



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Danielle Barkhouse

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First Session

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Gov't. (N.S.): Eviction of Low-Income Seniors - Ban, G. Burrill	9411
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Article: "Drug plan will start on schedule, says Hare," Hon. B. Adams	9412
2023-2024 Annual Report of the N.S. Crop and Livestock Ins. Commission, Hon. G. Morrow	9412
2024 Glace Bay Housing Survey: Initial Results, K. Coombes	9412
Progress Report on French-language Services 2023-24, Hon. C. LeBlanc	9412
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
Halloween: Celebration - Recog., Hon. A. MacMaster	9413
Hon. I. Rankin	9415
S. Leblanc	9416

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 1,206, HMCS <i>Kootenay</i> Disaster: 55 th Anniv. - Recog., The Premier.....	9417
Vote - Affirmative.....	9418
Res. 1,207, Hare, Jack: Contrib. to Seniors' Health - Recog., Hon. B. Adams.....	9419
Vote - Affirmative.....	9419
Res. 1,208, Budget Estimates: Tabled - Recog., Hon. A. MacMaster.....	9419
Res. 1,209, Notices of Motion Under Rule 32(3) - Approve, Hon. K. Masland.....	9420
Vote - Affirmative.....	9420
Res. 1,210, 4-H Prov. Show: Benefits - Recog., Hon. G. Morrow.....	9420
Vote - Affirmative.....	9421

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:

No. 500, Steve Estey Act, S. Leblanc	9422
No. 501, Basic Income Program Feasibility Act, K. Coombes.....	9422

NOTICES OF MOTION:

Res. 1,211, N.S. Poverty Rate: Need for Action - Recog., G. Burrill.....	9422
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STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:

Cole Hbr. Rockets Assoc.: Skill Devt. - Recog., Hon. T. Halman.....	9423
SMU Team: Enactus World Cup Expos. - Recog., L. Lachance.....	9425
Avon 4-H Club: 100 th Anniv. - Congrats., M. Sheehy-Richard	9426
MacKenzie-Power, Allison: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. P. Arab	9427
Martell, Pamela: Com. Serv. - Thanks, S. Leblanc	9428
Leg. Staff: Assistance - Thanks, L. Harrison	9428
Leg. Staff: Assistance - Thanks, L. Nicoll	9429
Mulla, Sarah: Nichols Awd. Recip. - Recog., S. Leblanc	9430
Father, Jim - Birthday Wishes, Hon. B. Johns.....	9431
Nnaji, Boma: Com. Serv. - Congrats., L. Nicoll	9431
Housing Survey: Results - Recog., K. Coombes.....	9432

Grant, Ashley: Hfx. Com. Votes Awd. - Congrats., Hon. T. Grosse	9432
Vols.: Wildfire Preparedness Work - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	9433
ICCA: Festa Italiana - Thanks, S. Hansen	9434
Havre Boucher & Dist. VFD: 50 th Anniv. - Congrats., Hon. G. Morrow.....	9434
Staff: Keshen Goodman Lib. Renov. - Recog., R. DiCostanzo	9435
CCPA Report: Low N.S. Wages - Recog., G. Burrill.....	9435
Matchem, Tyler: Rugby Accomplishments - Recog., M. MacLeod.....	9436
Members of Leg.: Work - Recog., Hon. D. Mombourquette	9437
Leg. Staff: Assistance - Thanks, C. Chender	9437
Weymouth: Canada Day Celebrations - Thanks, Hon. J. Balsler.....	9437
White, Gerald: Death of - Tribute, Hon. T. Ince	9438
MLA for Bedford Basin: Service - Thanks, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	9438
Schwartz, Maxine Victoria: 95 th Birthday - Congrats., L. Lachance.....	9439
Wedgeport Tuna Tourn. & Fest.: 20 th Anniv. - Recog., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9439
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 1,743, Prem.: High Rent Cap - Explain, Hon. Z. Churchill	9440
No. 1,744, Prem.: Fixed-Term Leases - Regulate, C. Chender	9442
No. 1,745, RTA: Rent Cap Number Source - Divulge, Hon. Z. Churchill	9443
No. 1,746, MAH: Hfx. Exhib. Pk. Devt. - Commit, Hon. I. Rankin.....	9444
No. 1,747, DHW: Cape Breton ER Wait Times - Improve, F. Tilley.....	9445
No. 1,748, DHW: Travel Nurse Pgm. Plan - Commit, S. Leblanc	9447
No. 1,749, EECD: New School in Clayton Park - Build, Hon. P. Arab	9447
No. 1,750, DPW: Hwy. No. 101 Section Work - Update, R. LeBlanc	9449
No. 1,751, DCS: Pallet Shelter Project - Communicate,	

R. DiCostanzo.....	9449
No. 1,752, MAH: Community Benefit Agreements - Allow, S. Hansen	9451
No. 1,753, DPW: Bedford Ferry Status - Update, Hon. K. Regan.....	9452
No. 1,754, NRR: Baille Ard Trail Status - Update, Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	9452
No. 1,755, FTB: Basic Personal Tax Exemption - Increase, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	9453
No. 1,756, DCS: More on Red. Income Assistance - Explain, K. Coombes.....	9454
No. 1,757, EECD: New School Builds Holdup - Explain, B. Clark.....	9456
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 469, Hunter Church Building Fund, An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the (amended), Hon. K. Masland.....	9457
G. Burrill.....	9457
Hon. K. Masland.....	9457
Vote - Affirmative.....	9458
No. 487, Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre Continuation Act, C. Palmer.....	9458
Vote - Affirmative.....	9459
PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 467, Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap Act (amended) and Residential Tenancies Act (amended) Hon. C. LeBlanc	9459
B. Clark.....	9462
G. Burrill.....	9463
K. Coombes.....	9464
L. Lachance.....	9465
S. Hansen	9468
S. Leblanc	9471
Hon. K. Regan.....	9472
C. Chender	9474
Hon. C. LeBlanc	9476
Vote - Affirmative.....	9479
No. 471, Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act, Hon. T. Rushton.....	9480
R. LeBlanc	9482
L. Lachance.....	9483
G. Burrill.....	9486
Hon. T. Rushton.....	9487
Vote - Affirmative.....	9487
No. 476, French-language Services Act (amended),	

Hon. C. LeBlanc	9487
R. LeBlanc	9488
L. Lachance.....	9490
Hon. C. LeBlanc	9491
Vote - Affirmative.....	9492
No. 455, Emergency Management, An Act to Establish a Department of, and Authorize the Establishment of a Nova Scotia Guard Act,	
Hon. J. Lohr	9492
Hon. B. Jessome.....	9494
K. Coombes.....	9498
M. Sheehy-Richard	9499
L. Nicoll	9500
J. White	9502
Hon. J. Lohr	9506
Vote - Affirmative.....	9509
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:	
ADDRESS IN REPLY:	
Hon. T. Grosse	9509
Hon. K. Regan.....	9513
Hon. T. Rushton.....	9516
ARRIVAL OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR.....	9516
BILLS GIVEN ROYAL ASSENT:	
Nos. 455, 459, 464, 467, 469, 471, 476, 482, 487	9517
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again at the call of the Speaker	9518
NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):	
Res. 1,212, Comité des Aînés: Cérém. du patrimoine - Recon., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9519
Res. 1,213, Comité des Aînés : Heritage Ceremonies - Recog., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9519
Res. 1,214, Saulnier, Paul: King Charles Cor. Medal - Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9520
Res. 1,215, Organizers: Wedgeport Tuna Tourn. & Fest. - Thanks, Hon. C. LeBlanc	9520
Res. 1,216, Mullen, Alannah/d'Eon, Riley: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9521
Res. 1,217, Muise, Jasmine and Steven: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9521
Res. 1,218, Beazer, Kanzie and Mike: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9522
Res. 1,219, Cleveland, Selina and Bronson: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9522
Res. 1,220, Ivany, Sydney and Sebastian: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9523
Res. 1,221, MacDonald, Bill: Sackville Community Contribs. - Thanks, Hon. C. LeBlanc	9523

Res. 1,222, Freedom Kitchen: Community Contribs. - Thanks, Hon. C. LeBlanc	9524
Res. 1,223, RCL Ladies Aux.: Lr. Sack. Com. Contribs. - Thanks, Hon. C. LeBlanc	9524
Res. 1,224, Braye, Elaine - Maj.: Lr. Sack. Com. Contribs. - Thanks, Hon. C. LeBlanc	9525
Res. 1,225, Sackville Rotary Club: Recycle Your Cycle Prog. - Recog., Hon. C. LeBlanc	9525
Res. 1,226, Khoury, Roy: Roy's Restaurant - Recog., Hon. S. Craig.....	9526
Res. 1,227, Inductees: Sackville Sports Her. Fdn. - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	9526
Res. 1,228, Webb, Brady: World Piping Comp. Winner - Congrats., Hon. T. Houston.....	9527
Res. 1,229, Maynard, Elijah: Basketball Success - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	9527
Res. 1,230, Armstrong, Hannah: Art Career Success - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	9528
Res. 1,231, Forrest, Nathan: Harmony Ball Park Repairs - Thanks, Hon. K. Masland.....	9529
Res. 1,232, Liverpool Int'l. Theatre Festival: 16 th Annual - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	9529
Res. 1,233, Mersey Seafoods Ltd.: 60 th Anniv. - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	9530
Res. 1,234, Fralic, Michael: CWF Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	9530
Res. 1,235, Freeman, Richard: Brigadoon Village Fundraiser - Thanks, Hon. K. Masland.....	9531
Res. 1,236, Mansfield, Tiffany: Slo-pitch Ch'ship Medal - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	9531
Res. 1,237, Thibault, Dorian: Karate Ch'ship Medal - Congrats., R. LeBlanc	9532
Res. 1,238, MacKenzie-Power, Allison: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. P. Arab	9532
Res. 1,239, Nadeau, Beckett: Com. Serv. - Congrats, Hon. P. Arab	9533
Res. 1,240, Care and Fun Child Care: 12 th Anniv. - Thanks, Hon. P. Arab	9534
Res. 1,241, Peters, Carol: Death of - Tribute, Hon. P. Arab	9534
Res. 1,242, Winchester, C./Langille, H.: Citrus Shack - Congrats., Hon. P. Arab	9535
Res. 1,243, Fairview Resource Ctr.: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. P. Arab	9536
Res. 1,244, Fairview United Church: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	9536

Res. 1,245, Beasy, Jason: Chief Scout Awd. - Congrats., Hon. P. Arab	9537
Res. 1,246, Salomon, Michaela: Dance World Cup - Congrats., Hon. P. Arab	9537
Res. 1,247, Samuel, N. & H.: Fairview Fam. Days - Thanks, Hon. P. Arab	9538
Res. 1,248, Kenny, Sister Nuala: King Charles III Cor. Medal - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	9539
Res. 1,249, Age of Sail Museum: 30 th Anniv. - Congrats., Hon. T. Rushton.....	9539
Res. 1,250, Wentworth VFD: 50 th Anniv. - Congrats., Hon. T. Rushton.....	9540
Res. 1,251, Atkinson, Sylvester: Middleton Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9540
Res. 1,252, Clarke, Don: Berwick Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9541
Res. 1,253, Cleveland, Ben: Digby Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9541
Res. 1,254, Devenne, David: Mahone Bay Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9542
Res. 1,255, Hussher, Donald: Trenton Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9542
Res. 1,256, Lloy, George: Stewiacke Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9542
Res. 1,257, Locke, Harold: Shelburne Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9543
Res. 1,258, MacGillvray, Danny: Stellarton Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9543
Res. 1,259, Mills, Bill: Truro Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9544
Res. 1,260, Smith, Carl "Chook": Death of - Tribute, M. Sheehy-Richard	9544
Res. 1,261, Boucher, Laurie: Antigonish Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9545
Res. 1,262, MacDougall-Merrill, Amanda; CBRM Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9545
Res. 1,263, Muttart, Peter: Mun. of Kings County Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9546
Res. 1,264, Norman, Darlene: Region of Queens Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9546
Res. 1,265, Savage, Mike: HRM Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9547
Res. 1,266, Scott, Murray: Mun. of Cumb. Co. Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9547
Res. 1,267, Snow, Sandra: Kentville Mayor - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9548

Res. 1,268, Morrison: Mun. of Annap. Co. Warden - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9548
Res. 1,269, Morrison, Bruce: Mun. of Victoria Warden - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9548
Res. 1,270, Muise, Danny: Mun. of Argyle Warden - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9549
Res. 1,271, McCarron, Owen: Mun. of Antig. Co. Warden - Thanks, Hon. J. Lohr	9549
Res. 1,272, Gregory, Michael: Tat. Mun. Councillor - Thanks, T. Taggart.....	9550



HALIFAX, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2024

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Danielle Barkhouse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Lisa Lachance, Nolan Young

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition. The operative clause reads as follows:

Whereas over one-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 wait-list for public housing, with an average wait time of two years;

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

This petition has been signed by a number of residents of Halifax Chebucto and elsewhere in the province, and I have affixed my name.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Speaker, I beg leave to table a document that I'll be referring to in my Notice of Motion.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. GREG MORROW: Speaker, I beg leave to table the 2023-2024 Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission Annual Report.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I beg leave to table the 2024 Glace Bay Housing Survey: Initial Results relative to my Member Statement later.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Je désire déposer un rapport d'étape, le rapport d'étape 2023-24 Services en français offerts par le gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Speaker, I beg leave to table a progress report on French-language services provided by the Government of Nova Scotia, 2023-2024.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Oidhche Shamhna, the night of October 31st - or as you know it, Halloween.

The celebration of Halloween is rooted in the Gaelic tradition of Samhain. Samhain marked the end of the harvest and the beginning of Winter. It was also a time when pre-Christian beliefs held that the boundary between this world and the next was close at hand. The spirits were close.

Fifteen hundred years ago, Christianity was brought by people like Saint Patrick to Ireland and Colum Cille or Saint Columba to Scotland. We have Iona here in Cape Breton, which is named after the same place whereupon he founded his monastery in the kingdom of Dalriada, which became the Gaelic-speaking Kingdom of Alba, for which our own province is named: Alba Nuadh or New Scotland.

These saints needed to find a connection with the people with whom they were sharing the story of Christ. For the early Christians, Samhain was an opportunity to extend what the Gaels already believed to Christian belief in the afterlife. It is why we see All Saints' Day celebrated on November 1st and All Souls' Day celebrated on November 2nd, just after Samhain.

It is why I grew up in a largely Christian community but listened to my own grandmother and other Gaelic speakers explain to me the nature of the supernatural and what I could expect from it. One of my last memories of her was lying on the couch, sick at home from school, as she sat there with me and told me of her own experiences. In Gaelic culture, there's strong faith and belief in Christianity and a strong belief in the supernatural - in things second sight, forerunners, and ghosts or bocain.

While we likely won't be sitting here in this Legislature on October 31st, we must not miss this opportunity to recognize this day for the Gaels and for everyone else who celebrates it.

Last year, I spoke about the Devil and the many forms and ways and reasons why he might come for someone. A significant example I referenced could not include details out of respect for the family who experienced it, and because there are people living in that house. What better stories to tell you this year than ones I've experienced myself? Thankfully, I've never seen the Devil, although there have been a few moments here in this Chamber where I felt like I was crawling through the very bowels of hell. (Laughter)

There was one time pedalling home on my bike from the store with a bag of treats, getting ready to watch some playoff hockey on TV, that I could swear I heard the Devil laughing at me as I passed the graveyard. On a night a few nights later, walking with my father, I was lucky enough to discover that it was just a frog that I had never heard before. It was not the Devil. But sometimes there is no explanation.

Coincidence: Are all things that happen that are unlikely simply coincidence? I have a couple of personal stories. Three years ago on Saint Patrick's Day, an important day for the Gaels, my son was born. As I was sitting outside the operating room waiting to go in, I was thinking, "This is an important moment, a special moment in my life," and I started to think about my father. I wondered: "I wonder if he's aware of this or if he's even here with me." Beep. Within 30 seconds, my phone had beeped, and I received a text message from my stepfather-in-law, Bill, and he said, "Hey, your father's name is on the cover of the paper today." What do you think? In that moment, is that just coincidence, or was my father somehow sending me a message that he was there with me?

Another one: the night my father died. I was driving home from Halifax to see him one last time before they would take him away. Normally, I would have the radio on listening to the music all the way home, but that night, I didn't feel it was a night to be listening to music. For some reason at one point, I did turn on the radio, and it was a little staticky where I was. It was near New Glasgow - it was probably a Halifax station that was starting to run out - and what song was on the radio but Paul Carrack's "Don't Shed a Tear." What was the next song? "Blinded by the Light" by Manfred Mann.

Is that a coincidence? Was my father trying to speak to me through the music? I turned the radio off, and I continued home. Maybe we look for these things, but I can tell you that night, I wasn't looking for it.

A few weeks back, on the 10th anniversary of his death, I happened to be in Lunenburg at a restaurant. Faintly in the background, what did I hear but the song "Blinded by the Light"? Kind of strange, unexplainable by me.

I have one more for you. Surely, we are not just "planted in the ground," as my good friend Cyril Reddy used to joke. He himself, the last time I saw him, was part of a strange occurrence. I would have to say no one has had such an influence on me in the world of politics than he. He worked at Community Services for many, many years. He actually served five terms as president of the Nova Scotia Government Employees Association, which later became the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union. I knew him as John Hamm's right-hand man.

He imprinted such wonderful sayings on my mind as: "Where you stand depends on where you sit."; "He'd haunt a house for 50 cents," to refer to somebody who had narrow perspective; "He'd sneak into a free show and charge you for the popcorn," referring to somebody who was maybe not above-board. As you can tell, Cyril had a great sense of humour.

As you can expect in politics, sometimes things would go wrong and he might say that "you'd end up being the proud owner of both pieces," referring to the fact that you just landed home from the auction, and what you got is actually broken. He used to say something about going up the ladder and suggesting one "had to be careful because it can

be awfully slippery on the way back down.” There are many more, but some of them may be deemed unparliamentary.

The last time I saw Cyril, we were in a meeting full of people, and as we approached the end of the meeting, the man to my right was speaking. As he was, I looked at his forehead and I said, “Death.” I said that in my mind; I didn’t say it out loud. I thought, “That’s a strange thing to think about,” and I felt bad about it.

[9:15 a.m.]

As the meeting concluded, Cyril and I and that man and another man who was with us in the elevator going down - and this time I looked at that other man. I looked at the back of his head, and I said, “Death,” in my mind again. I couldn’t really understand it.

That would be the last time I’d see Cyril because a few days later he died of a brain aneurysm. I can’t explain why that happened. All I can say is that Cyril was somebody who was very important in my life. He meant a lot to me, and that was the last time I got to see him. Maybe it was some premonition of what was about to happen, but I couldn’t understand it in the moment.

With that - not on a sad note. It’s about 20 years since Cyril passed, and 10 years since my father passed. I believe they’re still out there somewhere. I would say, Speaker, as we approach Halloween: Remember those who have passed on All Souls Day, and the hallowed who have passed on All Saints Day. Remember that we are close to the spirit world on Oidhche Shamhna.

With that, Beannachdan na Samhna oirbh uile. Happy Halloween to all of you.
(Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Always a challenge to follow up the Master of Halloween.

I’m going to go national today. I want to introduce the House to one of the most haunted places in all of Canada - true story.

A 19-year-old law student came to Niagara Falls in 1877. He was in awe of the sight of the mighty Niagara Falls and began studying the thought of trying to harness the power of hydroelectricity generation. By 1900, the sod was turned to build a power development in Niagara Falls - what an achievement by this young man - but by 1905, that industrious lawyer had died.

The Niagara Falls power generation is actually one of the newest tourist attractions now in Niagara Falls, as of July 2021; but this historic building has a dark side that few

visitors know about. With a history dating back to 1905, the Niagara Parks Power Station and the haunting of the Niagara Falls attraction traces back to the tragic lives of that original founder, the young lawyer, and his wife, Annette.

The life of the founder was a flurry of business. After founding what would become Niagara Falls' longest-running power station, he became ill and quickly died of congestive heart failure - during his honeymoon, actually. His young wife, Annette, married him in that same year that he died. Annette was heartbroken and spent years using mediums and trying to use psychics to attempt to reach her dearly departed husband.

After finally giving up on her lost love, Annette spiralled into a deep depression, and then, one evening, told her chauffeur to pull over for just a moment. She then vanished.

About a month later, her body was found, and it was returned back to her husband's gravesite. Shortly afterwards, staff at the station began seeing this well-to-do woman in a fur coat walking around. Even recently, tourists and all kinds of people feel like people are watching them - someone is watching them when they're on the thrust deck.

Many people believe this landmark has a resident ghost now. If any of you are brave enough, you can wander the halls and search for yourself. These reports continue to this very day, and many believe it is Annette, desperately searching for her lost husband, who had such an interest in renewable energy - imagine, in the 1800s. Ahead of his time.

Who was this person? William Rankine. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, I will only take a couple of minutes.

Seeing as it's not so close to Halloween, I have not yet been visited by the ghost of the Legislature. I have not yet been visited by the ghost of Helen Creighton. I haven't even been walking in the dark on the bridge and been enshrouded by fog, but I will tell you this: I tend, at my age, to wake up in cold sweats very often, Speaker. I am experiencing menopause. The member the other day talked about World Menopause Day. Well, let me tell you, every day is Menopause Awareness Day in this caucus. (Laughter and applause)

I normally wake up with cold sweats, lying like this, going, "Ugh, I can't go back to sleep." Last night, the same thing happened. "Okay, this is just a menopausal waking up with cold sweats." Then I looked, and at the end of my bed, there was a massive figure. I got very scared, and I thought, "Oh god, is this it? Is this how it all ends? Is this the end?" In fact, the figure in some weird speech that somehow I understood - it was a language that I had never heard before, but I somehow understood it - suggested to me that my work was not done.

I fell back asleep. I woke up, and I was like, “Boy, oh boy, I’m going to give the best speech about rent control that I’ve ever given in my life today.” (Laughter and applause)

THE SPEAKER: It’s hard to move on from that, but we must.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

THE PREMIER: Speaker, in your gallery we have members of the crew of HMCS *Kootenay*. As I say their names, I would like to ask them to please rise. Please join me in welcoming Steve Rowland, Allan “Dinger” Bell, John Montague, John Gregory, Brian Galletly, Cyril Johnson, Roger Bronson, and John Judd. Fifty-five years ago, these sailors experienced the worst peacetime disaster in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy. Nine crewmen were killed, and 53 were seriously injured following an explosion in the starboard gearbox on board. It has been said that a lesser-trained and -professional crew would have ended the day in lifeboats. I would like to thank each of them for their service and ask them to receive the warm welcome of the House. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for your service. Thank you for being here today. We hope you enjoy your time.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Thank you for your service, gentlemen.

We know service is a family thing. They’re also joined in the East Gallery today by Esther Ann Gregory, Rachel Mosely, Hendren Gaudet, Mary Johnston, and, of course, John Gregory’s granddaughter Julia is seated right beside him up there. Thank you for being here today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,206

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

Whereas October 23rd will mark 55 years since HMCS *Kootenay* experienced the greatest peacetime disaster in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy; and

Whereas on that fateful morning, off the coast of England, a gearbox exploded, and the resulting fire and toxic smoke claimed the lives of nine crewmen and seriously injured 53 more; and

Whereas 55 years later, we recognize the bravery and the professionalism of the crew on board that prevented the disaster from being more widespread, while honouring the lives of those who did not make it home; and

Whereas we offer our heartfelt thanks to all those aboard HMCS *Kootenay* and their families supporting them at home for the sacrifice they made in protection of the freedoms that we hold so dear as Canadians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize October 23, 2024, as Kootenay Day in the province of Nova Scotia and remember all those who served on HMCS *Kootenay*, with gratitude and respect.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried. (Standing ovation)

The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Before I give my Government Notice of Motion, I tabled a document earlier that I just want to give context for to everyone here.

It was printed in the *Provincial Reporter* on September 23, 1974, called “Drug Plan Will Start on Schedule, says Hare.” Jack Hare was the executive director of the Province’s Health Services and Insurance Commission for Nova Scotia. His office was in the Joseph Howe building across the street, on the seventh floor, right corner of the building.

My office is in the Joseph Howe building, on the seventh floor, in the left-hand corner. I was in that building when I was a little girl, looking down at this Legislature from the exact same view as this gentleman here that I'm referencing today.

So, with that I'll start my - oh, and before I start it, he delivered a seniors' drug plan for Nova Scotia, the same week that I delivered a collaborative pharmacy clinic for Eastern Passage. I feel his spirit here with me today.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1,207

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

Whereas John "Jack" Hare made a significant impact on the lives in Nova Scotia while serving as the executive director of the Health Services and Insurance Commission for Nova Scotia; and

Whereas John Hare introduced Nova Scotia's free Seniors' Pharmacare program 50 years ago this month; and

Whereas my father, John Hare, passed away 37 years ago, after many years as a dedicated public servant and wonderful family man;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature acknowledge John Hare for his significant contribution to improve the lives of seniors and all Nova Scotians.

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

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 1,208

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day:

I shall read and table the message from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, transmitting the estimates of sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, for the consideration of this House, table the Estimate books, table the Government Business Plan, table the Estimate Resolutions, deliver my budget speech, and move that the estimates of sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, being supplied to be granted to His Majesty, be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The Notice of Motion is tabled.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,209

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

Be it resolved that all the congratulatory motions deposited with the Clerk, pursuant to Rule 32(3) of the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, from September 5, 2024 to the rising of the House today, that have not been otherwise considered by the House of Assembly, be approved.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,210

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

Whereas the 44th Annual 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show, known as the Pro Show, will take place on September 27 to 29 at the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition complex in Bible Hill; and

Whereas the Provincial Show features 4-H members from across the province showcasing their hard work and dedication in an atmosphere of togetherness and celebration; and

Whereas the event features livestock displays, fashion and trade shows, a 4-H member parade, market show and sale, food vendors, and a variety of fun competitions, from tractor driving to cake decorating;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the positive benefits the annual 4-H Provincial Show brings to the regional economy and to the development of young farmers for the future agriculture industry in Nova Scotia.

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

[9:30 a.m.]

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you, Speaker. May I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUSAN LEBLANC: In the gallery today is Anne MacRae, the wife of the late Steve Estey, and she is joined by Steve's mother Dee Estey, and sister Jane Estey. Anne is a fierce advocate for people with disabilities and worked for years in this province to make sure it is an accessible place for every person.

Steve was a disability rights advocate with 30 years' experience at all levels - local, regional, and international. Combining his formal education in international development with his experience in disability advocacy, he made significant policy contributions that have had an impact, both globally and locally. As someone with a hearing impairment, when Steve campaigned as a candidate in a provincial election in Dartmouth North, he was accompanied by an interpreter, which would have been a huge expense for him and the campaign.

The Bill I am about to table would see that this type of expense would be allowed to be past the cap for the reimbursable spending limits for elections. This Bill is also subtitled "the Steve Estey Act."

Before I table the Bill, I would like to ask the House to join me in welcoming Steve's family to this very important table. (Applause)

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

Bill No. 500 - An Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 2011, the Elections Act, Respecting Expenses Incurred in Relation to a Disability. (Susan Leblanc)

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Thank you, Speaker. I beg leave to make an introduction prior to tabling the Bill.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

KENDRA COOMBES: From the Basic Income Nova Scotia Society, in our gallery today we have Mandy Kay-Raining Bird and Pierre Stevens. I ask them to stand and get the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Enjoy your time here.

Bill No. 501 - An Act Respecting the Feasibility of Creating a Basic Income Program. (Kendra Coombes)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,211

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

Whereas Food Banks Canada's Annual Poverty Report Card shows that Nova Scotia has the highest poverty rate among all provinces at 13.1 per cent, 1.5 percentage points higher than the second highest province; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's year-on-year increase of people living below the poverty line at more than four percentage points is the largest such annual increase of any province in the country; and

Whereas the poverty rate for seniors in Nova Scotia is especially high - 6 per cent as opposed to a Canadian average of 4.7 per cent - with the poverty rate among seniors living alone at 13 per cent in Nova Scotia, more than doubling the figure for other seniors in the province;

Therefore be it resolved that this House instruct its Standing Committee on Community Services, on an urgent basis, to examine the government's role in Nova Scotians having the highest poverty rate among all provinces and to bring forward recommendations that establish measures to effectively and immediately bring about significant reductions in poverty rates for the people of Nova Scotia, particularly seniors.

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

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

I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: In the Speaker's Gallery, we have members of the Cole Harbour Rockets. We have Robin Veinotte, Laverne Withers, Isaac Skeete, and Laura Brine. I'd ask them all to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the House of Assembly. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Thank you for coming. Enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

COLE HBR. ROCKETS ASSOC.: SKILL DEVT. - RECOG.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Speaker, I rise today to highlight the exceptional work being done by the Cole Harbour Rockets. Robin Veinotte has created an exceptional

basketball association built on skill development, inclusivity, fairness and community involvement.

The Cole Harbour Rockets are fortunate to have dedicated parents and first-time coaches who bring their passion for basketball into every practice and game. With the help and support of Jason Sheppard, tech coordinator and head coach for the U-16 and U-18 girl's team, and Michael Adderson, head coach for the U-12 boy's team, the Cole Harbour Rockets are very well-respected and loved in our community of Dartmouth Cole Harbour. I've certainly had many students over the years participate in this program.

I am honoured to recognize the Cole Harbour Rockets Association here today in the Nova Scotia Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent of the House - we have a lot of guests here today and I know this is the last day, and so many want to make introductions - if we could extend the daily routine for 15 minutes to allow for that. That would be great.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request to extend the daily routine 15 minutes.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I beg leave to make some introductions relative to my member statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

Order. Quiet, please. There's a member speaking.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Today we are joined in the West Gallery by many members of the Saint Mary's University Enactus team. I am going to say names as each arise and receive the welcome of the House: Brennan Daley, Paige Bigelow, Gabriel Martin, Aneesa Hussain, Mary MacLeod, Vaishali Sachdeva, Lydia Lee, Mohammad Rashid Khan, Maya Campbell, Rebecca Sullivan, Courtney Dingle, Hanna Sakaki, Jonzel Robichau Lorde, Olivian Sanderson, Mya MacDonald, and David Campbell. I think that's the whole group. Welcome to the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

SMU TEAM: ENACTUS WORLD CUP EXPOS. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the achievement of 27 student leaders of the Saint Mary's University Enactus team who, in May of this year, competed in and won the Enactus National Championship. Enactus is a student leadership organization that approaches environmental, social, and economic efforts through entrepreneurial action. With their win, the Saint Mary's University Enactus team will represent Canada on the global stage, competing against 33 other countries at the Enactus World Cup from October 2nd to 4th in Astana, Kazakhstan.

This is the first time the Saint Mary's University Enactus team has taken the top prize, after placing in the top four in the national championships 11 of the last 13 years. Their success stems from their commitment to fostering positive change through their work with such projects as Plastarch and Square Roots.

The students on the SMU Enactus team come from around the world, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Brazil, India, Pakistan, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Palestine, Nepal, and Zimbabwe. I ask that everyone in the House join me in congratulating the Saint Mary's University Enactus team on their national win and wish them luck as they head to Kazakhstan to represent Canada this Fall.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: In the East Gallery, I'd like to introduce my former CA and good friend Codie Dionne, who has successfully moved on from my office. I think that's probably a good thing for her and a bad thing for us. I ask that everybody give her a warm welcome and a round of applause. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY RICHARD: Before I begin my member statement, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: In your gallery, the Speaker's Gallery, we have members joining us from Avon 4-H Club, and I'd ask that each of them rise as I say their name: Gretchen Archibald, Avon Senior Ambassador; Ben Szczepanowski, Club Vice President; Riley Wamboldt, Avon Junior Ambassador; Alina VanKippersluis, Avon Junior Ambassador; and the general leader, Justin Jamieson. Also joining us are Ben's parents, Pat and John Szczepanowski, who are leaders in the club as well. I would ask that everybody give them a warm welcome to the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Hants West.

AVON 4-H CLUB: 100TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: On July 22, 2023, the Avon 4-H Club celebrated their 100th anniversary during the club's Annual Achievement Day. Under the strong and consistent guidance of General Leaders Justin Jamieson, Bailey Burgess, and Cynthia Duey, the Avon 4-H Club can boast that it has grown to over 70 members and counting.

4-H plays a pivotal role in shaping our youth of today into leaders of tomorrow. I am a huge supporter of their program and have had the pleasure of attending many of their events. Not only am I blown away by their projects but also their public speaking abilities, showmanship, tug-of-war accomplishments and overall knowledge of agriculture, sciences, trades, cooking, and so much more. Please join me in congratulating Avon 4-H Club on this incredible milestone and wish them much success and a ton of Hants County fun, for many years to come.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Before I start, I want to take the opportunity to wish you an early Happy Birthday in case I don't get a chance to do that before the day is done.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

PATRICIA ARAB: You're very welcome.

THE SPEAKER: This has been 20 years now that I've been turning 28, so I'm excited.

PATRICIA ARAB: That's right. I mean, hold on. It's a good age. It's a good number to hold on to.

THE SPEAKER: That's right.

PATRICIA ARAB: I beg leave for an introduction, please.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

PATRICIA ARAB: In your gallery, we're joined today by an amazing Fairview resident, Allison MacKenzie-Power. I'd ask her to stand 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.

MACKENZIE-POWER, ALLISON: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Allison is a dedicated volunteer with Calvin Presbyterian Church. She had actually come and presented on their behalf on food security issues to the Legislature before, and her family does an awesome Christmas display at the top of Frederick Avenue every year. She brings a lot of joy.

Today I am proud to stand and recognize Allison MacKenzie-Power for her service and dedication to our community through her role as the mission and outreach team lead for Calvin Presbyterian Church. Allison orchestrates the vital breakfast program, which supports numerous families every single week, and recently celebrated the 3rd anniversary of the Calvin Food Cupboard. This initiative has become increasingly crucial with the demand growing year over year due to rising costs.

In addition to her dedicated community service, Allison brings joy and magic to our community. Last Christmas, she created a Winter Wonderland at the top of Frederick Avenue, complete with a light show synchronized to music that spectators could tune into via their radios. This festive display brought delight to both the young and the young at heart, lighting up our community in more ways than one.

Allison's continued efforts to support those in need and to spread happiness throughout the year are appreciated by so many. We're grateful to have such a dedicated and caring individual in our midst, continuously working to make a difference in the lives of many.

Please join me in expressing my heartfelt thanks to Allison MacKenzie-Power for her continuous commitment to our community. Her contributions not only meet the immediate needs of families but also enrich the spirit of our entire community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: May I make an introduction please?

[9:45 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite, where today we are joined by Amanda Crawley Doherty and Pamela Martell from the Demetreous Lane Tenants Association. I know Amanda and Pamela very well from attending many meetings and events at Demetreous Lane, and I would like the House to join me in welcoming them. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Thank you for coming.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MARTELL, PAMELA: COM. SERV. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Pamela Martell has been involved in the Demetrous Lane Tenants Association for the past 10 years. As a youth leader, Pamela has organized the Tenants Association's annual community cleanup and helped with the celebration of their community garden. Pamela also worked with Demetreous Lane youth to plant seeds and transplants, creating a beautiful, vibrant garden and outdoor classroom. Last year that garden supported over 30 families.

In her role as youth leader, Pamela assisted in planning weekly arts programs, outdoor games, crafts, and garden activities, and chaperoned on off-site day trips. According to Amanda Crawley Doherty of the Demetrous Lane Tenants Association, Pamela has been an incredible volunteer, shown great leadership skills, and been a great role model for youth. I have witnessed that as well.

I ask the House to join me in celebrating Pamela Martell and thanking her for her leadership in the Demetreous Lane community.

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

LEG. STAFF: ASSISTANCE - THANKS

LARRY HARRISON: I just want to take this opportunity to thank all the folks who help make this Legislature run smoothly. The team right here in the historic building, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Clerks, the Pages, the Legislative Television people have always been very fantastic to work with.

I must say a thank you to everyone who works behind the scenes as well to make sure that we're organized and looking and sounding our best. Our staff are always available to help when we need assistance, and they ensure we are well-prepared as we enter this

Chamber. Our constituency assistants keep us informed about important issues at home so that we don't have to worry about them here.

We MLAs are only a part of what makes this House of Assembly work. I ask each of you to join me as we say thank you to everyone for their assistance during this session. They are all very invaluable to us.

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

LEG. STAFF: ASSISTANCE - THANKS

LORELEI NICOLL: As was previously said today, I would like to stand as we come to a close, obviously, to another Legislative sitting and take a bit more time to express our deepest gratitude to the incredible team that works tirelessly behind the scenes making everything run like clockwork, including yourself, Speaker.

First, a huge thank you to the Legislative Television Broadcast and Recording Services for their seamless streaming services; your efforts ensure that Nova Scotians remain connected and engaged with our proceedings. To the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Commissionaires, and Halifax Regional Police, we extend our sincere appreciation for your unwavering commitment to our safety throughout this sitting.

To the Clerks, Pages, and the entire House of Assembly operations team: thank you. Thank you for your meticulous attention to detail, ensuring the legislative process flows smoothly, and that all members are well-informed at every step. A special mention must go to the incredible team in the Legislative Library. Your research skills, readiness to assist at a moment's notice, and wealth of knowledge are nothing short of commendable.

To the media, thank you for the role you play in keeping us on our toes. Your dedication to transparency and accountability is vital to the strength of our democracy. Lastly but certainly not least, I want to acknowledge the hard-working individuals in all our caucuses' offices and our staff back home. The countless hours of preparation you put in are never overlooked. To all the families holding the fort - including my husband Jim - while we're here: thank you from the bottom of our hearts for everything you do to make it all possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: May I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Again, I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite, where we are joined by Sarah Mulla. I am going to give a member statement

about her now. Please, Sarah, stand up and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MULLA, SARAH: NICHOLS AWD. RECIP. - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, this past July, I was in the audience to witness Dartmouth North resident Sarah Mulla receive the Karn Nichols Passion and Purpose Award from the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning. Sarah graduated from Woodlawn High School, where she was involved in extracurricular activities such as the yearbook committee, bio-making club, and book club.

At the MacPhee Centre, Sarah has been involved in many programs over the years, including their inaugural fashion hacking program, which sounds super-cool. On top of it all, Sarah has been an after-school STEAM mentor through Brilliant Labs and a youth volunteer at Halifax Public Libraries and has worked with groups like the Low Entropy Foundation and Operation Smile Canada.

This Fall, Sarah embarked on what I know will be a bright future when she started applied human nutrition at Mount Saint Vincent University.

I ask this House to join me in celebrating Sarah Mulla for all she has and all that she will, no doubt, accomplish.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, today in the East Gallery, my constituency assistant and friend Regan Oliver is joining us, as well as his very patient wife, Jennifer. It's Jenn's first time, actually, in the House today. I would like to welcome them and ask all the members of the House to please give them a warm welcome today. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

FATHER, JIM - BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, 80 years ago today, Anna McDaniel-Johns and her husband, Hartford Johns, celebrated the birth of their first child, James Harris Johns. This bouncing baby boy would eventually grow up and marry his high school sweetheart, Marjorie Lyons, and together they would have three children, the eldest of whom is me.

Today my father, Jim Johns, is celebrating his 80th birthday. I want to take an opportunity in the House to wish him a happy milestone birthday and to thank Dad for everything he and my mother have done to support myself and my two girls over the years.

Not only am I thankful and fortunate to have both my parents still living, but I am also thankful that Jim has been my dad. I ask all the members of the House to join me today in extending a very Happy Birthday to my father on his 80th birthday.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction prior to my member statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LORELEI NICOLL: Joining us today in the Speaker's Gallery is Boma Nnaji. Boma moved to Nova Scotia from West Africa seven years ago, and resides in Portland Hills, Dartmouth. I ask Boma to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

NNAJI, BOMA: COM. SERV. - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: Speaker, I would like to welcome and introduce Boma Nnaji. Boma is a resident of Portland Hills, Dartmouth, and a space planner with the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Boma has been at the forefront of significant health care projects, including the planning and implementation of the Care Coordination Centre in the Central Zone, the expansion of patient beds at the QEII, and the strategic planning efforts to address displacements caused by the Halifax Infirmary expansion.

In addition to his work in architecture, Boma is a talented visual artist, actively involved in community art initiatives. His work has been exhibited locally and internationally, and his murals, such as the one at Halifax Shopping Centre celebrating African heritage, have left a lasting impact on public spaces.

Boma's dedication to both his professional and artistic pursuits continue to enrich the lives of Nova Scotians. I encourage everyone to celebrate his contributions to our community.

I ask all members of the Legislature to please join me in congratulating Boma Nnaji on his accomplishments and contributions.

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

HOUSING SURVEY: RESULTS - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, initial results from the research collaboration between Town House and CBU confirm what we already know: We are in a housing crisis. Housing affordability is in a crisis state, and it's even worse for renters in the secondary market, which is bad news for residents in the CBRM.

In the survey, 64 per cent of respondents are renting from the secondary market, which is not purposely built for renting, which is omitted from the CMHC's official numbers in CBRM, creating many issues for residents, including making them ineligible for a rent supplement and downplaying the cost of rent in the CBRM. Two-thirds of respondents said they could not easily find alternative housing if they lost their home. Many of those who are suffering from poor housing conditions stated they are afraid to report concerns for evictions. I want to thank Town House and CBU for their work, and I encourage more residents to take the survey.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TWILA GROSSE: In the Speaker's Gallery today is Ashley Grant, an award-winning business owner. Ashley, I would ask that you please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Legislature. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Preston.

GRANT, ASHLEY: HFX. COM. VOTES AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. TWILA GROSSE: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ashley Grant, an African Nova Scotian descendent of Africville, North Preston, and East Preston. Ashley is

the proud owner of Knead to Stretch Therapeutic Care, who in 2023 was voted Platinum winner in the Massages category of the Halifax CommunityVotes awards.

Ashley is a certified yoga practitioner and a graduate of the Black doula program, where she acts as an advocate and a source of support and comfort during pregnancy, labour, birth, and post-partum.

In October 2019, Knead to Stretch Therapeutic Care was opened in Cole Harbour. She is a founding member of the Black Wellness Co-Operative of Nova Scotia, formed in 2020, which is comprised of Black health and wellness professionals committed to providing their expertise and services to underrepresented communities.

Through this work, Ashley promotes healthy living and well-being by conducting, at no cost, beginner yoga sessions to seniors in the Preston Township and through events in collaboration with the Africville Museum.

I ask all members of the Legislature to please join with me to congratulate Ashley on her accomplishments and award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

VOLS.: WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS WORK - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I rise to recognize Chris Richards of Lake of the Woods and Veronica Stinson of Cambrians Cove in Hubley for their leadership to organize the joint Wildfire Community Preparedness Day through the support of FireSmart Canada.

Last year's devastating fires close by served as a stark reminder of the impacts of climate change and working together to mitigate potential fire hazards. As we entered the peak season of wildfires and dry weather conditions, Chris and Veronica mobilized within their communities to remove wildfire fuel, to reduce the risk of fire, and to take proactive initiatives to protect lives and property. With the use of a donated dump truck, they hauled away three loads of debris and another 18 loads with the use of utility trailers.

Although this community event was a tremendous success, there's still a lot of work to do for these communities and many others throughout Timberlea-Prospect that need emergency egress. This work will require the co-operation of the municipal and provincial governments. I am committed to supporting our communities in working with both levels of government to achieve this endeavour.

I would like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Chris Richards and Veronica Stinson for their proactive fire prevention measures, neighbourhood beautification project, and excellent display of volunteerism and community spirit.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

ICCA: FESTA ITALIANA - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the board of directors of the Italian Canadian Cultural Association of Nova Scotia and the Italian community for such a successful evening at the Festa Italiana. Last weekend, I was able to attend the event as a volunteer, helping out with greeting folks at the door, to being promoted to the dessert table, where - let me tell you - all the action happens.

[10:00 a.m.]

I got to watch all the volunteers feed so many people, and then the chefs came and poured mounds and mounds of gnocchi - red, green, and white fluffy pillows. Oh, my goodness, it was so delicious. Then they came to our table for dessert to end off the night. Let me tell you, they were choosing from crostoli, cannoli, tiramisu, crostata. I'm telling you, I took it all home. I had so much fun helping out, I came back on Saturday to eat and drink what I missed out on the night before.

Saying all of this, the Festa Italiana was a place to be for good food, drinks, and fun. I would like all members to join me in congratulating the ICCA of Nova Scotia and the Italian community for such a wonderful gathering and celebration of culture at the Festa Italiana.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

HAVRE BOUCHER & DIST. VFD: 50TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to recognize the Havre Boucher and District Volunteer Fire Department on their 50th year of serving our community. This past July, in celebration of their milestone anniversary, they held their first Fire Fighter Picnic. It was a day of events for everyone from children's activities, parade, dunk tank, barbecue, and celebration dance.

Volunteer fire departments are often the heart of our communities and offer vital services. Their members are there for us when we're facing the worst scenarios imaginable, and they are also there for some of our best times. How many people do you know who had their wedding reception at a fire hall? Whether it's responding to a house fire, providing a venue for events, fundraising, or engaging with residents, our fire departments are crucial to all Nova Scotians.

I ask that the House please join me in applause to congratulate Chief Roy MacKinnon and the 17 volunteer firefighters from the Havre Boucher and District

Volunteer Fire Department, as well as all who have served over the past 50 years. You are owed a debt of gratitude from all of us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

STAFF: KESHEN GOODMAN LIB. RENOV. - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to recognize the staff at the Keshen Goodman Public Library and all personnel who were involved in the library's redevelopment project. The Keshen Goodman Public Library has been a fixture in Clayton Park West and a hub for community members for over the past two decades, and they recently reopened their doors to the public following remodelling.

Both the exterior and the interior of the library have been revamped, offering community members a new, exciting experience that goes beyond what traditional libraries offer. The diversity of its book collection, programs offered, events, and use of space is a strong reflection of the diversity of cultures in Clayton Park West. I know I am not the only one looking forward to using this new space. I ask the House to join me in celebrating the reopening of the Keshen Goodman Public Library and many more years of open doors to my community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

CCPA REPORT: LOW N.S. WAGES - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: I'd like to draw the attention of the House to an important report on the Nova Scotia economy recently released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The report - *Atlantic Canadians need a raise: One-third of Workers Earn Less than \$20 an hour* - shows that 154,825 people in Nova Scotia earn below \$20 an hour, which is 35 per cent of the workforce, the highest percentage in the Maritimes. Strikingly, 65 per cent of those making less than \$20 an hour are in full-time jobs, and 56 per cent are women.

The report draws attention to the discrepancy between a living wage and Nova Scotia's current minimum wage of \$15.20, the lowest in the Atlantic region and the lowest in Canada after Saskatchewan and Alberta. This important report deserves the attention of every MLA in Nova Scotia.

I have a copy for each MLA with me. With your permission, I will ask the pages now to distribute them to the House.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

CHRIS PALMER: In the East Gallery is, I would say, my second wife. She's the - well, I should explain this. (Laughter) All right. That did not come across right. Don't click that, okay?

What I mean to say is someone whom I have really come to respect - my constituency assistant. She serves the people of Kings West with amazing loyalty and dedication. She does great things. They say one of the best decisions we can make as a new MLA is whom we choose as our constituency assistant, and I am very honoured that Susie accepted my request to be my constituency assistant. I would like to ask all members to please recognize my constituency assistant and a great worker for Kings West: Susie Bond. Thank you, Susie.

THE SPEAKER: Way to sneak that introduction in, honourable member.

The honourable member for Pictou West.

MATCHEM, TYLER: RUGBY ACCOMPLISHMENTS - RECOG.

MARCO MACLEOD: I rise today to congratulate Tyler Matchem, a 20-year-old rugby player from Pictou County. Tyler began his rugby journey at the age of 14, helping his high school win a provincial championship. Upon graduation, Tyler moved to B.C. to play for the Pacific Pride development team.

This past Saturday the prop from Pictou County made his first career appearance for Team Canada. Tyler went on the pitch halfway through the second half as we played Tonga at the Pacific Nations Cup in Tokyo.

Although Canada fell to Tonga 30 to 17, it was a huge win for rugby in Pictou West and in Nova Scotia. Tyler, we are proud of your sporting achievements, but we are even more proud of your humbleness and your work ethic.

Speaker, I ask all members of the Legislature to please join me in wishing Tyler Matchem the best of luck as he continues on his promising rugby career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

MEMBERS OF LEG.: WORK - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, I rise in my place because many of us will re-offer, but we also know that there are some members in here who have announced that they will not seek re-election. I rise in my place to recognize them.

I have been here now almost 10 years. You build personal relationships with members in the House here from all political parties, no matter where you represent.

I rise in my place because the members, whether they are with the NDP, the government or our caucus, have spent a big part of their careers representing their communities and really supporting the residents whom they were given the honour to represent.

As a young guy who came in here, you learn a lot from all of them in some way, and you take a story back and an experience back in your conversations, in the friendships that you build. I don't know what's going to happen to the rest of us, Speaker, but to those members, congratulations on a wonderful political career and thanks for teaching a young guy a thing or two.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

LEG. STAFF: ASSISTANCE - THANKS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you, Speaker, on what I think is the last day of this session. I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank all of the staff here in the House but also all of the staff back in our constituency offices, our families, our kids, our friends who hopefully are still our friends at the end of all of this, our caucus staff. I want to thank all of you, my colleagues, and in particular - I know the Speaker mentioned this before the doors opened - I do want to give a special thanks to our Minister of Health and Wellness who has done double duty as the health officer for this building in this session, when we've had three scary and unfortunate situations with staff needing medical attention. A huge thanks to everyone who makes this House go and thanks to the member for her dedication.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

WEYMOUTH: CANADA DAY CELEBRATIONS - THANKS

HON. JILL BALSER: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Canada Day celebrations in Weymouth and to thank everyone who makes this event possible year after year. Each year on July 1st, community members and visitors gather to celebrate Canada's birthday. However, this year was a big one. It was their 75th anniversary, and the residents of Weymouth sure knew how to commemorate the special occasion. From 7:00 a.m. until

dark, the village of Weymouth was filled with special events, vendors, games, a parade, fireworks and so much more.

I am so fortunate that I was able to spend my Canada Day with the residents of Weymouth. It's amazing to see volunteers pull together to host events like the Canada Day celebration in Weymouth and keep traditions going. I'd like to thank the organizers, volunteers, vendors and the Village of Weymouth Commission and everyone who played a part in making Canada Day in Weymouth happen.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

WHITE, GERALD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. TONY INCE: Speaker, I would like to speak on my friend, Gerry White, who passed away a few days ago. My colleagues have expressed their condolences as well, but I would like to add remembrances and a personal story.

Gerry had a storied career, serving with the RCMP and the Royal Canadian Navy, which took him all over Canada and the world. I was particularly touched by his story about serving in Cambodia on a UN mission. He and his colleagues brought toys, medicine and food and necessities. He played "You Are My Sunshine" on his harmonica to let the fearful children know they were there to help and be friendly. This kind of kindness and sensitivity were hallmarks of Gerry's personality, along with his love of a good joke.

In the early 2000s, I met Gerry when he was here singing with the Nova Scotia Mass Choir, and he helped my mother through her health failing at that time. He was a very good person.

I ask my colleagues to join me in sending our best wishes to his beloved Jane, their daughter Linda Lee, and his grandchildren. May his memory be a blessing. May you have fair winds and following seas, my friend. Thank you to Gerry.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MLA FOR BEDFORD BASIN: SERVICE - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to honour our MLA colleague and friend, MLA for Bedford Basin - my now seatmate. We don't know if we'll see this MLA back here in the House, depending on if there is an election call or not, but she has made it clear that she is not reoffering. Today I want to honour her, woman to woman.

She has served our province and the people of Bedford with integrity and class. She was first elected in 2009, then 2013, then 2017, and then again 2021. She has served this province as Deputy Premier, Minister of Community Services, Minister of Seniors,

Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act, Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, and Minister responsible for Youth.

In Status of Women, I remember when she held a non-partisan dinner. It was amazing. As a woman here in this Chamber, I want to personally thank her for standing up for me when she did not have to - when no one had to. She chose to stand and speak, and it matters. When you're in a position like mine, you really get to see the character of people.

Today, I want to personally thank her for her service to our province and for being a woman of integrity. I wish her all the best. Spend an amazing time with your grandbaby and with your family. Wishing her all the best.

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

SCHWARTZ, MAXINE VICTORIA: 95TH BIRTHDAY - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise today with a special birthday wish for a long-time resident of Hubbards, Maxine Victoria Schwartz, who will be turning 95 on September 26th.

Maxine has worn many hats over the years, including as a long-time business owner. Alongside her husband, John, they built and ran Scotty's Esso Restaurant and Gas Station from 1959 to the mid-1980s, becoming famous for their lobster sandwiches.

Outside of business, Maxine is a phenomenal grandmother to five and great-grandmother to one. Her eldest granddaughter, Jennifer, shares that she made every holiday magical and is known around the community for her holiday spirit.

She has also shared her love for travel and shopping - in legislative-speak, supporting the local economy - at any and every chance she got, inspiring a zest for life and adventure among all those who cross her path.

May we all seek to love an adventure and those around us the way the soon-to-be 95-year-old Maxine does.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

WEDGEPORT TUNA TOURN. & FEST.: 20TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: The Wedgeport Tuna Tournament & Festival celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, and I rise today to recognize its past and present organizers and volunteers.

From 1935 to the mid-1960s, Wedgeport was known as the sport tuna fishing capital of the world. The abundance of feed in the area made for perfect tuna fishing grounds. In 1976, the original tournament - the International Tuna Cup Match - ended due to a lack of fish. The tournament started again in 2004 and continues to grow each year. A total of 20 boats participated this year.

While the competition at sea takes place, on land there are different activities for all ages. Congratulations to this year's winning crew aboard the *Sea Devil*, who landed a 666-pound bluefin and 1,251 pounds in overall weight of tuna.

I would ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking the many volunteers and organizers over the years who have contributed to the festival's success and wishing them many more successful tournaments in the future.

[10:15 a.m.]

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: HIGH RENT CAP - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, this has been an extremely uninspiring sitting, where we have not had legislation that attacked the true issues that matter. It seems the No. 1 reason the Premier brought us in here was simply to level attacks against the federal government. I want to ask him about his rent cap, though: it's the highest in the country. You look at any other province that has initiated one of these: P.E.I. is 3 per cent, Ontario is 2.5 per cent, B.C. is 3.5 per cent. Nova Scotia has the highest, on top of having the highest rental increases in the country, over 30 per cent since this Premier took office. My question to him is: How is he going to blame his own regulation on the federal government?

THE PREMIER: I'm not really sure what to . . .

THE SPEAKER: Just before I recognize the honourable Premier, I will let the members know that the honourable Leader will be standing for most of Question Period due to an injury. The Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care offered physio after QP. (Laughter)

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Listen, we know the solution to the housing crisis is more housing. That's why we've tabled legislation to remove red tape, get that red tape out of the way so more housing could be built. The members opposite fought against that legislation and voted against it. We know the members opposite have stood beside groups that were trying to block developments from happening. We know also that when those developments go through, new houses are built. Housing starts are up. There's more housing coming. We know the solution is housing.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We're talking specifically about a regulation that the Premier brought in through Cabinet control. We have the highest rental cap in the country, on top of having the highest rental increases. The Premier talks about housing starts. Housing per capita is in free fall. We have a vacancy rate near zero. My question to the Premier is: How did he come up with this number, and why hasn't he brought in legislation to ensure that tenants are protected during this very difficult time for tenants and landlords?

THE PREMIER: The cap does offer some protection to tenants. Some of the stuff that's before the Legislature right now is to protect tenants, to level the field. Look, big changes take time. We're working at it. We're committed to doing the work. We will get there. Our plan is working. There are more housing starts, there's more housing. We know there's more to do, but we're committed to rolling up our sleeves and doing the hard work, and that's what we've been doing for three years.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Coming into a legislative sitting for 10 days without any real pieces of legislation that are going to help deal with the biggest issues that people are dealing with - with this housing crisis, with health care, with the affordability crisis - is not rolling up your sleeves, Speaker. Every single day this week, instead of answering these serious questions, the Premier has deflected and taken the chance to attack the federal government, which, by the way, isn't elected to this Chamber.

My question is: Looking at the housing facts according to his own government - less housing per capita, rents going up higher in Nova Scotia than anywhere else in the country - what is this Premier going to do to protect people who are dealing with these high inflationary costs of housing?

THE PREMIER: In this sitting, we've debated Bills that will help workers. We've debated Bills that will create the conditions for more job growth, especially in rural areas. We've debated federal-provincial relationships. Every time, we've stood for Nova Scotians when those relationships come to the top, and the members opposite stand with the Liberals. We've debated federal-provincial relationships. We've debated immigration. I think all those things matter, and I'm proud of the work that we're doing. We know there's more work to be done, but we are committed to moving this province forward. We just ask the members opposite to stand with Nova Scotians and help us do that.

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

PREM.: FIXED-TERM LEASES - REGULATE

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I want to tell the Premier about Erin Vasseur, who has spent recent years in a state of fear, unsure whether her landlords would renew her fixed-term lease. Last year, they renewed, but this new lease came in at 33 per cent higher, and now her landlords are selling the building with its undervalued rents as a major selling point. Faced with losing her home, Erin says she now may have to leave Nova Scotia entirely. The Premier likes to say that he stands up for Nova Scotians, but how is he standing up for Erin, not in the future but right now?

THE PREMIER: We know the solution to the housing crisis is more housing. That's why we're moving forward with housing construction. Housing construction starts are up. That's why we did something like the MOST program - the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades - so we can have the people in the workforce to help build those homes. We know we didn't break these things over night. We're working hard to fix them, but the Liberals and the NDP - their record on housing is very clear. When the NDP was in government, and certainly those years under the Liberals, no money, no investment, no action, and even now today they stand shoulder to shoulder with those that are trying to block developments. The solution to this problem is more housing, and the members opposite can get on board with helping us get that done.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The Premier relies on his reinterpretation of the past and his casting forward to a beautiful future, and I am asking a question about the present. Erin is not alone in her struggle. Ian Henderson, another renter in our province, was forced to accept an illegal rent increase with three days' notice. Why? Because his landlord told him he would be evicted if he didn't accept it. Now Ian knows the rules, but he's afraid that if he reports significant maintenance issues to the Tenancy Board, his landlord won't just threaten eviction but will end his lease before the Board can do anything. In Ian's words, "If we complain or request too much maintenance, we get kicked out." Will the Premier stand up for Ian today?

THE PREMIER: There is a process in place, and I encourage all Nova Scotians who feel they're in a situation where that process is necessary that they should apply to that process. It's there. It works. We'll continue to work on that. If we step back, we need more housing in this province. That's why we're removing barriers to the construction of housing. That's why there are more houses being built right now than anytime in the past decade. That's why we will continue to support those who want to help build a better Nova Scotia. There is a good future in this province. There are issues today, but we're working through them. There are opportunities for the members opposite to get on board and support Nova Scotia.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: While we build housing, we need to protect the 300,000 Nova Scotians who are renters. Kelsey Bennett signed a fixed-term lease for her current apartment in 2021 with the promise that after the first year it could transition into a periodic

lease. Despite multiple requests and three lease renewals, she is still on a fixed-term lease. Earlier this spring, she learned that her neighbours' fixed-term leases were not being renewed because their landlord can charge new tenants so much more. According to Kelsey: "I now face the same anxiety, wondering if I will be forced out when my lease ends." Will the Premier stand up for Kelsey, Ian, Erin, and the hundreds of thousands of Nova Scotians who rent their homes and fix this . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: . . . now?

THE SPEAKER: Order.

THE PREMIER: Of course, the legislation that's being debated in this Chamber right now with the rent cap, the extension of the rent cap and other modifications, are meant to protect tenants and protect that relationship. We'll continue to move those items forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RTA: RENT CAP NUMBER SOURCE - DIVULGE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Again, in responses to the Opposition, we hear the Premier misdirect and blame others. Obviously, that's motivated by winning the daily cut and thrust of politics, but there's more to politics than winning the headline every day. There's doing it with honesty, integrity, respect for the institution that we serve and the people that this institution serves. That means answering questions honestly and straightforwardly.

Renters and landlords are worried about this arbitrary rent cap, which is the highest in the country and also, according to those who own buildings, is not based on the economics of the situation. Where did this figure come from?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Speaker, I'll remind members of the House that we do not believe in permanent rent control or a permanent rent cap. The fact is the solution to the housing crisis is more housing. We have an existing rent cap at 5 per cent. We're extending that interim cap for another two years.

As the Premier has indicated - and as I have indicated - in previous responses, the solution to the housing crisis is more supply. We're creating the environment to build more housing. We have a housing plan that's working - record starts and removing the provincial portion of the HST on new builds. That's moving in the right direction. We didn't break it, but we're certainly fixing it.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We keep hearing the government is building more housing. They say they didn't create this problem. The fact is very different than that. This government has set the doubling population target; no other government did that. More people are being brought into the province at a time when housing starts are not keeping up with that growth. That is creating a zero vacancy rate. It's creating a scarcity of housing supply. It's driving up costs. It's the reason why homelessness has tripled over the last three years under this government, and they still can't take responsibility for it.

My question to the minister is: What is the rationale during this precarious time to have the highest rent cap in the country? What's the reason? What are the economic factors that were looked at? We'd just like to have a simple answer to that, please.

COLTON LEBLANC: Feedback that we've heard through Law Amendments Committee and feedback that I've received through my department through correspondence from the smaller landlords in this province who have expressed concerns with the rising cost of insurance and property taxes and other factors that are impacting the cost to operate their units - we need them to be part of the solution. We need them to keep their rental units. We cannot afford to lose units in today's market.

To insinuate that we're not taking responsibility is not true. We are investing in Nova Scotia, investing in housing, investing in affordable housing, investing in supportive housing, investing for the first time in public housing, investing in student housing, and removing the provincial portion of the HST. I could go on.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MAH: HFX. EXHIB. PK. DEVT. - COMMIT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The HRM recently hosted public engagement sessions to consider feedback on proposed development at the Halifax Exhibition Park lands. At least 300 people showed up with concerns, the biggest ones being increased exponential traffic that over 5,000 units would bring to an already overburdened provincial road. I have written to the Chair of the HRM Housing Task Force to, at minimum, not speed up this process until a new entrance and exit is approved, as could be recommended by a pending traffic study. Since I don't have a response yet, my question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is: Will he commit to not interfering in the HRM process, at least before critical capital is approved to find another way in and out on the Prospect Road, given that there have been seven times that the road has been shut down in 2024?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I appreciate the question, and I think it gives me the opportunity to talk about our Special Planning Areas, which really have been a remarkable success. We have said there is no free pass. All the permitting and all the studies that are required will be done with those Special Planning Areas. Their program that has caught national attention has helped us to see development go forward in the HRM, where we

know how critically important it is. It's part of the reason why we can say that housing starts are up 25 per cent this year.

The program has been successful, it has gotten the attention of the nation, and there are no free passes. The studies and the permitting all still have to be done.

IAIN RANKIN: That's the second time that the minister hasn't committed to not interfering in a process. I am concerned because there are approvals that don't have secondary access through that program for egress for communities. As I said, that road was shut down once in 2021, four times last year, and seven times already this year, and the year is not over yet - where people can't get out.

[10:30 a.m.]

I'll redirect to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who is responsible for storm water and groundwater discharge. This is the secondary concern, given that the building is proposed on three wetlands. Given that we have shorter, higher-intensity rainfalls, I would ask the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who is responsible for watercourses: What preventable control measures is the Province insisting on? Given that Penhorn Lake was impacted last year, how is he going to prevent that from happening?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: As the regulator, I want to take this opportunity to thank staff in our regional offices who are constantly monitoring the terms and conditions. All developers require approvals. When instances of discharge in lakes occur, it can be alarming to residents. However, we've put in place storm water engineers at our department to work with municipalities.

This is unprecedented growth that we're seeing in the province. We have all the regulatory tools to ensure that we're developing Nova Scotia - building up Nova Scotia - responsibly and sustainably. Building homes is not a threat to the environment. We can build up Nova Scotia responsibly.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DHW: CAPE BRETON ER WAIT TIMES - IMPROVE

FRED TILLEY: Speaker, ER times in the Cape Breton Regional Hospital are struggling to keep up with demand. Despite repeated promises of improvements and fixing health care, recent data from the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness shows that emergency room wait times in the Cape Breton Regional Hospital are the highest in the province, with patients waiting up to 12 hours and beyond. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Why are ER times so high in Cape Breton?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: As we discussed yesterday, there are a number of factors. We work in health care as an entire system. The things that we are doing to address the ER wait times are things like building an incredible number of long-term care beds. In the member's riding, we are anxiously anticipating the opening of the new redevelopment that will allow for more individuals to live in long-term care. We're looking at recruiting staff there.

If you follow the Nova Scotia Health Authority website, you'll see there have been a number of physicians who have been recruited to the area, both specialists and GPs. We're investing in a cath lab. We're investing in a PET scanner. There have been a number of investments in Cape Breton Regional redevelopment. We're very proud of that, and we'll continue to work on the wait times.

FRED TILLEY: I'm so excited for all the development that's happening in my riding and in Cape Breton, which was started by the previous government and is being finished up. It's great. The additional investment on the PET scanner is fantastic. The additional cath lab - it's all good stuff.

What I am specifically talking about is the ER. I asked the same question in the Fall sitting of the Legislature last year, and it was the same answer about the long term. What can we do now? Wait times haven't improved. What can this government do now to improve wait times for the people of Cape Breton at Cape Breton Regional Hospital?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We actually are seeing a reduction of wait times across this province. We are seeing that people are accessing with lower-acuity triage scores. Those folks are coming away from the emergency room and they are getting access through primary care clinics in the community. They are getting them through the pharmacy clinics. They are getting that through urgent treatment centres. They are getting care through VirtualCareNS. There are a number of things that are under way.

This will take time. The time to invest in beds in this province was 10 years ago. It was never done, and so here we are, working as hard as we can to build as fast as we can. There are cranes in the sky in Cape Breton for the first time in many, many years because we are trying to build more capacity for all individuals.

This will definitely take time, but these new facilities will create a wonderful work environment for . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: TRAVEL NURSE PGM. PLAN - COMMIT

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Despite changes intended to reduce the number of travel nurses working in our province last December, it has been since reported that there has been no change to this number in the months after, and that last year, our government spent \$141 million for these services. I'll table that. Can the minister tell me how many travel nurses are currently working in our system, and is there a plan to further reduce the number?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We know that travel nurses are very expensive to the health care system in our province, but we also have to appreciate the work that they provide because they allow us to keep a variety of services open. We are grateful that they are here. We have increased the number of seats that are available for our nursing students. We have offered every nursing student a job until 2026. We have given excellent bonuses and taken a number of nurses back into the system, many of whom are in hard-to-reach areas like intensive care and critical care. There have been a number of things. There are internationally educated nurses who are coming online. We've been able to find capacity within the province. There is so much happening in order to change the nursing crisis.

SUSAN LEBLANC: There is one simple idea that the minister has not mentioned - I've raised it several times - and that is to create a provincial travel nurse program to address staff shortages and vacancies in hard-to-fill areas. When asked this Spring about such a program, the president of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union said, "It's very doable. All it's going to take is for the unions and the employer to sit down and negotiate this. We just have to do it." I'll table that. I asked the minister at that time, but we didn't get a clear answer if this was something on the department's radar, so I will ask again: Will the minister commit to working with nurses to design this program?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure the member that we're working with nurses every single day. We passed the Patient Access to Care Act and, with that alone, found 619 nurses in this province who were working below their scope of practice because there was never a common-sense approach to credentialing. We know that there are many ways in which we are going to address the nursing crisis. The members opposite voted against the Patient Access to Care Act because they didn't feel that it was worthwhile - 619 nurses and thousands more had applied to registration. We are looking at every solution. We'll continue to do that, and we're grateful to the nurses in this province for the incredible care they provide to Nova Scotians.

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

EECD: NEW SCHOOL IN CLAYTON PARK - BUILD

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. The residents of Fairview-Clayton Park were promised a new

school to address the serious overcrowding in our existing facilities, but another school year has come, and we are already bursting at the seams in our schools. With the upcoming development at Seton Ridge, it's going to prove that our schools will be even more burdened, so the need is becoming more urgent. When will this government finally deliver on its promise to build the new school that my community urgently requires, and where exactly will it be located?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I've been asked a number of times about projects that are under way in the school system, and I can say - as I've done before - that we have a \$1 billion capital plan, and numerous projects are proceeding across the province. As they are ready for announcing, I will be the most excited person to be able to do that, and I know communities are waiting anxiously for that. I share their anxiety and their enthusiasm around that, and as soon as we can announce new projects, we will. Education is about so much more than the walls around our students and staff. We are taking historic, game-changing action to improve the experience of education all across the province, not just with our capital plan but with so many other things.

PATRICIA ARAB: With all due respect, I don't need the minister to tell me about all of the other things that are important about education. Learning in an environment that is conducive to that is one of the most important things about education. Modules and portables - these are not proper learning environments.

At LeMarchant-St. Thomas Elementary School, there was a model that was used where the existing school was used, and the green space was where a new school was built. Then upon that completion, the old school was demolished, and a new green space was used. I'm simply curious as to why the minister hasn't looked at that as a particular model for the issues in Fairview-Clayton Park.

BECKY DRUHAN: As we renovate and update the schools across the province with our increased investment in school repairs, as we add modulars - which are amazing, beautiful learning spaces that educators and students alike enjoy - as we build new schools, I am so proud to say that we are doing things that change the environment within those spaces.

When that new school is available, it will be a school that has the benefit of a cellphone directive that removes the distraction of cell phones from classrooms. The Leader of the Official Opposition, and then-Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development said he would not do that. I'll table that. That school will also have the benefit of our historic school food program, which the member for Sydney-Membertou called historic.

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable member for Clare.

DPW: HWY NO. 101 SECTION WORK - UPDATE

RONNIE LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Public Works regarding the unfinished section of Highway No. 101 between Weymouth and Marshalltown. Many businesses use that section of road. A lot of seafood companies use that to access the Digby ferry. Could the minister provide an update on the work happening on that section of road?

HON. KIM MASLAND: I certainly am aware of the amount of traffic that travels through Highway No. 101 from Marshalltown to Weymouth. I was actually down and had a meeting with my honourable colleague the member for Digby-Annapolis. We met with municipal officials, some community members, and actually some fire department members that day. They shared with me their trauma of attending accidents on that section of highway. What I can tell the member is that we are in the planning and preliminary design of an effort to preserve the corridor. We certainly will continue to look at that corridor.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I know the minister is well aware of the safety issues. The reason I raise it here today is because I hear it from my own constituents who use that road quite regularly. I want to bring that to the minister's attention - to raise the importance of that section of road. I hope to see construction begin at some point in the future.

KIM MASLAND: I want to assure the member opposite that as the Minister of Public Works, safety is of top priority for me when it comes to our roads. The last time a traffic study was done on that section of the highway was in 2015. I have initiated a new traffic study. That is in the process of being completed, and I expect that in Fall 2024.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DCS: PALLET SHELTER PROJECT - COMMUNICATE

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, the Pallet shelter project near the Canada Games Centre has raised concerns in my community, especially given the proximity to a high school and three athletic facilities nearby. Constituents have reached out, worried about the lack of information. While I fully recognize the urgent need to address homelessness and provide support for those in need, it is equally important that the community is kept informed and involved. Will the Minister of Community Services explain why there has been so little communication about this project? What steps are being taken now to keep my community informed?

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: When it comes to the Pallet shelters, in this area in particular, all three sports facilities were involved in this discussion. The truth of the matter is that when it comes to choosing spaces, we leave that up to the municipalities. They know where this goes best. The local area councillor was involved in this every step of the way. In fact, the moment the local MLA and I had a chance to talk, I told her instantly. I can't

say why the local councillor did not inform the local MLA. What I can say is that the moment the member and I had a conversation, I told her.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I know why the councillors couldn't say anything - because it was in camera. They were informed in camera, and they were not allowed to speak up. It is unfortunate that it was done that way, and he knows that . . . (interruption).

[10:45 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: And the minister knows that.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. Through me to the minister.

The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: This project is about balancing the two critical needs, supporting those facing homelessness, and addressing the community. Will the minister commit to meeting with me next Wednesday, or before, to discuss these issues in detail, and ensure we are moving forward in a way that is compassionate, transparent and inclusive to everyone?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: You know what wasn't in camera? The actual tour of a Pallet facility that her councillors, HRM, the local area sports associations, everyone attended a couple of weeks ago.

What I will say is that there is some misinformation. I understand the trepidation and some of the fear that people have around these things. The truth is the one in Sackville - people are working, they're back to school. The people with complex - and I see the members shaking their heads. We have the facts, and facts don't lie.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. Pretty chirpy. Please let the minister finish.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The truth is, individuals who are dealing with complex mental health and addiction issues, this is not the spot for them. We have other places for them. We want to make sure that everyone who's involved in these Pallet shelters and the communities feel welcome.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH: COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENTS - ALLOW

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs. In a 2023 letter to this department, the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity Advisory Council encouraged this government to take action to allow community benefit agreements through legislation. These agreements would allow our communities to negotiate things like affordable housing, employment, and environmental protection in development processes. My question is: Does the minister support the use of these agreements to ensure our communities are able to participate fully in economic growth and prosperity?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I certainly want to thank the member for the question and the community benefit program. We have received that request from HRM. That is under consideration. I just want to say that there have been a number of things we've done as a province, as a government, to enable the African Nova Scotian community, including a needs assessment, including considerable work in housing in Preston and in other areas. I'm very proud of our record of working with the community. We will continue to do so.

SUZY HANSEN: With all due respect, I was asking the question to the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs. But it's fitting that this question will come to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, because it hasn't come to this floor yet in legislation. Over a year ago, the HRM mayor wrote to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing formally requesting legislative amendments to allow the municipality to develop, enter, and enforce community benefit agreements, noting that many of our historic African Nova Scotian communities are under severe development pressure. This Province previously committed to ensuring these communities survive. That request has gone unanswered.

Has the minister advocated for her government colleagues to advance this legislation? And has the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing put any legislation forward saying that that's what he wants?

JOHN LOHR: We're very aware of the advocacy of the community. The discussions and consideration of this are ongoing, and I'll go back to our record. We've done a needs assessment for the African Nova Scotian community across the province. We're working very hard. We made historic investments in the community. We will continue to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DPW: BEDFORD FERRY STATUS - UPDATE

HON. KELLY REGAN: I had the pleasure yesterday of taking the ferry from Dartmouth to work here in Halifax. I had a funeral in the morning and was able to sail across the harbour to come to work, which was lovely. Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with folks from the Department of Public Works. I do want to thank the minister for continuing that tradition, because I was able to ask them about the Bedford ferry and they told me they didn't know anything about it. It was with Build Nova Scotia. I am wondering if the minister could give us an update on the status of the Bedford ferry.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I find that very odd - that staff from the Department of Public Works said they didn't know what was happening with the ferry. I certainly will check into that. Everything continues to progress on the ferry. As we've discussed in the House, we are really excited about this project. Tons of investment going into that ferry and it certainly is going to be great to help with the reduction of the traffic congestion.

KELLY REGAN: Yes, given that we had recently had an expert who has indicated that there is going to be gridlock in Downtown Halifax - and many of us have experienced it lately. I know that when I come across the Angus L. Macdonald Bridge, I can spend 20 minutes - I could probably walk faster from the bottom of that - so that is a deep concern, but we don't have any information on what is that progress. If the minister could update us on that and also give us an opening date for the Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector which was supposed to open last Fall.

KIM MASLAND: The Sackville-Bedford-Burnside Connector was delayed because of moving of ash trees and some extra environmental permitting that had to go through. We expect that connector to open late Fall, which will be really great. As far as the Bedford ferry continues, we are really excited to continue work with the JRTA, an absolutely fabulous Crown corporation that has been set up to study how we move traffic in and out - people and goods in and out of our city within that hour commute and we look forward to their report that will come out at the end of November as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

NRR: BAILLE ARD TRAIL STATUS - UPDATE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I have a local question. There is a beautiful trail in Sydney - the Baille Ard Nature Trail - was built by hundreds of volunteers all over the community from Sydney and beyond. Over the years, governments - whether you are a politician or staff - looked at protecting that land to make sure that it continued to be a trail. We were in conversations with the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables for years to do that and I am being told that it hasn't been finalized yet.

My question to the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables is: Can he give me an update on the status of the Baille Ard Trail?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Obviously I would have to look into it to get any information about that specific trail, but it gives me an opportunity to highlight the many trails that we have all throughout the whole province and about protection about different lands. My colleague in the Department of Environment and Climate Change and I are charged with looking at the list of the (inaudible) list from the 2013 list and advancing that forward. What I can say to the member is please reach out after the House is done and we will certainly get you an update for that trail.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Ultimately that is all I can ask the minister to do at this point. It is an important trail and, as I said, hundreds of volunteers all over the Greater Sydney area built that trail themselves with a lot of love and support. There are a lot of local donors who provide support to that trail and it's probably one of the biggest forested areas in Sydney. Some of the land was allocated for housing and then the other piece is allocated for a trail that families all over Sydney use. I guess, if I were going to ask a question to the minister at this point: Could he give me an update as soon as possible just so we can relay that, get the paperwork done, and protect that trail for future generations?

TORY RUSHTON: Trails are very important to us all. All of our constituencies have these and it is a great opportunity for our residents to get out and visitors to come see - a great part of our province is trails, and different areas offer different aspects in nature in different parts of the province. It is a great initiative and over the next few months maybe I might even get there on the trail or maybe different trails to advance some interest in our trail network as well. We will keep you posted.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

FTB: BASIC PERSONAL TAX EXEMPTION - INCREASE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Nova Scotians are paying the highest taxes in all of Canada, and many Nova Scotians are struggling financially. People are contacting my office like never before: working families, seniors who have worked their entire lives, young adults, persons with disabilities, and more. This government does have the power to make life easier for Nova Scotians. One such measure is increasing the basic personal tax exemption. We are the lowest in Canada, making us pay income taxes before anyone else. Will the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board help struggling Nova Scotians by making a commitment to increase the basic personal tax exemption?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Affordability is a big concern, and we know that taxes are a cost for people. What we have been focused on is - as you know in the last

budget - indexing of income tax brackets, which will start to benefit people, and the benefit to them will grow over time every year.

I also want to mention something else that a lot of people don't know about. With changes at the federal level around Guaranteed Income Supplement, anybody in this province who is in receipt of the Guaranteed Income Supplement actually gets their provincial income taxes rebated up to \$10,000. With the changes at the federal level - I'll explain more.

THE SPEAKER: Order.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: As I said, Nova Scotians are paying the highest taxes in all of Canada, and one of the areas where we're seeing increasing pressure is around property taxes. In Cumberland and throughout all of Nova Scotia, we've seen an influx of people moving here, which is positive, but it's increased housing prices, increasing market value assessments. For example, a new home for a nice young couple starting a family maybe used to cost \$150,000 but now might be \$300,000. We all know once a house sells the cap is removed, making home ownership nearly impossible for young adults in our communities. My question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board: Will he commit to working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to work on a real solution to addressing the high property taxes in this province?

THE SPEAKER: Order.

ALLAN MACMASTER: To finish my last point - the changes at the federal level - continuing the policy of giving back those taxes for people who get the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the dollar cost to the Province is in the millions, but we're glad to do it because we know it helps.

On property taxes, we do the assessments - the Province does that. We have the property cap, which I realize works for a lot of people but not everyone. The actual tax rates - there's nothing stopping municipalities from lowering a tax rate if there's been a significant appreciation in the assessments, because they're getting a lot more revenue. If they choose, they could lower the rate a bit to help give some relief.

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

DCS: MORE ON RED. INCOME ASSISTANCE - EXPLAIN

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. Since 2021, when this government took office, the number of unhoused individuals receiving the reduced income assistance essentials rate has increased dramatically by 1,000. My question is to the minister: Why are we seeing this alarming increase?

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I would ask that the member table that information. What I will table is the executive director of AHANS, Michael Kabalen, who said:

I think, just to pause, this government has made some of the most significant investments in generations in affordable housing and toward resolving homelessness. The challenge has been after many years of relatively low and no investment. It's almost like we have to play catch-up . . .

We are investing in every aspect of the housing market, whether it's transitional housing, shelters, permanent housing, or, for the first time in my lifetime, public housing. I just ask that the member table that document and get on board.

[11:00 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Just to note, the document is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: They're investing in everything, potentially it seems, but not in the Income Assistance essentials rate. Vince Calderhead, a Halifax-based human rights lawyer, has demonstrated that this \$380 monthly rate is, in fact, not enough to cover food, medications, and other basic goods. With the severe lack of affordable housing, people are staying in temporary shelters longer. This means individuals will be forced - by this government - to go without proper food and medications for extended periods of time. How does the minister expect people to afford to find housing, let alone other essentials, on this rate?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I do find it strange that the member is talking about Income Assistance when she personally voted against indexing Income Assistance. The reason why we indexed Income Assistance is because it rose by less than 1 per cent in five years under the NDP government. Now that it's law, every government, every year, has to index Income Assistance. That's a positive thing, and I don't know why they would vote against those things. The truth is housing starts and the building of housing - we've heard it over and over and over saying that it's down. Don't believe me? CBC's "More new homes being built in N.S. this year than any 1st quarter since the 1940s" - the 1940s. There's more housing being built, there's transitional housing being built, and when transitional housing was being built in her community, she did not stand up . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: . . . for it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

EECD: NEW SCHOOL BUILDS HOLDUP - EXPLAIN

BRAEDON CLARK: Last June, 15 months ago, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development announced that four new schools would be built in high-growth areas of HRM. I know that in my riding - in Bedford, in Hammonds Plains, in Clayton Park, in Fairview and Timberlea and Middle Sackville, everywhere on that side of the harbour in suburban Halifax - the schools are full or over capacity. I know the minister has said that she will be as excited as any of us when the announcement is made, but my question is: Why has it taken 15 months to get essentially nowhere on this issue? What is the holdup?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I've been asked a number of times in this House about our capital plan and the building that we're doing. I can say we understand that circumstances are different now in HRM and across the province. That is why we invested \$50 million in a strategic land acquisition envelope for the Department of Public Works to secure land in the ever-increasingly difficult HRM, where it is challenging to get land. That process is under way, and I will be so excited to share news when we have more details around where those HRM schools are going.

I've been asked about capital on a regular basis. I haven't been asked about learning. Education is so much more than the walls that are around the students, and we are doing so many more things than just investing in capital.

BRAEDON CLARK: I appreciate the minister's response, but it is difficult for students to learn when the school is so overcrowded that they have to have lunch at 10:30 a.m., or they can only go to the playground twice a week, or it's difficult to get into the washroom from the modulars, where we have 12 modulars, for example, at a school that just opened a year ago. This is a problem. I understand the minister has mentioned land, and I appreciate that's an issue. But I'm also wondering: Has the department received a recommendation from HRCE as to where these four new schools will go?

BECKY DRUHAN: When we are in a position to announce the locations of new schools, I am so thrilled that we will also be able to say that those students and families, that those students will be in classrooms, free from the distraction of cellphones, which is a game-changer for learning. Those students will have access to new approaches to literacy and math to support their learning. Those students will have access to an affordable lunch program for the first time ever because Nova Scotia has invested to build a program that will deliver lunches to students across . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order.

BECKY DRUHAN: . . . the province . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, order, order. (Interruptions) We're almost through here.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

BECKY DRUHAN: . . . affordable for all, free for those who need it, fuelling learning for our students.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Bill No. 469, An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the Hunter Church Building Fund (amended).

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

KIM MASLAND: I move that Bill No. 469, An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the Hunter Church Building Fund, be read a third time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I would just like to say about this Bill that the Hunter Fund has done so much for the halls and manses and sanctuaries of the rural churches in Nova Scotia, it's a pleasure for our party to support the change in their governance that they have requested in this Bill.

THE SPEAKER (Nolan Young): If I am to recognize the honourable Minister of Public Works it will be to close debate on third reading.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I thank my honourable colleague across the aisle from Halifax Chebucto for his kind words. I was asked to present this Bill, a housekeeping amendment, and I move to close third reading of Bill No. 469, an Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the Hunter Church Building Fund.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 469.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 487, the Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre Continuation Act.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: I move that Bill No. 487, an Act to Continue Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre as a Society under the Societies Act and Repeal Chapter 16 of the Acts of 1990, the Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre Act, be read a third time.

Before I move to close debate on this Bill, I would just like to take a minute and thank everybody who has been part of this Bill and getting us to this point. I'd like to thank all members of the House for your co-operation in delivering for Kings County, and the advocates that have been looking for this for many years. I'd specifically like to thank the member for Kings North, who has worked in conversations with stakeholders for the last few years. I'd like to thank the Minister of Community Services, specifically, and the Minister of Service Nova Scotia for their contributions. Yes, indeed, you did well.

Thank you to all members. I'd specifically like to thank the member for Kings South and his co-operation on this Bill. As I said the other day, as a former member representing Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre, the member for Kings South's co-operation on this Bill was key with all members of the House. I'd like to, specifically, on the floor of the Legislature, thank him for all his service to the people of the Annapolis Valley for all the years he has given to the Annapolis Valley.

I'd also like to thank the people who came to speak at Law Amendments Committee: Greg Barr, from the Municipality of the County of Kings; Phil Warren, the board chair for Kings Regional Rehabilitation Centre, for their contribution at Law Amendments Committee the other day. Thanks to all who spoke on this Bill.

The last point I'll make, just as a reminder over the last few years, how blessed I am to be in this government and work in this House, that when you have the right people

at the right place at the right time, you can get good things accomplished for your community. I'm very pleased and honoured to be with this group in getting this Bill over the finish line for the people of Kings County.

With that, Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 487.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 487.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Bill No. 467.

Bill No. 467 - Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, an Act to Amend.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I move that Bill No. 467, the Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

As I've said before, there are some philosophical differences about the solution to the housing crisis in this House, and even outside of it too. We can all agree that Nova Scotians need more choices in their rental market, and a higher vacancy rate that will slow rent increases and make it more affordable for all Nova Scotians.

All of that means we need more housing supply. That's why our government has a housing plan and it's working. Housing starts are up, and our plan will create tens of thousands of new units. Some, even those in the Opposition, like to suggest that none of the new units being built is affordable, but that's not true.

We are investing in affordable housing. We are investing in supportive housing. We are investing in student housing. For the first time in my lifetime - and the Minister of Community Services noted, in his lifetime too - the first new public housing units in this province.

We are creating the conditions needed for more construction by encouraging more students to go into the skilled trades, new incentives to mentor apprentices, bursaries and tax support for young tradespeople through the More Opportunity for Skilled Trades program. We're doing a lot to increase the housing supply, but while we do that, we need to protect Nova Scotians and balance the rights of tenants and landlords as best we can.

We're continuing the rent cap, as we know. We're also making changes to the Act to address tenant behaviour, subletting and eviction timelines. I know there's been some debate on the eviction timelines for rental arrears, so I do want to provide a bit more clarity and reassurance for members and Nova Scotians.

We know that many people are worried about their housing situation, and some of them may not fully understand the changes that are being made. Nova Scotia currently has the longest rental arrears eviction timelines in the country. Right now, landlords must wait 15 days after a tenant's rent is late to file an eviction notice. These changes mean they will be able to file an eviction notice three days after the rent is late. So if you don't pay your rent on the first day of the month, the landlord will have to wait the second, third, and fourth days, and can serve notice on the fifth.

After that - this is the part that some folks seem to misunderstand - tenants who want to stay would have another 10 days to pay the rent or dispute the eviction notice with our Residential Tenancies Program. As I've said before, once an application is filed to the program, it stops the clock.

Do these changes mean a tenant would need to be out three days after the rent is late? Of course not. I know some Nova Scotians are struggling financially. We heard a great deal at Law Amendments Committee about people who are struggling with increased costs, and I know that causes stress and worry. We also heard from landlords who say they'd rather keep a good tenant than lose them.

Ultimately, tenants do have to pay their rent, and these amendments haven't changed that. If someone is a good, reliable tenant who has been paying their rent on time for years, many landlords will be willing to work with them to make payment arrangements.

We can't paint all landlords and all tenants with the same brush. There are landlords out there who might always be looking to raise the rent by a higher amount, but it's not all of them. Similarly, there are tenants out there deliberately not paying their rent.

[11:15 a.m.]

We had one presenter at the Law Amendments Committee who was really worried that, after a decade of paying rent mostly on time, her landlord might use these provisions to try to evict her. I know there's lots of fear out there about the housing crisis, and I want to reassure tenants and everyone in this House that repeatedly paying rent late will be clarified in the regulations. This change isn't meant to evict good tenants who've paid rent late once or twice over several years.

I have used the example of someone living near a drug dealer before. Let's try another one - a parent with a young child living next to another tenant who might be hosting a lot of loud parties late into the night. Speaker, the family's right to enjoy their home in peace is being violated, but it's hard for the landlord to evict the partying tenant. In that scenario, the family might feel that their only option is to move, but obviously, that's a tall order in today's housing market. These changes clarify circumstances when landlords can and can't end a tenancy so that they, their tenants and neighbours can continue to live in their homes with peace of mind.

We're also making a couple of changes that, as one witness said, just make sense. This includes clarifying that tenants can't sublet their unit for more rent than they are currently paying and publishing director's orders in full or in part at our discretion. We're also creating the common anniversary date for land lease communities to make landlord rules clear for all tenants in their community. This will make it easier and clearer for those tenants.

I know there are lots of people who express frustrations with the Residential Tenancies Program, but I want to remind everyone that it's there to help both tenants and landlords, and when you apply to the program, it works. We worked hard to get our wait times for a hearing down to four to six weeks. We have streamlined our process. We're getting a damage deposit back so it can be done without a hearing. We're working hard to improve our systems and to triage emergency hearings.

We have dedicated staff who are there and ready to help, and who want to help. Our staff help to mediate disputes between landlords and tenants, and after a hearing, they issue orders to identify the next steps that need to be taken. Sometimes that can be real measurable financial help for a tenant, such as a break on their rent if the repairs aren't being made.

I want to reassure all Nova Scotians that the program is there. I want to thank the staff of the Residential Tenancies Program for the hard work that they do to support all Nova Scotians - the 300,000 tenants in this province and the 6,000 landlords in this province - understanding that the rental market is ever-changing, and we'll continue to address the changes as we move forward into the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for those comments. It will come as no surprise to members of the House that I have serious concerns and reservations about this Bill that I have mentioned before. If I could summarize my views on this Bill in particular, I would say it's one step forward and four steps back when it comes to rental market.

The step forward, if I want to start on the good side, is that the government has acknowledged that there is a need for a rent cap in Nova Scotia. We agree with that. That's my one step forward, very quickly.

In terms of steps back, we agree there has to be a rent cap, but we don't know why it has to be 5 per cent. We have given the minister and the Premier endless opportunities to explain why it is 5 per cent. We have not gotten any answer whatsoever. Even if it was an answer that I totally disagreed with, I would be happy just to have one so at least I knew what I was dealing with. Evidently, that's not going to happen. That's disappointing, but I guess that's what the government wants to stand on: 5 per cent "just because."

Again, the deadline doesn't make sense. That's pretty obvious. There's no reason to just keep extending it for two years. It should be based on something more concrete, like the vacancy rate, which is what we have put forward as a party.

Significantly, it's not just problems with what is in the Bill that I have issues with - that our party has issues with - but what is not in the Bill. What is not in the Bill is anything to do with compliance and enforcement, which we have an expert report on, suggesting that we take that forward. The government's position is that it's not necessary, everything's working.

The minister said two minutes ago when you apply to the program, it works. In some cases, yes, and in many cases, no. I think that's why we need to have a compliance unit for egregious, repeat offenders. You could also have provisions in there showing landlords who have convictions under the Act, like they have in Ontario, so if you're a potential tenant, you know what you're getting yourself into ahead of time. If you see a landlord who has three convictions over the last three years, maybe you want to stay away. That's a good thing for us to know.

No enforcement unit is a big miss. Five per cent is a number that is far too high. The year 2027 is an arbitrary deadline that makes no sense. We have no rental registry. Again, this is one that bothers me because I think it should be a fairly uncontroversial, non-partisan issue - to collect data in the rental market so that we can all make better decisions and don't have to stand here and talk about the epidemic of fixed-term leases without anything other than anecdotes, reports, and stories, which are valuable but also don't give us the full, complete picture all the time.

That's a real shame, because in other areas of the government - like Health, for example - there's a real emphasis on data, which I agree with. There should be data. The Minister of Health and Wellness was talking about the importance of data the other day. I agree with her on that. I wish the Minister of Service Nova Scotia would agree, as well, when it comes to 300,000 Nova Scotians who are renters.

There are some small pieces of this Bill that I agree with, particularly the fact that a rent cap will continue for the next two years. Beyond that, there are major holes in this Bill that the government has shown no interest in addressing anytime soon. That is a real shame, not just for the 300,000 renters in Nova Scotia, but also for the landlords in Nova Scotia, because they're dealing with an uncertain system with decisions that are being made with no real justification. That is the principal job of government. It's not just to make decisions. It's also to defend decisions, and this government does not do that very often.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: With the imminent passage of this bill into law, a number of very difficult things are about to become deeply entrenched in the lives of the people of Nova Scotia:

- 1) With this Bill, the government is deeply entrenching the fixed-term lease system into residential tenancies in our province. That is, with this Bill, fixed-term leases ought not any longer to be thought of as singularities, one-off abuses, or anything of this sort. They have become the very system of landlord-tenant relations in our province.

Landlords have been very candid in their appearances at standing committees of this House - most recently this week at the Law Amendments Committee - about how we got to this place and how this came about. First, they have explained fixed-term leases became used more broadly - more broadly than their obvious, limited, on-the-face-of-it purpose - in response to the security of tenure provisions of the 2010 Residential Tenancies Act. Fixed-term leases allowed landlords to evade security of tenure by, in effect, having tenants take up residence on a long-term probationary basis.

Then, with the first rent cap in 2020, the practice became even more widespread as a way of generating a yearly supply of new tenants to whom the rent cap would not apply. By 2024, so widespread has this practice become of undermining security of tenure and undercutting the rent cap through fixed-term leases that tenants' advocates now see very few forms of leases other than fixed-term leases, and 22 per cent of those forced to live outside in our province identify either renovictions or evictions at the close of fixed-term leases as the reason why they lost their home.

With this Bill, what was once an occasional aberration has become deeply entrenched as the very system of residential tenancies in Nova Scotia. The result is that to rent your home in our province is now, across the board, to live standing on one foot with your housing permanently under a question mark, with all the anxiety and all the uncertainty that entails. That's one.

- 2) When members of the government vote for this third reading of this Bill, they will - we should be very clear - be deeply entrenching the failure of the rent cap to actually cap the rent.
- 3) The rent cap in place at the moment can only be regarded as a complete failure. It has set rent legislatively at 5 per cent, and rent has increased more than three times that to 18 per cent or a little better. Yet, in the context of this failure, every single one of the defining features of Rent Cap Failure 3 - the tying of the cap to tenancies rather than units, the exemption of certain forms of leases from the cap's provision, the lack of a system for deriving the percentage of the cap - every single one of the defining features of Rent Cap Failure 3 is carried over here in this legislation, holus-bolus, into this Rent Cap 4 that is before us.

I can't think of any other instance where a public program has failed so completely as this 5 per cent to 18 per cent non-cap rent cap, and then at the conclusion of this failure has been adopted lock, stock, and barrel, without reform, without adaptation of any kind - as the successor program to itself. The result can't be anything other than to deeply entrench the present rent cap's failure.

- 4) With the passage of this Act, the government - make no mistake - will be deeply entrenching imbalance in landlord-tenant relations in Nova Scotia, an allowable annual rent increase that provides landlords, at 5 per cent, two and a half times more than the rate of inflation. New rules: reducing the time before rental arrears may lead to the initiating of processes for eviction from 15 days to three; eviction grounds expanded; processes expedited. What was a system for incentivizing eviction in Rent Cap 3 is about to become a system for incentivizing and facilitating eviction in Rent Cap 4. This entrenches the imbalance of power between landlords and tenants at a whole new level. With this legislation, Speaker, the landlord's party has buttered both sides of the landlord's toast.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise on third reading of Bill No. 467 in response to changes being made to the rent cap and the Residential Tenancies Act. I want to preface my comments by saying that not all landlords are bad, but there are bad apples who are running roughshod through our system. My community is experiencing a housing crisis.

In Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier and across CBRM, many community members find it increasingly difficult to afford rent or find suitable and affordable rentals.

This Bill does nothing to protect renters in the CBRM. If passed, it will further price people out of their rental units due to the 5 per cent rental cap, which, as my colleague said, is really an 18 per cent non-cap increase, which is the highest in all of Canada. This increase could have been avoided if the PCs had brought in actual rent control. Where are these people to go? Some people in my community have been on the wait-list for four years for housing, and the emergency wait-list for those who are unhoused has been increasing every day.

[11:30 a.m.]

In this Bill, the PCs had the opportunity to close the fixed-term lease loophole, which landlords use to increase rents on their units by evicting the current tenant. Again, when a community member from my riding or in the CBRM falls victim to this misuse of fixed-term leases, where will they go with high rents and vacancies so low?

One of the few places renters and landlords agree is the need for a tenancy enforcement unit. It's a place where the renters and landlords agreed, and yet, where is it? As the MLA for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, I've heard horror stories from renters about mould growing up the walls, holes in the ceilings, front doors being removed, power and water being shut off, and so much more. It's not just one, it's many stories. I've also heard stories of tenants who have damaged property from landlords. They all agreed that the regime we have for disputes has no teeth.

In this Bill, the PCs had the opportunity to bring in a tenancy enforcement unit but have chosen to do nothing except evict tenants faster, adding to the growing number of community members in my area living rough.

I cannot in good conscience support Bill No. 467 knowing it will harm Cape Bretoners and all Nova Scotians.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise to share a few words of disagreement about this Bill. Others have been far more eloquent and have argued a lot of the very specific points.

I have to say that when this Bill was tabled, I was actually quite shocked. I was quite shocked based on what I see happening in my riding, what I see happening in other ridings, the conversations I've been having with folks - really, since I've been elected - with seniors in my riding who find themselves on fixed-term leases and are being presented with impossible choices and having to leave their long-term homes, with seniors calling

and saying that not only are they leaving their long-term home - their long-term apartment - but that they're headed for the streets.

I know this from talking to students who are regularly asked to sign illegal leases, including fixed-term - well, fixed-term leases are not illegal, but also having parents as guarantors; international students facing different types of questions - all kinds of issues in a deeply unstable housing market.

Honestly, I think I'm just a hopeful person, which is great, but I really thought that there would be legislation brought forward that actually attempted to fix the situation. I literally couldn't believe that this is what this government brought forward.

I think that some of the changes in terms of the eviction process - I mean, there is no balance. They're all focused on enabling landlords to have greater powers. I immediately received dozens of emails from folks in the constituency, including from Katerina Allan, who then subsequently appeared at Law Amendments Committee. I said, "You should write and share some of your analysis with the committee. You should come present." I think that she really walked through quite practically the challenges of having that initial three-day period. Having the current 15 days actually protects renters.

Fifteen days does not seem like a very long time for that process to start, but it protects renters by having multiple pay periods during a 30-day window, ensuring that unpaid leave due to illness does not lead to eviction. It allows time if people are laid off, or perhaps they have a seasonal position, a Summer job - it allows them time to then look for their next work. We know that many Nova Scotians live paycheque to paycheque, so these types of protections are really necessary.

I'll table what Katerina had brought to Law Amendments Committee. I think it was a really important consideration. I can't remember if it was her or someone else who also mentioned even things like the federal government's Phoenix pay catastrophe. Being partner to a federal public service manager, I can tell you that situation actually was quite unreal, and people were without proper pay for months and months and months and were remortgaging homes, borrowing money from wherever they could to stay in their homes. Again, if you were a renter who is a federal government employee, so should have a stable work environment, you would have been really struggling in that case.

Then, I also just want to talk about this 5 per cent cap. First of all, it is a cap. It's not a system of supportive rent control like we have called for time and time again, and 5 per cent is not tied to inflation. It is unfounded. You know, I don't understand why there isn't a formula behind the 5 per cent. I just can't quite believe that there isn't a formula behind the 5 per cent, but since one has not been provided, then I guess that's the case.

I want to just read from the e-mails that I have received - I can table them - about what 5 per cent means. I will quote from this one e-mail:

Anyone who thinks 5 per cent a year for the next four years is a cap that is worth anything at all, they're crazy. That will put my rent up \$400. My disability pension is not going to go up \$400 a month, and I am going to be homeless. I don't know what world the government is living in thinking people can afford 5 per cent a year for four years. They are not helping us, they are hurting us.

Let me read another excerpt:

I also wanted to add from my personal perspective. I never expected, as a citizen of this great country of Canada, that I would have to choose between rent, medicine, and groceries like so many of my American friends. Yet here I am, for the first time in my life, deciding what to cut from my grocery list so I have enough money to afford all my diabetes and blood pressure medication. I have no disposable income whatsoever to afford any mobility devices, and as a result I don't leave my home.

Another excerpt:

My partner and I have been living in this apartment for four years. The rent has risen from \$1,600 to \$1,900 a month, an 18.5 per cent increase without a single renovation, and those apartments at this building that have been vacated, the rents have risen from \$1,600 to \$2,600 a month. A 62.5 per cent increase. So the rents rise and rise but my pension doesn't. Oh, and the house that we were renting in 2020 for \$800 a month is now renting for \$2,500 a month. A 212 per cent increase in the same time.

And here is somebody who walks through their very specific situation:

I am writing to express my concern about the 5 per cent rent cap declared by the Nova Scotia government this week. Here is what a 5 per cent increase over a period of seven years actually means to someone like me. My rent has crept up to \$2,213 a month over the last years. Five per cent is \$116 a month in the first year - this year - which is an increase of \$1,394 annually. Five percent in the second year is an increase of \$122 a month, or \$1,463 annually, and so on and so on for five more years. Five per cent rent cap will mean an increase of \$945.95 a month over seven years for me. Five per cent rent cap means that in seven years I will be paying my landlord \$11,350 more a year than I pay this year. I am a senior who lives mostly on a fixed, non-indexed pension income. Five per cent is much too high, even for retired teachers.

As I said at the beginning, I was shocked – flabbergasted, I would say - that this is the response that was tabled to the growing housing crisis in Nova Scotia. It is deeply out of touch with the realities of Nova Scotians, and I know that it will have detrimental affects on folks in my riding.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: There is a lot to say here, but I think we are all in the same breath here when we talk about: Why is this piece of legislation coming forward so quickly but yet doesn't have the information in it that needs to protect all parties?

I am just going to say that we need to do better. We could be doing better for all Nova Scotians. This sitting, we've had one Bill on the table on housing that will directly affect housing negatively. That in itself is absolutely disappointing.

We have been asked to come back here and sit, to be able to help Nova Scotians with legislation, through our legislation. We are not helping Nova Scotians with the legislation put forward. There's no Bill on creating affordable housing other than by us on our side, no amendments to fix the loophole on fixed-term leases - which could have been added to this residential tenancies Bill - no homelessness strategy, legislation to create a plan to tackle this issue which I think the minister is very well aware that is about to explode.

We will pass this legislation, and we have already been feeling it in our offices on multiple occasions after the previous legislation was put forward with the 5 per cent cap. Now we are going to be experiencing an overload in the number of things that are going to be happening, that I know the minister understands.

I just wanted to say that we were in Law Amendments Committee and a number of people came and a number of folks from all side came and spoke about the Bill and it wasn't in a positive way. I mean, if folks came in and said, "We really think this is great, those are things to consider" - but every person who came in there had an issue with the Bill, whether it be on one clause or another.

We, as the NDP, suggested to take this Bill back to the department, have it looked at, go through some amendments, figure out how we can make this Bill better, like we often do.

During Law Amendments Committee I was reassured by the member for Hants East that the time for amendments was during Committee of the Whole House. So even though my motion was not passed, to be able to have this go back to the department, I felt like: "You know what? Maybe there's going to be an opportunity for us to bring forward some amendments on all sides" - I was hoping to see some government amendments - "to be able to make sure that we are protecting Nova Scotians in the rental market."

I want to say I appreciate all of those folks who came to Law Amendments Committee who poured their heart out, gave relevant data, spoke firmly about their personal experiences, with hopes that amendments would come forward in the Committee of the Whole House that would be reflective of what was said and presented.

Amendments were presented by the Opposition side and I really feel like it could have helped the Bill. It could have done some things to protect Nova Scotians because the rent cap is not rent control. It would have at least tried to balance it a bit more instead of the imbalance we have put forward today. Yet, to my surprise, none of our amendments were taken or even considered, even thought of.

Yes, I did say 10 days because it is quite a quick turnaround for all these things. I also wanted to point out the fact that the minister says time and time again that the residential tenancies is working, everything that is happening is doing great and they are doing amazing work.

Yes, the staff at the residential tenancies group or board, or whatever you want to call it - RTA - they are doing an amazing job. They are doing their best with what they got put forward in front of them.

What we could have done is we could have - in agreement with all parties, that was put here before, whether it was tenants or landlords and parties across the aisle - we said an enforcement branch was needed. We all agreed that that was important.

The minister looked at us and said: "There has to be a balance, we will consider that, we'll take a look at the report." Lo and behold, it was recommended, we all agree on that. I can say it on this end, we agree on that, and at some point the government side agreed as well, so I am confused as to why we don't have something in place to help those staff in Residential Tenancies to do the work they need to do in an efficient and timely manner for folks in Nova Scotia.

I'm just going to use a small example because I know the minister talks about how using Residential Tenancies works for landlords, it works for tenants, it's for everyone and it's a balance - the process works, that's what we heard today.

In my community there's a 73 year old woman who is disabled, who can't read or write because of her disability, and she has a severe physical impairment. She was given notice to quit in March. Processes were followed, absolutely, walked them through the process, educated them on the Residential Tenancies Program, went to the hearings with them - did all of that stuff - and they were given a Notice to Quit at the end of March.

Let's just put this in context. Right now, they pay a little bit over \$1,200 for their apartment, but the landlord - other accommodations next door to her are paying \$2,100. This tenant has been there for multiple years. She has tenure, right, and no problems, none

that we know of. Apparently, the landlord's putting a Notice to Quit. Went through the process, won the claim, and found out that the landlord was overcharging them, because we do the research and all that stuff. The landlord was overcharging them, illegally, and so they had to take the landlord to Small Claims Court, which works out great.

[11:45 a.m.]

Then the landlord filed another Form J, a Notice to Quit, and they went through the hearing, and they found that the landlord was not in the proper means to do that stuff. They had a mediation. Things were working out great. The next day, the landlord filed another form and tried to push his way into her home to give them the paper, which caused this woman to have a stroke - which in turn had her hospitalized - and we had to work with this person to make sure that they made the hearing, that they were able to do this work that they needed to do.

When I hear the minister talk about the process works - it works when you have support. It works when you have people who know the process. It works when you have them, but there are a number of folks - I mean, I'm going to point to my colleague from Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, who has a person who doesn't leave their home, who doesn't actually access all these supports. What do we do for those folks? If we had legislation in place that was able to protect landlords and tenants, to be able to make sure that they have a stable home and stable processes, then this wouldn't be happening.

I just want to say what I've heard from this government every time is that their housing plan is working - build faster - and the answer to the housing crisis is supply, which, you know, when we ask, What's the timeline for this supply? When is this going to be built? - it's just like that, crickets. Excuse after excuse, passing the buck, talking about the federal cousins, my car broke down, the dog ate the plan, you know, whatever that is, it's being thrown at us. No answers to Nova Scotians, no answers to questions, because you know what? They know the plan. They got it together. The process is working. What we haven't heard or seen yet is how this government is making lives better for Nova Scotians. Legislation can do that. That's why we come into the House - to work.

On the housing front, we see nothing. No units are ready for all those who are unhoused. Don't get me wrong: We have shelters, we have Pallet shelters, we have a number of things that are temporary, but we don't have any units. Housing supply that is built today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next yea - we have no timeline for that. We know that the vacancy rate is 1 per cent. That hasn't changed, and yet we are in Year 3 of this term with this government, and all we hear are announcements. We have non-profits building units for folks in record time. They got it together. They got it together. They need the funding. They can build it, and it can be ready for folks before the next season.

This government, with all the resources at its fingertips - and yet we have no idea when anything can be built or anything can be done. We haven't even made a dent in the

vacancy rate. When we talk all about the supply, more homes, what we want is a stable housing market. I'm still waiting for this government to make some bold moves to make Nova Scotians' lives better - so not worse, not worse at all - and this Bill put forward is not one that we're seeing any change in, other than in the negative way.

We need to do better for Nova Scotians across this province. They deserve it, and everybody who comes in and talks to us, comes to our office, comes in for Law Amendments Committee, you know, they deserve to have an answer to a question about why their lives are the way they are, why they're struggling. We've given suggestions. We've given feedback. We've given recommendations. There have been reports of recommendations, and yet we don't see any of those things happening.

Think about this today, and I just want you guys to keep your minds open: When we leave here today, think about those who are struggling to make ends meet. With rent rising, grocery bills up, health care needs, folks being evicted just before Winter, think about it: Where is this legislation to help those folks in Nova Scotia?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The situation for renters in Dartmouth North, in HRM, and across the province is getting more and more dire. Rents are incredibly high. We're hearing about studio apartments going for \$1,700, and one-bedrooms are over \$2,000. These are not luxury apartments.

The fact is that most incomes are nowhere near adequate to pay these prices, and it results in people being evicted for non-payment, defaulting on their power bills or other loans, not taking the medications they need, not eating enough and getting sick, or experiencing crippling anxiety and fear about all or any of the above.

People contact me every single day for help with housing. They can't afford where they're living. They're living with an abuser, and there's nowhere to escape to. Their landlord is moving into their unit, and they have to get out. Their power has been cut off. The list goes on and on.

Let me be clear: These are not calls that I get once a month, every couple of weeks, or even every couple of days. These calls come in every day, and most days there are more than one. People need help, and they need it now.

Yes, supply will help a little, but supply is coming in years and not days or months, and there is no guarantee of what the rents of all these buildings will be. People need housing that is adequate and that they can afford. There are some solutions to this that the government is at best ignoring and at worst working against.

We need a system of rent control where the rent is tied to the unit and not the tenant. This Bill does not do this. We need a system where there is no financial incentive for the use of fixed-term leases so they would be used for the intended purpose instead of for landlords to skirt the rent cap, as we heard about in Law Amendments Committee. This Bill does not have that.

Instead, it provides a pathway to homelessness, which, by the way, quadrupled in HRM since this government came to office. We need a system where there would be no financial incentive to make buildings pet-free when they were always pet-friendly; no need to charge for storage lockers when they always had been included in the rent; and no need to renovict tenants when there is nothing more than a cosmetic improvement needed to do to a unit or building. This Bill does not have this.

If not fair or affordable, the rent cap will give some predictability to renters for the next couple of years, but what happens then? This government is determined to return our rental market to a scenario where there is no control at all. We need this Bill to legislate permanent rental control tied to the unit and not the tenant.

The opportunity to bring this Bill forward could have done so much good, but it actually does the opposite. It will not help the housing and homelessness crisis, and in fact, it will probably make it worse for all these reasons I have laid out. For the tens of thousands of renters I represent in Dartmouth North, I cannot support this Bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I won't take a long time here. I've been thinking a lot about people whom I've heard from over the last couple of years who are really struggling to find accommodations. It's become harder and harder.

Recently, I received a really articulate letter from a young woman who had moved into my constituency because she had been on a fixed-term lease for a number of years. Then, with the latest fixed-term lease, the monthly rent was going up \$1,000 and she couldn't stay there.

I ask: How many of us could absorb a \$12,000 increase in one of our monthly bills? Most of us could not - not just because we haven't had a raise since 2013, but most of us could not.

What we're hearing from constituents is they cannot absorb these increases, so then they have to move. The problem with that, of course, is that moving costs money. Think about every time you have to move, how much that costs. It's not just the truck that you have to rent or the movers, if you are so inclined, but it's all of the re-hookups. It's all of the time that takes. It's the disruption in your life. For so many people across our province, this has become their annual reality. They're getting kicked out because an increase is

beyond their ability to pay. I don't see anything in this Bill that is going to help the situation we're dealing with.

When I moved here in 1984, Nova Scotia was going through an accommodation crisis. The vacancy rate was 1 per cent or lower. I'm not sure. It was very difficult to find a place to live. We ended up finding a place in a building that was known for some of its tenants' ability to sell not-quite-legal things, but it was the only place we could find.

The difference of then versus now is we were able to save and buy a very modest first home - I think it was for \$57,000 - on Flying Cloud Drive in Dartmouth-Cole Harbour. We were able to get out and start on that path to home ownership.

I was looking on Flying Cloud Drive the other day and I noted that one of those little townhouses - and again, a very modest townhouse. It had that terrible carpet that was really short and industrial. It was rust or avocado; we had rust. Just really terrible carpet, but you couldn't destroy it in any way, shape or form. One had sold for \$400,000. I was 25 years old when I was able to afford that first home. How many young people can afford to buy a townhouse today, a year out of university? Very few, not without help from the "Bank of Mom and Dad."

Many Nova Scotians, many Canadians, help fund their retirements, help their kids get through college, because they have an investment in a house. I fear for young people today because they can't afford an apartment and, if they do, they're on a fixed-term lease, so guess what happens when that comes up? The increase is massive. I don't see anything in this Bill that's going to change this.

We keep hearing figures being bandied around about the number of units being built and yet they don't seem to appear. We are three years into this government, and it just keeps getting worse.

I think back to my constituent who wrote to me that she could not afford for her rent to almost double. She could not afford to pay \$12,000 more every year for her apartment. Who among us could do that? This is the situation we're dealing with, and this is why this Bill doesn't help with it. It is not dealing with the actual situation on the ground.

It was interesting to go to Law Amendments Committee, because one of the nice things about Law Amendments Committee is you get to hear both sides of the story. Hearing about landlords who had reserved a unit for a child and then they couldn't put their child in it - I understand that. I was concerned about that too, but if you have a tenant who is paying rent on time, is quiet, doesn't cause trouble, and you're telling them for five, six years, you get a fixed-term lease, you get a fixed-term lease, and then you hit them up with a \$1,000 increase because that's what the market will bear right now in some places. We're not dealing with the issue. That's the problem with this Bill.

[12:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I want to rise and say a few words to what we think is the most challenging Bill for sure of this session. Every day I go out into the hallway after Question Period, and I hear the Premier answer questions put to him by the media. It's sort of like a mini-QP out there, and I also respond to those questions. The Premier often says: "We're doing what we can." I think that this Bill is a really clear example of not doing what you can.

I don't take issue with the need to build housing. We need to build housing. We think a lot more of that housing should be affordable - genuinely affordable - for Nova Scotians who need housing. We think that's what's within the government's power, but that's not what this Bill is about. Notwithstanding the fact that every time we've asked about this Bill and debated about this Bill, that's the answer we get. We ask: "How are you protecting renters?" We hear: "We have to build housing." It's a little bit of cognitive dissonance because the reality is, the line, the assertion, "We need to build housing for Nova Scotians, Nova Scotians need us to build housing" - absolutely.

There are 300,000 Nova Scotians in this province who are renters. That's almost one-third of our population who pay rent every month. Based on what we know the average rents are, I suspect that most people paying market rent in this province right now have higher costs than the majority of the people in this Chamber.

Most people in this Chamber are homeowners. Some people in this Chamber - now I'm judging based on age and stature, so I'm not trying to stereotype anyone - have paid off their mortgage, or I wish for them that they have. I think it's really important that we think about the pressure that those kinds of housing costs cause people. More than \$2,000 for a one-bedroom apartment. When I rented a one-bedroom apartment on Pizza Corner - that's another story - when I was in my early 20s, it was \$450 a month. It was a big one-bedroom apartment with a big living room. We were right above the King of Donair Plus, as it was at the time, so we did have neon in our windows, but otherwise it was perfectly suitable.

That actually was not the cheapest apartment we could find. You could rent an apartment and pay your bills and save money. I think that it is a categorically true statement to say right now that that is not possible in this province. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says that he believes that the most affordable home is the home you can own. We have almost no path to home ownership in this province for renters right now because they simply are required to pay too much money.

The question is, and the devil is in the details: How do we fix it? I think that probably all three parties in this Chamber would have different ideas about that, and they

do, because we've seen the legislation. This government is doing nothing to fix it. Nothing. This Bill preserves the rent cap at 5 per cent. We've heard lots of stories about the ways in which that will impact people negatively. It tightens the timeline for evictions so that those people who are struggling to pay the rent - based on the submissions of Dalhousie Legal Aid and other housing support workers - will functionally be unable to get help when they need it because of the backlog of cases that these organizations have. It doesn't close the fixed-term lease loophole.

I want to address one myth that I hear about fixed-term leases, and that is that the reason we need them is because non-market housing providers use them. That's true. I've had conversations with those non-market housing providers. But here's the really important difference about those housing providers - the AHANS, the Adsums, and the others: They, by dint of their mission and the type of housing they supply, have rent control. Their housing is rent geared to income. They have no financial incentive to evict a tenant.

That doesn't mean they might not have a tenant who isn't a fit for their housing, and that fixed-term lease allows them flexibility, but the government could put everyone in that situation by tying this rent cap to the unit instead of the tenant. That one simple change, which we suggested but was turned down, of connecting this rent cap the government has brought in - this government that doesn't believe in rent caps and doesn't believe in rent control - this is a Bill with a rent cap, but they've made sure that the rent cap is functionally useless, because it is not tied to the unit. Therefore, any landlord has the incentive, if they are under financial pressure - or a bad actor, but many are just under extreme financial pressure - to evict.

This Bill gives landlords the incentive to evict people. That might be something we could stomach and call an ideological difference if we had more than a zero per cent vacancy rate in this city, certainly, and not much higher in the rest of the province, but we don't. So when people get evicted - when people get evicted in this way, I should say - when people's fixed-term leases are not renewed, and then the new tenant comes in and pays a thousand dollars more, those people cannot find a place to live. We have heard story after story of them leaving the province, moving back home, and in the worst cases, becoming homeless. Every single MLA office has heard these stories.

I think it's so important to impress upon this government how little they are doing with this Bill. This Bill brings no balance. There is nothing in this Bill that protects renters. Yes, there is a rent cap in place. There is a 5 per cent rent cap in place. For the small number of people who have periodic leases and are able to hold on to them, their rents will be capped at 5 per cent, but we heard from my colleague, the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, what that means in real life: 5 per cent is not nothing, and 5 per cent compounded turns out to be quite a lot.

That 5 per cent is the highest in the country. Do we have the highest incomes in the country? Do we have the highest number - do we have the highest vacancy rate in the

country? No, but we have the highest rent cap in the country. Why? Because Cabinet decided that behind closed doors with no rationale. It's not tied to CPI. It's not decided by the NSUARB, as our colleagues in the Liberal Party have suggested. It's a number that someone literally pulled out of a hat, because there's no formula that gives us that number.

The last thing I want to say is that when this Bill was introduced, after many requests to see the Davis Pier report on tenancy and on a compliance enforcement unit, the minister, after saying that that report didn't recommend a compliance enforcement unit - which we know it does, as it's been tabled in the House - decided not to go ahead with that. That would have been balance. That was something that landlords and tenants wanted that would give some measure - not enough, but some measure - of balance to ensure that everyone can avail themselves of the rules and the regime that the minister likes to reference in this House so often.

The reality is, as we have told in story after story, many people don't actually get to use the system as it was designed. It's abused. It's not as accessible to everyone. It's extraordinarily hard to navigate without help.

On the topic of health, I want to address comments that have been made by the government many times this session that infer that we are not giving Nova Scotians the true information about residential tenancies. I want to assure all members and all Nova Scotians that that is the majority of what our constituency offices do. We might as well be RTA consultants because, literally, that's what we do. People come in, and they bring us eviction notices, and they bring us Form As, and they say, "What does this mean?" and "How do we do it?" We help them as much as we can, and we send them to the agencies that know more than us. It's all we do, and it's not enough. It's. Not. Enough.

As the MLA for Dartmouth South, I want to say that when I knock on doors on Gaston Road, when I knock on doors in North Woodside, when I talk to people across my constituency, what I hear is fear and concern, and a desire to be able to build a life, and frustration that costs are making that impossible. I want to say that Nova Scotians deserve better than this. They deserve better from this government - this government that says they are doing what they can is not doing what they can for the 300,000-plus Nova Scotians who rent.

THE SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister, it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Just because you keep saying something over and over again doesn't make it true. Just because you keep saying the Residential Tenancies Program is broken over and over again doesn't make it true. It's concerning to hear some of the mixed messaging from the NDP caucus: the program not being accessible, made to

be difficult. What I find deeply concerning - I can appreciate tenants who are in a difficult situation, faced with an eviction. That's very stressful and a source of anxiety.

Unfortunately, I've noticed that since my time in becoming minister, there is this picture being painted that you need a lawyer to go to the Residential Tenancies board. You do not need a lawyer to go through the Residential Tenancies Program. It is accessible. You can apply online. You can apply in person. Both tenants and landlords have that option. We're making it easier for tenants to get their security deposits back.

It's just concerning to hear comments that members of the House are helping their constituents, but giving examples on the floor of the Legislature, whether it be about eviction notices due to pets - and I've reminded members in this session and in past sessions of the rules, and they're still bringing them up. They're saying that they are not able to be addressed in the program, and that's not true. They're saying that eviction notices for renovations cannot be addressed. That's not true. They're saying that changes for fees - storage lockers or parking, things that were included in a previous lease - that you can't get those addressed. That's not true. Tenants have the option, and I would encourage them, if they have something to dispute, to go through the program. I've said it before. The program is there. We have dedicated staff who are willing and able and want to help Nova Scotians address these disputes.

I heard some comments that lead me to believe members don't understand that it takes time to build. If only the bold and historic investments that our government is doing today, and since the early days of our government, had been started 10 years ago, perhaps we would be having a different conversation right now in this Chamber. Perhaps. If only. For the benefit of the House, here we are on September 20th. Fall is in the air. I'm going to table all the investments and the announcements in housing - housing alone - that our government has made in Nova Scotia for Nova Scotians just this year.

I guess this is where I get mixed opinions from the NDP caucus about the cost of property ownership. If you're privileged enough to own a home in this province, you are very well aware that property taxes have gone up. Utilities have gone up. Mortgage rates have gone up. Repairs have gone up. Insurance has gone up. Those same costs - property owners and landlords are facing those costs. Again, I have said it before during debate, and I have said it before probably during Question Period, that every action has a reaction, and we do not want landlords to be leaving the market and losing their units that we so desperately need to be part of the solution.

I'll touch quickly on the CEU. We asked Davis Pier for a report. They gave us the report. They gave us an option to look at, if government were to consider it. We considered it. We did a jurisdictional scan across the very few other Canadian provinces that have a compliance and enforcement unit. There were a number of gaps. They identified that it would not benefit tenants and landlords. It would not be bringing forward and addressing

the scenarios and the stories that members opposite and even, with respect, that tenant and landlord organizations are bringing forward. It would not.

[12:15 p.m.]

I believe it was the member for Bedford South who said we need tickets, charges, and fines. Look in Manitoba - they had eight penalties in four years. As I noted before, part of our program is continuing our education and awareness campaigns - continuing to educate and inform tenants and landlords of the entirety of the process and to remind tenants, if they are faced with an eviction notice, to apply to the program. If they're faced with an eviction notice because of pets, because of changes to fees, because of a renoeviction - and to insinuate that there's no process for renoeviction, and that minor repairs are going to get through the program - I will remind members of the legislation we passed in Fall 2021 that strengthens and puts some rigour to renoevictions in this province. There is a process in place, and it does work.

In British Columbia, they're turning away approximately 40 per cent of complaints. In Ontario, they're waiting over a year for resolution to residential tenancy matters. That doesn't sound to me like a good idea. When you're faced with a bad idea, I don't think you should shy away from doubling down and saying it's a bad idea.

All that said, I guess I would have a question for the NDP caucus and the Leader of the NDP: When will they realize that the Liberal-NDP carbon tax is a bad idea and stand with Nova Scotians? (Interruption) They want to talk about affordability in this province. That is the single biggest move they could make today. The Leader of the NDP could stand and join her colleagues - NDP colleagues across the country - and stand against the Liberal-NDP carbon tax. It's punitive. We recognize it's punitive. The fact is we recognize it's punitive.

We also recognize as a government that we have to continue to take bold actions to support Nova Scotians. We are supporting Nova Scotians. We are investing in Nova Scotians, in public housing, supportive housing, student housing, and affordable housing. We're investing in the Property Tax Rebate for Seniors, Your Energy Rebate Program, Seniors Care Grant, Heating Assistance Rebate Program, More Opportunities for Skilled Trades, removing the provincial portion of the HST on new builds, and - I would say one of the biggest accomplishments of this government - a school lunch program. The members opposite may not believe that's a good thing for Nova Scotians but I can assure all Nova Scotians that it's a good move and it's a good thing for Nova Scotians.

I know members opposite don't want to indulge me and hear my comments. Members across here listened, and I think it was probably for over an hour, to their commentary, four more years. I'm going to conclude because I know my comments are on the record. I've answered the questions from opposition during Question Period, recognizing that the rental market is tough and it's tight, that Nova Scotians are facing

tough times. We are there, our government, to support them. We know that the absolute solution to the housing crisis is more housing.

We are doing it, Speaker. We have an action plan, a housing plan. It is working, despite what the Opposition will say. They will continue to repeat things over and over again, hoping it will be clipped and it will be said: "Yes." People will start believing them. Guess what - on this side of the House we're going to continue saying the truth, we're going to continue to say what we're doing because it's supporting Nova Scotians.

With that, I move to close third reading on this Bill.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 467.

All those in favour of the motion? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

ALI DUALE: Joining me in the House today is Foseah Issa, her husband and son, Hasamusa and Abdi-Mahamud. Foseah is the Executive Director of the Stable Family Development Centre in Edmonton, Alberta. Foseah is dedicated to supporting immigrants' families, newly established families here to find their part and to try for a successful life. Foseah is working incredibly. I ask Foseah to please accept the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable Government House Leader

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Bill No. 471, Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act.

Bill No. 471 – Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I move that Bill No. 471, an Act Respecting Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

I am pleased to rise to speak on Bill No. 471. My Cabinet colleagues and I have put forward a Bill that advances Nova Scotia opportunities by protecting the health and safety of Nova Scotians, promoting our offshore wind industry, and strengthening regulations for important historical industries across this province.

Amendments to the Forestry Act will help protect Nova Scotians from the ever-increasing risk of wildfires in the province by removing all exceptions to the daily burn restrictions. Going forward everyone will need to follow the daily burn restrictions on the Burn Map or get an industrial permit when appropriate.

We take the safety of Nova Scotians seriously - so much so that we're also increasing the fines that we can pursue by laying charges that require a court appearance, from \$100,000 to \$1 million for corporations and from \$50,000 to \$500,000 for individuals.

We're working hard to develop our offshore wind industry, with our first call for bids set to go out next year. Our federal counterparts are working on their legislation for regulating this new activity through Bill C-49. We continue to urge them for quick passage of this Bill to ensure we meet our offshore wind targets in 2025. That's why we're putting our mirror legislation on the table now so that everything is tidied up by the time that everything rolls together.

I want to reiterate our commitment to working with our First Nations partners throughout this process. They've been involved with the conversation to date, and they will continue to be involved in the conversation as we move forward. We will not move ahead without hearing the feedback from our First Nations on this matter.

Our goal is to have a thriving offshore wind industry that benefits Nova Scotians, our First Nations communities, industries - including fisheries - and all Canadians, for that matter, to be the first offshore wind development in this country. We need everyone at the table to make sure that things go right.

The amendments to the Accord Acts allow the federal and provincial ministers of natural resources to determine the areas where offshore wind could be. I can tell you that we do not support offshore wind happening in areas that are in conflict with protected areas. Neither the federal nor the provincial governments want to develop offshore wind on Georges Bank.

I've given this commitment in writing to members of the fishing industry, and I will keep that commitment. Speaking with my federal counterpart this week, we both intend to keep that commitment. We're going to make sure we effectively manage both our economic and environmental protections.

The intention for amending the Marine Renewable-energy Act is to facilitate an interim pathway, just in case Bill C-49 does not pass in time, to proceed with a call for bids and avoid any delay. The amendments do not allow us to proceed with developing an offshore wind industry without our federal partners. We cannot do that. It just gives us a different pathway forward to pursue this industry in our jointly managed waters in time to call for bids next year. Either way, we will be working hand in hand with our federal government to establish a regulatory process and do the first call for bids for offshore wind in 2025.

This Bill does not change our promise to put a regulatory framework for offshore wind in place for joint waters before we consider any projects in any provincial waters. I said we will do that before we look at any activity in provincial waters, another commitment that I intend to keep.

We fully expect that any future offshore wind development projects will need approvals from all relevant federal and provincial regulators. This would include getting all the necessary permits, licensing, and conducting an environmental assessment. Again, our goal is to ensure sustainable development while we explore this new renewable energy sector in our province and our country.

Changes to the Gas Distribution Act allow gas utilities, like Eastward Energy, to move toward low-carbon fuels like hydrogen and renewable natural gas. To do that, they need to recover costs from gas ratepayers when they make cleaner fuel investments in the sector. These investments could be things like contracting for cleaner fuels or developing for their own hydrogen projects. The changes we're making through this Bill will allow the UARB to have these considerations.

Amendments to the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act will improve the licensing process for low-impact, sustainable aquaculture. The amendments to the Act will streamline regulations for shellfish and aquatic plants, promoting sustainable growth. The process for marine fin fish aquaculture will include increased public engagement when applications go to the independent Aquaculture Review Board for hearing and decisions.

Amendments to the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission update language to reflect the current remaining members: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and P.E.I. This Bill removes Newfoundland and Labrador from the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission and renames the commission back to the Maritime Provinces Harness Racing Commission.

Finally, we're moving amendments to the Public Procurement Act. They ensure that the province's process for procuring goods and services are aligned with our goals to support Nova Scotia businesses. Basically, if a Nova Scotia business is within 10 per cent of a leading bid for a government contract, and the other bidders are not Nova Scotia businesses, the Province will award the contract to the Nova Scotia business.

In conclusion, all these amendments advance Nova Scotia opportunities, economic opportunities for communities throughout this province, and many of those in rural communities. With that, I will take my seat and we'll hear from the members of the Opposition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

[12:30 p.m.]

RONNIE LEBLANC: It's a privilege to stand and speak to Bill No. 471. I'd like to begin by maybe echoing my colleague's comments from yesterday, from Kings South, more on the process of having an Omnibus Bill. As Opposition, we are assigned critic roles. I know I do take it seriously. Part of that role is to listen, learn, and look at the Law Amendments Committee to give an opportunity for the public and stakeholders to come in and voice their concerns, offer constructive criticism, or provide amendments that the Opposition can put forward.

In saying that, it's the second session in a row where we've seen the government come forward with an Omnibus Bill, which to me is a great concern for our role as Opposition members but for democracy as a whole. I did watch the entirety of Law Amendments, and it is discouraging to see that there are important Bills here. Even if you look at the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act, that is a huge, technical, and complicated Bill. For that to be part of an Omnibus Bill, where a lot of fishing associations across the province - not that they would be necessarily in opposition - I think it would have been important for them if this had been a stand-alone Bill, and that they would have understood what it meant, what was brought forward, and how they could maybe participate in the discussion consultations and bring forward amendments.

I feel that if we keep going down this route with Omnibus Bills, it does take away from a lot of the stakeholders in this province. I think they do have a lot to contribute. Like I said, it's not always about being in Opposition, but it's about understanding what's coming forward and what the impacts are on their respective industries, associations, or what have you. I did want to raise that issue - that it is a serious issue for this province.

I have to ask the question: How do you decide what goes into the Omnibus Bill and what doesn't? To me, this is the most complex legislation the government has put forward. To my mind, it should have been a stand-alone Bill. If you look at the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Bill, that should have been a stand-alone Bill. In saying that, as a fisheries critic, I'm going to stick to my role, but I did feel I had to say that.

On the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act, in large part, the amendments and the changes that are coming forward - I have met with a lot of industry stakeholders, and those are a lot of the amendments they were asking for. When it comes to additional consultation

for fin fish, I think that's a positive. That's something a lot of communities and people were asking for. One thing I've heard over and over again is when it comes to shellfish and aquatic plants. It's a long time coming. Now that the industry is trying to develop and move forward in this province, it's looked at in a different light than maybe the larger fin fish companies and the way they have to go forward for applications, which costs a lot of money. On that, I think those are pretty much good amendments, and I do support them, but it comes back to the Omnibus Bill.

It would be nice to be able to vote on a Bill specific to aquaculture, rather than a Bill that's across the spectrum, from Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act to aquaculture. I feel fisheries is important enough that it should come to the Legislature as a Bill on its own. I think that's very important to the province.

On the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act, I did have concerns about the Georges Bank moratorium. Full disclosure: We did look to put forward an amendment, but the way the Bill is structured, it didn't really fit in there, so that's why in the end we decided not to put in the amendment.

I do appreciate the minister committing to that and committing to - for offshore wind - not going to provincial jurisdiction before they do look at the offshore jointly managed. Again, the big concern for me is the speed at which the Bill is going through, the fact that it's in an Omnibus Bill. I don't think stakeholders really understood what the Bill was about and what it meant for their respective associations. As stakeholders, I think they have to have an opportunity to come forward and really lay out what they see as the challenges that each Bill has for them.

I'll leave it at that, but I do urge the government to really look at the Bills individually. I take great pride in being the fisheries critic. It's important to our province and it should come to the floor of the Legislature as a stand-alone Bill. I will let my colleague say a few words.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I'm just going to rise for a few minutes to offer a few comments on this Bill. Actually, what I'm going to do is talk a little bit about what I was hoping when I saw the words "Nova Scotia Opportunities Act," and that the Minister of Agriculture was one of the sponsors of this.

Hope springs eternal that this government will recognize the agricultural sector for the backbone of this province that it is. I just invite you to dream a little dream with me. I am just going to list off the priorities that have been clearly articulated by our agricultural stakeholders - in writing, in meetings, in events - that we need to see real movement from this government on.

First of all, I thought maybe it's the announcement of the Nova Scotia Food and Beverage Strategy promised since 2021. Lots of consultation. Still MIA.

Then I thought maybe it's the actual integrated business risk management system that people have been asking for. The agriculture sector does not want any more one-off responses to the climate crisis. In particular, I can tell you that there was really difficult implementation this past year of the Season Extension Enhancement Program. I received many phone calls from people very concerned about how that was happening.

Speaking of season extension, we need to invest in season extension, and we need support for folks to be able to enter into processing and manufacturing. This is what will really allow Nova Scotia farmers and producers to support the Nova Scotia economy, and support Nova Scotians to have access to local foods all year round. Folks want to invest in season extension, but they need support so that they know they can access the insurance needed to protect their investments.

We need to end the commercial wine bottling program. In Nova Scotia, local wines currently hold 9 per cent of the market share compared to 23 per cent in B.C. and Ontario. We can do so much better for our amazing local wines.

A lot of these core ideas have been presented, and I'm happy to table it again. In the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Growing Nova Scotia Together program of action - it was initially launched a couple of years ago - its content remains incredibly relevant because none of it has begun. I'll give you some sense of some of the other priorities in that area: support farms to increase productivity and efficiency through meaningful investments in aid of technology; pay attention to agricultural land, including establishing a provincial land bank program to ensure farms have access to rent or purchase land at an affordable rate to support farm succession and growth; encourage farmers to look at agricultural easements; pay attention to soil health; pay attention to water health.

Under labour and workforce: work with the industry to establish targeted immigration programs to support farm workers and farm operators moving to Nova Scotia; support farm succession by applying a new entrance lens to policies and programs to foster profitable and equitable farm transitions. We know that we have an aging owner workforce in the agriculture community. We know succession is on the minds of many. What is clear - what people have been telling me - is that succession is far easier when the sector is stable: when we do all those things like integrated risk management, offer support for season extension, and make sure that the insurance is there to protect those investments.

We really need to enhance the support for temporary foreign workers while in Nova Scotia. We need to provide access to MSI upon arrival. Specifically around business risk-management programs, we need to look at the Nova Scotia delivery of AgriStability to improve its effectiveness and local uptake; increase awareness of the AgriInvest program and introduce a top-up and a kick-starter program for new entrants; adopt a national

livestock price insurance program in collaboration with industry; and review and adapt the AgriRecovery program to meet the risks faced by the industry.

You can have a sense here that there are very specific calls to action that this government has not chosen to respond to. I'm just going to quote a little bit from the *Growing Nova Scotia Together* document:

Agriculture is the epitome of the term "essential," providing food and products to our communities. Farming is a noble career and a vital industry with tremendous opportunities for the future. We need a targeted plan to alter the current trajectory, enhance profitability and support our future generations of farmers, which in turn supports the prosperity of our province.

I also just wanted to quickly comment on the other thing that could have been but isn't in this Bill, and wasn't brought forward during this time that we've spent together in the Legislature. The industry has been very clear in asking for their involvement in the development of the implementation around Nova Scotia Loyal.

I think the Premier has waved, a number of times, an op-ed from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture - I've just re-tabled it - suggesting that, in that letter, they say to get off the partisan politics, and that is our problem.

I would suggest that a fulsome read of that letter is - that's not actually the tone or intent. I'm going to read what they're actually looking for:

A program aimed at the growth of local markets must be supported by an industry-led, government-supported, competitiveness and growth strategy for agriculture. We are ready and willing to lead the development of a strategy with our partners to ensure the future success of our local food system. Working together to grow the Nova Scotia Loyal program and to develop an industry-led strategy has the potential to transform our local food system - but only if we commit to working together towards a common goal.

I appreciate everyone going with me on that little dream of actually responding to and prioritizing the agricultural industry in this province. I'd love to hear from the Minister of Agriculture as to when we can expect to see the food and beverage strategy, and when we can expect to see some actions.

I guess the other thing that came to mind when I saw the Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act was that I was hoping that it, at the very least, of all the legislation that was tabled - not that there was a ton, but however many pieces of legislation were tabled

by this government - would show some demonstration of implementing the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act. I'll table the Act.

We all adopted that Act. It was an all-party committee that developed the Bill, and we all approved the Act. It calls upon us to make evident how we are considering equity, equality, and justice in the legislation that we bring to this House. I don't see the government doing that work. If I'm wrong, I'd love to see it, but that's what I think of when I see opportunities.

[12:45 p.m.]

I was reminded, when I was thinking about opportunities and the needs that we have, of the YWCA Halifax report that came out in the Spring this year looking at the rate and experience of sexual and gender-based harassment in the skilled trades in Nova Scotia. Here is a perfect example. It's an area where we need skilled trades industries to be working well. They obviously hold a lot of the answers to our key challenges, housing being one of them. Yet we know we have a problem with those people trying to enter the industries. The YWCA has some ideas about how to fix that, and that could have also been part of the Advancing Nova Scotia Opportunities Act.

I think they clearly spend a lot of time trying to mix this all together and come up with a catchy title. We will support the Bill, but I echo my colleague's comments around the use of Omnibus Bills and what really could have been here is real opportunities for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I would just like to add to what has been said about this Bill by the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island about the particular part of the Bill that has to do with the Fisheries and Coastal Resources Act. We in our party are broadly in support of changes that would streamline the licensing procedures in the part of the world looked after under the Act that is made up of shellfish and aquatic plants.

At the same time, in registering our support for this, I think it's important also to register that we are disappointed that the government hasn't taken the opportunity that this legislation presents to address and improve so many of the procedural and other regulatory shortcomings that have been so widely recognized in the oversight process for finfish aquaculture in Nova Scotia.

There are so many areas of this sort that suggest themselves, from the establishment of leasing fees that would be more in keeping with the value of the resource to fair and more substantial fines for non-compliance and non-adherence. In other words, in this respect, this is an opportunity that has been missed in this legislation. Of course, as previous

speakers have pointed out, this is the great danger with a piece of legislation as disparate and lacking in a defining central purpose as is the case with this present Bill.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the minister, it is to close third reading on Bill No. 471.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: With that, I move to close debate on Bill No. 471.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading on Bill No. 471.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, could you please call Bill No. 476, French-language Services Act?

Bill No. 476 - French-language Services Act (amended) and Loi sur les services en français (modifiée).

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

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Je propose que le projet de loi 476, la Loi modifiant le chapitre 26 des lois de 2004, la loi sur les services en français, soit maintenant lu une troisième fois.

Les modifications de cette loi permettent au gouvernement de renforcer son engagement envers la communauté acadienne et francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Il y a 20 ans, en 2004, après le Congrès mondial acadien a eu lieu en Nouvelle-Écosse pour la première fois, cette loi a été introduit et elle rappelle les liens historiques de notre province avec le peuple acadien. Elle reconnaît les contributions du peuple acadien à la Nouvelle-Écosse et l'importance de la langue française à l'épanouissement de la province. Avec plusieurs communautés acadiennes et francophones à travers la province, ces changements législatifs nous permettrons de mieux aligner les programmes et services gouvernementaux pour répondre aux besoins et à la pluralité changeante de la communauté, les communautés qui contribuent à la diversité et au dynamisme de la province.

En proposant ces modifications, nous reconnaissons l'importance de la langue française et nous permettons au gouvernement de répondre aux attentes des partenaires acadiens et francophones.

Je tiens à sincèrement remercier la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, qui est la porte-parole officielle de la population acadienne et francophone de la province. Elle est un partenaire important pour moi comme ministre et pour mon équipe à l'Office des affaires acadiennes et de la francophonie.

Nous sommes à l'écoute, Monsieur le président, de nos partenaires acadiens et francophones. C'est la meilleure façon de préserver et de faire croître nos communautés et d'offrir des services publics en français.

Speaker, I do move that Bill No. 476, an Act to Amend Chapter 26 of the Acts of 2004, the French-language Services Act, be now read a third time.

The amendments to the French-language Services Act allow government to strengthen its commitment to Nova Scotia's growing Acadian and francophone community. Twenty years ago, in 2004, the Congrès mondial acadien was hosted for the first time in Nova Scotia; here we are 20 years later, after the legislation as initially introduced.

This legislation recognizes the contributions of Nova Scotia's Acadian community and the importance of the French language to the diversity of our province. For several Acadian and francophone communities across Nova Scotia, these legislative changes will allow us to better align government programs and services to meet the changing needs of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community.

By bringing forward these amendments, we recognize the importance of the French language, and they enable government to respond to and meet the expectations of Acadian and francophone partners. I'd like to acknowledge la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, which is the official spokesperson for the province's Acadian and francophone community. They are an important partner for me as minister and for my team at the Department of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

We are listening to our Acadian and francophone partners on how to best preserve and grow our communities and to deliver public services in French. I'm eager to hear comments from the colleagues opposite.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Merci au ministre pour avoir amené la loi 476. Je suis en support du projet de loi. On veut tout le temps voir l'Acadie et la langue avancer. C'est ce projet de loi qui continu à avancer ça un peu. Certainement, c'est bon de voir que le langage

- ça démontre l'importance de la culture et de la langue acadienne dans la Nouvelle-Écosse. Je suis certainement fier de voir que ça va être regardé tous les 10 ans.

Vraiment ce qu'on veut faire aussi, c'est prendre une opportunité aujourd'hui de reconnaître le travail que les municipalités qui se trouvent dans les régions acadiennes, le travail qu'ils font pour assurer qu'on a des services en langue française dans nos communautés. Sans doute que des membres - et on prend la municipalité de Clare comme un exemple des (inaudible) efforts qu'ils travaillent et des ressources qu'ils mettent pour assurer que les résidents de Clare ont des services au niveau municipal.

Ça veut dire au ministre - je sais que c'est un travail qui continu. Je sais que c'est important qu'il y ait des services provinciaux, qu'il y ait certains services provinciaux, pour qu'ils soient en français. On comprend que ça ne peut pas être que le travail de la province, mais certaines régions, certaines municipalités, certaines communautés - je pense qu'ils doivent avoir des services en français quand ça va aider des départements provinciaux, pour nommer - comme services communautaires ou travaux publics. J'ai hâte, j'attends, et la municipalité a envoyé quelques lettres à ce sujet-là.

Les associations qui travaillent tous les jours pour supporter nos communautés poussent pour avoir plus de services provinciaux en français.

En grandes lignes, je ne vais pas parler pour longtemps mais mes mots sont d'encourager le ministre à continuer à garder - je sais qu'il a établi un rapport aujourd'hui, je pense, et on va prendre le temps de le lire.

En grandes lignes, je suis en faveur du projet de loi et merci au ministre pour l'avoir amené en avant.

I'll try to repeat myself as much as I can. It's not always easy. We are in favour of Bill No. 476. I think any time a Bill brings forward - pushes forward - the Acadian culture and shows the importance of our language, our culture, and our communities, it's always a good thing. We're happy to see that the Bill - the law - will be reviewed every 10 years.

What I would say is I want to take this opportunity to recognize the hard work that municipalities are doing across this province, in Acadian and French communities, to ensure or try to ensure as much as possible that there are services in French for their residents. I'm going to use the Municipality of Clare as an example, because it's within my community, but I know they have it as a priority to provide French-language services. Even council meetings have simultaneous translation. It does come at a cost, and I know the Department of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie is providing some funding to some municipalities to try to help that. I think the point I want to make is that, for certain municipalities across the province, it is important that they have access to provincial services provided in French, and two departments, I'll say in particular, are the Department of Community Service and the Department of Public Works.

Some residents who move to the area have difficulty speaking in English, so it would be ideal if they would have access to some French-language services, especially around the management of certain departments. I know in the Department of Community Services, we did have a bilingual caseworker who was in Meteghan every Tuesday; with her retirement, now it's by appointment. If you want an appointment in French, you have to ask beforehand, and they will try to provide it as much as possible.

In saying all that, I just want to push a little bit and try to get - I know the minister will work on providing more services to our Acadian communities. Overall, I think you can always do more, but we are in support of this Bill.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Je suis contente d'offrir quelques mots afin d'appuyer le projet de loi 476. Comme j'ai expliqué pendant la deuxième lecture, j'ai eu l'occasion de me pencher sur la question de comment vraiment améliorer la prestation des services en français en Nouvelle-Écosse quand je travaillais à la Commission de la fonction publique de la Nouvelle-Écosse. À travers cette expérience, ça m'a offert une bonne compréhension des défis et de l'effort nécessaire pour s'assurer que les services sont disponibles en français où ils sont nécessaires.

En même temps, en tant que député, je connais aussi l'importance de l'immigration des francophones pour notre province, un projet compétitif dans le monde. Sur l'échelle globale, on doit démontrer notre engagement envers la prestation des services en français. La prochaine étape, c'est le développement des règlements et on attend avec impatience l'implémentation de ces règlements.

In English: I'm happy to rise and offer a few words in support of Bill No. 476. As I talked about in second reading, I had the opportunity to work for the Nova Scotia Public Service Commission and develop an implementation plan around the provision of services in French in the province in 2008. Certainly, that gave me a great opportunity to understand both the necessity of doing this but also the challenges. Also, I know that it's possible to offer better services in French across the province.

At the same time, we want more French immigration. In my riding in particular, I have a lot of francophones from Quebec, Acadians, and international folks, and I know that we're in a global competition for people, whether it's in health or in other types of services. I think folks want to know that they can come to this province and while they'll learn English, they are able to access necessary services in French. We look forward to seeing the development of the regulations to implement this Act.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, it will be to close debate on third reading.

The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Des grands mercis à mes collègues de l'opposition et mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative entière pour leur appui pour apporter ce projet de loi. C'est un projet de loi important à la communauté acadienne. Aujourd'hui est un moment historique, un moment, une journée importante pour l'Acadie de la Nouvelle-Écosse. J'apprécie vraiment l'appui apporté de tous côtés de l'Assemblée.

[1:00 p.m.]

Certainement, les points apportés par le membre de Clare sont appréciés. Nous sommes prêts comme gouvernement - nous sommes prêts à travailler avec les organismes communautaires, avec des municipalités. Nous avons augmenté notre budget pour les fonds communautaires. Je pense que la municipalité de Clare vient de recevoir \$40 000 grâce à une bonification de notre entente avec le gouvernement fédéral pour avoir plus pour appuyer nos communautés, nos régions, plus pour les services publics offert en français et c'est certainement un engagement personnel comme Ministre des Affaires acadiennes et de la Francophonie et en tant que fier Acadien que je tiens au cœur.

Ce projet de loi est un renforcement de notre engagement à la communauté acadienne et francophone. D'autre exemple : la stratégie de l'immigration francophone, un travail d'équipe avec le Ministre du Travail, des Compétences et de l'Immigration ainsi que des organismes communautaires. L'adoption du projet de loi concernant le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial de la Nouvelle-Écosse, la proclamation par le premier ministre du mois d'août comme le Mois du patrimoine acadien - ce sont tous des engagements, des initiatives importantes pour notre communauté pour s'assurer qu'ils sachent qu'on est un gouvernement qui est à l'écoute des besoins et des attentes et qu'on comprend l'importance de la langue acadienne et francophone.

Speaker, I want to thank all members from all sides for their support on this piece of legislation. It's an important moment, an important day, and a historic day for the Acadian community of Nova Scotia.

I want to reassure all members - and I appreciate the member for Clare for raising this - that we are ready as a government to support our Acadian Francophone community. As I noted in French, we provided - I believe it was last month - \$40,000 to the municipality of Clare to improve and to continue to strengthen the amazing work that is being done in Clare to provide French-language services through the municipality.

We have increased our budget to support community groups. We have renegotiated a new agreement with the federal government, which has increased our contributions both provincially and federally and which will allow us to do more: support more community organizations and do more within the public sector to provide more French-language services for Nova Scotians.

This piece of legislation is one initiative that the Acadian francophone community knows - they should know that we are a government that is committed to them and that is listening to their needs. We want to continue to strengthen the French language and the Acadian culture here in Nova Scotia. Add this to the list of our government's support to the Acadian francophone community.

The Francophone Immigration Strategy developed with the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration and community organizations; the passing of the CSAP - the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial - Act by this House; and the proclamation by the Premier designating the month of August as Acadian Heritage Month - these are all important reminders that we are a government committed to support our growing Acadian and francophone community.

With that, Speaker, I do now move to close debate on Bill No. 476. Madame la présidente, je propose maintenant de conclure le débat sur le projet de loi 476.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 476, the French-language Services Act.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 455.

Bill No. 455 - An Act to Establish a Department of Emergency Management and Authorize the Establishment of a Nova Scotia Guard.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Emergency Management.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I move that Bill No. 455 be now read a third time.

I am pleased to speak again briefly on Bill No. 455, an Act to Establish a Department of Emergency Management and Authorize the Establishment of a Nova Scotia Guard. As you've heard me say several times before through this legislation, the new Department of Emergency Management will lead, direct, and support a coordinated response and help meet the immediate and ongoing needs of Nova Scotians when a crisis or disaster occurs.

The new department will include existing emergency response teams from across government and take on expanded responsibilities, including better planning and preparation prior to an emergency, better communication and coordination during an emergency, all leading to faster recovery from an emergency.

The creation of the Nova Scotia Guard, which will be made up of volunteers from across the province, will help communities during and after emergencies. The Guard will match volunteers to areas of need based on their skills, interests, and qualifications. This will include everything from providing care and comfort, delivering food, and shovelling snow to operating heavy equipment and assisting with large animal transport, just to name a few possibilities. The Nova Scotia Guard is about being able to harness the Bluenoser spirit and call on all volunteers who are ready to help the moment an emergency happens.

Our volunteers and existing emergency response organizations are critical, valued, and appreciated. They've given their time and have put their lives on the line to support Nova Scotians in an emergency. We will continue to rely on their commitment and expertise as we move forward with the new department and build the Nova Scotia Guard. I've had the opportunity this week to bring forward in Committee of the Whole House on Bills changes that we made to the Bill to ensure the voices of our first responders, emergency officials, municipalities, Nova Scotians, and all others who participated in our consultations was reflected.

I won't repeat those changes here, but if I had to use one sentence to sum up what we've been trying to achieve with this legislation, it is creating a strong culture of preparedness for Nova Scotians now and into the future. This Bill was not built in a boardroom; it was created with the help of hundreds of frontline emergency responders, community groups, municipal leaders, and many others. As we built this Bill, we listened. Even though the need for this department and a Nova Scotia Guard is extremely important - some would say even urgent - we didn't rush. We took time over the past several months to meet, reflect, and consult, and even pivot when a good idea was raised or a point was made.

Through the last several months, we've had 19 sessions that were held with volunteer firefighters and Ground Search and Rescue teams across the province. Thirty sessions were held with organizations that are positioned to respond during emergencies, such as NGOs like the Red Cross, the United Way, and the Salvation Army. More than 20 in-person and virtual community engagement sessions with community leaders and community groups were held across the province throughout the Summer, and those sessions are continuing. Fourteen community events, festivals, and exhibitions that were held across the province were attended so far, with more planned for the Fall.

Our engagement is not done. In fact, we are just getting started. Several sessions have already taken place to start the process of engaging directly with those Nova Scotians who have registered to be part of the Nova Scotia Guard through an initial series of in-

person information sessions that will be occurring at 10 locations across the province. Those sessions are an opportunity to say thank you to the over 1,100 volunteers who have already registered and to provide an overview of the Guard and get feedback on how the Guard, community groups, and others can support one another to work effectively during emergencies.

In our first two sessions, there was a great discussion on the orientation and training for the Guard, developing different levels within the Guard, how the Guard volunteers will be deployed to support communities, and how to ensure physical and mental well-being of Guard volunteers. There was a lot of passion and enthusiasm, and it is clear the Guard volunteers are committed to helping support their communities and the province during and after an emergency.

Additionally, I was very pleased to see such a great turnout at the Law Amendments Committee for this Bill. The conversation was very balanced, and the vast majority of representatives spoke very positively about the Guard and the new department. We did hear from two career firefighters who had some reservations with the engagement around the Bill. The Law Amendments Committee is a very important way for Nova Scotians to have their say, and I am happy to be able to inform the representatives or anyone with reservations that the minister's advisory panel on the Nova Scotia Guard has representation from career firefighters, including Halifax Fire & Emergency and the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia, who helped advise on the department and the deployment of the Nova Scotia Guard. All firefighters were invited to the 19 sessions I had mentioned earlier. As I've said, we have consulted with hundreds of Nova Scotians, including volunteer and career firefighters. Their voice is important and represented in the Bill.

We have been through a lot as a province over the last couple years: hurricanes, wildfires, floods, historic snowstorms. Nova Scotians have lost so much, but through it all, we haven't lost our strong willingness to help each other. That is very evident in the tremendous response we've seen to this legislation and the many people who are coming forward to join the Guard. Together, we are stronger, and we will do whatever it takes to support each other and our communities in any emergency. With that, I invite comments from my colleagues on Bill No. 455.

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: Through you to the minister, I want to thank the government for taking an interest and at least at a glance, trying to button up the way that we're prepared for emergencies and the way that we have an ability to respond to emergencies. I think all members can agree that we can always do better, and I guess the theme of this Bill for me is that only time will tell whether we have achieved that or not.

I think it's fair to any government of any stripe when they start out with a project to say: "We're going to be cautiously optimistic that things can and should and may

improve,” but today - and by the minister’s own regard - the attempt is to create the conditions for such a scenario. Time will tell whether this government, and we as a province, achieve that goal. Now I have some feedback on the Bill itself and how it took shape.

This Bill was introduced on the cusp of wildfire season this year. It was introduced on the last day of the previous session of the House. Seemingly, I guess a strange way to start this conversation. It felt like the government needed something to go out into the Summer months during wildfire season to say that we’re going to consult, we’re going to do something after the year that we just had.

[1:15 p.m.]

The frustrating point that’s been communicated to me is that it took almost a year from the disaster that happened in 2023 for the government to take a stand and promote the fact that they wanted to do something about wildfire and emergencies in the province. It made it feel like it was kind of being done off the side of the desk. We know by the number of different consultations that have happened this Summer - I understand that the minister’s department has reached out and engaged some people to weigh in on the Bill, and they have come back this Fall, as suggested, to present what we see before us today.

As far as the - I mean, there are two - essentially another example of two Bills in one, an Omnibus Bill. They’re standing up what is being termed as a new department, and they’re also establishing this so-called Nova Scotia Guard. We understand and hope that it does not mow the grass of other volunteer organizations, that it doesn’t take away from the human resources that are already difficult to find with other not-for-profits - the Red Cross, Team Rubicon, the United Way. There are organizations out there that are doing already good work. Seemingly there is a bit of overlap here.

The minister has indicated that this is going to create kind of a Rolodex for volunteers so that the volunteers on this list will be able to support the situation at the time. The communication to us over the course of the last several months was that we hope that this does not compromise the ability for these other entities that we have relied on to date. At least for me, experiencing that wildfire last Summer, seeing their work on the front lines and dealing with a lot of the interfacing with the community on behalf of the government, in many cases, the service providers are the ones that we need to make sure that this Nova Scotia Guard does not take away from. Only time will tell whether that is successful or not.

We know that there are municipal units across this province that play a primary role in responding to these emergencies. Any one of us could account for the good work that municipalities do in their different corners of the province. The minister has also made remarks about the value that we all share in the work that they do and the capabilities that they have.

For me, the government has taken a stance that we need to improve the way that everything is streamlined and the way that we're capable to respond across the board. It begs the question: How is this going to improve, exactly, what is already in place? Can we be reassured that this is going to create better circumstances in our different regions across the province when there are efforts of different first responders, agencies, different municipalities to respond to different emergencies? How is this actually going to create a different scenario, or will this actually create a different, more capable scenario for Nova Scotians, for the agencies that are involved in responding to an emergency? Again, only time will tell.

The minister referenced in a question during committee, when I asked him if this initiative by government is going to be coupled with investments to enhance the capabilities of agencies and critical partners across the province - it sounded to me like the intent was to work with what we have by grouping municipal units together to try to enhance the capabilities, rather than stating certainty around the government's commitment to put in the necessary funds required to enhance capabilities throughout the province.

We know that the government introduced an EMO budget in the Spring that was actually less than last year's budget. So when the government talks about enhancing capabilities, streamlining processes, increasing training capabilities, and standardizing capabilities across the province, it's a little hard to appreciate how they intend to do that, given that they introduced a budget for the EMO in the Spring that was less than what the previous year was. That seemingly doesn't add up.

I know, based on our conversations with fire services, emergency responders, and some of the service providers, that a big issue for them - because they want to do more, and they feel that they have the ability to do more in terms of their commitment to it - is they struggle when it comes to funding things. So okay, we're trying to put our best foot forward. Part of that is showing up with the funding in order to make the capabilities better.

We've had some debate in the House this week related to establishing development in a safe, responsible way. I have tried to get across to the minister, the Premier, and the government the value, importance, and requirement on the planning process to build communities, particularly new ones, that are as safe as they possibly can be for people to come and go - for emergency responders to come and go.

We continue to see the government try to spin this line of questioning in such a way that says that we're against development - that says on one hand we're against development, and the other we want to go faster. I'll speak very matter-of-factly about my community and what I believe is relevant in other communities.

We have historically built subdivisions that are isolated from main arteries and that limit our capabilities to respond during emergencies like the one we experienced last year - and the ones we will see in the future, without a doubt. When the government makes

decisions to sign off and enable new developments that perpetuate the issue of lacking access, it fails to demonstrate to me that they are listening to those who have been through what can only be described as a miserably horrific scenario. It demonstrates to me and others that the government is just looking past this so that they can say they're building more houses.

Make no mistake about it. We do have a housing deficit. We do want to encourage more development, but - I'm trying to make this as clear as I possibly can - we want to do so while we're also maximizing our ability to create safe, complete communities.

I will add, just for the benefit of the record and the facts at hand, I've actually reached out to the ministers and the government's Housing Task Force back in July. I still have not received a response to this letter. This is an ask for the Housing Task Force to get involved with a development in the Middle Sackville area. This development would create more homes, but what it would also do, which is very important, is create an access point between Margeson Drive and Lucasville.

This is a testament to me making an effort to work with the government, to work with the Housing Task Force, to promote more housing development, but also to ensure that we're creating access points, we're creating safer communities. The example of the approval in Fall River - I know the subdivision fairly well. They are enabling a scenario with pushing that development ahead that will make all this work. All this intent behind the Bill at hand takes away from the capability for these groups. It makes it harder for these groups to get in and out of places.

We have a choice to make. We have the capability to do things before developments get started. We're looking at situations like in my community, and in many others throughout our province, where there are legacy issues with the infrastructure. There are historic deficits where developments have happened without an intentional behaviour to enhance the infrastructure that connects these communities.

It needs to be said again that we're not against development. We want, to the best of our ability, to work with the government to promote more housing but it cannot be done at the expense of public safety. The whole point of this Bill is to create the conditions for the best possible scenario we can have to foster a response, to prepare for these emergencies, and to recover from these emergencies.

When we see approvals around these developments without necessary access points, we're just taking away and further burdening the first responders who have to go in, or the people who have to flee these neighbourhoods.

I will say in closing, Speaker, that there are voices missing from this initiative, particularly with recovery being a paramount component to this piece of legislation. By the minister's own admission, recovery is a big part of this Bill, of this project. He has not,

through this Chair, met with the wildfire victims from my community. He has committed in Question Period to do so. He has not met the obligation to sit with these people who have, on countless occasions, reached out through his office to do so.

There is an absence of the voice of the people who had to evacuate my community, who lost their homes, in this Bill. I cannot overstate how frustrating that is. We all have different capabilities to respond to the matters that are brought before us through our constituencies, as a former minister, to respond to the questions that come through our office. Our obligation, first and foremost, as representatives of our communities, as representatives of this province, is to get in front of these people who are going through the hardest of circumstances and have those hard conversations. Those voices that I referenced . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. We're getting a little sidetracked. I was just trying to pull up the Bill to make sure we're tying this back in and we're speaking to the Bill.

[1:30 p.m.]

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

BEN JESSOME: To recap, I'm talking about the minister's admitted purpose behind this Bill, which is recovery after a response. What I'm saying is that he's indicated that he has reached out to a number of entities. He's indicated that every volunteer fire service has been contacted. I know for a fact that the Hammonds Plains volunteers have not been contacted. I tried to get this through to the minister in the Committee of the Whole House, and he made the comment again, so it begs checking that statement. The volunteer agency that was first to respond to the fire in Hammonds Plains-Tantallon was not engaged on it. Their voices are also missing from this Bill.

Ultimately, I'm going to get back to my first theme on this. The theme of this is that we will have to wait and see what happens. It's not something that we are going to stand in the way of. As I said in the beginning, there is merit in taking a look at how we streamline our processes, how we identify our capabilities throughout the province, and how we identify critical partners. On paper, this Bill does indeed suggest a priority to do that. Time will tell whether we achieve this.

Finally, I will say to the staff at the department and those who were involved in the process of making this Bill: Thank you for taking the time and interest to make emergency preparedness better in the province of Nova Scotia.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I will be brief. I want to raise and voice the Nova Scotia NDP caucus's general support for this Bill. Considering the recent and future impacts of

climate change on the province, we know that we need to improve how we manage emergencies. To this end, we in the Nova Scotia NDP see very clearly the need for a new emergency management department. It should not be something that is done off the side of somebody's desk. We support a new EMO department, but it needs to be pointed out that the process of how we ended up with the final version of the Act we are considering today was less than ideal.

With the introduction of this Bill last Spring, dropped into the Legislature on the last day or so, many felt, to quote Deputy Chief Terry Canning, like the province was "jumping into something without considering all the ramifications of it." It turned out that was true. What was initially introduced no longer stands. It was quickly realized that serious consultation was needed to turn this piece of legislation into something meaningful.

We were glad to hear from this government about their consultation and collaboration that took place to revise Version 2 of this Bill, including with our province's dedicated volunteer organizations. I would like to point out that that consultation should have been done prior to the Bill being dropped into the Legislature in the Spring.

We were concerned to hear from the professional firefighters during the Law Amendments Committee that they felt excluded from this consultative process, and we would encourage this government to ensure all relevant stakeholders are at the table as they continue with the implementation of this Bill.

Finally, and most importantly, we want to thank all the long-standing volunteers, especially the members of Ground Search and Rescue and the volunteer firefighters, the auxiliaries, and all the volunteers in Nova Scotia who every day are taking care of their neighbours and all of us, and who jump to serve any time there is a crisis in our communities, and whom we hope will be well served by these changes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill No. 455. This Bill is a watershed moment for our province. There are not many in this Chamber who haven't been impacted one way or another by a catastrophic event in their constituency. We must only look at the last two years to understand the terrible impacts of hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and blizzards to see the lasting effects that these have on our entire communities. By establishing a new Department of Emergency Management and authorizing the creation of a Nova Scotia Guard, we can harness the skill sets both within government as well as the incredible volunteer power found within our own communities.

Everyone has a friend or a neighbour whom we know we can count on. We also know that in times of crisis, people want to help. Just imagine the possibilities when we can connect all these people with a common purpose. To me, that is exactly what being Nova Scotian means. To date, we have had over 1,100 people sign up to become members

of the Guard, and the number continues to grow. There is a place for every Nova Scotian who wants to sign up.

Skill sets can range from chainsaw operators and GIS mapping experts to individuals who own ATVs or snowmobiles, individuals who can help clear debris and volunteers who can step in and relieve fire department auxiliaries when response times or search recovery efforts are long-lasting, like we saw with the wildfires and the floods last Summer. Maybe they are contractors who are already vetted and established to assist with additional gear and operators. To have all those resources organized and managed by the new Department of Emergency Management will better enable us to respond in emergency situations in the future.

When the Bill was introduced in the Spring, our government committed to travelling the province and consulting extensively to make this incredible initiative even better. I attended a session myself in Kentville this Summer alongside members from my own ground search and rescue team, our municipal EMO coordinator, additional members from ground search and rescue, our minister, various fire departments and members from across the Annapolis Valley, and the honourable MLA for Kings West. Everyone wanted to have a voice. Everyone who wanted to have a voice and provide feedback had many opportunities to do so.

Through this consultation, we heard lots of optimism, and we received excellent feedback. Much of what I've heard has been incorporated into the legislation with these amendments that were debated earlier in the week. The Nova Scotia Guard will allow us to support communities more efficiently when they are responding to emergencies in the years ahead and enable better collaboration with partners across the province.

I truly believe that a Nova Scotia Guard will galvanize the volunteer spirit that runs so deeply through our province, and it will increase our ability to respond in difficult times, but mainly it will bring Nova Scotians together, build our resilience, and make our communities stronger. With those few words, I will take my seat. (Applause)

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

LORELEI NICOLL: From what I gather, the idea of the Bill before us - the Guard - was first mentioned in a response to a media enquiry during a scrum with the Premier, which one could also conclude must be the case, as there is no mention whatsoever of emergency management at all in the minister's mandate letter. Unfortunately, it indicates a lack of forethought in keeping Nova Scotians safe during emergencies, much like delaying the immediate need for the vulnerable persons registry, so I am glad that it is in this Bill No. 455.

It is obviously the result of the Emergency Management Office and public relations scrambling over the Summer to present something in the Fall legislative session to make

good on the introduction of the Bill in the Spring. I acknowledge the hard work that did take place over the Summer.

The minister stated during the tabling of his amendments that there was extensive consultation, but from what I heard from rural residents, they were held on poorly planned days and at times during the month of July with very poor attendance. That is the pool I heard from. That said, it is obvious by the length of the amendments that many staff were still scrambling at the time the Bill was brought before us now.

I'm not opposed to the intent of the Bill to provide direction to those who protect Nova Scotians during an emergency, but given the efforts focused on getting more volunteers by this government's staff at farmers' markets and other events with a QR code, it does cause me some concern. Nova Scotians, as we know, are very well-intentioned. I know; it's been my experience as a past Block Parent and Neighbourhood Watch coordinator, Citizens on Patrol volunteer, municipal councillor, and auxiliary member of the Westphal-Cole Harbour Fire Fighters Association.

The one common message to me during all my involvement in those roles was do not put yourself in harm's way. It's not in print, but it's an accepted understanding in rural brigades that volunteers are trained on incident command systems and occupational health and safety. I trust, going forward, that this understanding will continue to be the practice, to protect these volunteers who may be blindly stepping up.

We may have seen how fragmented emergency responses can play out. We have during emergencies, and that is my main concern going forward. I will continue to be until Nova Scotians see adequate resources and funding towards a well-coordinated effort, not piecemeal and not without imperative state-of-the-art coordination.

Currently in Nova Scotia, each municipal unit - regional municipalities, towns, and rural municipalities each have their own emergency management policies and procedures. Naturally, the larger regional municipalities have the resources to respond to an emergency and have their own dispatch system. I understand towns in Nova Scotia do as well. But the rural areas of Nova Scotia are grouped together to form regions, with these regions being large in geographical size, with a dispatch system that is contracted out. As someone said to me, Dispatch service in Nova Scotia is a dog's breakfast with regions identified as the Valley with Kentville, Colchester, Cumberland, East and West Hants, Kings, and Annapolis; Canso, with Guysborough, Antigonish, Port Hawkesbury, Richmond; another in Shelburne, another in Digby and surrounding areas.

With communication structured this way, it causes confusion with emergencies like wildfires, storms, and they all cross municipal boundaries. I have strong concerns about the lack of clear, decisive, immediate communications going out to Nova Scotians during any emergency.

My question to the minister, and hoping for a response in his remarks: Who will coordinate these communications? What will be the plan going forward to ensure each municipal unit, with their various dispatch communication systems, alerts residents efficiently and timely? Who will be the lead, and why is that not identified in the Bill? Will the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office be taking the lead during all future emergencies? Is the minister relying on the individual municipal units to communicate to their respective residents? Once again, emergencies do not abide by physical municipal boundaries. How will this Bill address communications and proper communication during our next emergency?

[1:45 p.m.]

I will use a farming term that the minister has used in the past in discussions with me about “not getting into the weeds.” But we all know if you don’t tend to the weeds, they will choke out your desired plans, and in this case, your desired outcome. In this Omnibus Bill, the details on how this legislation will be implemented are unknown, and how various individual systems will be integrated to ensure communications are dispatched and how these valued volunteers will be protected from harm and liability.

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

JOHN WHITE: Preparing for emergencies is a job of government. It’s achieved through working with our many partner organizations, our departments, and our specially trained administrators. Over the next few moments, I’ll offer a broad perspective as to how I see the Nova Scotia Guard benefiting people in this great province.

My perspective comes from a variety of experiences, including having taken part in several stakeholder meetings, one-on-one conversations with many first responders, real-life experiences - I come from 20 years of firefighting - and having served as a mental health professional and chair of the Fire Service of Nova Scotia’s Critical Incident Stress Management team. In that area, I also received training from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

Together these hands-on experiences and academic training provide me with a broad perspective on crisis intervention. From the direct impacts to citizens to the community at large, the ways in which this new department will benefit the people of Nova Scotia are numerous. This point we have hardly spoken on, but before I do that, I want to correct some records.

Through the legislative process of Bill No. 455, I’ve listened, and I took notice of some of the comments made. Just today, the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville said that tabling the Bill early was a strange way to do it, while yesterday his leader talked about consultation or lack of. How can we do both? Tabling the Bill months early allowed engagement, and I think that’s the sign of a very responsible government.

The member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville talked again today about the lack of correspondence with the first responder team in his region. The Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia, FSANS, is the unifying body of all fire services across this province, and not only were they engaged, they sit on the Guard committee. Their voices are heard: 18 sessions with volunteer fire departments and ground search and rescue; 30 sessions with various organizations, NGOs, as the minister mentioned earlier today - the Canadian Red Cross, the United Way, the Salvation Army; fourteen community events, festivals, and exhibitions across the province so far - more are planned for the Fall; more than 20 in-person/virtual community engagement sessions with community leaders and community groups across the province throughout the Summer. Many more are planned throughout the Fall. I would say consultation is going pretty well.

There's been a theme in the House this week, the last couple of weeks. The numbers don't lie. The numbers just don't lie. I want to be fair, so it was good to hear several members on both sides of the floor recognizing the great demand placed on our volunteer firefighters. To be honest, as a retired firefighter sitting here, I was reassured with that recognition.

The heavy demand that is placed on volunteer fire departments is indeed real, because whether on an emergency scene or planning a community event, fire departments are often the centrepiece of our rural communities. Firefighters are called upon for everything from organizing a community parade to rescuing a cat in a tree. From a full-blown structure fire to a large-scale natural disaster, firefighters are the Swiss Army knives of the modern world.

It is good to see the heavy demand is recognized, and that we all have such great respect for the work they do, and the time that is given up so unselfishly. Truly ordinary people doing extraordinary actions. I'm proud that this government recognizes that great commitment and that heavy demand.

I'll give you a couple of indications, Speaker. Mental health supports for first responders - that was this government - previously done by volunteer groups because other governments refused to take credit for that. We did it. Thank you very much. Thousands of dollars to more than 300 fire departments over multiple years - that's great financial support, which we've heard talked about today.

We can't forget First Responders Recognition Day - made it official. It seems that some members are concerned about organizations having to compete for volunteers, which is a legitimate concern, given that volunteers are not as common as they used to be. Unfortunately, our first responder organizations are not immune to this. However, I want to relieve that concern. I assure you that the Nova Scotia Guard is not here to compete with first responders but rather to help first responders.

We have to remember that firefighters are extremely well-trained. In addition to Level 1 firefighting training, which is typically about a year long, countless hours of specialty training courses such as incident command, extrication, water rescue, rapid intervention, high-angle rescue, medical first response, just to name a few. Countless hours of repetitive training go into making it possible to do the extraordinary acts they do every day. Operating specialized equipment, training in search patterns, radio communications, and various ways of securing water supplies are just a few examples of the repetitive training that is the firefighters' world. In an emergency, the response must be planned, familiar, and swiftly acted upon with confidence. First responders are the hometown heroes.

Equally specialized are Ground Search and Rescue members. These members are very well-trained in the work they do. They are extremely compassionate and committed individuals. From urban search techniques to wilderness search techniques, from search management to instant command, and from collecting evidence to advanced skills in their own survival, these folks are extremely committed to doing the work they do every day, and they give up a lot of time to do that.

A point we do agree on is the quality response from our first responders and their unquestionable commitment to professionalism. For a member to suggest that the Guard fails to support first responders shows a complete lack of understanding in emergency response. In the first responders' world, we often do something that is called pre-incident size-ups. In this preparation exercise, every aspect of a specific scenario is considered, such as apparatus placement for a growing incident; water supply, which could require tankers coming in and out of the scene; various weather-related possibilities in regards to its effect on the incident, the victims, and the first responders; mass evacuation; resting areas; staging areas; and many other aspects that we can imagine that could arise in an event.

From that brief list, you can imagine that there comes a point in time where the task, while necessary, may no longer require the specially trained first responders who already have their hands full. Sometimes community support networks, charities and voluntary organizations help to address these needs, but this is the point where I recognize the great value of Nova Scotia Guard.

The Nova Scotia Guard is an organized resource available to support first responders. I am sure it will now be referenced in many pre-incident size-ups across the province. For example, I think of the great work the Red Cross does. In many calls, we've had to call out the Red Cross in full structure loss. Once you make the call, they take care of the family. It's looked after and we can go back to dealing with the fire. They will continue to do that work. But who do I call when I have to evacuate a farm? Who do I call when I have to clear snow to multiple seniors to get oil in their house and tank? Who do I call in extended power outages? This is the place where I see the Guard really chipping in and helping out Nova Scotians.

The Nova Scotia Guard is a way of helping these organizations as it allows others to chip in where such unique specialized training is not necessary: food handling; constructing temporary structures such as tents; walking dogs; taking care of large farm animals; operating chainsaws; shovelling snow; sitting with and providing comfort to people who are removed from their homes and feeling displaced; or helping an elderly person secure communication with their loved ones who may be worried about where they're at or where did they go. The needs are endless when it comes to planning a large-scale disaster response. It would be irresponsible for a government to not prepare. Given the events we've experienced the past few years, I think it's long overdue for a Guard.

I'm very happy that we have landed on a way that we can support first responders and Nova Scotians in their time of need. There's another aspect to this as well. When people learn of a crisis in a community, often it is followed up with a statement like: "I wish I could do something. Let's go help in some way." Other speakers have talked about the volunteers' donations of clothes and food. I think it was referred to as looking like Costco. Absolutely beautiful to experience, but that's the Bluenoser way. That's what we're talking about here. Not to take away from the great act of compassion, but if you act on that thought - "What can we do?" - it's often subconsciously as much about yourself as it is about helping the individuals who are in need. The feeling of helplessness is an uncomfortable place to sit, and it feeds the seed of empathy. That's why it's the Bluenoser way.

One of the many things first responders deal with when on scene is well-intentioned volunteers who sincerely want to help but sometimes place themselves in harm's way because they are unaware of how to work on a busy emergency scene. The Nova Scotia Guard is a way for those folks to step up in a meaningful and organized way, helping their community, the first responders, and themselves in doing so. The Guard provides coordinated support where a greater sense of unity and a stronger sense of identity are just a few of the benefits of engaging in the community in a crisis response.

First responders know first-hand this experience because the psychological bonding of other members who work on a traumatic scene with them is known first-hand. There's even a name for it. It's called post-traumatic growth. This refers to the positive personal changes that result from dealing with trauma. While I don't believe members of the Guard will be involved in trauma to the same level as first responders, the Nova Scotia Guard will provide this feeling of unity to those who are unable to provide the specialized intervention but are able to help in other ways.

I am sure members of the Guard will experience a sense of community, identification, and unity. They will experience a reduction of the helpless feeling that often crushes a community following a large-scale traumatic event. I believe the byproducts of the Guard's social connection will be increased well-being and a reduction of depression and anxiety. I believe we all want this for Nova Scotians.

Resiliency is what we're talking about, and that is what we are building for Nova Scotia. Resiliency is an individual's or a community's ability to adapt to setbacks. It's the ability to recover in the face of adversity, and it can be directly attributed to the individual or the group having the skills to endure hardship. The ability to prepare for anticipated hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions build resiliency. Whether it is a major forest fire, a flood, or some natural disaster, the strength and resiliency of a community are improved by replacing a sense of helplessness with a greater feeling of empowerment.

The importance of community engagement cannot be overstated because it plays a crucial role in helping individuals cope with the challenges and uncertainties that arise from traumatic events. Engagement offsets feelings of isolation and despair with a sense of solidarity, hope, and a shared purpose, thereby building community resiliency.

[2:00 p.m.]

Imagine all this community-building while providing meaningful assistance to those in need and assisting our beloved first responders. Today is indeed a great day for Nova Scotia.

By organizing our resources and expertise that we already have, we can ensure that people's needs are more completely met during a crisis - all this while providing relief to our trained personnel so that they can use their personalized training to work on the crisis. In the face of changing climate conditions, anything we can do to strengthen our disaster response and preparedness is beneficial, and when combined with prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery, we are strengthening Nova Scotia.

As a province, there is no doubt that Nova Scotia will be better-positioned to deal with crisis by the creation of the Nova Scotia Guard. I want to thank the Premier, the minister, and all the folks in the background who did all this work to help bring this very thoughtful piece of legislation forward.

THE SPEAKER: If I recognize the minister, it will be to close the debate.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I do want to say a few words to address some of the concerns I heard and say a few words of thank you, and maybe just a bit of explanation.

To begin with, I am really disappointed to hear the disparaging words from the Liberal caucus on this. I'm sorry to hear that they will not be supporting this Bill. That's a disappointment. I want to assure them . . .

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: We will be supporting this Bill. My . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. That's not a point of order.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

JOHN LOHR: I will begin again. I'm sorry to hear the disparaging words from the Liberal caucus. I want to assure all members of this House that this Bill is anything but a publicity stunt or a PR stunt. Absolutely, this is incredibly important to Nova Scotia.

Second, I want to assure all members that this Bill is in no way a comment or criticism of our existing first responders, whether they be career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, or search and rescue. We deeply appreciate them. I just want to assure all those first responders that this Bill and what we are doing are meant to help them, enable them, fill in behind them, and work with them. That's incredibly important to us.

In fact, what I want to say is that this Bill is really a result of three pretty brutal years of emergencies of one sort or another and lessons learned. One of the things we learned was that these emergency events that we experienced were of longer duration than we had experienced in the past, and that stretched the resources that we had.

We learned that there were many people who wanted to volunteer during these events. When we talked to other jurisdictions around the world, we learned that other jurisdictions in different parts of Canada and, from what we can understand, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand all have the same situation. It's not just true of Nova Scotia. When emergencies happen, people in the community step up. We can say that's the Bluenoser way - and it is, 100 per cent - but we see it in other jurisdictions too.

The term we use is "spontaneous volunteers." How do we manage and organize spontaneous volunteers? I will say anecdotally that we had in one rural community one fire chief say: "Why do I need the Nova Scotia Guard? If I need 20 people, I just go down to the wharf and get 20 people." I totally respect that comment. That works in that community, but that doesn't work in the larger scale for us. We need more organization. We need to know - we need to be ready to use those people, know what their skills are and that they've had criminal record checks done, and all that.

This is a result of really, as I said, three years of brutal circumstances of various sorts in Nova Scotia. What we learned from those three years in the after-action was that we needed better communication, better collaboration, and better coordination. That's really what this Bill is about.

I also want to say that, in terms of the first responders, as I already said, this will not compete with our existing first responders or volunteer agencies. In fact, if we look at other jurisdictions, we know that we will be able to filter or encourage some members of

the Guard to get more involved. If we look at other jurisdictions as well, some people who sign up will get into it and want to be more involved and we will be able to encourage them to become volunteer firefighters, for example, or firefighters. In fact, of the 1,100 we had over 50 who said they were trained firefighters and were not attached to a fire service right now. That's an opportunity for us to attach them and not retire them. We know that there are people out there. We can use the Guard to help them along and get them involved.

I do want to note that the member from Cole Harbour-Dartmouth made comments about dispatch, and this is one of the areas that, yes, we know we need to do more. This is an area that has been long neglected in our province. We need to do more. We're working on that through this Bill. I do want to say - and as the member from Glace Bay-Dominion indicated - we have increased funding to our first responders, to our firefighters, to our search and rescue, each of the years that we've been here in government. We've also funded presumptive cancer care coverage through LSI, so we're supporting our firefighters. They know that. We've also increased funding to our municipalities through the historic MOU renegotiation which we did a year ago which increased the funding greatly to our municipalities. We recognize how important a part they are in this.

I just want to say in closing that I want to thank the volunteers in Nova Scotia who have already signed up for the Guard. I can't tell you how appreciative we are that we already have 1,100 people signed up, and we have community groups signed up, so we have the Snowmobilers Association of Nova Scotia and many other community groups are signing up as well. I think I said in the House before that, for the first time since 1984, last Winter we needed Ski-Doos and people stepped up. With the Guard, we'll be more organized in that.

There are many ways the Guard can help us deal with emergencies. On the one hand, I hope we never need them to step up, but I know we just never know when the next emergency will happen. We want to be ready. We want to create a culture of preparedness in Nova Scotia.

I also want to thank all of the many people who gave input into this, including firefighters, professional career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, search and rescue, and all of the people who attended, which I add up to 74 different engagements we had over the Summer. I realize that Summer is not a great time to have engagements with the community, but the reality is emergencies can't wait. We felt the urgency to have this ready and get it done. We're in hurricane season now. We've been spared, thankfully, so far on that front, but we felt the need to have the Nova Scotia Guard be ready - as ready as we could have it - if there was an emergency. We feel the pressure of timeliness on this, that we need to have this ready to go if necessary.

In particular, I want to thank my staff who worked so hard on this. They know who they are. Finally, I want to thank the Premier, who was absolutely committed to this project and really was a primary driver on it. Our Premier - I'm really grateful for his support in

making this go ahead, and his commitment to it and his vision for what we're doing is really a big part of this too, so thank you, Premier, for your part in this. With that, I move to close debate on Bill No. 455.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 455.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Bill No. 455 - An Act to Establish a Department of Emergency Management and Authorize the Establishment of a Nova Scotia Guard.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that the Bill do pass and the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the Bill be engrossed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

ADDRESS IN REPLY

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston. (Applause)

HON. TWILA GROSSE: Speaker, I hail from the historic African Nova Scotian community of Cherry Brook, which is a few kilometres east of Dartmouth. It is the home of the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, a one-of-a-kind facility in Canada that houses a museum and a library centre that focus on the history and culture of African Nova Scotia.

A quick fact: I was among the first employees hired to work at the Black Cultural Centre. In 1983 I was hired to work as an accountant/bookkeeper, making \$3 per hour. I come from a family of two sisters and four brothers. My mother, who will turn 89 on October 4th, was a stay-at-home mom, yet she practically babysat every child in the community. We always had children at our house.

My father was a mechanic's assistant, and in all honesty, he performed the duties of the lead mechanic. When folks in the community had a problem with their vehicle, they would always come to Dad, who prepared their vehicles for basically nothing. My parents did an awesome job in shielding us from the realities of growing up Black in Nova Scotia in the 1960s and 1970s. We were instilled with the values of honesty, integrity, kindness, respect, compassion, hard work, and perseverance. I should also mention that the value of a good education was always stressed.

I can recall my parents saying: “Remember, you are going to have to work twice as hard, but a good education will create opportunities and open doors.” I excelled in all levels of education - elementary, junior high, senior high, and university - it was not easy often being the only Black person in the classroom, but I persevered. Racism, discrimination, and prejudice were and still are real.

I know what it’s like to be ignored, isolated, dismissed, and passed over, but this only made my resolve stronger. I used every setback, every disappointment, and every obstacle to strengthen me and become a calm, quiet, but determined voice that would challenge the status quo and make a difference.

I’ve been involved in my church and community my entire life, serving on various boards and committees both locally and provincially. My mindset has always been to give back, to do my best. In my professional career and volunteer work, I practice this motto, which is a quote from Theodore Roosevelt: “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

I am a retired accountant, business analyst, and business planning manager. I retired in February of 2020 after nearly 36 years at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. My experience at the airport shaped me in so many ways and I will always appreciate my time there. I was only 21 years old when I started there. Yes, there were some real struggles, but I was able to grow and excel in my field and I profoundly enjoyed the work and the people. If someone had said to me some 15 months ago that I would be standing here today in this revered and historic place as a member of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, representing the constituents of Preston, I would have said, “Are you for real? Are you out of your mind?”

I have often told the story of how I wrestled with this decision to enter politics. I consulted family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and my mother, who, with her quiet and gentle spirit said to me in June 2023, “Twila, for such a time as this.” I took her words to heart and started to reflect and believe that it was my time.

I want to share with you that shortly after I retired in 2020, my sister, the late Reverend Tracey Grosse - who, by the way, in 1996 became the first female ordained in the African United Baptist Association of Nova Scotia and the first Black woman ordained in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. She said to me, “Twila, you are not finished yet. There is still more work for you to do, so always keep an open mind.”

Well, I never imagined that I would be headed in this direction, but here I am. To put it all in perspective, I remember that on June 20, 2023, I received an e-mail from my brother Conrad, which read: “You did not choose the journey. Others who saw your compassion to help, your determination to lead, and your talents to succeed, it was they who chose you. Let that light shine brightly in you and continue to lead and move forward.”

[2:15 p.m.]

I remember reciting the poem, *Our Greatest Fear*, by Marianne Williamson, in the first person, and it went something like this:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,
talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other
people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of
God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear,
Our presence automatically liberates others.

I want to acknowledge family members who have passed on, because I stand on their shoulders: my father, Kenneth; my grandmother Elizabeth; my brother Blair; my sister Tracey; and my aunt Alma. The one thing they all had in common was their care and concern for others. They were an example of dedication, commitment, and desire to serve others.

I often think about my lifelong mentor, Gloria McCluskey, who gave me my first job at the Halifax Regional Assessment Office and has always kept in touch with me for well over 40 years. Her advice to me has always been, "You are not going to please everybody, so simply do the best you can, and people will respect you for that."

The Preston constituency I represent consists of the communities of Lake Echo, Mineville, East Preston, North Preston, Ross Road, Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, Humber Park, Montague Gold Mines, Westphal, Sunset Acres, and parts of Dartmouth. It is home to two of the two largest African Nova Scotian communities in Nova Scotia: North and East Preston.

African-Nova Scotians and people of African descent make up approximately 38 per cent of the constituency's population. I became the MLA for Preston because I care about my community and the future of its constituents. My desire is that I will be a voice that amplifies the issues, needs, and concerns for every corner of this cherished constituency.

You see, Preston is urban, suburban, and rural, and this represents some unique challenges. The issues in one area may not be the same as those in another area. A one-size-fits-all approach will not necessarily work. What are some of those common issues in this constituency? Health care, support for seniors, long-term care, housing, affordability, and improved transit infrastructure in rural areas, to name a few.

Preston has so much to offer, from beautiful scenery and growing communities to opportunities for development and a real sense of belonging. Many are thrilled that we will soon become the home of a new seniors and long-term care facility. There's development taking place along Highway No. 107 near the Akoma Family Centre. The Orenda Canoe Club, nestled beside the Lake Echo Community Centre, offers a variety of year-round programs.

We have two beautiful golf courses - the Links at Montague Golf Course and Eaglequest Grandview Golf & Country Club - along with a number of thriving small businesses, and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, which welcomes tourists from all over the world all year round. That's all to say that there is potential and opportunities in Preston. Today, we are building a stronger and brighter tomorrow for Preston, and I am committed to illuminating a path forward for everyone's success. I consider it a privilege and an honour to represent Preston.

My real satisfaction comes when I am out and about, whether it be at a vegetable stand - Nova Scotia Loyal - in the grocery store, or simply pumping gas in my vehicle. Oh, let's not talk about the carbon tax. Someone stops to say, "I appreciate the job you're doing. I respect and admire all those who are involved in politics." I realize that, for the most part, it is not about fame or fortune but a sense of duty, a desire and a yearning to serve others and make a difference.

I recognize that there are many challenges ahead. However, I only need to focus on one step forward. I don't need to have everything figured out today. The only way to climb a mountain is one step at a time. I don't think about the peak, getting to the top, or what may come later. Instead, I will focus on taking that one step every day, knowing that

eventually I and we will get there. There are challenges ahead, but there are also many opportunities to make a difference.

I thank the Premier and my colleagues for your support. Together, we will continue to build Preston up.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Thank you, Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Oh, oh, my apologies.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'd like to make a point of privilege.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I think that after 15 years of service in this Legislature, my colleague and MLA for Bedford Basin should have been given an opportunity in Address in Reply and should have been told before it started.

THE SPEAKER: This is not a point of privilege. If the honourable member would like to get up, she could speak. I mean, we saw it yesterday, so sorry, no. And the member is more than willing to. If she wants to, then I will recognize her.

The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank my honourable colleague for making this point. If I had been told that this was going to happen, I might have prepared remarks, but truth be told, I said what I wanted to say when I announced that I wasn't going to run again. I thank the people who are important to me. But it's deeply disappointing, on this very last day of the sitting, that there wasn't even the respect accorded to members on this side of the House that this would be called. I am not the only one on this side of the House who hasn't done Address in Reply. There's another member of another party too. We had no notice. It would have been a respectful, kind, thoughtful thing to do.

As my colleague outlined the other day, there are a number of things that are concerning about the way this House functions, and this would be one of them. I want to thank my colleagues. I'm the longest-serving member here - 15 years - and I have had lovely interactions with pretty much every member of this House. Some were a little more fraught in the beginning, but they have been lovely interactions. And I have so enjoyed representing the people of Bedford. Actually, it was Bedford-Birch Cove, then Bedford, now Bedford Basin. It keeps getting smaller because the population keeps getting bigger.

If I were to, off the cuff, having had no warning that I would be speaking, if I were going to leave any words for this House, I would say to people: Think about how Nova Scotia has changed. In the 15 years that I have been here, the population in the area that I serve has exploded. I am on my third constituency now in just 15 years. I would ask people to think about what we are asking Nova Scotians to deal with. Change is hard. Today when I asked the Minister of Public Works a question, I talked about what we're doing with just the traffic down in this area.

In so many aspects, once upon a time, people could count on having a family doctor or a nurse practitioner. I have no doubt in my mind that we're going to hear changes announced that you don't really have the right to a family doctor, you're not going to get that anymore. Those changes are coming.

[2:30 p.m.]

The schools in the area I represent have been overcrowded since before I became a member. When the new Charles P. Allen High school was being built, I kept sounding the alarm: It's not being built large enough, it's not being built large enough. Sure enough, the day it opened, it was full. It was more than full. We've had to build another high school.

We need more schools. We have Rocky Lake Elementary, which has currently one grade in it. It was supposed to be shut down. I'd be the first to admit that we extended its life, but there was a sunset on that. Now we have no idea whether there's a sunset or not. Sunnyside Elementary was supposed to be rebuilt. If you break your leg or you end up in a wheelchair, you can't get to the second floor in that school. There's no cafeteria. Sunnyside Elementary school doesn't have a gym. It's a hallway. That's where you take gym. There are lots of challenges there to growth.

If I were to leave this House with any thoughts, it would be to have respect for the Nova Scotians whom we are asking to deal with massive change. It would be to have respect for Nova Scotians who, once upon a time, thought that they were going to be able to purchase a home, or that when they sold their home, the money they got from that would allow them to rent for the rest of their days, and now they're finding out it's not. To simply say, Oh, the process is working, and to dismiss their concerns - which we are definitely hearing in Metro daily at our offices about these concerns - I would say, if I were to leave some final words to the House, it would be around that.

It seems to me that in terms of accommodations - where you live - there are some very different striations in society now here in Nova Scotia. If you bought a house - if you were lucky enough to buy a house before the pandemic, you're probably sitting pretty. If you had that house paid off, you're definitely sitting pretty - except where are you going to move to if you sell that house? For folks who are trying to get into the housing market now - and I did speak briefly to this earlier today - I have grave concerns about our young

people. If you live in Metro, it is very difficult for a single person to buy a house, or a couple, because wages have not kept up with inflation and housing costs.

One of my concerns, watching things develop over the last year, has been the “all politics, all the time,” “all PR, all the time,” and the necessity to check and recheck every single statistic that gets thrown out there. We’ve heard statistics like “40,000 new homes.” What does that mean? Where are they from? We don’t know.

I have a friend who’s an accountant. He was telling me about seven years ago about the hollowing out of the middle class in the U.S. He was talking to me about how the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, and there’s just no middle class left there. I have started to wonder if that is what is happening here in Nova Scotia. There are too many people who cannot make ends meet. We never had a food pantry in Bedford. We have a food pantry now. When I look around at what’s happening, and who doesn’t have money, I am deeply concerned.

I guess if I were going to leave some final words to this House, it would be: Thank you to my colleagues for the time we’ve shared here together. We haven’t always agreed with each other - we frequently haven’t agreed with each other - but we have sometimes agreed on things. I do believe that people in this House want the best for Nova Scotians. I think we ignore the growing disparity at our peril - at their peril.

Having spoken off the cuff - gosh, I hope I would have been way more eloquent if I’d had time to think about it - I will say that I am going to miss your eloquence from the member for Halifax Chebucto. Sometimes in this Chamber I hear words that I haven’t heard in a long time, and it makes my heart glad that there is somebody here who is trotting out those words that I probably haven’t heard since university.

I want to thank the people of Bedford-Birch Cove, Bedford Basin, and Bedford for allowing me to represent them for four terms, and to my family for supporting me through those because, as I noted in my retirement remarks, our kids have been through 13 elections. All of you who think, “Oh gosh, I have to go through another election,” think about it if your kids had to endure 13 of them - both parents in politics. Again, we made this choice, but our kids didn’t. Our friends who frequently supported and volunteered at each - although we did have separate campaign teams - our families who fed our kids and looked out for things on the home front when we were running in elections.

To my husband, Geoff, who has been my biggest supporter - it was always good to have someone to bounce things off when you had a tough decision, and was encouraging and very proud of me. I really appreciated that during this time. To the people of Bedford, thank you very much. Sorry I wasn’t more eloquent, but I didn’t have any notice. (Standing ovation)

The honourable member for Cumberland South.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: As it is directed, I move to adjourn debate.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I ask that we take a short recess to await the arrival of His Honour.

THE SPEAKER: The House is in recess until His Honour arrives for royal assent.

[1:38 p.m. The House recessed.]

[2:57 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

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

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

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.

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

The Sergeant-at-Arms then departed and re-entered the Chamber, followed by the Speaker, the Honourable Danielle Barkhouse; the Chief Clerk of the House, James Charlton; and the Assistant Clerk, David Hastings.

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that the ladies and gentlemen be seated.

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

[3:00 p.m.]

THE ASSISTANT CLERK:

Bill No. 455 - An Act to Establish a Department of Emergency Management and Authorize the Establishment of a Nova Scotia Guard.

Bill No. 459 - Health Professional Associations Continuation Act.

Bill No. 464 - Stronger Workplaces for Nova Scotia Act.

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) and Loi sur les services en français (modifiée).

Bill No. 482 - Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act.

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

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

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber. The Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Her Honour the Speaker.

[The Speaker took the Chair.]

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

[The national anthem was sung by the members.]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Please be seated.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Speaker. Before I move to adjourn, I'd like to thank a number of people who are in the House who made sure that this session moved along so smoothly.

On behalf of the members of the House, I want to acknowledge the Pages; the folks at Legislative Television for all you do; the Clerks of our House, James and David and the team with them; Legislative Counsel, the folks who draft all the Bills we debate; the team in the Legislative Library, thank you for all your support; House operations staff; the Sergeant-at-Arms; thank you to the Commissionaires; our constituency assistants who keep our offices running so smoothly while we are here; the entire Public Service - the men and women of the Public Service are some of the most dedicated professionals we have in this province; of course, our families, who keep things running at home while we are here and make sure our children and loved ones' activities remain smooth - thank you to our families for everything they do.

On a personal note, I just want to wish each and every member here the very best this Fall. Bonne chance, everyone. Have a great Fall.

With those few words, I move that this General Assembly be adjourned to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned.

[The House rose at 3:09 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 1,212**

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

À une date ultérieure je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que le mois d'août 2024 a été un mois inoubliable alors que nous avons célébré notre premier Mois annuel du patrimoine acadien, après sa proclamation par le premier ministre l'année dernière; et

Attendu que Le Mois du patrimoine acadien a offert l'occasion d'honorer notre riche histoire acadienne et de célébrer notre identité culturelle, notre patrimoine et nos traditions; et

Attendu que le Comité des aînés de la région d'Argyle a organisé 11 cérémonies du patrimoine dans la municipalité d'Argyle dans le but de rassembler les gens, dans un esprit de fierté et de patriotisme, pour célébrer notre patrimoine acadien;

Par conséquent, qu'il soit résolu que les membres de l'Assemblée législative reconnaissent le Comité des aînés de la région d'Argyle, les organisateurs et les participants qui ont rendu les Cérémonies du patrimoine possibles et mémorables.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,213

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas August 2024 was a month to remember as we celebrated our first annual Acadian Heritage Month, after its proclamation by the Premier last year; and

Whereas Acadian Heritage Month provided opportunities to honour our rich Acadian history and celebrate our cultural identity, heritage and traditions; and

Whereas the Comité des aînés de la région d'Argyle organized 11 heritage ceremonies in the Municipality of Argyle with the goal of bringing people together, in the spirit of pride and patriotism, to celebrate our Acadian heritage;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the Comité des aînés de la région d'Argyle, the organizers, and participants who made the Heritage Ceremonies possible and memorable.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,214

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas Paul Saulnier of West Pubnico has been awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal by the Lieutenant-Governor, in recognition of his service to culture and language; and

Whereas the medal is awarded to a wide range of Nova Scotians who have made significant contributions to Canada, the province, or their communities in recognition of significant and long-term service; and

Whereas Paul is a well-known piano and organ player, composer, and musician and has been sharing his musical talents and contributing to the Acadian culture for over 60 years as the choir director and organist at St. Peter's Church in West Pubnico, and has participated in numerous cultural and musical activities, including six times with Symphony Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Saulnier on his recent recognition.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,215

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas from 1935 to the mid-1960s, Wedgeport was known as the sport tuna fishing capital of the world with an abundance of feed in the area making for perfect tuna fishing grounds, however in 1976, the original tournament, the International Tuna Cup Match, stopped due to a lack of fish; and

Whereas the Wedgeport Tuna Tournament & Festival started again in 2004 and this year celebrated its 20th anniversary, with a total of 20 boats participating in the competition at sea and different activities for all ages on land; and

Whereas this year's winning crew aboard the *Sea Devil* landed a 666-pound bluefin and 1,251 pounds in overall weight of tuna;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank the many volunteers and organizers over the years who have contributed to the festival's success and wish them many more tournaments in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,216

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

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

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

Whereas on June 20, 2024, Alannah Mullen and Riley d'Eon welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Alannah Mullen and Riley d'Eon on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,217

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

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

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

Whereas on May 3, 2024, Jasmine and Steven Muise welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jasmine and Steven Muise on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,218

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

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

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

Whereas on May 17, 2024, Kanzie and Mike Beazer welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kanzie and Mike Beazer on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,219

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

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

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

Whereas on May 21, 2024, Selina and Bronson Cleveland welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Selina and Bronson Cleveland on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,220

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

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

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

Whereas on March 20, 2024, Sydney and Sebastian Ivany welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sydney and Sebastian Ivany on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,221

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Bill MacDonald served as Halifax County councillor before serving as the Liberal MLA for Sackville-Beaver Bank and was instrumental in the Community of Sackville Landfill Compensation Act; and

Whereas Bill was a founding member of the Lake District Recreation Association (LDRA), Sackville Blazers Junior Hockey Club, and the Sackville Sports Heritage Hall of Fame, and was a dedicated volunteer, coach, and committed member on numerous associations in the community; and

Whereas in 2021, Bill was inducted into the Sackville Sports Heritage Hall of Fame for Building in Hockey, Baseball and Recreation, and was the Sackville Volunteer of the Year in 2008;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me applauding Bill MacDonald for his incredible contribution to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,222

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Freedom Kitchen is an outreach program, supported by Knox United Church and volunteers from the community, providing 350 to 400 meals every Monday evening, 30 to 40 emergency food hampers monthly, and food rescues three times a week; and

Whereas in 2019, Freedom Kitchen was run out of a truck donated by the Salvation Army; however, in 2021, a dedicated building was built in the parking lot of the Church; and

Whereas takeout meals are prepared every Monday night in the church kitchen and distributed from the Freedom Kitchen building to anyone in need;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Freedom Kitchen volunteers, staff, and those who provide donations for their support of those experiencing food insecurity.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,223

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas in this, the National Legion Week, I applaud the Ladies Auxiliary of the Royal Canadian Legion, Calais Branch 162 in Lower Sackville; and

Whereas the Ladies Auxiliary originated during the First World War when women were asked to help the wounded veterans returning home to provide supports for their families; and

Whereas present day, members of the Ladies Auxiliary continue to serve our veterans and communities by providing Legion programs, activities, and events that meet

their needs and, of particular note, the Ladies Auxiliary prepares and serves delicious meals of which I have enjoyed many;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding each and every member of the Ladies Auxiliary, not only at the RCL Calais Branch 162 in Lower Sackville, but across the province, for their continued dedication and support of our veterans and communities.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,224

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Major Elaine Braye recently retired after providing ministry for the past 43 years to Salvation Army congregations throughout our country; and

Whereas six of these years were spent leading the work of the Salvation Army in Lower Sackville; and

Whereas the incredible impact that she has had on so many lives during those 43 years is remarkable and is worthy of recognition, and she most likely will never know the full effect her ministry has made on her parishioners;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Major Elaine Braye for her years of dedication and service to the Salvation Army, and wish her all the best on the next chapter of her life.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,225

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas the Rotary Club of Sackville and Area, along with Sportwheels Sports Excellence, partnered with the Salvation Army and Junk-Works and organized Recycle Your Cycle, an event that provided ride-ready cycles to families in need, including newcomer families within the community; and

Whereas over 100 ride-ready cycles and 112 new helmets were given out during this year's program, allowing the recipients to have fun with their new bicycles while enjoying physical activity as well; and

Whereas without the help of those who donated cycles, this event would not have happened;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the organizing team who helped to make this year's Recycle Your Cycle program another great success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,226

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Roy Khoury recently opened Roy's Restaurant in Lower Sackville, offering a wide variety of menu items; and

Whereas being a diner-style restaurant serving Middle Eastern and Canadian cuisine, along with all-day breakfast, you are guaranteed to find something pleasing to your palate; and

Whereas not only does Roy own the restaurant, but he also does the majority of the cooking and takes the time to come out from the kitchen to greet his guests to ensure they are enjoying their meals, making them feel at home, while building great connections with his customers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding Roy Khoury and wish him many successful years of serving the community at Roy's Restaurant.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,227

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas since 1981, the Sackville Sports Heritage Foundation has been honouring amateur athletes, teams, and administrators involved in local competition and beyond; and

Whereas on October 2, 2024, this year's inductees will be honoured: Valerie Bechard, James Sheppard, Trevor Wamback, Ross Webb, Bill Repchull, and the members of the 1980 Sackville U16 Women's Soccer Team and their coaches; and

Whereas, unfortunately, one of the players, Darlene Harker, passed away years ago so her mother, Simone Harker, will accept her daughter's award on her behalf;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me congratulating this year's Sackville Sports Heritage Hall of Fame Inductees and wish them continued success in all their future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,228

By: Hon. Tim Houston (The Premier)

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

Whereas at the recent World Solo Amateur Piping Competition in Glasgow, Scotland, Brady was competing in the Grade 1 league, which is considered the top level in piping, and came in first place in March, Strathspey and Reel, and Hornpipe and Jig, and was named the overall winner in his league; and

Whereas it has been a remarkable Summer for Brady, a student at St. F. X who has been playing bagpipes since he was only seven years old; and

Whereas this Summer he also competed with the Dartmouth and District Pipe Band which placed second overall in the Grade 3A category at the World Pipe Band Championships;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brady Webb for his remarkable achievements at these international competitions.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,229

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Elijah Maynard of Queens County is coming off a successful outstanding Summer season of basketball; and

Whereas Elijah is building on an impressive high school season, where he led the Liverpool Regional High School Warriors with 462 points, and his remarkable talent and commitment earned him a place on the Basketball Nova Scotia U16 team, and Elijah was also selected to join the prestigious 15U YHZ Genesis program in Halifax, where he contributed to an exceptional 19-3 record and secured three tournament championships; and

Whereas Elijah has also delivered notable performances with his local teams, the Queens County Bears and South Shore Lightning 16U Select Boys;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Elijah on his impressive basketball career, we are so proud of you here in Queens, and I am so excited to see where this journey takes you.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,230

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas on July 12th, Caledonia-based artist Hannah Armstrong opened her first art show at the Riverbank General Store in Mill Village, with a steady stream of visitors starting that morning, and by the end of the first day many works were tagged with red “sold” stickers; and

Whereas Hannah says her bright, whimsical, and direct paintings help her to relax and unwind after a busy day, and she also spends time sketching, getting inspired by the animals, trees, flowers, plants and ocean creatures she sees outside her window; and

Whereas Hannah’s creativity was showcased in the Medway Room through July and August, and she was invited to display works at the 2024 Lighthouse Art & Craft Show at Seely Hall in Port Medway;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Hannah on her successful first art show, and in wishing her all the best as she continues to create and inspire.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,231

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas community members of North Queens recently stepped up when the Harmony Ball Park needed repairs; and

Whereas the park's gazebo needed replacement, so Nathan Forrest agreed to oversee the project and assembled a crew, raising funds for materials was collaborative, with timbers donated by Freeman's Lumber, and money was raised through initiatives like Wanda Carvers' ball tournament; and

Whereas the North Queens Board of Trade sourced grants to fulfill the requirements including one from Westfor, and in addition, playground equipment for the park was purchased with funds raised through another tournament organized by Connie Atkins;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Nathan and his crew, the North Queens Board of Trade, Wanda and Connie, and all of the people who worked to make the Harmony Ball Park improvements possible, this is a great example of amazing folks coming together to benefit their entire community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,232

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas from October 17th through 20th, Queens County will once again welcome the world as the 16th Biennial Liverpool International Theatre Festival takes place at the beautiful, historic Astor Theatre; and

Whereas LITF is world renowned, and its executive, artistic directors, and talented team of volunteers have been busy preparing and planning since the 2022 festival; and

Whereas troupes from Algeria, Egypt, Georgia, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Poland, Switzerland, the United States, and Canada will entertain and wow audiences with a diverse range of performances, in addition they will participate in the festival's popular coffee critiques and social events, all while enjoying the warm hospitality of their local hosts and beauty of communities here in Queens;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding the commitment and efforts of the entire LITF Team, and in wishing them and all the participants another successful festival.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,233

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas on July 14th, I was honoured and pleased to attend Mersey Seafoods Ltd.'s 60th anniversary celebration; and

Whereas constituents in Queens have long benefited from the dedicated contributions that this cornerstone business has made over these past six decades; and

Whereas it was a privilege to join previous and present employees as they celebrated this impressive milestone event, chatting with them, hearing their stories and memories, which made it clear how special a place this community-minded business truly is;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Mersey Seafoods on celebrating 60 amazing years, here is to another 60 filled with much success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,234

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas on June 15th, Michael Fralic of Queens County received the Canadian Wildlife Federation Roderick Haig-Brown Award for fisheries and conservation; and

Whereas this prestigious award recognizes outstanding leadership for wildlife and habitat, and is presented to a remarkable citizen who shows exceptional commitment, innovation, and leadership, making a lasting impact on the conservation landscape; and

Whereas Michael is president of the Medway River Salmon Association and has engaged volunteers and corporate partners in conservation and restoration activities along

the river. The Association's mission is to save and restore the remaining wild salmon populations, Michael's interest in the health of Atlantic salmon and trout was instilled by his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Michael on this incredible honour and applaud his continued dedication and commitment to the health of Atlantic salmon here in Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,235

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Richard Freeman of Greenfield, Queens County, has made fundraising efforts on behalf of Brigadoon Village; and

Whereas Brigadoon Village's mission is to give Atlantic Canadian children and youth living with health conditions and other life challenges opportunities to reach their full potential, make meaningful connections, and have fun; and

Whereas Richard and his family business are well known for their ongoing generosity to communities in Queens, but this past May, Richard stepped up and organized a band party at the Sanctuary Arts Centre in Dartmouth to benefit Brigadoon. By the end of the night, he had almost reached his goal of \$75,000, the total eventually reaching an impressive \$85,720;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Richard and his band for their tremendous support of this worthy organization and applauding all those who contributed to making his fundraiser such a huge success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,236

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas last March Tiffany Mansfield of North Queens competed on the international scene at the World's Slo-pitch Championships in Barcelona, Spain; and

Whereas Tiffany's team called True North was comprised of players from Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec, and she and teammates battled against many different countries during the three-day competition and ultimately won an impressive Bronze medal; and

Whereas the team has already begun preparing to improve on this third-place finish at the next Worlds in Italy, in two years' time;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Tiffany and her teammates on this remarkable achievement. Queens County looks forward to cheering you on in Italy.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,237

By: Ronnie LeBlanc (Clare)

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

Whereas the 2024 Karate Canada National Championships were held from July 4th to 7th in Laval, Quebec; and

Whereas Dorian Thibault finished second in the U21 Male Kumite – 75 kg division; and

Whereas Dorian Thibault has qualified to represent Canada at the upcoming Junior Pan American Karate Championships from August 26 to September 1, 2024, in Brazil;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dorian Thibault for winning a silver medal at the 2024 Karate Canada National Championships and wish him all the best at the upcoming 2024 Junior Pan American Karate Championships.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,238

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Allison MacKenzie-Power has demonstrated exceptional service and dedication to our community as the mission and outreach leader at Calvin United Church, orchestrating the vital breakfast program that supports 20 families weekly; and

Whereas she recently celebrated the third anniversary of the Calvin Food Cupboard, an initiative that has become increasingly crucial as demand grows year over year due to rising living costs; and

Whereas in addition to her community service, Allison brings joy and magic to our community, exemplified by her creation of a Winter wonderland at the top of Frederick Avenue last Christmas, featuring a light show synchronized to music, delighting both the young and the young at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly express heartfelt thanks to Allison MacKenzie-Power for her commitment to our community, recognizing that her contributions not only meet the immediate needs of families but also enrich our community spirit.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,239

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Beckett Nadeau, a remarkable student athlete from Halifax West High School, has distinguished himself in both academics and athletics, finishing his Grade 12 year with honours as a multi-sport student athlete; and

Whereas Beckett was honoured as the basketball MVP, a testament to his skill, leadership, and dedication on the court, and he also excelled in cross country, earning the Cross Country 100% Award, which recognizes his commitment and excellence in every race; and

Whereas his most notable accolade, the School Sport Nova Scotia Award for Exemplary Participation, is awarded to a male student athlete who embodies the core values of the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation, demonstrating exceptional sportsmanship, respect for others, and academic dedication, making him a leader in sports and an exemplary student and community member;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Beckett Nadeau for his outstanding achievements and the high standard he has set as a

student athlete, recognizing his inspiration to peers and pride for our community, and wish him well as he embarks on his post-secondary journey at Kings this week.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,240

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Care and Fun Child Care celebrated 12 years of service to our community on July 29th, marking a significant milestone in its commitment to supporting families in Fairview Clayton Park, and this year also saw the expansion into a new location on June 3, 2024, enhancing their capacity to serve the diverse families of our community; and

Whereas under the leadership of Hoda Ibrahim, Care and Fun Child Care has been recognized for its diversity, reflecting the multicultural fabric of Fairview-Clayton Park, named the most diverse community east of Montreal, thereby contributing to a nurturing and inclusive environment for our children; and

Whereas Hoda Ibrahim was honoured with the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Award last year for her outstanding community service, further underscoring the impactful work being done at Care and Fun Child Care;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud Hoda Ibrahim and her dedicated team at Care and Fun Child Care on their 12th anniversary, recognizing their commitment to diversity and excellence in childcare, and wish them many more years of growth, diversity, and success.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,241

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas we gather today to honor the memory of Carol Peters, a cherished resident of Fairview for nearly 60 years, whose dedication to her family and community has left an indelible mark on us all; and

Whereas Carol was a devoted registered nurse at the Halifax Infirmary and Camp Hill Hospital, recognized for her caring and compassionate nature, and her commitment to helping others extended far beyond her profession; and

Whereas she volunteered at the Fairview Food Bank for over 40 years, canvassed for the Canadian Cancer Society for more than 20 years, and was one of the first Block Parents in our community, ensuring the safety of neighborhood children. Her contributions also included involvement in the safe arrival program at Halifax West High School and teaching Sunday school and Vacation Bible School at the Church of Christ;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize and celebrate Carol Peters' life of dedication and compassion, honouring her lasting influence on Fairview and beyond, and expressing our gratitude for the countless lives she touched through her service.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,242

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas young entrepreneurs Chase Winchester and Hayden Langille, friends since Grade Primary in their French immersion classroom at Burton Ettinger, started their own lemonade business, Citrus Shack, this Summer, demonstrating remarkable initiative and entrepreneurial spirit; and

Whereas their lemonade venture took them from a neighbourhood stand to Cleveland Beach, where they were warmly welcomed by beachgoers and even received a visit from the local radio Summer cruiser, bringing refreshing lemonade and smiles to the community; and

Whereas although their lemonade season has come to an end, the friendships and experiences they've gained will continue to flourish as they embark on their Grade 8 year at Fairview Junior High;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly celebrate Chase Winchester and Hayden Langille for their initiative and success as young entrepreneurs, recognizing the power of friendship and determination they have shown, and look forward to their future accomplishments.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,243

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas the Fairview Resource Centre has celebrated its grand reopening this Summer following extensive renovations aimed at enhancing accessibility, including the addition of a new elevator to better serve the community; and

Whereas these improvements will allow for greater participation in the Centre's diverse range of programs, including parenting support classes, seniors programs, free community meals, and fitness and technology classes; and

Whereas since its establishment in 1986, the Centre has supported an ever-increasing population within Bedford, Clayton Park, Tantallon, Lakeside, Beechville, Rockingham, and Fairview, providing assistance to approximately 650 adults and 150 children and youth under 19 annually, with a mission to remove barriers and offer essential resources to families and seniors alike;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly celebrate the Fairview Resource Centre's dedication to our community and acknowledge the positive impact they continue to have, ensuring their valuable work can thrive for years to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,244

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Fairview United Church, after 85 years of dedicated service to the Fairview Clayton Park community, has been decommissioned, having served not only as a place of worship but also as a vibrant center for community life, hosting the Fairview Resource Centre, the 2nd Fairview Scout troop, numerous community groups, and memorable annual pancake suppers; and

Whereas while we reflect on the emotional conclusion of this chapter, we also look forward to a promising new beginning; and

Whereas the Fairview United Church will merge with Rockingham United on October 1st to form Hillside United Church, which will be commemorated with its first

service featuring guest preacher Rev. Michael Blair, the General Secretary of the United Church of Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge the significant contributions of Fairview United Church to our community and celebrate the new beginnings that await with Hillside United Church, congratulating all those involved in making this transition a beacon of unity and hope.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,245

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Jason Beasy has earned the prestigious Chief Scout Award at the end of the season this past June, a testament to his dedication and commitment to Scouting since joining the second Fairview Scout Troop at the age of five; and

Whereas alongside his father Paul, one of the Scout Leaders, Jason has participated in a full range of Scouting experiences, including community volunteering, Apple Day, camping, and week-long canoe trips, exemplifying the values of leadership and community service; and

Whereas the Chief Scout Award is the highest honour in Scouts Canada, requiring the completion of 18 levels of Outdoor Adventure Skills, contributing 30 community service hours and successfully leading a community-oriented service project, showcasing Jason's dedication to outdoor adventure and community involvement;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jason Beasy on this remarkable achievement and wish him continued success as he carries the lessons of Scouting forward in life.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,246

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Michaela Salomon, a proud resident of Fairview, represented Canada at the Dance World Cup in Prague from June 27 to July 6, 2024, showcasing her exceptional talent and dedication in three disciplines: jazz, contemporary, and acro; and

Whereas Michaela's team achieved remarkable results, placing 12th overall in contemporary, 16th in acro, and 17th in jazz, accomplishments that are especially impressive considering the team had only five rehearsals together before the competition; and

Whereas since returning from Prague, Michaela has continued to excel, recently auditioning for a new *Nutcracker* performance and securing three roles in the production, further demonstrating her commitment to her craft and her community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly celebrate Michaela Salomon's dedication and success, recognizing her outstanding achievements that make her community proud, and look forward to her continued accomplishments in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,247

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Captain Nicholas and Major Heather Samuel, along with their family, have joined the Salvation Army Halifax West Community Church in Fairview, making a significant impact on our community since their arrival in July; and

Whereas the Samuels quickly engaged in community activities, playing a pivotal role in the success of the Fairview Family Days event, which saw over 400 guests served at the BBQ, demonstrating their leadership and commitment to gathering volunteers and creating memorable experiences for families in Fairview-Clayton Park; and

Whereas their energy and dedication have made them valued members of our community, and their ongoing involvement promises to bring positive changes to our community projects;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly extend a warm welcome to Captain Nicholas and Major Heather Samuel and their family, expressing our excitement for their leadership and the positive contributions they will bring to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,248

By: Hon. Patricia Arab (Fairview-Clayton Park)

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

Whereas Sister Nuala Kenny has been awarded the inaugural King Charles III Coronation Medal on July 31st, recognizing her lifelong dedication to child health and medical ethics, a testament to her remarkable contributions to the field; and

Whereas Sister Nuala's illustrious career began after her graduation from Dalhousie University's medical school in 1972, and in 1996, she played a pivotal role in establishing the Department of Bioethics at Dalhousie University, still the only one of its kind in a faculty of medicine in Canada; and

Whereas her leadership and work at the IWK Health Centre in pediatric care and ethics have had a lasting impact on the health care community, and as a member of the Sisters of Charity Halifax, Sister Nuala has dedicated her life to service, inspiring health care professionals and communities across Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Sister Nuala Kenny for her decades of service and congratulate her on this well-deserved honour, celebrating her as a shining example of the mission of the Sisters of Charity, especially as they commemorate 175 years since their founding.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,249

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Greville Bay Shipbuilding Museum Society incorporated in 1992 to conserve the history of the shore, lumbering, and shipbuilding in the area; and

Whereas the society tells the stories of the process of stump-to-ship and the power of wind and sail at the Age of Sail Museum; and

Whereas the society will recognize the Age of Sail Museum's 30th anniversary on Saturday, September 21, 2024;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the volunteers, board of directors, and the community on 30 years of bringing visitors to the shore area and to this museum and thank the Age of Sail staff for 30 years history telling and many more to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,250

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the community of Wentworth and surrounding areas have been protected and served by the volunteers of the Wentworth Volunteer Fire Department with outstanding service and dedication; and

Whereas the members have dedicated their time, along with that of their families, to train, respond, and serve the community and province without hesitation; and

Whereas the Wentworth Volunteer Fire Department will be celebrating their 50th anniversary on November 2nd with their members and family;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and celebrate the achievements of the members, community, and leadership of the Wentworth Volunteer Fire Department on its 50th anniversary and wish them many more years of safe and exceptional service to their residents.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,251

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Sylvester Atkinson has served as the Mayor of the Town of Middleton for 20 years in total; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Sylvester Atkinson for his years' service to the people of the Town of Middleton.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,252

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Don Clarke has served as the Mayor of the Town of Berwick for 12 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Don Clarke for his years' service to the people of the Town of Berwick.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,253

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Ben Cleveland has served as the Mayor of the Town of Digby for 16 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Ben Cleveland for his years' service to the people of the Town of Digby.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,254

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship David Devenne has served as the Mayor of the Town of Mahone Bay for eight years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank David Devenne for his years' service to the people of the Town of Mahone Bay.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,255

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Donald Hussher has served as the Mayor of the Town of Trenton for 4 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Donald Hussher for his years' service to the people of the Town of Trenton.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,256

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship George Lloy has served as the Mayor of the Town of Stewiacke for 4 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank George Lloy for his years' service to the people of the Town of Stewiacke.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,257

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Harold Locke has served as the Mayor of the Town of Shelburne for four years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Harold Locke for his years' service to the people of the Town of Shelburne.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,258

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Danny MacGillvray has served as the Mayor of the Town of Stellarton for eight years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Danny MacGillvray for his years' service to the people of the Town of Stellarton.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,259

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Bill Mills has served as the Mayor of the Town of Truro for 27 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Bill Mills for his years' service to the people of the Town of Truro.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,260

By: Melissa Sheehy-Richard (Hants West)

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

Whereas Windsor and Nova Scotia lost a great local hockey legend last weekend in the passing of 95-year-old Carl "Chook" Smith; and

Whereas there are so many stories and memories that can be told and shared about Chook's long hockey career; and

Whereas he began his hockey career on Long Pond as a child and was one of Nova Scotia's greatest senior hockey players;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly and myself as the member for Hants West extend our condolences to the Smith Family.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,261

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Her Worship Laurie Boucher has served as the Mayor of the Town of Antigonish for eight years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Laurie Boucher for her years' service to the people of the Town of Antigonish.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,262

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Her Worship Amanda MacDougall-Merrill has served as the Mayor of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality for four years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Amanda MacDougall-Merrill for her years' service to the people of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,263

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Peter Muttart has served as the Mayor of the Municipality of Kings County for eight years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Peter Muttart for his years' service to the people of the Municipality of Kings County.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,264

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Her Worship Darlene Norman has served as the Mayor of the Region of Queens for four years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Darlene Norman for her years' service to the people of the Region of Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,265

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Mike Savage has served as the Mayor of the Halifax Regional Municipality for 12 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Mike Savage for his years' service to the people of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,266

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas His Worship Murray Scott has served as the Mayor of the Municipality of Cumberland County for four years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Murray Scott for his years' service to the people of the Municipality of Cumberland County.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,267

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Her Worship Sandra Snow has served as the Mayor of the Town of Kentville for eight years; and

Whereas This service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Sandra Snow for her years' service to the people of the Town of Kentville.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,268

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Alex Morrison has served as the Warden of the Municipality of Annapolis County for two years and council much longer; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Alex Morrison for his years' service to the people of the Municipality of Annapolis County.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,269

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Bruce Morrison has served as the Warden of the Municipality of Victoria County for 14 years and council for 14 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Bruce Morrison for his years of service to the people of the Municipality of Victoria County.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,270

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Danny Muise has served as the Warden of the Municipality of Argyle for five years and council for 12 years in District 1; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Danny Muise for his years' service to the people of the Municipality of Argyle.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,271

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Owen McCarron has served as the Warden of the Municipality of Antigonish County for seven years and council for 30 years in District 6; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Owen McCarron for his years' service to the people of the Municipality of Antigonish County.

RESOLUTION NO. 1,272

By: Tom Taggart (Colchester North)

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

Whereas Michael Gregory for the past 12 years worked tirelessly as municipal councillor for District 7 and has proven to be a great champion for the Tatamagouche area, going above and beyond for these residents; and

Whereas Michael served 25 years with the RCMP and later for the Nova Scotia Alcohol and Gaming Authority when he retired to the village of Tatamagouche, but little did he know that his other job had just begun where he founded and sat on numerous committees. His voice has always been one to be heard and he should be proud of his many accomplishments; and

Whereas his dedication to his community has been unwavering, no matter what time of day, even when on vacation. He was always available for his constituents, and sadly Michael Gregory will be retiring his councillor position;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Michael in all that he has contributed to the Village of Tatamagouche and its citizens and wish him all the best in all of his future endeavours.

**FILED PETITIONS
(Tabled Sept. 20, 2024)**

Petition for the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Sept. 20, 2024
- Re Nova Scotia Road Trails Act Candidate Site in Brookfield

By: L. Harrison

As concerned residents of Brookfield, NS, we request that the Government of Nova Scotia deny any forthcoming application submitted by the South Colchester ATV Club and/or All Terrain Vehicle Association of Nova Scotia (ATVANS) for a "Road Trail" through the community of Brookfield, as described under the Roads Trails Act.

The total distance proposed as a "road trail" through our community is approximately 7 km. The proposed route has high traffic volumes with a combination of high-density residential areas (single family homes, five seniors apartment buildings), two schools (Pre-Primary to Grade 12), a daycare, busy commercial properties, two churches, ice rink, curling rink, seniors social centre, ball field, cemetery and a long-term care facility.

The roads and highways along the proposed "road trail" are very busy. The route the ATV club wishes to gain access to passes South Colchester Academy and Brookfield Elementary School through a busy 770 m long school zone. The proposed route includes the very busy main commercial intersection of Hwy 2 and Hwy 289, connector highways for communities surrounding Brookfield in all directions. The "road trail" route in question would be unsafe considering the current highway speeds, the volume of heavy truck traffic such as logging trucks through the village, the school zones with their busy drop-off and pick-up times, and the heavy traffic volume at the Hwy 2-Hwy 289 intersection.

Yet another concern is the condition of the road shoulders along the roads and highways that are being proposed for this ATV "road trail". The state of the existing road shoulders is very poor (e.g., washouts where there is gravel shoulder). The gravel

shoulders are narrow, and nearly 2 km of the proposed "road trail" has no road shoulder at all but rather curb, gutter and sidewalk.

The proposed "road trail" route is unreasonably excessive in scale as it takes in most of the village, includes main residential streets and directly affects over 150 households. An increase in safety concerns, an increase in the numbers of ATVs, as well as the noise and air pollution resulting from greater ATV traffic would negatively affect the quality of life of Brookfield residents. The residents of Brookfield have the right to a safe community and one in which every citizen can enjoy the best quality of life possible.

For the above reasons, we, the undersigned, oppose the South Colchester ATV Club's and/or ATVANS' "road trail" application for Brookfield to become a "road trails" community.