issues today of what it's like to be a politician. I wrote those words, and I didn't have an opportunity because the meeting wrapped up before I got to them. I'm going to weave those into them.

Of course, this is a topic that cannot be spoken about on the floor of this House. These are going to be my words. My leader, my party, my party colleagues - none of them is aware that I am raising this issue before the House and asking for the House's consideration of a better path forward.

I don't believe that Nova Scotians are aware - or at least very few of them understand - that MLA offices have not had an increase in resources for more than a decade. A constituency budget in 2013 is now roughly worth 20 per cent less because of inflationary pressures. In the same period, rents for both MLAs' apartments and offices have dramatically increased, particularly in HRM.

Under the current situation, MLAs have not had a salary increase in 13 years. In fact, the current MLA's salary almost qualified for the home heating rebate last year afforded to Nova Scotians struggling with inflation. MPs - automatic increases each year; their salaries are now \$200,000. Councillors in HRM are now approaching, if not over, \$100,000. All have had increases over the last 10 years to address inflationary pressures. MLAs have not. Most outside members - and I'm not in that category - are now subsidizing their accommodations with after-tax money. I believe there's a gentleman across the floor who's probably, under my calculation, taking 10 per cent of his after-tax remuneration as an MLA to pay for his apartment that is not adequately subsidized.

Unbeknownst to many Nova Scotians is that we, as MLAs, have to cash-flow our offices. I looked at my reimbursement cheques last year - \$43,000 of reimbursement I cash-flowed with my \$53,000 of take-home pay.

As politicians, we tread so gingerly around conversations on compensation and resources to support our offices, to the extent that we had to debate and vote on partisan lines about the safety of our constituency assistants.

I don't believe we are doing a service to Nova Scotians when we - if we can't respect the work that we do, why would we expect Nova Scotians to respect our work?

When these conversations come up, parties love to pounce on the Opposition and try to get political wins about our compensation. No one wants to be voting in a raise and

get 5 or 10 per cent of people on Twitter saying, Oh my God, look what those guys are doing. We have a duty to the other 90 or 95 per cent of Nova Scotians who do value our work and understand that we put in long hours, we make significant sacrifices, and we love our work, but our families also make these sacrifices.

[4:45 p.m.]

In that conversation at the House of Assembly Management Commission, it was very discouraging to be using compensation arguments to question whether we can adequately protect our employees from safety threats.

I am not a particularly partisan politician. My energy goes into trying to find solutions to difficult issues, but when we get into compensation for MLAs, it has been the low-hanging fruit for partisan discussion, to try to get political advantage. It's us creating this situation for the future politicians and the future MLAs who will have the honour to sit in this House.

We need to be doing what we need to do to ensure that this province has the best politicians to produce the best governance that Nova Scotians deserve. We need to elect the best citizens of Nova Scotia with life experience, knowledge, and expertise to lead and to make difficult decisions in an increasingly complex world. The 55 politicians in this room are responsible for the prudent spending of \$16.5 billion of taxpayers' money.

I believe Nova Scotians want the best of the best to be sitting in this Chamber. To do that, we need to adequately compensate them, their families, and their heirs and successors. I have friends on this side of the House who have taken \$40,000 pay cuts to represent their community. I can imagine the conversation with the spouse when they heard the compensation for the job that they were applying to.

This job that we all have the honour and privilege to have, to occupy a seat for a period of time, should not be reserved for those with financial means, to work for low wages that do not reflect their skills or their responsibility. We cannot attract good people into political office at the same time you tell them that constituency office budgets are frozen. MLA compensation has been frozen for over a decade. By the way, you have to cash-flow your offices.

What's the path forward? Well, we could follow the laws that were put in place some 12 years ago or more that address this, that had citizens objectively - non-partisan - come up with a recommendation. That Bill, that law, also allows cost of living increases. Why not follow the laws that are on the books? Other provincial legislatures are stepping up on this issue: Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick. New Brunswick brought in their salary adjustment before this election, that I think was called yesterday or today, to try to disconnect them voting themselves a raise. That's something that the House may want to consider.

I want to move on now to the parts of the job that I have enjoyed: the casework, the helping people. Those have been extremely rewarding, sometimes frustrating. You can't solve all the problems. I've met some incredible people in my constituency. It's been a real honour to have that privilege that gives me contact with so, so many people. I have enjoyed in particular my time in Treasury and Policy Board that Premier McNeil gave me the opportunity to serve on for four years. I felt it was meaningful work and that I was able to make a significant contribution at the table.

I also enjoyed my 145 days as the first Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I want to thank the former Premier and the member from Timberlea-Prospect for that honour. I'd like to thank all the staff in the civil service, those who got halfway to briefing their Minister of Environment and Climate Change before an election was called. I also want to thank my colleagues in the House. I have many good friends here. (Applause)

Now I want to come to the legislative part of this job. To stand in this House - Joseph Howe over there, a few other important people on the wall - yes, it's been an honour and a privilege. Am I proud to have served in this Chamber? Absolutely. Is it a good use of my time? Not so much. Anyway, the days I have to contribute to that seem to be getting shorter and shorter each year.

I want to touch on a few things that I think the House really needs to give some thought to on how we can make this place work better and how we can make democracy work better. I've spoken about democracy in this House and, unfortunately, it's in a debate, so I got the usual comeback of: "Well, you did this back then. You were part of a party." If every government comes in and gets a little worse than the next government on the justification that the last government did bad things, we are in a race to the bottom.

There are problems in how this place works. Question Period - I think Nova Scotians would like a few more answers than questions. I don't know how to solve that one. I've been on both sides of the House. Some ministers are better than others. I think in my observation, the ministers who know their files, who do the hard work, are the ministers who can answer those questions and defend the actions of the government. I encourage all of us to find ways to get the questions that Nova Scotians want asked and the answers answered. I think Nova Scotians deserve that, and I think, I do honestly believe that that's why this Chamber was created.

There is a problem that we can't solve, I think, here in this Chamber but I think is a concern right across this country, and that's the centralization in the Prime Minister's Office and Premier's Office. I think we feel it. I certainly felt it when I was in government. I seem to see it elsewhere. It is a problem, and pundits and watchers of democracy have commented on this for years. I don't have an answer for that, other than the only way to take power out of that central office is by the members of the Legislature, and political parties electing leaders who want to govern in a different way.

I want to comment now on how legislation moves through this House. It needs a complete revamp. I've watched for 11 years from both sides of this House how poorly we move legislation through this House. All three parties do this. They present their amendments for bills - presumably all of them people believe are good suggestions to make changes in legislation - and we present them at the last minute asking the other parties to pile on and support. It doesn't make a lot of sense. How do you make good decisions about a piece of legislation, an amendment, from whatever party in this House, when five or six pages are dropped on our desks with a stack of 14 other amendments, and as legislators we're supposed to serve our constituents, put our knowledge or wisdom, things that we've learned, to work by reviewing those amendments and do our job for which we're underpaid? That needs to change.

[5:00 p.m.]

Rushing bills through the House needs to change. I've watched this get worse and worse over 11 years. When I began in 2013, the word was six weeks in the Fall, eight weeks in the Spring when we're doing budgets; 16, 18, 25 pieces of legislation. Now we're going through Estimates and sitting in the House in 12 days. I think this will be another 12-day sitting. Sorry - 10 days. Why are we doing this? We all know. The governing party does not feel that they want to answer any more questions in the House. Something can happen on the street. Get in and out. Get back to governing. That's not what this House is for.

It's not what Nova Scotians are asking us to do. We need to find a better way to bring legislation through this House and to improve it on the floor of this House for the good of Nova Scotians, not for political credit. We're not serving Nova Scotians by just worrying about the party and what the next election is going to be.

Omnibus bills: I've spoken of this in the House. It didn't really appear, I think, until last year, which was our first omnibus bill. There might have been one under our government. I can't remember. I've spoken to how undemocratic it is to take six pieces of legislation - a 110-page piece of legislation went through Law Amendments Committee moments ago without a whiff of conversation.

As I pointed out on the first omnibus bill when I spoke - touching 8 or 10 different ministries, and none of the ministers, other than the minister who brought forward the legislation, spoke to the bill. Then each and every one of us had to vote on one bill, not the individual bills. If I was for something and against something, I couldn't distinguish those votes for my constituents. That's why I believe they are undemocratic, and the only reason they are being brought in is to get out of the House quicker.

Nova Scotians, I believe, deserve better. I believe the people in this room know what I'm speaking about. I think the people in this room do have the ability to make change. Yes, it's frustrating being in Opposition, and you do really see the weaknesses of the system

more in Opposition than you do when you're on the government side of the House. I've had the benefit of being on both sides. We need to have thoughtful debates about the issues of Nova Scotians. We need to have mature conversations about these issues and how to make legislation and laws for Nova Scotians better.

One thing I did do when I was on the government side of the House is I resisted having a speech put in my hand and read. I didn't speak that well, but I wanted to use my own words. I think that is important - that every one of us, when we're representing our citizens, are speaking our words, not the words by a caucus staff person or by a civil servant. We need to be here genuinely speaking on what we believe.

So what do we do? My wife would always say, "Don't come with problems without solutions." I don't know, given I only had a couple of hours to think about this, what we do. We can hope that we can elect leaders in three parties who can work well together, who aren't focused on putting their political fortunes ahead of Nova Scotians and make changes in how this House is governed. It's always tough to get three cherries to come up at the same time. Hope is not necessarily a plan.

In my brief thinking about this, I do believe perhaps the way forward is to create a citizens' group to review how this Legislature functions with the goal of improving the workings of this House for the people of Nova Scotia - not for us as politicians but for the people that we have the honour and the privilege to serve.

I have tried not to make this speech criticizing any individuals or individual leaders or any parties. You can judge that for what it may. This is not about any one person in this House; it's about how we together are working as a group of 55 elected officials.

When we have the honour and the privilege to sit in this House - this 205-year-old, beautiful building, the seat of responsible government in Canada - we should do everything in our power to ensure that it works for Nova Scotians.

As a wrap-up here, I want to thank, first of all, all of my constituents. As I said earlier, I met some remarkable people in Kings South. It is one of the richest and most vital areas of Nova Scotia. I feel very proud to live there and work with the citizens of Kings South and to represent them. I want to thank my EDA, and particularly my riding association president, Bob Prange, and so many others I can't name them all. There's only an hour left for this speech.

Again, I want to thank my former Premier, the member for Timberlea-Prospect, for his leadership. He deserved far more than 145 days to govern this province. I thank our leader, the member for Yarmouth, and my caucus colleagues for being such good friends and support through this journey.

I remember Chris d'Entremont saying it's so hard to talk about your family. I want to thank my wife, Katherine Trumper. None of you know how important she has been in how I have been as an MLA. She's a highly skilled woman. I think her Inuktitut name back in Pangnirtung is something like "the woman with good ideas." She's ready for me to come home.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve the people of Kings South. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I move to adjourn debate on Address in Reply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on the Address in Reply. Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Friday, September 20th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Government business will include third reading of Bill Nos. 476, 471, 467, 487, 468, and 455. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on September 20th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until Friday, September 20th.

[The House rose at 5:11 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1,198**

By: Hon. Barbara Adams (Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas 38 percent of Nova Scotians self-identify as having one or more disabilities; and

Whereas the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage provided funding to the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors to launch the first multiple listing service system in Canada that includes mandatory information to help prospective homebuyers determine the accessibility and adaptability of a home to meet their needs; and

Whereas the Accessibility Act recognizes accessibility as a human right and sets a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030 by working together;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors for their leadership and commitment to accessibility and a more inclusive Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,199

By: Hon. Barbara Adams (Eastern Passage)

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

Whereas for 25 years, Nova Scotia has been a leader in promoting a restorative approach to justice through the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program; and

Whereas restorative justice represents a holistic and human-centered approach to acknowledging responsibility, repairing individual and collective harm, and fostering community health and well-being after a criminal offence; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program is rooted in community and delivered through a partnership between the Department of Justice and eight community-based restorative justice agencies, including the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network that

provides Mi'kmaw and Indigenous communities access to culturally appropriate justice services;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the eight community-based restorative justice agencies, Department of Justice staff, and other justice partners for their leadership and commitment to supporting an alternative justice pathway and advancing justice transformation in Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,200

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas Derek Lesser of Yarmouth is always looking for ways he can help others; and

Whereas Derek has organized GoFundMe initiatives which have been a huge help for people in our community; and

Whereas Derek organizes, collects, and delivers donations of food and other household items to those in need;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Derek Lesser for always trying to find ways to help others and for inspiring many in our community to do the same.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,201

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas Yarmouth's Mike Wedge founded the non-profit Acts of Kindness, which provides free meals to our community; and

Whereas Mike also goes out of his way to assist those in our community not only with food insecurity but also with housing and other basic needs; and

Whereas Acts of Kindness has installed free food pantries throughout Yarmouth County, allowing those in need to access food items 24 hours a day, seven days a week;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Mike Wedge and Acts of Kindness for always looking out for those in need in our community and inspiring so many others to do the same.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,202

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas Yarmouth's Steve Berry is one of our community's hardest-working volunteers; and

Whereas Steve started Yarmouth's Good Grub Group and he and his team of dedicated volunteers have prepared and delivered many free meals for our community over the last several years; and

Whereas Steve is a student support worker at Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School and the Town of Yarmouth's Deputy Mayor, and is also an active volunteer with the J-Strong Foundation.

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Yarmouth's Steve Berry for his many years of service to our community. His dedication has helped countless people in our community and has also inspired others to volunteer and help those in need.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,203

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas Justin Surette tragically passed away in January 2024 at the age of 21 from an accidental overdose from the wrong combination of pills; and

Whereas Justin's mother, Tina Comeau-Surette, and his brother, Jacob Surette, recently released their film project *No Family Is Immune*, a deeply moving film detailing Justin's courageous battle with addiction; and

Whereas since its release, the film has been viewed several hundred thousand times;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Tina Comeau-Surette and Jacob Surette for making *No Family Is Immune* and sharing Justin's story, which will help other families battling with addiction, and for bringing awareness that even with all the love and support in the world addiction can still happen to anyone.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,204

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 Greg Tanner of East Dover left the military after breaking his back in 2012, was diagnosed with PTSD three years later, and had trouble walking and struggled with his day-to-day life, but Paws Fur Thought, a non-profit organization that pairs veterans with service dogs, helped him find a loyal Labrador Retriever named Barret in November 2022; and

Whereas Greg wrote an autobiography called *First In, Last Out* documenting his 34-year career in the Canadian Engineers, and the post-release struggles with injury pain, depression, and PTSD; and

Whereas the two years of steady positive reintegration into life was almost destroyed by a vicious and unprovoked attack by a dog at large on both Greg and Barret and what mental traumas they endured to navigating back to where they once were;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Greg for the release of his book, for continuing his advocacy to strengthen by-laws related to dog attacks, and for being a trusted active member of the East Dover community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,205

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 Simon Pont of Brookside started his journey in photography over 40 years ago when he first picked up a camera and started capturing images of the world around him, learning through experimentation and by listening to and learning from others, using a passion for travel to find new subjects and scenes to share; and

Whereas his father, a watercolour painter, has been an influence in his work and taught him the importance of taking time to “see” a scene and create compositions that capture the moment, leading to Simon spending time sitting and absorbing the surroundings before using a camera to create images and art; and

Whereas Simon is a photographer who specializes in using only light that is naturally available, capturing landscapes, coastlines, wildlife, and nature photography notably in the Prospect communities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Simon for creating natural light photography and thanking him for creating unique and memorable images, capturing the truest essence of the moment.