



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2021

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2021

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table documents in response to the question from the member for Yarmouth regarding the Department of Health and Wellness health care infrastructure and capital investment projects.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I know we were all so relieved last night when we heard the news the young boy who went missing in North Preston had been found safe. This is the outcome every Nova Scotian was hoping for. Members of the Canadian Forces, Search and Rescue, volunteers, police, staff at Natural Resources and Renewables, and community members all worked together to find the 10-year-old boy.

Mr. Speaker, while the search was taking place, North Preston community members came together at the Saint Thomas Baptist Church to support the search and provide comfort to family and friends. I want to extend my appreciation to everyone who joined the search and supported the family with strength and kindness.

Mr. Speaker, I am not using the boy's name because I know the family has been through a lot in the past few days and I want to respect their privacy, but as a father I want everyone who loves him to know how happy and grateful I am that he is back home safe. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his kind words in speaking of the community.

I also want to just say oftentimes this community is not highlighted for the resilience and strength and community spirit which it has. I also want to take the time to thank the members who rallied together - the Saint Thomas Baptist Church, the Nelson Whynder Elementary School, the administration there who came together, and the many people who visited the community.

I'd like to thank my own family who was there for most of the day. I returned in the evening to support community, and in particular I want to give nice congratulations to my CA, who also went up into the community. We had all sorts of people volunteering. I just want to be able to thank the minister for the kind words and acknowledging Ashayo Johnson is North Preston's future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I echo as well - I am grateful for the minister's words across the room. I just also want to say that, as well, it is wonderful to see how people come together in a time of need. The North Preston community is one of those communities that is truly for their families.

I'm so grateful that this young person was found and that he's safe and sound. I also want to echo that I'm grateful for the rec centre and the groundwork crew that was out there looking for this young boy and Saint Thomas Baptist Church and, as well, all the volunteers and the families and the people on social media who were praying and well-wishing for this young person to find his way home.

I just want to say, as well, we're grateful and thankful for the family. Just continue to keep them in your prayers through this time, because we know this is still such a challenge. Thank you as well, Mr. Minister.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that Nova Scotia needs nurses. There are currently hundreds of vacancies for nurses in the system, and to transform and fix our health care system, we will need many more than that. We are fortunate to have excellent universities and colleges in our province that graduate somewhere in the range of 700 nurses every year - that would be registered nurses and licensed practical nurses.

But there has been criticism that the government and Nova Scotia Health haven't done all it could to let those eager, talented graduates know that they are needed and wanted right here in Nova Scotia. Well, Mr. Speaker, that ends today. This government is taking bold action today to keep our best and brightest nursing graduates right here. We want to assure them that they can have career stability and opportunities for advancement right here, at home in Nova Scotia.

Today we're announcing that every nursing grad coming out of a school in this province over the next five years has a standing offer to work in Nova Scotia. If they want to work in our health system when they finish their studies, there is a place for them.

I'm sure every member of this House was disappointed to hear the news last week that recruiters from British Columbia were meeting with our graduating nurses and offering bonuses while some of the students felt that they didn't get the same treatment from our local recruiters. This government will usher in a new era of respect between health care workers and the government.

It's going to take time, Mr. Speaker, but it started with our Speak Up For Health Care tour. I was honoured to meet face to face with so many health care professionals and listen to their concerns, but also their solutions for a better health care system. Because of them, there will be change for better in our health care system in this province.

With this announcement today, I am signalling - this government is signalling - to nursing students that Nova Scotia needs and wants their skills, their energy, and their compassion. This is not lip service. Starting today, those nurses will know that if they

graduate they have a job with Nova Scotia, the IWK, or in the continuing care sector in this province. I met with - myself and the minister, actually, met with nursing students from across the province earlier this week. I want them to know that we heard them. We heard about their anxieties and fears for the future. We respect them. I want to be perfectly clear to them - we will do whatever we can to make it possible for each and every graduate to work in their chosen field in their chosen region.

Under the guidance of Dr. Kevin Orrell, first-year nursing students will receive job offers and they will be given information about opportunities and programs that are available here in Nova Scotia. Nursing students will not be taken for granted by this government. They will understand and they will know that they are respected and valued in Nova Scotia. They don't need to go to B.C. or anywhere else to find work. Talented nurses will walk out of school here in Nova Scotia and be able to start their careers right away, right here in Nova Scotia. I am so excited to have them stay here in Nova Scotia. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Let me thank the Premier for a copy of his remarks before he gave them today. Let me give my thanks on behalf of the Liberal caucus to all those nurses and health care workers who have been working so hard over the last year, over three waves of a pandemic and now a fourth wave. (Applause)

This is what's happening across the country and beyond. Of course, there is a nursing shortage here and across the country. That's why the government before this took significant step. This is not a new thing. In fact, there's nothing new in his political statement today that they will get job offers in this province.

Go back to the engagement that had taken place - going back to 2015 - with the nursing strategy, and I'll table that. This is a product of a lot of work with over 500 nurses. You can laugh, but these are the people whom you're engaging with now. Of course, we commend that there is some engagement - the tour that they're taking across the province. I'm sure they're getting similar feedback that we got in 2015 under Minister Glavine.

We went from 53 per cent of nurses staying in this province and getting jobs back in the dark Tory days of the early 2000s to 90 per cent of RNs staying in the province within our first year of government in 2014. We continued to work to ensure that we increased spaces. People want to work here. Nurses want to stay here. We need more seats. We need incentives, Mr. Speaker.

The update in 2016 on the progress report that came out after that showed significantly more progress. Nurses told us that they need to do more to be ready to practise in today's complex health care environments - action taken. LPNs want fair recognition of

their education and work experience - action taken. New nurses need support for transition from school to workforce - action taken. On and on and on and on.

The statistics: Just one year after that nursing strategy was launched, 96 per cent . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor. Order, please.

IAIN RANKIN: Ninety-six per cent of our new RNs and 95 per cent of our new LPN graduates are employed here in Nova Scotia within one year of graduation. (Applause)

As I said, this is a national issue. People have gone through a lot in the health care sector. We need to make sure that we're there to support them. As Nova Scotia compares to Canada, however, Nova Scotia employs 62 per cent of its RNs in full-time positions compared to 60 per cent of Canadian RNs. In Nova Scotia, 55.7 per cent of LPNs have full-time positions compared to 48 per cent in Canada. We actually lead on top of the rest of the country.

We weren't resting on our laurels. Of course, we were doing more just within the last six months, making permanent the 70 more RN seats at the Cape Breton University and Dalhousie University, Yarmouth Campus. There are now 471 nursing seats - hundreds more than there were under past Tory governments, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we put forward plans for more that we had been asking for in Question Period. We know there is some commitment for more seats. We're waiting to see if they will step to the plate and actually put more seats into our schools. We proposed 270 seats for LPNs at the Nova Scotia Community College and ideas for RNs. We put forth incentive programs and ideas. We expanded nurse practitioner programs.

For all this rhetoric in this statement today as if something's new, it's simply false. We support health care workers on this side of the House. We're proud of the record. Even under challenging times, increasing seats . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

IAIN RANKIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker - I guess I'm striking a chord with the government. So again we are there to support health care workers. We need more seats, we need incentives for Nova Scotians and I'll take my seat. Thank you. (Applause)

[1:15 p.m.]

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

GARY BURRILL: The Premier's statement today is plainly a sensible step. As he has noted, there are hundreds of vacancies, so why would our government not want to offer a position to every nursing graduate in Nova Scotia?

However, at the same time, I expect any nurse in our province hearing the statement today would also want to hear addressed the working conditions that those nursing graduates will be stepping into. Conditions which we know have led to many of the vacancies we are discussing in the first place: Burnout and chronic work exhaustion, chronic injuries due to unremitting overwork and resulting plummeting professional morale. All of these things are deeply implicated, deeply related to the level of nursing vacancies present in the health care in Nova Scotia and this is true whether we're talking about hospitals or long-term care or even clinics. It's true across the board, across the province.

Pivotal to improving working conditions for nurses will be a fair collective bargaining process and we know this is something that has been eroded in recent years. There is also a broad range of measures needed in addition to offering jobs to our recent graduates, a range including a training, retention and recruitment plan to ensure adequate staffing; reducing workplace violence; enabling a healthy work-life balance for nurses; ensuring that nurses are able to work within and to their full scope of practice rather than being used for more routine tasks; reaching the goal of 500 nurse practitioners; and, as the government has committed, increasing the minimum number of hours in long-term care to 4.1 hours per resident per day.

This is the work which will retain nurses in Nova Scotia and this is the work to which the government must turn and to which and in which our caucus would be a willing partner.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 35

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que la Loi sur les services en français de 2004 de notre province stipule que les ministères, offices, organismes gouvernementaux, sociétés d'État et institutions publiques désignées de la province ont l'obligation de fournir des services en français; et

Attendu que, la mise à disposition d'information importante, tant au niveau de la santé, de l'éducation ou de bien-être publics sont de la plus haute importance de la part du gouvernement envers ses citoyens; et

Attendu que les services de traduction sont primordiaux dans l'effort de mise à disposition d'informations, surtout en ce qui concerne la santé publique des Néo-écossais et Néo-écossaises.

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour reconnaître et féliciter le travail accompli par les traductrices et le traducteur du gouvernement Melany Close, Lise l'Anglais et Sylvain Filion ainsi que leur diligence et leur engagement à fournir de l'information traduite au public, et tout particulièrement depuis le début de la pandémie. Leurs efforts permettent à tous les Néo-écossais et Néo-écossaises d'avoir accès à des informations en français.

Monsieur le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas our province's French Language Services Act of 2004 stipulates that designated departments, offices, agencies, Crown corporations and public institutions have an obligation to provide French language services; and

Whereas the provision of important information either about health, education, or public well-being is of the utmost importance for the government towards its citizens; and

Whereas translation services are essential in the effort to make information available, particularly with respect to the public health of Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing and congratulating the work done by the government's translators Melany Close, Lise L'Anglais, and Sylvain Filion and their diligence and commitment in providing translated information to the public, particularly since the beginning of the pandemic. Their efforts allowed Nova Scotians to have access to information in French.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

RESOLUTION NO. 36

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

Whereas the Nova Scotia Woodland Owner of the Year Award recognizes landowners for outstanding stewardship of their woodlands and highlights the importance of how sustainable woodland ownership and ecological forestry go hand in hand; and

Whereas the 2021 Woodlot Owner of the Year provincial winners are Jonathan and Abbey Veinotte of Lunenburg County, who are the youngest winners in the program's history; and

Whereas Luther and Joyce Sears of Brookfield, Colchester County won the Central Region Award, and Warren and Barbra MacMullin of Sydney Forks won the Eastern Region;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join me in recognizing this year's winners and commending their sustainable forest management, which will help their woodlots thrive for generations to come.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care.

RESOLUTION NO. 37

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

Whereas the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia is working to improve the quality of life for Nova Scotians affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and advance their search for cause and cure; and

Whereas dementia has many faces and all Nova Scotians with dementia deserve to receive care that is inclusive and recognizes their diverse identities; and

Whereas the Alzheimer Society is hosting its annual provincial dementia care conference today, October 28th, this year's theme is Supporting Dementia in all Its Diversity, and the day is filled with educational sessions featuring a range of speakers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House take this opportunity to wish the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia the best for its conference this week and thank the society and its staff and volunteers for their dedication to improving the quality of life for Nova Scotians affected by dementia.

I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 38

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que le Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle-Écosse est un pilier majeur du développement économique de la communauté d'affaires acadienne et francophone en Nouvelle-Écosse; et

Attendu que la directrice générale Julie Oliver, en poste depuis 17 ans, aura œuvré au développement économique tant des contextes ruraux qu'urbains pour les Acadiens et francophones de notre province; et

Attendu que Julie Oliver quittera le poste de directrice générale a la fin de l'année.

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour remercier Julie Oliver de son engagement et de son dévouement à l'essor économique de nos communautés acadiennes et francophones en Nouvelle-Écosse et pour lui souhaiter autant de succès dans ses nouveaux projets.

Monsieur le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas the Conseil de développement économique de la Nouvelle Écosse is an important organization for the economic development of the Acadian and francophone business community in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the Executive Director, Julie Oliver, in the position for 17 years, has worked diligently toward the economic growth and development for both rural and urban areas for the Acadians and the francophones in our province; and

Whereas Julie Oliver will leave the position of executive director at the end of the year;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Mme. Julie Oliver for her commitment and dedication to the economic development of our Acadian and francophone communities in Nova Scotia and wishing her success in her future projects.

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

MR. SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61 - Entitled an Act to Establish a Joint Regional Transportation Agency. (Hon. Kim Masland)

Bill No. 62 - Entitled an Act to Implement an Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap. (Hon. Colton LeBlanc)

Bill No. 63 - Entitled an Act to Establish the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality. (Hon. John Lohr)

Bill No. 64 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 3 of the Acts of 2018, the Cannabis Control Act. (Hon. Brad Johns)

Bill No. 65 - Entitled an Act to Support Local Action on Climate Change. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 66 - Entitled an Act Respecting Mental Health Recruitment Accountability. (Hon. Patricia Arab)

Bill No. 67 - Entitled an Act to Amend Schedule A of Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2018, the Education Act; and Chapter 1 of the Acts of 1995-96, the Education (CSAP) Act, Respecting School Capital Construction. (Suzy Hansen)

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that the bill be read a second time on a future day.

NOTICES OF MOTION**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou East.

UHREN, SUE: WORK ON ELECTION CAMPAIGN - THANKS

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, in 2013 when I was first elected as an MLA, I had Sue Uhren standing beside me as my colleague in the constituency office. She agreed to help me get started but she said she would only stay for one year and then she was retiring for good.

The years passed and in 2018, when I ran for the leadership of the PC Party, it was again not the right time for retirement, so she stayed by my side and continued her hard work. In 2019, she did retire but, of course, in 2021, when the general election was called,

there she was standing beside me as an integral part of our hard-working campaign team in Pictou East.

She didn't want a main role. She said she wanted to just help quietly on the sidelines, but each and every day that our campaign office was open, Sue was there. She spent her days volunteering and greeting everyone who came through that door. She even brought her dog and best friend Rio with her so he would not be lonely at home.

To Sue, I can't thank you enough for your kindness and support over the years. We will miss you, but we know you're not going very far. Thank you, Sue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**WOTHERSPOON, KIMBERLEY:
RECIP. OF 2021 HRM VOLUN. AWD. - RECOG.**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, on Women's History Month, I rise to recognize an amazing woman who continues to give back to our community, Kimberley Wotherspoon.

Kimberley is an active member of our Litter Prevention Committee. I can honestly say that she cleans more than anyone I know. I am not surprised at all that she's the recipient of the 2021 HRM Volunteer. Recently on October 2nd, Kimberley biked 50 kilometres during the Ride for Cancer, surpassing her fundraising goal of \$2,000.

This is Kimberley's third year participating in this event and each year, she rides in memory of her late husband Marc, who passed away in 2012 from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Over these three years, Kimberley has raised over \$5,000 to help fundraise for cancer care in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House join me in recognizing Kimberley Wotherspoon for her continued inspiration and dedication to our community and beyond.

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

**INAUG. CBU AUNTI-POVERTY CONF.:
WAYS TO ELIM. POVERTY - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the inaugural Cape Breton University Anti-Poverty Conference entitled Communities Building Hope: Action Agenda to Reduce Poverty on Cape Breton Island, which starts today.

Nova Scotia has the third highest provincial child poverty rate in Canada and the highest rate in Atlantic Canada. We also have the fastest-rising food bank usage. One in

five children in Nova Scotia lives in poverty, while in Cape Breton, Annapolis County, and Digby County, more than one in three children live in poverty.

Things we can do to eliminate poverty: introduce a \$15 minimum wage and get Nova Scotia on the road to a living wage to make sure working people can afford to live; increase income assistance rates to get people out of poverty; lower everyone's bills by limiting rent increases with permanent rent control; increasing the number of affordable housing units; introduce free after-school care; and establish a universal school food program, just to name a few.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**ADAMS, BETH:
60 YEARS OF SERVICE TO GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA - CONGRATS.**

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge one of my constituents and a great volunteer: Beth Adams from Springhill.

Beth has been awarded her 60 years of service pin from the Girl Guides of Canada. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, they were unable to have a ceremony to present her with this pin, so allow me to spread the good word of Beth's commitment to Girl Guides.

Beth started Guiding as a Brownie and then as a Girl Guide. Beth went on to be a Brownie leader for many years while bringing her three girls, and sometimes her son, to Brownies. Beth continued with her passion of teaching girls and moved on to be the leader of the older group, called the Pathfinders. Beth has also been the chairperson of Camp Cumberland Girl Guide Camp as well as the fill-in leader for the youngest group, called Sparks, as well as their camp cook.

Please join me in congratulating Beth Adams on her 60 years of service to the Girl Guides in Cumberland. I wish her many more years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

**L'ÉCOLE SEC. DE CLARE STUDENTS:
VISIT TO LONG-TERM CARE HOME - RECOG.**

RONNIE LEBLANC: Monsieur le président, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour féliciter les quatre étudiants de l'École secondaire de Clare qui ont visité les résidents de la Maison au Coucher du Soleil la dernière Saint-Valentin.

Elles étaient là pour remettre aux résidents de ce foyer de soins de longue durée un sac de cadeaux et une carte célébrant la journée. Sophie LeBlanc, un membre du CA de la

Société acadienne de Clare, a recruté Adèle Comeau, Denise Thibault, et France Boudreau pour l'aider à remplir ses sacs-cadeaux avec des casse-têtes et d'autres articles.

Il s'agissait de la première d'une nouvelle initiative de la Société acadienne de Clare visant à financer des projets communautaires. Ayant reçu des fonds destinés à tels projets, la SAC espère surtout d'inspirer nos jeunes à concevoir d'autres initiatives semblables.

Aux étudiants de la SAC, je suis certain que les résidents ont apprécié votre geste généreux.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize four students of École secondaire de Clare who last Valentine's Day visited Maison au Coucher du Soleil, one of our long-term care homes, to give to each of the home residents a gift bag and a card celebrating the day. Sophie LeBlanc, a member of the Société acadienne de Clare's board of directors, recruited Adèle Comeau, Denise Thibault, and France Boudreau to help her fill the gift bags with jigsaw puzzles and other items.

This was the first of a new initiative of the Société acadienne de Clare to fund community-led projects. The SAC especially hopes to inspire youth to conceive similar initiatives.

To the students of the SAC, I am sure the residents of la Maison au Coucher du Soleil appreciate your acts of kindness. Merci.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**CUMB. HEALTH CARE BURS. PGM.:
NO LONGER GUARANTEED - CRITICISM**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to stand and say that I was very encouraged to hear the words of the Premier this afternoon speaking about his commitment to nurses in this province. I hope that his words filter down to the grassroots, where the work is actually done and where decisions are actually made.

In Cumberland, we have an incredible health care foundation that has offered \$5,000 bursaries for nursing students as well as other health care professionals for years. Just in the last couple of months, they were told by Nova Scotia Health that they could no longer potentially offer this bursary to Cumberland County students to guarantee that they would be given a job. (Interruption) Completely. It's money donated by the people of Cumberland to help encourage people to come back and work in Cumberland, and Nova Scotia Health told them they could no longer guarantee that bursary program.

It's wrong, so I am encouraged to hear the words of the Premier today. I certainly hope it sends a message to Nova Scotia Health and changes their culture.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**PAUL, DANIEL:
AUTHORING BOOK *CHIEF LIGHTNING BOLT* - CONGRATS.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Mi'kmaw elder Daniel N. Paul, writer, advocate, and historian. Mr. Paul said, during the unveiling of the newly renamed Peace and Friendship Park, that reconciliation requires examining the past in a way that doesn't "leave out the oppression of a race of people such as ours, which has been the practice in Canada for far too long."

This year, Mr. Paul released a new book entitled *Chief Lightning Bolt*, a tale of life before settlers arrived in which the values of humility, honour, service, and sacrifice, which are still honoured themes of the Mi'kmaq people today, are described and what is lost is shown to the reader.

I would like to ask all the members to join me in congratulating Daniel Paul on the release of his new book and his history of advocacy for the Mi'kmaq people in Eastern Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

BOURQUE, ROLAND: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay homage to the life of Roland Bourque, a Second World War veteran who passed away on September 3, 2021, just a few hours short of his 97th birthday: a man I am honoured and blessed to have called a friend.

Roland was a member of the Wedgeport Legion. Having enlisted in the army at the age of 18, he was stationed in Petawawa, Ontario, where he received advanced training in artillery. Fortunately he never had to deploy overseas.

From a young age, Ronald had a fascination with airplanes. As a teenager, he'd ride his bicycle the long distance from Sluice Point to the Yarmouth airport, where he'd sit and watch military planes land and take off. He taught himself to build, repair, and fly radio-controlled airplanes, a passion that lasted a lifetime.

During an early drive-by parade celebrating his 97th birthday, two planes flew over his house as a touching tribute.

On behalf of this House, I wish to extend sincere condolences to Roland's wife, Pauline, his family, and friends.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**HALLIDAY, DOROTHY - COM. CARES YOUTH OUTREACH:
RECIP. OF C.B. CoC COM. IMPACT AWARD - CONGRATS.**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dorothy Halliday, executive director of Community CARES Youth Outreach. Dorothy has been the driving force behind Community CARES Youth Outreach for many years. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to work with Dorothy on a number of initiatives. Her passion and dedication to the youth of the Northside and area are second to none. As a matter of fact, Community CARES Youth Outreach under Dorothy's leadership has just been honoured by the Cape Breton Chamber of Commerce, recognized for the Community Impact Award.

I would ask all members to please join me in congratulating Dorothy and Community CARES Youth Outreach for their outstanding work in our community.

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

**BRAIN INJURY ASSOC. OF N.S.:
FOSTERING RESILIENCE, RECOV. AND COM. - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia. They are the only organized voice for over 70,000 Nova Scotians who have been affected by brain injury. Their mission is fostering resilience, recovery, and community for survivors and their families across Nova Scotia. They do this through advocacy and programs such as yoga and the Between Two Brains podcast.

There are an estimated 17,000 new brain injuries in Nova Scotia each year. These injuries result in a vast range of challenges for those injured, their families, communities, and workplaces.

I ask that all members join me in commending the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia and wishing them luck in their annual Bowling for Brains fundraising event on October 31st.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**ANSEMS, FRED:
WINNER OF GREAT HOWARD DILL PUMPKIN CLASSIC - CONGRATS.**

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Fred Ansems of the community of Steam Mill as this year's winner of the Great Howard Dill Pumpkin Classic. This local giant gourd competition has been occurring for about 40 years. Howard Dill was

one of the original founders of the Great Pumpkin Commonwealth in the early 1990s and the competition is held each year at the Dill family farm in Windsor, Nova Scotia.

Fred Ansems has been growing pumpkins for 20 years and he has taken the top honour after years of vying for the title. Fred's winning giant pumpkin weighed 1,359 pounds, 180 pounds heavier than his closest competitor.

Please join me today in congratulating Fred Ansems on his huge win.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**BROOME, SCOTIA/LANGILLE, JILLIAN:
RECIPS. OF HUNDAL SOC. AWDS. - RECOG.**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, earlier this session the member for Bedford Basin introduced the House to Simar and Jagdeep Hundal and their amazing work. Several years ago, Simar and Jagdeep Hundal lost their son Angad in a motorcycle accident and in response they founded the Angad Hundal Society, which every year gives out two scholarships to deserving high school graduates in Nova Scotia.

I was happy to attend this year's scholarship ceremony with the member and many others as well. I wanted to recognize the two recipients: The Angad Hundal Memorial Award recipient was Scotia Broome and the Emerge Award winner was Jillian Langille.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the House to recognize these two young Nova Scotians and to thank Simar and Jagdeep for their ongoing generosity and goodwill. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**DOOKS, NATHANIEL "NATORIUS": RECIP. OF 1ST PRIZE
IN HOPSCOTCH FEST. ALL-STYLE BATTLE - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize dancer, dance teacher, and Dartmouth North resident, Nathaniel "Natorious" Dooks, who recently won first prize at the Hopscotch Festival's All-Style Battle earlier this month.

Nat has been a breaker and active member of the hip hop and dance community for seven years. He has competed against some of the top breakers all across the country. He is taking classes and workshops from such hip hop pioneers as Frost Flow of Ground Illusionz crew, Ynot of Rock Steady Crew, SwitchB of The Floor Assassins Militia, and Kaze of Supernaturalz crew. He has won competitions in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and here in Nova Scotia.

Natorious Dooks is also an inspiring teacher. Both my kid and my colleague from Dartmouth South's child take breakdancing and hip hop lessons from Nat through Studio 26 in Dartmouth and at Halifax Dance. I can speak for my son - he loves the moves he's learning every week. He demonstrates them expertly and he's working toward competing at a high level, now that breakdancing is an Olympic event.

I ask the whole House to join me in congratulating Nathaniel Dooks on his excellence in breakdancing and for being an inspiration to younger generations.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

GILBERT, RICK & KATHY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, Rick and Kathy Gilbert moved to Liverpool in 1996. Since then, they have become known in the community as tireless, creative, and innovative volunteers. The Gilberts exemplify all that is good about community spirit.

The Community Health Board, Waterfront Development, Astor Theatre Society, LITF, Winds of Change, and South Shore drive-ins are just a few of the organizations that have benefited from the Gilberts. Of particular note are the spectacular sets created for the Astor stage designed and constructed by Rick and dressed by Kathy. These involved hundreds of hours and helped elevate the level of theatre in Queens County.

The Gilberts will be leaving their Liverpool home in November, moving to be closer to their family. I am honoured today to recognize and give appreciation to the Gilberts for all their contribution to Queens and to wish them all the best as they start this new chapter.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

**HEUBACH, LORENA:
ATHLETIC AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, Lorena Heubach is an exceptional student athlete from my hometown of Annapolis Royal. In 2019, she was named AUS Championship MVP Field Athlete of the Year after earning four gold medals at the AUS Championships. She won the high jump, the long jump, the 60m hurdles, and was a member of the first-place Dalhousie Tigers 4 x 200m relay team.

She went on to win gold in the long jump at the national championships, earning U Sports first team all-Canadian honours. Lorena has also set an AUS, Dalhousie, and Nova Scotia record in the long jump, and a Dalhousie record in the pentathlon, and is currently

training for the world championships. On top of this athletic success, Lorena is an academic all-Canadian as a fourth-year mechanical engineering student who just completed her work co-op in robotics.

I invite all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Lorena on her continued athletic and academic success.

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

**NEW WATERFORD ROTARY CLUB:
BEAUTIFICATION PGM. - THANKS**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the New Waterford Rotary Club. The Rotary Club purchased 27 hanging flower baskets that lined Plummer Avenue in downtown New Waterford during the Summer and Fall as part of the club's beautification program. The flowers were purchased from Gerard Burke, who also maintained the flowers. The beautification program is one of several things the club does for the community each year.

I ask the House to join me in thanking the New Waterford Rotary Club for their beautification program.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

**MEZA, JEN:
AUTHORING BOOK *OUR BEST N.S.: ADVENTURE JOURNAL* - THANKS**

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take an opportunity to acknowledge Middle Sackville resident Jen Meza.

Last year, Jen lost her job of eight years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Believing that her new circumstances were happening "for her and not to her" she turned her misfortunes into an opportunity. Jen created a book called *Our Best N.S.: Adventure Journal*. The book encourages Nova Scotians to get out there and explore our province.

I was very impressed to learn, Mr. Speaker, that Jen is giving back to the province by donating 10 per cent of the profits from her book towards the Mental Health Association of Nova Scotia.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank Jen, not only for the love of travel in the province, but also for giving back and taking advantage of a social-distancing opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

RISLEY, LISA: THE PLAID PLACE RELOC. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate owner Lisa Risley on the opening of the latest iteration of her popular store that sells all things Scottish and Irish, The Plaid Place. Now the Celtic store operated for many years in the Barrington Place shops and after that the store moved around a little bit and like many retailers during the pandemic, Lisa moved online, as well, but she still wanted a storefront retail operation, and we are delighted to see her in Bedford at Sunnyside Mall. So if you need to rent or buy a kilt, The Plaid Place is your place.

If you want to get your hands on your family tartan, this is where you can find it. Kilt hose - check; Aran sweaters - aye; a sporran - she's got plenty; a Claddagh ring - got 'em. Also oilskin outerwear, capes, tams, ties, lambswool blankets, and even some Scottish delicacies. As I said, all things Scottish and Irish.

I would like to wish Lisa Risley and her staff every success in Bedford. We are delighted to welcome them to the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BARKLEY, JACKIE: ADVOCACY FOR COMS. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize the work of Ms. Jackie Barkley, a Halifax Needham constituent and social worker who has been a tireless advocate for those who are underrepresented, oppressed, and living in poverty.

Jackie has studied and lectured on issues around white privilege, cultural competence, and anti-racism for many years. She writes pieces often found in *The Chronicle Herald* that will call out the injustices she sees in the community and beyond.

Jackie works as a cultural clinical consultant who volunteers her time in a wide range of capacities, including the Community Justice Society, the Child Welfare Action Coalition, the North End Community Daycare Centre, the Model School Committee, the Social Policy Review Committee, and the Housing for People Coalition. Jackie was a 17-year member of the Metro Coalition for a Non-Racist Society as well.

I'd like to ask that all of us would join in recognizing Ms. Jackie Barkley as a community leader and advocate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**LIVESEY, AVA: LEADERSHIP AND INIT.
AT PARK VIEW EDUC. CTR. - THANKS**

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I stand today to recognize Ava Livesey, a Park View Education Centre student in her senior year. Ava has been an important leader in the Park View student body for the past three years.

She has volunteered her time to be involved with multiple school committees and clubs while maintaining her focus on academics. Ava has been an exceptional voice for Park View students. Recently, she was an integral member of the school Terry Fox planning committee and was also the top student fundraiser for the event, which was held in memory of Sherri Hirtle, a Park View teacher who recently passed away.

I would like to recognize Ava as a youth leader who leads by example and for committing her time and using her voice to advocate for students, as well for volunteering on multiple school committees and clubs throughout her high school career.

I ask the members to please join me in thanking and congratulating Ava on her leadership and initiative.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**PAUL, CHIEF TERRY & COUNCIL - MEMBERTOU:
HOSTING OF NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HOCKEY CH'SHIPS - RECOG.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place to recognize the community of Membertou and the announcement again yesterday: For the second time in five years, they're going to be hosting the National Indigenous Hockey Championships. This is great news for the community of Membertou, and it's also representation of how they host events within the community and the infrastructure that they've long worked on to ensure that they could welcome the world, which is their motto.

I rise to congratulate Chief Terry, who is a very significant leader on the island and also one of the nicest gentlemen you'd ever meet, and the council for advocating to have this elite hockey tournament that will see Indigenous hockey players from all over Canada come to our community to participate.

Congratulations to Chief Terry and council, and congratulations again to the community of Membertou.

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

UTSAV - THE FESTIVE FUSION: DIWALI CELEB. IN HFX. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Today I rise to note the upcoming celebration of Diwali. Diwali is a festival of lights that celebrates the triumph of light over dark and good over evil and the blessings of victory, freedom, and enlightenment. Diwali is celebrated by the Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities all over the world.

Utsav - The Festive Fusion is a Nova Scotia organization that promotes and celebrates South Asian communities and cultures. They will be hosting a free Diwali celebration starting at 4 p.m. on October 30th at St. Andrew's Church here in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island. The night will be filled with music, dance, food, and festivities.

I ask that all members join me in celebrating Diwali and recognizing Utsav - The Festive Fusion for bringing this event to the Halifax community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

**STALKER 822 MEM. GOLF TOURN. ORGANIZERS:
HARD WORK AND DEDIC. - RECOG.**

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to recognize the inaugural Stalker 822 Memorial Golf Tournament. Members of the Canadian Veterans Corps Nova Scotia, along with family members of the fallen CAF members from the HMCS *Fredericton*, came together to organize this amazing event.

All proceeds of the tournament will be given to "Soldier On," a program of the Canadian Armed Forces that helps with the recovery of the ill and injured soldiers and veterans. I was honored to be asked to participate.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in remembering the fallen soldiers: Master Corporal Matthew Cousins; Sub-Lieutenant Abbigail Cowbrough; Captain Kevin Hagen; Captain Brenden MacDonald; Captain Maxime Miron-Morin; and Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, and to recognize the hard work and dedication of those who organized the inaugural Stalker 822 Memorial Golf Tournament.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**MARRIOTT, MIKE/PRASAD, DEEPAK:
ADDRESSING TRAILS SAFETY ISSUE - THANKS**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize two outstanding community volunteers: Mike Marriott from the Safety Minded ATV Association and Deepak Prasad, a BLT Rails to Trails board member. Mike and Deepak led a group of volunteers this

Summer from three associations to address a safety issue between two trails that run through our community.

The BLT trail ends at Highway No. 3 and Hubley across the highway. The St. Margaret's Bay Rails to Trail starts, and that trail runs all the way from Hubley to Hubbards. It is at the intersection where the trails meet and cross the highway that a safety issue emerged for trail users.

Over the years, a combination of a double layer of asphalt and the gradual wearing away of gravel along the shoulder and the road created a deep ridge on both sides of the highway, making it dangerous to cross Highway No. 3 to move from one trail to the other.

Mike and Deepak, along with six other volunteers from the Safety Minded ATV Association, BLT Rails to Trails, and the St. Margaret's Bay Area Rails to Trails, laid an asphalt apron and fixed the gravel shoulder to provide a safe passage from one trail to the other.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Mike and Deepak for their service to the community. Due to COVID-19, there has been an unprecedented increase in use of the trail system, making the maintenance and management of the trails more important than ever.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Chester St. Margaret's.

**GORE, ERIN: RECIP. OF MUN. OF CHESTER
VOLUN. OF YR. AWD. - RECOG.**

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, it is with considerable pleasure that I rise this afternoon and acknowledge Erin Gore as the Municipality of Chester's Volunteer of the Year for 2021.

Erin is a volunteer with the Tuesday evening's Picnic in the Park concerts each Summer. She also attends the Chester Farmers Market to sell face masks she sews, with 100 per cent of the proceeds going to Chester PRO Kids. So far, she has raised more than \$10,000.

Erin also sews costumes for the Chester Playhouse and the Coldest Day of the Year at the Fo'c'sle Pub. She is a food server at Chester Area Middle School, as well as participating in line dancing classes, the Harvest Jam, and the 50/50 Draw for Our Health Centre and PPE for Shoreham residents.

The Municipality of Chester is much richer in spirit, inclusion, education, and fun because of Erin's dedicated involvement in her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**YAR. & AREA CoC/COASTAL FIN. CREDIT UNION:
NEW RES. FOR DOCTORS - THANKS**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, a key component to attracting and retaining family doctors to rural areas is housing. The Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce and Coastal Financial Credit Union have partnered to address this by building a five-unit apartment building exclusively for doctors in Yarmouth.

The new residence is very handy to Yarmouth Regional Hospital. Driving there would take seconds and walking would take only minutes. This is the kind of innovative and proactive work under way in Yarmouth on doctor recruitment. We were the first community to receive funding from the previous government to support community-led initiatives that encourage and assist doctor recruitment in our area. This led to a domino effect that unleashed our community's drive, innovation, and heart when it comes to doctor recruitment.

I ask the House to join me in thanking Kerry Muise, chair of the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce doctors recruitment team and Rick Doucette, CEO of Coastal Financial Credit Union, as well as Rebecca Cassidy, community navigator for the Yarmouth Regional Medical Professional Recruitment Partnership. I am so proud of them and all of their vision and hard work to make this very important project a reality, and for their unwavering dedication to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**BONA, JACK & TEAMMATES:
WINNING UNDER-13 ATL. CDN. CHALL. - CONGRATS.**

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, the U13 Nova Scotia provincial baseball team recently won the U13 Atlantic Canadian Challenge in P.E.I. in August. Under normal circumstances the team would have been playing in nationals this year, but that was not possible due to COVID-19.

Jack Bona from Louisdale in Richmond County was one of three Cape Bretoners to make the provincial team, along with Reid MacDonald from Long Point in Inverness and Brody Walker of Glace Bay.

I want to extend my congratulations to Jack and his teammates for their dedication and perseverance and look forward to seeing him represent Nova Scotia in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

PARTICIPANTS: SEARCH FOR MISSING PRESTON BOY - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Really quickly, Mr. Speaker, as a follow-up, I just want to acknowledge some of the other folks who were there yesterday helping with the ground search. The Integrated Criminal Investigation Division, Halifax District RCMP, the Natural Resources helicopter, the police dog services, and then also the ground search and rescue crews and police dogs combined area.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

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

THE SPEAKER: The time is 2:00 p.m.; we'll go until 2:50 p.m.

The honourable member for Preston.

DOJ: MINISTER'S COMMENTS - CLARIFY

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I asked a question of the Minister of Justice about street checks. He responded by saying this isn't about an individual, any individuals and their wants and needs right now, it is about reaching a conclusion that's acceptable to all members of community.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: What was the minister's intent behind that statement?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member across the floor, there was no intent to the statement. It was just to point out that I felt that it's important to make sure that all community groups are consulted before we come forward with the final statement.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, just a point of clarification - when I rise in this House I would like members to know who I represent - I don't just represent myself and my experiences as an individual but those of my constituency.

My constituency is the home communities of Lake Echo, Mineville, Westphal, Dartmouth, and it is also of the three African Nova Scotian communities, of which one is the largest . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, is there a question? It's more of a statement at this point.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: So, the same Black communities that have not been afforded a voice in this House are owed one.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: Will he issue a new ministerial directive by the end of 2021 and will he table legislation in 2022?

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that if the member across the floor felt that any of my comments were directly related or related to her personally somehow, I certainly apologize for that. That was not the intent of the comment. The comment was to talk about the broader consultation.

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

PREM. - \$15 MIN. WAGE: OPPOSITION - RECONSIDER

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, for a number of years our Party, along with labour groups and other activists, have called on the government to implement a \$15 minimum wage on the road to a living wage.

The Premier, when asked about this a little while ago, said about a \$15 minimum wage, and I'll table this, "I would worry about the impact that would have on our economy with less people working . . ."

A couple of weeks ago, economist David Card was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics for his research showing that increases in the minimum wage do not result in unemployment or in reduced employment.

My question to the Premier is: Is he prepared to revisit or to reconsider his previous opposition to a \$15 minimum wage?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, what I would say to the member on this important topic is we are focused on making sure that Nova Scotia is a province where everyone can see opportunities for themselves and reach their full potential right here in this province, and \$15 is a number for some people. Some people strive much higher than that.

What I would say to the member is that we're focused on making sure that there are jobs in this economy, in this province, that pay a satisfactory amount, a suitable amount, an appropriate amount, so that everyone who wakes up and goes to work every single day earns enough to afford groceries, shelter, and a quality of life that they have a right to expect right here in this province.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I think these are entirely appropriate words for the Premier to use: "a satisfactory wage, a suitable wage, an appropriate wage."

We know that we have one-third of the people working for wages in Nova Scotia who are making less than \$15 an hour today and that they are working for large businesses, a majority of them. Now in an interview not long ago, the Premier added to these words “suitable and appropriate,” I think, another proper word to describe this: He said that although he didn’t support a \$15 minimum wage, he did think it was important for people to have a “fair” wage.

My question to the Premier is: Does he think that \$12.95 is a suitable, appropriate, fair wage for a person working in Nova Scotia?

THE PREMIER: What I would say is that we want Nova Scotians to believe that the economy is growing, that they can participate in the economy, that they can make a living in this province, and they can thrive in this province. That’s what I would say.

My concerns remain around the member’s position that it would cause fewer people working on certain shifts and it would lead to job loss. We have a philosophical disagreement on that. That’s okay. We just have to accept that we have a disagreement on that.

We know our economy just came through a pretty difficult time as well. Right now, we’re focused on rebuilding the economy, moving forward, and making sure that Nova Scotians can earn a fair wage, earn a suitable wage, and earn a satisfactory wage, but above all of that, can enjoy a quality of life in this province where they can reach their full potential.

GARY BURRILL: This whole idea of having a quality of life speaks to the idea of a living wage, which we know is actually quite a bit more than \$15 per hour - a living wage being defined as what two earners in a household have to make in order for them to cover the cost of living and have basic decent living conditions in that family’s home.

In Halifax, that’s been defined as \$20.70 an hour. There are a number of jurisdictions in North America now, as well as a number of companies, that are declaring living-wage policies, not just for their employees but also for their suppliers. Cyclesmith in Halifax is one of them.

I want to ask the Premier: Is he prepared to lead Nova Scotia to a position where we will be able to declare the Province of Nova Scotia as a living-wage jurisdiction?

THE PREMIER: What I would say to the member is that I am prepared to lead this province to the place where people all over the world see Nova Scotia as the province of opportunity. That is what I see for this province. That is what more and more people are seeing.

It is my hope that every person who wants to live and work in Nova Scotia can find that opportunity right here and reach their full potential. That is my hope. That's where I'll lead the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - STREET CHECKS: LOOPHOLE - CLOSE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'd like to add my voice to some of the members asking questions on when we will see action and a ministerial directive to ensure that the area of the ministerial directive on suspicious activity is removed.

There are a number of individuals - at least 17 in the House in our caucus - who stand with our colleague for Preston and our colleague for Halifax Needham. There are also 11 individuals who have been street-checked here over the last little while. I'll table that. There are 50 historic Black communities across the province that are waiting to see this happen, and beyond.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he direct his minister to close this loophole once and for all?

THE PREMIER: I want to assure the Leader of the Official Opposition and all members of this House that we stand united on this. We've been very clear: We want this loophole closed.

The reason there's a loophole is because the well-intentioned first legislation left a loophole. The ministerial directive left a loophole. We all want the same thing. What we want is no loopholes.

We will do the work, and just as soon as possible, we will make sure that loophole is closed. You have the commitment of me personally and our government that we're on the same page on this one.

IAIN RANKIN: Street checks are illegal in this province, but this directive clearly has problematic language. This was the language that our government was working very closely with, with the Decade for People of African Descent.

To my knowledge, the Justice Strategy Working Group has not been able to meet yet with this new government. All they have to do is change that language and then look at bringing in an amendment to the Police Act.

A lot of initiatives have been worked on. We have the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute, and I know the member had favourable comments on that recently.

I'd like to ask the Premier if he's committed to ensuring that the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute will remain in this province in perpetuity?

THE PREMIER: I commend the former government on the institute. We do support it. I think it's a great initiative. Our government thinks it's a great initiative. It's something that Nova Scotians can get behind.

We are there. We just need to make sure that those consultations continue and that we get the language right. Obviously, everybody has the same goal, but we've now seen two examples, I would say, with the legislation and with the subsequent ministerial directive, of well-intentioned words that left a loophole.

I know the loophole wasn't meant to be left. We don't like it; we don't want a loophole. We will do everything we can to fix that loophole, to close that loophole, and I will assure the members opposite, if in our first attempt we don't properly close it, we will keep trying until it's closed. There should be no loophole. They are illegal in this province. It shouldn't be happening.

IAIN RANKIN: We will watch closely. A number of our colleagues, like the member for Cole Harbour, have been working on this file as well. We want to see that African Nova Scotian Justice Institute remain in place beyond the three years that they're guaranteed funding for and the issue around street checks.

Another recommendation from the Justice Committee and DPAD was looking at a policing strategy, an African Nova Scotian policing strategy. I'd like to ask the Premier his thoughts on this, if he would consider supporting this initiative.

THE PREMIER: Again, I'm glad the member is raising the issues because they are of such importance that they do deserve constant confirmation. I will be happy to give that confirmation. We have no interest in moving backwards, we're only moving forward. Sometimes we have a bit of a back and forth in here on different things, but this government started a number of very positive initiatives, and we will absolutely be continuing those initiatives and building on that good work that's been done on those.

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

PREM. - TRADES: TAX BREAK - EXPAND

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The PC platform promised the much-touted 50 per cent income tax break for those workers who are under the age of 30, in trades. They put a lot of credence behind how this policy will work to attract people. This is where they see that we need people the most.

I'd like to ask the Premier: If this is a solution for this area where we need people, why won't he extend this out to other sectors that are in high need?

THE PREMIER: I'll take that as validation that it's a good solution. You want more of it, maybe, but what I would say is we know we're in a housing crisis in this province. We know we need more people in this province, and certainly as a platform solution that we put forward is to attract people working in the trades, particularly younger tradespeople who come in, make their whole life here and help us build this province, I'm very committed to that. I believe it will be very successful, and I will assure the member that we will also build on that success and look to extend that to other industries after we've proven this out with a pilot in the trades.

IAIN RANKIN: I would submit that we need nurses and ECEs just as much as people in these areas. So logic would show - if they believe so much in this program, will they consider making sure that nurses get this income tax break, and early childhood educators, if they think we need them so much?

THE PREMIER: I don't think that our dedication to fixing health care and attracting health care professions is up for question. I don't know, maybe it is. I personally don't think it is, but what I will assure the member is we understand the need. Despite some things we hear that there maybe is no need because of all the good work that was allegedly done before us, we think the need exists.

I will assure the member, and I will assure Nova Scotians, that we will not stop attracting people to this province. We will certainly not stop supporting health care workers and attracting the health care workers to this province. We will not stop until the job is done - and there is a lot of work to be done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

NRR - ATLANTIC LOOP: WORKERS - TRANSITION PLAN

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, and it's around something that we're all very supportive of in the potential of the Atlantic Loop here for Nova Scotia.

One of the things that we do have to keep in mind, though, and it's something that I was engaged with in many conversations, is around the workers who are in the power plants in Cape Breton and in Stellarton. I've heard from some of the families myself about their concerns. They see the potential, but what does that mean for transition for those workers? We're talking about hundreds of workers, and we're also talking about a supply chain.

My question to the minister is: Did Nova Scotia Power submit a transition plan for the workers at these plants?

[2:15 p.m.]

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Just to enlighten the House and the province, I appreciate the dialogue that one of the past members of the energy department has had with myself.

To answer the question, I haven't seen a report from Nova Scotia Power, but I can enlighten the member that there have been conversations with Nova Scotia Power. I've actually heard personally from some staff at Nova Scotia Power who have had conversations about retraining.

I know the members opposite spoke yesterday about green jobs initiatives. That's where we envision it as a government, part of this changeover with the Loop, with going to 80 per cent renewables, with having greenhouse gas emissions drop down, in the bill that we presented yesterday that's part of our process to ensure that those people are turning into the green economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the dialogue with the minister, too, back and forth about the issue, because this is significant for these communities. There are hundreds of jobs that are involved with these plants.

For me, I was always very adamant with Nova Scotia Power that we needed to see a plan, that the plan actually had to start now. If 2030 is the target to get off coal, then let's not talk about it in 2029, let's talk about it in 2021.

As a follow-up question to the minister: Has the minister reached out or had any conversations with the employees at these plants directly about some of the concerns that many of them are bringing forward to all of us?

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite. No, any conversations that have been initiated have been from staff at Nova Scotia Power who have reached out to me directly. There has been no formal process.

What I can offer to the member opposite is availability of myself and availability of staff. I'll certainly reach out to the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration as well and bring them into the conversation to ensure that some of those fears may be alleviated, so the workers of Nova Scotia can understand where we're headed for a greener environment in Nova Scotia, which does include those workers.

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

LSI - VACCINATIONS: CHILDREN - BARRIERS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

Health Canada is expected to approve a COVID-19 vaccine for children shortly. It has been explained in this House that the government has no overarching plan to run school-based clinics for children ages 5 to 11. We know that with only 51 per cent of parents planning to immediately vaccinate their children, we need to remove every barrier that we can to get vaccines into arms.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister commit to ensuring that parents and caregivers have paid time off work to get their children vaccinated?

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, thank you very much for this very important question. We know that we need to make sure that all Nova Scotians feel that they can get vaccinated, and I really do want to be able to work with the member.

I don't have an answer right now and I know that I have to talk to my colleagues on this and we know that it's very important. So again, thank you for bringing forward this important question. I will have a conversation with you afterwards.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, and I look forward to it.

According to an FOI received by our office, providing paid sick leave to workers is much less expensive than anticipated. When the program was announced, the previous government anticipated that it would cost \$16 million to administer. In fact, claims to date, under the now expired program, total only \$469,073.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister agree that it would be affordable, sensible and logical to provide paid leave to parents so they can vaccinate their children?

JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, again, thank you for this very important question. We do know that there was a temporary program in place to support workers during the third wave of the pandemic. We want to make sure that Nova Scotians know we saw that they did such great work to make sure that the third wave was put to an end.

This was a temporary program in place and there hasn't been a decision made yet to continue it, but again I look forward to having that conversation with the member.

Again, I just want to thank Nova Scotians for doing the right thing and getting vaccinated, making sure that they were getting tested and took the time off when they had symptoms. Again, thank you for the question, member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

DHW - NURSES: HIRING PROCESS - CLARIFY

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, nurses are the lifeblood of our health care system, as the Minister of Health and Wellness would know very intimately. I did listen with interest to the Premier's statement today. Just for clarification of the House, does this mean that nursing grads will not have to go through the usual application, interview, and hiring process that they currently go through right now, Premier?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Certainly during the Speak Up for Health Care Tour and on the conference call we had with nursing students we had the other night, we did hear about some of the challenges that we have with the red tape associated with the hiring practices.

There will be an interview process, of course. We want to interview people, we want to understand where their interests lie, and we want to understand where the best place for them to work is. There will be a process, but the job offers are there.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, just for the clarity of the House, can the Premier please explain how this process differs from the one previously?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We have been working very closely with the Nova Scotia Health Authority to streamline those processes with the nursing students.

The nursing students will hear from the Nova Scotia Health Authority directly and they will then have the opportunity to reach out and have another conversation with the Nova Scotia Health Authority about where it is they want to work in terms of specialty and when their start date would be.

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

DHW - NURSES: MANDATORY VACCINES - IMPACT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I am still not seeing what the difference is in that process, but would be happy to chat with the minister offline.

In regard to the current nursing shortage that we have in Nova Scotia, we do want to see the government have success in recruiting and training. Our government did train more nurses than ever before in the province. We doubled the number of nurse practitioners and still we had challenges when it came to labour pressures in our system.

One trend we are starting to see in other provinces is related to the mandatory vaccine. Other provinces, and I will table this, are experiencing people leaving the sector as a result of this.

Can the minister please provide an update to the House if we are seeing any impact to our current nursing numbers and vacancy numbers as a result of this plan?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Currently, there is no immediate impact in terms of the vaccine policy. We do know that after the 30th, people who are not vaccinated at all will be excluded from the workforce.

People who have begun the vaccination program, if they have had one dose and they have their second one booked, will not be excluded from the workforce for a period of time. We are working with partners in continuing care as well as the Nova Scotia Health Authority and we have seen an uptick in the number of people who have got vaccines.

I appreciate that there may be people who choose not to get vaccinated. I understand that. Those would be people who will be working with the most vulnerable people in our province in long-term care and in hospitals, and it is not lost on us that if any of those individuals brought COVID-19 into the hospital, there would be significant implications in terms of workforce. So we have to continue on. (Applause)

ZACH CHURCHILL: I certainly do not disagree at all with the intention of the mandatory vaccine for health care workers. We are concerned that there isn't a plan to deal with potential labour shortages, which do impact service delivery across the spectrum, from primary care to emergency care to surgeries. That is why it is so critical that this government report on vacancies and numbers for recruitment, just like we did with doctors.

I do want to quote the Premier, who said, "To do my job, I rely on information that I can assess, trust, reach conclusions about."

For voters to participate in democracy and make informed voting decisions, they also have to rely on that information. We have asked repeatedly in this House for this government to report monthly on vacancies and recruitment numbers.

Can the Premier please commit today to provide at least monthly reporting on nursing recruitment numbers and vacancies?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: So, as we've said before, we are committed to working on the nursing shortage and we need to understand exactly where they are. There are a lot of issues around the reporting system, particularly in the continuing care sector, where they don't have a lot of computer-generated work.

We are committed to reporting. We want to make sure it is the right reporting at the right time and it doesn't become a task that takes people away from their everyday work.

Recruitment is a very important focus for us and we will continue to report as appropriate.

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

SNSIS: DEROGATORY PLACE NAMES - UPDATE

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. It's important that all place names in Nova Scotia reflect the values that we, as Nova Scotians, have. One of the responsibilities of that minister's department is to make sure that any offensive or derogatory names that are located in our province are changed.

When I was minister, we had started a consultation process on a number of names in the Shelburne area that were forms of a derogatory slur, a racial slur, and I'm curious as to where the department is in that process.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my predecessor for the question. It is one where I have been brought up to speed. In fact she is correct, there was an ongoing process to rectify the derogatory names in the Shelburne County area, part of which was my former constituency.

I do want to thank the more than 200 people who participated in the consultation process. Names have been brought forward back through consultation with folks in the region. They will be presented back to the community for some further input, support from the local MLA, and the changes will be made in the future.

PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that answer. Right now, the mechanism to trigger a renaming or a consultation on a renaming process in the province is based on a complaint being brought forward. A lot of times, people who are marginalized don't always feel like they have a voice or that they feel comfortable enough to initiate this process. We have a number of places still in the province that are using very derogatory terms, racial slurs.

My question through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Would he look at implementing a new system that would do a general sweep of any offensive names in the province and see what we can do to start changing them, to reflect the nature of our society?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, that is correct, there are two complaints brought forward to the department over the last number of years, which started off this process. We recognize there are a number of other names to be changed throughout Nova

Scotia and that will be led through consultation with our First Nation communities and African Nova Scotian communities.

I do take the point, and I'll bring that back to the department to see if we can improve on the process to move forward on this file.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH: AIRBNBS - REGULATION

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A 2019 study found that short-term rentals have removed 740 housing units from HRM's long-term housing market - and I'll table that.

However, the Conservatives' plan only commits the consultation with stakeholders in the growing short-term rental industry.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister agree to strengthen the regulation of Airbnbs to stop the creation of ghost hotels and prevent the loss of long-term residential units?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I can't speak to any Conservative plan. This is the Progressive Conservative government, so I'll decline to speak to that.

SUZY HANSEN: Touché. Mr. Speaker, all of those words previous, however the Progressive Conservatives' plan only . . . (Applause) I really appreciate that, because I hope the claps happen after I give them the question.

However, the Progressive Conservatives' plan only commits to consultation with the stakeholders. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: Will the minister agree to strengthen the regulation of Airbnbs to stop the creation of ghost hotels and prevent the loss of long-term residential units?

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for that question. Yes, we have committed to consultations in the coming months with the intent of bringing in legislation in the Spring.

There's a lot to consult on that. We don't know what's really transpired to Airbnbs during COVID-19. That's part of it. We know we're entering the post-COVID-19 world, we hope, and this is all important to address. It's an important factor in housing. We're very concerned about it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

[2:30 p.m.]

DPW - ACADIAN COMM.: BILINGUAL SIGNS - TIMELINE

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works.

In 2019, an important initiative was begun by a group of students from Clare. They held meetings with government officials and advocated on behalf of their community to replace stop signs in Acadian communities with bilingual signs. Their efforts were successful and on July 5, 2021, it was announced by the previous government that bilingual stop signs would be installed on provincial roads in Acadian communities across the province.

My question to the Minister of Public Works: When can we expect to see those signs start to be installed?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: This is a file that the Department of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie has been well involved with; one that I supported the group of youths who came to the House of Assembly with the former member, and met with them, actually, in my constituency office.

I can say that the request has been received by my office and submitted to the Department of Public Works for follow-up. Those signs are expected to be installed in Spring 2022. Perhaps the member and I can install the first one.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Je suis ouvert à faire ça. Ç'est tellement une bonne pour toi.

La question que j'ai pour le ministre, c'est que chaque autre communauté acadienne à travers la province ont droit de demander de rapport dans cette initiative-ci. Avec le Congrès mondial de 2024 qui s'en vient dans Clare-Argyle, faut-il nous assurer que tous les signes vont être remplacés avant le Congrès?

THE SPEAKER: En anglais, s'il vous plait.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I'll try my best.

As we know, other Acadian communities can ask through their municipalities to get their signs replaced. I am asking the minister: Can he commit to replacing those signs before the World Acadian Congress takes place in this province in 2024?

COLTON LEBLANC: Certainement, ce changement des règlements aux traffic signs regulations, surtout Section 88, permet la valorisation du français dans nos communautés rurales et francophones. Certainement avec trois ans avant le Congrès

mondial, on a du temps à faire la consultation. Chez mon coin d'Argyle, on attend avec impatience pour faire les installations, mais ç'est certain que mon bureau va tenir cela à une priorité.

Mr. Speaker, en anglais now.

Changes through the traffic sign regulations, specifically Section No. 88, permit the valorization of French language in our rural communities, particularly our Acadian communities. Through my office, I'll be ensuring that this is an ongoing file. We'll be doing consultation in the three years ahead of the World Acadian Congress.

I look forward, in Argyle, to putting the first bilingual stop sign - perhaps the member for Clare can help me on that one, too. (Applause)

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

LSI - WOMEN IN TRADES: RECRUIT - PLAN

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, nous savons que - no, I'm just not going to go there. (Laughter)

We know that the trades industry is a traditionally male-dominated field where we see disproportionately fewer women working. In the Speech from the Throne, this government highlighted the increasing need for more skilled trade workers in our province, with an emphasis on encouraging young girls and students from diverse backgrounds to take interest in the trades.

We know that there's a shortage of tradespeople in this province which will, in turn, have negative impacts on increasing the supply of housing in Nova Scotia. My question is: What is the government's plan to recruit and retain more women into the trades?

HON. JILL BALSER: To the member opposite, you're absolutely right. We do have a wonderful opportunity to be able to encourage young people, women, and diverse communities to get involved in the trades.

Our department has a marketing plan to be able to encourage that. I'm really excited for the work that's going to happen. The apprenticeship agency is also doing wonderful things to encourage women and diverse communities to get involved. We're also listening to those communities around the changes that need to be made.

Again, we're just really encouraged about the fact that young people have the opportunity to come home and fill in those labour market gaps. That's our goal as a government, too.

LORELEI NICOLL: According to the Office to Advance Women Apprentices Nova Scotia - and I'll table that - women account for approximately 4 per cent of the skilled construction trades workforce nationally. Does this government have an action plan to reserving a percentage of trade jobs and dedicating them specifically to the hiring of women, to quote the Premier, so they can achieve their full potential?

JILL BALSER: Again, to the member opposite, this is so important, to make sure that women and all diverse communities have a space and feel seen and heard in the trades. The Apprenticeship Agency, again, is dedicated to making sure that that work is happening, and our partners at NSCC as well. We're making sure that we're listening to the diverse communities. We have great partnerships and we want to make sure that women especially feel encouraged to apply for these jobs, because we know that we need them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DPW: INFRASTRUCTURE PROG. - PLAN

BRAEDON CLARK: My question is for the Minister of Public Works. In 2018, the Province and the federal government signed the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which allocated over \$800 million in infrastructure funding for the province.

According to Infrastructure Canada - and I'll table this - just under 50 per cent of that funding has been allocated, leaving a little over \$400 million. My question to the minister is: What is the department's plan to make sure that all of that money is allocated and spent here in the province?

HON. KIM MASLAND: We are putting forward a great group right now to look at the infrastructure that we need going forward for growth in HRM and outlying areas. I would expect that we'll make sure that the money is being spent in the places that it needs to be spent.

BRAEDON CLARK: In particular, I'm interested in the public transit stream of that funding. I know in the past, the department has been quite reluctant - the Province has been reluctant to fund public transit. We see that in the numbers. There's about \$172 million sitting there, available to be spent. That's about three-quarters of the total for the public transit fund.

My question to the minister is: Will she commit that every cent of that \$172 million will be spent here in the province?

KIM MASLAND: Of course I'll commit to spending money.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

PREM.: FILM TAX CREDIT - CANCELLATION

SUSAN LEBLANC: That's great. I hope that your honourable colleague, the Premier, will have the same answer to my question. My question is for the Premier. I would like to go back to a topic that we discussed briefly earlier this week.

In 2015, when the Liberal government cancelled the Nova Scotia Film Tax Credit, the Premier had a lot to say about the decision's impact on the industry. There are many quotes to choose from. Here are a couple. He said: "What's happening in the film industry is even more egregious, even more unfair. We're looking at it and the impact is so wide-reaching."

He also said: "The change to the Film Tax Credit ... is a devastating blow to our film industry and the young generation that had all kinds of aspirations to make a career here in that industry." I can table that.

Does the Premier still believe that the cancellation of the Film Tax Credit and its impacts were devastating, egregious, and unfair?

THE PREMIER: What I would say is it certainly had an impact, there's no question. Six years have passed. I think the pandemic, actually, in many ways - the way the Province responded to the pandemic - was actually helpful to some productions.

What I would say to the honourable member is there should be no doubt, there can be no question about my commitment to making sure that we have a thriving film industry here in this province. We will look at the issues that we face now today in 2021 and make sure that we're working with the industry to solve the problems that they see, to overcome the hurdles that they see. They know full well that I will be standing right beside them, arm in arm, moving the industry forward, because that moves our province forward.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The Conservative 2017 election platform said: We will work closely with our film industry to bring back a refundable tax credit and make Nova Scotia competitive again. I can table that. Despite this promise and the Premier's strong words, nothing about the Film Tax Credit itself has appeared in the Party's most recent election platform, and I will point out that the industry has asked for a reinstatement of the Film Tax Credit to work in tandem with the newly-developed and working-well incentive fund. They've also asked for other things that I hope the Premier will respond to at a later date.

I'd like to ask the Premier to clarify: Will he work with the industry and reinstate the Nova Scotia film tax credit?

THE PREMIER: Of course, I can't speak to a Conservative election platform. I can speak to our Progressive Conservative platform and the industry knows it.

I can assure the member, and I would challenge the member to find one member of the film industry who doesn't think they have a friend in this government. (Applause.)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

EECD: HOUSING DEV. - SCHOOLS

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I'm really hopeful that the member takes the Premier up on that challenge.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Progressive Conservative government announced last week the creation of a joint task force to facilitate the development of large housing projects in Halifax. Clearly, they read the Affordable Housing Commission report, and I'm very happy that they are following through on those recommendations.

For those of us who exist in a part of the province that is heavily populated and is continuing to grow and there is already major stress on our schools, I'm curious if the minister can tell us if the task force is going to be able to build the schools quickly enough to sustain the overcrowding that we currently have.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I am very happy to say that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has a five-year capital plan. Our capital planning, which includes the planning for building of schools, is one that looks forward to the future and has a long-term approach.

We are confident in our ability to respond to the needs of communities and support the communities to have the schools that they need.

PATRICIA ARAB: I appreciate the answer to the question.

Mr. Speaker, my question is: In Fairview-Clayton Park, we are very thankful for the enhancements that have been made to our overcrowded schools, in particular with the modular classrooms that we see. I am curious and hopeful that the minister would commit to building a new elementary school in the Fairview-Clayton Park area.

BECKY DRUHAN: I will say I believe very strongly in an approach that involves planning and consultation and collaboration and research, so I am not going to personally commit to building any individual schools. I want to make sure that we follow the appropriate process.

I am happy to work with the department, with municipalities, and with our other departments to make sure those processes are followed so that everybody gets their needs met.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DHW - PROOF OF VAC.: NON-PROFITS - ASSIST

FRED TILLEY: My question today is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. We all agree that providing proof of vaccination is a great way for all our citizens to enjoy group activities such as sports and concerts.

Mr. Speaker, the process is hurting many local, non-profit organizations financially. For example, in CBRM, all rinks that are run by the municipality, the proof of vaccination is covered by the municipality as they hire the security to do so. Rinks that are run by community groups don't have that same ability and are therefore forced to cover that cost themselves. I am getting to the question.

I was contacted by Northside Minor Hockey, who have just been informed by the Emera Centre that they are going to have to cover the costs going forward.

My question to the minister is: Will the government commit to provide funding to non-profit organizations to remove the financial burden of checking for proof of vaccination?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We have discussed this, actually, in one of the COVID-19 briefings. If there are particular organizations that feel the strain, we are willing to have a conversation with them about what those needs are.

We do now have the QR code reader, which is very quick and very easy for people to read with proof of vaccination. There may be a number of different options that we can explore with not-for-profit organizations.

FRED TILLEY: I think the code readers are great.

A lot of people in our smaller communities - a lot of seniors - don't have the technology to be able to use the code readers.

I guess I'm asking for a timeline for if the organizations can contact your office directly for assistance so that we can let Northside & District Minor Hockey call your office direct and get assistance with their program.

[2:45 p.m.]

MICHELLE THOMPSON: This is the first time, actually, that that's been brought forward. I'm not sure if phoning my office directly is the best way for people to reach me, especially since I'm sitting here for the next however long. (Applause)

I will commit to figuring out what a fairly easy process would be for us to work with groups that need support.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

ECC: AMOUNT OF LITTERING FEES - QUANTIFY

HON. KEITH IRVING: My question is for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. The minister's mandate letter requires him to bring in a litterbug act. The main intent of that act is to increase the penalty fees for littering in Nova Scotia.

Nothing against the objectives of trying to address this problem within the province, but in terms of knowing how best to address the problem, you've got to understand the problem. Is the problem really the size of the fees?

Can the minister tell us how many penalties - fines - have been issued annually for littering in the province?

HON. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable colleague for the question. Absolutely, in terms of enforcement, ensuring we have the cleanest, greenest environment possible is a top priority to Nova Scotians.

My commitment to this House and to all Nova Scotians is that before a bill like that would be tabled in the Legislature, consistent and strong consultations and research will be done. As the member may be aware, at the moment Divert Nova Scotia is conducting an analysis of why littering is still occurring. That is a study that I'll want to examine prior to any bill being tabled in this Legislature.

KEITH IRVING: If Nova Scotia is going to have the highest penalties in Canada, how many more compliance officers does the department plan on hiring to enforce these tough penalties?

How many more compliance officers to enforce this law?

TIM HALMAN: Process is very, very important. Process is something that those of us on this side very much appreciate. Before any piece of legislation would be brought forward, I can assure the honourable member, extensive study and research will be conducted.

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

DAE: POST-SECONDARY FEES - ADDRESS

LISA LACHANCE: My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education.

The year 2020 was a hard one for post-secondary students, with online learning and isolation from supports. On top of that, undergraduate students in Nova Scotia have paid the highest tuition fees of any province in the country for the last two years, rising this year to an average of \$9,028.

What is this government doing to address astronomical fees at post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia?

HON. BRIAN WONG: The struggle that students of post-secondary institutions and even our secondary institutions are going through in order to deal with COVID-19 does not go unrecognized. We do understand that cost is always a factor and it is also a concern for our government.

However, we do offer one of the strongest and best student assistance programs in the country. We are working with student groups and with universities in order to mitigate some of those as best we can.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island with three seconds left.

LISA LACHANCE: Will the minister commit to lowering tuition fees . . .

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: Mr. Speaker, I have a government motion. I move that the hour of adjournment today be not 6:00 p.m. but 11:59 p.m., and Friday, October 29th the hour of adjournment be not 1:00 p.m. but 9:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that we extend the hours of the House to 11:59 tonight and to 9:00 p.m. tomorrow. You have heard the motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Public Bills for Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 57.

Bill No. 57 - Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. TIM HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill No. 57, the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, and what this will mean for the future of our beautiful province of Nova Scotia.

This government is committed to taking bold and decisive action on climate change and sustainable prosperity and that is exactly what we are doing with this bill. Nova Scotians care deeply about our environment. They care deeply about climate change. They understand the need for change as we transition to a clean economy.

We all know we are already experiencing the effects of climate change. It has our youth concerned for their future. As a matter of fact, when I first got elected, my oldest child, Sophie, had said to me, Dad, get us off coal. Imagine a 9-year-old at the time fully aware and cognizant of this issue.

We saw last Friday the second student climate strike in a month on the streets of Halifax. On Monday, I had the privilege of meeting with a number of those student leaders who clearly told me how critical it is that we continue to take action on this issue that is an existential threat to humanity.

The change in climate is a threat to our communities. It is a threat to our industries. It is a threat to our way of life in the province. I fully acknowledge as minister that we are at the tipping point. We are at a pivotal moment in the history of humanity.

We have an opportunity to set the course so that all Nova Scotians can enjoy a better quality of life and the benefits of being leaders in sustainability. This legislation sets ambitious goals including the strongest 2030 greenhouse gas emission targets in Canada. (Applause)

We are committed to reducing emissions to at least 53 per cent below levels that were emitted in 2005 by 2030 and achieving net-zero by 2050. We will continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach our renewable energy goals by 2030. That will help us achieve a clean and prosperous future for Nova Scotia.

This legislation will guide Nova Scotia towards a cleaner, healthier environment over the next 10 years and beyond. It will encourage the growth of the clean economy and the greening of traditional industries.

The Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act has 28 specific goals and requires that equity be a principle throughout all of these goals. That was very important to Nova Scotians who participated in the climate and sustainability consultations from May to July of this year.

This legislation goes further than ever before. It builds on the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act brought in in 2007, and it continues with the Sustainable Development Goals Act of the previous government.

Let me say how important it is, I think, that we acknowledge the work that has been done thus far by previous colleagues, by previous ministers, by a previous Premier. That is not lost on me and it's not lost on this government, because I think we'd all recognize, when it comes to protection of the planet, when it comes to preservation of the things we hold so sacred to us - our lands, our water, our atmosphere - the great work that has been done thus far. What this bill will do is drive that momentum forward for the next decade.

This legislation is unique. There is no other province or territory in Canada that has enshrined environmental targets in legislation like this. Once again, Nova Scotia is a leader in Canada. This legislation, as you know, will be followed in the Spring by the climate change plan for clean growth, which will contain additional, specific measures on how we meet these ambitious goals. Our goals are enshrined in legislation, not regulation, and they require annual progress reporting for greater transparency and greater accountability.

I believe we've listened to Nova Scotians. We've listened to our youth, whom we know want immediate action. I am so pleased with the Clean Foundation, which led a 60-day joint public engagement from May to July on the government's behalf. I certainly want to thank all staff with the Clean Foundation, who did a fantastic job utilizing very innovative ways to ensure voices that have historically been and currently are marginalized, to ensure that their voices were heard in that consultation. I commend them for the use of the micro-grants, which I believe can be a great template for all government departments moving forward to engage those voices that have been marginalized.

Nova Scotians responded to that consultation. We received more than 5,600 individual ideas for the path forward to sustainability. Nova Scotians are engaged on this issue. There were 1,300 submissions made to this format to solicit feedback. Of course,

we've incorporated this feedback into the development of this bill. A summary of that feedback, of course, is posted at cleanfuture.ca if members want to see what Nova Scotians have to say, and that is currently being translated en français and should be made available very soon.

It was clear from the feedback that Nova Scotians want the well-being of the planet to be top priority. From the feedback, it was clear that they want us to break down systemic racism and discrimination. Nova Scotians want to see a reduction in income inequality. They want to ensure that all Nova Scotians live in affordable communities, in healthy communities, resilient communities, and inclusive communities.

[3:00 p.m.]

Nova Scotians also want to be part of the solution, and they see the potential for a brighter future. As I always teach my children, you have to strive and work for a better tomorrow. These goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Bill will be challenging, but these goals are attainable, and we all need to work together to attain our goals.

Therefore, the government of Nova Scotia is taking bold and decisive action to deliver tangible solutions to Nova Scotians, to better align our goals and social well-being to the environment and to the economy. Make no mistake, we have strong goals around climate action, clean air and water, land protection and forestry, supporting our businesses, supporting our municipalities, our sectors, and our youth, education, training and awareness, active transportation, waste strategies, and many, many more.

Mr. Speaker, we will phase out the use of coal-fired electricity generation by 2030. Certainly, the issue today was raised in terms of how critical that just transition is, that as we phase coal out we need to ensure that transition is just. We need to ensure that those workers are supported and I want to signal to those workers that this government will be there to help support them.

Eighty per cent of electricity needs will be supplied by renewables by 2030. We will be mandating 30 per cent zero emission vehicle sales by 2030. This legislation commits to conserve at least 20 per cent of total land and water mass. It commits to a provincial food strategy and 20 per cent local consumption by 2030. It reduces solid waste disposal rates to no more than 300 kilograms per person per year by 2030, and it will support energy efficiency programming while prioritizing benefits for low-income and marginalized Nova Scotians.

The goals in this legislation aren't simply nice-to-have goals. They are what is needed. They are what is needed to ensure Nova Scotia continues to be an international leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These are the actions we need to take to reach

our greenhouse gas emission commitments and to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for all Nova Scotians.

I want to paint a picture of what this legislation means for our province and how it will change the way we live and work. The legislation contains key dates and deliverables upon which Nova Scotians and the members of this House can hold the government to account, through legislated, transparent progress reporting.

In addition to the goals that have already been highlighted, Mr. Speaker, these legislated deliverables and timelines include: any new build or major retrofit in government buildings that will be net zero energy performance starting next year and adopt the 2020 National Energy Code for Buildings within 18 months of it being published by the Government of Canada; a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from government buildings by 75 per cent by 2035; develop provincial protected areas and active transportation strategies by 2023; complete core active transportation networks in 65 per cent of Nova Scotia communities by 2030; develop provincial water quality objectives and address key barriers to testing and treatment of rural wells by 2026; implement an ecological forestry approach through the triad model of forest management and Crown land by 2023; identify the percentage allocation of Crown lands dedicated to each pillar of the triad model of forest management by 2023; modernize the environmental assessment process by 2024; work with municipalities and First Nations to take immediate and long-term action on their climate change priorities.

We will initiate ongoing work in 2022 with racialized and marginalized communities to support climate change action, community-based solutions, and policy engagement.

We will engage youth in the clean economy through sustainability-based youth employment leadership programs and we will require climate adaptation planning across every government department. We will encourage the growth of the circular economy. We will expand extended producer responsibility in order to reduce single-use plastics. We will increase innovation. We will increase sustainability, diversity, and inclusion in government procurement, and consider community benefits.

We will create an environment for innovative, sustainable, and clean business start-ups that encourages them to establish or relocate in the province. We will work with small businesses on ways to enable them to reduce emissions, including rebates, targeted investments, and other supports. We will manage the province's air zones in line with the Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards and we will modernize apprenticeship programs to meet labour gaps in the clean economy.

We will promote and support climate change education and sustainability through the knowledge and teachings of Netukulink and environmental stewardship with ongoing

changes to our school curriculum, and develop inclusive and accessible resources and professional learning.

We will implement a licensing process for aquaculture that considers the environment, animal welfare, and fish health.

A healthier, more sustainable environment will result in more jobs and economic opportunities for Nova Scotians. It will help to attract new citizens to live and work here and create a cleaner future for the next generation of Nova Scotians.

I can tell you how proud I am of this legislation and of the incredible work done by the staff at Environment and Climate Change, whom I know many in this Chamber know personally. It has been a long road the past six weeks, but the goals that I've just outlined are attainable.

A long time ago, I used to tell my students that it's quite remarkable what you can achieve when you don't care who gets the credit for it. A lot of great work, Mr. Speaker, has been accomplished prior to my appointment to this office. The intent of this legislation is to take that great work that has been accomplished thus far and drive it forward.

The preservation of the planet is not a partisan issue. We all have a responsibility to ensure we take ownership of these goals and work together as elected officials to ensure a better and brighter future for our children and grandchildren. (Applause)

I've always said that our actions today will dictate our tomorrow. I believe that the path that has been set out here in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Bill will ensure that tomorrow will be better, but it will require work. It will require an enormous amount of effort. It will require an enormous amount of courage.

Just yesterday, my colleague for Kings South made parallels to the transitions that we saw during the Industrial Revolution and how there was such rapid change. Make no mistake of the times we are in: These times call for bold action. All change comes out of necessity. All authentic change comes out of necessity. The changes we need to make to our society and our economy have to happen, and at the same time they present enormous opportunities for all Nova Scotians.

Equity is going to be a guiding principle, and equity for all Nova Scotians runs throughout all of these goals. Therefore, we must all work together to ensure that Nova Scotians have equitable access to a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment, as well as equal protection from environmental harm. I know Nova Scotians will be watching us closely, as they should.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I hope this bill receives the support of all members of the Legislature. I believe we can work together. I believe there are enough points of policy

alignment contained in this bill that it is my hope that we do find that agreement, that consensus.

I'm a very pragmatic leader. I, like my colleagues, simply want a better tomorrow, a better future for our children and our grandchildren. We all acknowledge just how critical this issue is, not only to our province but to planet Earth.

I do hope this bill receives the support of all members. I hope we can work together on all sides of the House to secure the brighter future Nova Scotians want and deserve.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the comments and analysis from my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I just want to weigh in a little bit here on second reading of this important bill. I want to start by congratulating the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the new government for introducing this bill.

I'd like to extend some very worthwhile credit to the staff at the Department of Environment and Climate Change, where I had the opportunity of working, going back to 2017. The now-new climate change name to elevate that division within the department with an associate deputy minister, of course, Jason Hollett, doing a lot of good work on this bill. I'm sure he's very happy today. The whole team in the Climate Change Division there - Sachi, Michelle, John, and I'm sure there are others in that division - fantastic staff and past deputy ministers. Frances Martin, whom I worked with, had some contributions here and going back to the original EGSPA Act.

I think sometimes politicians are the ones who are given the credit for actually getting the bill on the table of the floor, but the work behind the scenes that Bill Lahey was very involved with starting the province down this path, it's worth noting on the record. (Applause)

So, obviously given that our government had a lot to do with this bill, we're supportive. We see our targets in the bill on greenhouse gas emission reductions, which were in line with the Paris targets. We see the net-zero target still in place. We committed to be the first net-zero province in the country. That is going to take some effort before 2050. Since we came out with that legislation in 2019, P.E.I. has a more aggressive goal, so we should be more aggressive there.

The 80 per cent renewable target, which is in regulation already - we're happy to see in legislation. Very happy to see the inclusion of Mi'kmaw traditional knowledge. That was clear in the *What We Heard* document. Really happy to see so many Nova Scotians who were advocating for more traditional knowledge, more language, more ingrained

principles around Netukulimk and other important traditional knowledge aspects like Two-Eyed Seeing.

We're happy to see the goal for electric vehicles. It's interesting. We just went through a campaign and before the campaign, where that Party mocked our incentives for electric vehicles - I think the line was, electric vehicles and dogs on patios - they did not think that that was good policy. I guess things change when you're in government and they see the value of electrifying transportation.

You clearly don't have an environmental plan without electrifying how people get around while you're cleaning the electricity grid. We are going to need incentives in place. We are going to need charging stations for the new government to come close to meeting the objectives in that goal.

There are a lot of positive things in this bill. I will challenge some of them and we'll think about amendments after Nova Scotians have their say at Law Amendments.

The efficiency section needs a lot of work. We can be more ambitious in this province, especially for a province that has led the way. We have been really in front as leaders in our programming, how we ensure that we have the demand side of electricity looked after, and how we move towards net-zero buildings.

There are omissions there on timelines and on efficiency programs to ensure that we have the low-rise residential sector looked at as well, so there is work to do there. There is work to do on solid waste. I haven't gone through in detail every goal of the past Acts, but the new goal of 300 kilograms per person is the exact same goal as in the past EGSPA Act back in 2007 - 300 kilograms a person. I think we can do more. We're not there yet. We have not achieved - I think we're at 380 kilograms per person, so there's work to do.

In terms of looking way forward to 2030, I think we can do a lot more on the solid waste side. Relative to solid waste, there was a broad mention of extended producer responsibility.

We tabled a bill in this session advocating for this, for paper and packaging. That is the next step where most of the country has gone without Atlantic Canada. New Brunswick is moving towards paper and packaging, so I think a more firm commitment towards moving in that direction. All municipalities want that, as well.

I think those are things that need to be worked on. Then, of course, the one that stood out for me and a lot of people who have been paying attention to the ecological forestry transition - 2023 is simply too long to wait. We're talking two years from now and the report came out. I know we had criticism in the last government for not implementing the report right away.

There were 45 recommendations and most of them are under way, but there is a key recommendation that should be in place. We on this side of the House know that it is ready, and the committee that worked on it knows that it is ready. That new silviculture management guide can be implemented today and we could see an immediate reduction in clear-cutting on Crown land. So to wait two years is a stretch for us on that side.

[3:15 p.m.]

Obviously, the bold commitment of ending the use of coal stands out for a lot of Nova Scotians. Our history around coal was spoken about a lot today, and how we need to make sure our workers are retrained. We want to make sure there is a plan for that just transition. We know that there is an ask to the federal government to help with that. Our caucus is very interested in seeing plans on how we make sure that no worker is left behind.

Just a couple of years ago, nobody was talking about getting off coal. This was not something that became mainstream until recently, but it is good to see all Parties now supporting getting off coal. Things have changed in this House. (Applause)

Things have changed in this House in the short time I've been here - eight years - especially that party. This is the party that voted against the cap-and-trade system and many other initiatives after sitting around this House for that time seeing the changes, but we are genuinely pleased, and I do think that the minister responsible for this portfolio cares for the environment.

We will wait to see what Nova Scotians say in the next reading of this bill. We are going to be looking at what amendments are needed to strengthen the bill, but we will be supporting this bill and I congratulate the new minister. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I want to say first that I am very pleased to stand and speak to this bill. It's an important bill. I am glad that we are debating it. I want to congratulate the minister for bringing it forward, and most especially to echo his comments and the comments of my colleague to the right.

I want to congratulate the many, many public servants and stakeholder organizations that have contributed to this bill and all of the people who contributed to the consultations that the Clean Foundation carried out this Summer - at the height of the Summer, during an election; it must have been hard to get your opinions heard at that time - but especially the Clean Foundation, the Ecology Action Centre, Efficiency Nova Scotia, and, of course, the department staff.

All of those experts have been working for years - in the case of the Ecology Action Centre, for 50 years - on making sure that this House and these members in this House are listening and paying attention to what our province and what our Earth need to survive.

It is very good to see that the government has chosen to act quickly on putting forward this bill rather than waiting for later in its mandate. It sends a message that the environment and climate are a priority for this government, which is impressive.

I am not going to spend a lot of time reviewing the entire history of EGSPA and the SDGA, but suffice to say that there were multiple issues with the previous government - delayed or misreporting, vacancies on the round table, introducing legislation that was late and that contained few legislative goals, and of course, when we debated the SDGA, that was our caucus's main criticism: there were no legislated goals in the piece of legislation. So I am really happy to see that there are some goals put back into this legislation.

We are glad that this bill is before us now, and we will, I think - pretty sure - be supporting it. We have said before that we have concerns, and like many others, we see room for improvement.

I just want to make a note that, yes, it is my job in the Opposition - our job in the Opposition - to oppose, but I think that reduces our presence in this House to something very simplistic. We are the Opposition, but we are here to propose. I think it would be weird if we were called the proposition, but I actually think it is a better term.

I spent my professional career in an occupation that required true collaboration and true proposals, not opposition and - is opposal a word? It's not a word. Seriously, the work that I did for 20, 21 years couldn't have happened without a dedicated and real commitment to moving forward, to making things better constantly, and to making sure that all voices were heard around the table.

I bring that with me when I stand in this House. I don't like being told that I oppose because I'm the opposition, and that I'm opposing for opposing's sake. It's frankly not true, and it can be insulting. I want to be here to propose things, and that's what I am going to say quickly right now, but I'll have lots more to say, I think, in third reading and probably in Committee of the Whole House.

As we noted, when we debated the Sustainable Development Goals Act when it was tabled in 2019, the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets are not where they need to be in this legislation. We hear from the minister and we hear from many people that they are the strongest targets in Canada, and that's good, but it's not good enough. If we want to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees, we need to cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 58 per cent below 2005 levels, or 50 per cent below 1990 levels.

The current Act suggests 53 per cent, and this is like “potayto/potahto” in some ways, but it actually isn’t. The IPCC is calling for these reductions, and it is our duty as a member of planet Earth, as a jurisdiction of planet Earth, that we contribute what we can, and we can attain 58 per cent. We can. I appreciate the 53 per cent, and I appreciate the words “these are attainable goals” and I understand the importance of setting goals that are attainable, but I also understand - and think about this as a parent, for instance. You also understand that you want to push goals a little bit. You want to push the envelope.

Why not set a goal that is a little bit harder to attain but will in fact be the one that we need to attain if we want to keep catastrophic climate change from affecting not only us in Nova Scotia - and it will, by the way, affect us in Nova Scotia - but the whole world?

We’ve been consistently saying this since 2018. Our fair share target is 58 per cent below 2005 levels. Happy to debate that any time, any day of the week. We are sticking with the science and the ambition that the climate crisis demands, and in the words of the minister just now, “bold action.” We need to take bold action. Standing alongside us in the NDP on this point are the signatories of the 2030 Declaration, over 30 experts, organizations, and leaders from this province in the fight against climate change.

We also believe that we could accelerate the transition to a green economy with a stronger target of 90 per cent renewables by 2030. Again, debatable. Eighty per cent, great. Ninety per cent, better, and also attainable. My colleague from Dartmouth South will address this more, and she will also talk in her remarks about other energy concerns, as well as forestry and aquaculture, so I’m going to leave those to her.

While we also recognize that the 20 per cent land and water protection target by 2030 is ambitious - and yes, I agree it’s ambitious - I also agree it will take an enormous amount of work and investment, but it still falls short in two areas. The global High Ambition Coalition calls for targets of at least 25 per cent by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030. These are minimums set globally to stave off biodiversity collapse. We are in a biodiversity as well as a climate crisis, and we know that the two crises accelerate each other. We need to raise our ambition here in Nova Scotia and do what’s required.

Second, in a crisis every moment counts. That’s why we need to set interim targets for land and water protection. If we back-end all of the work, then we’re in trouble. We risk not getting all of the work done.

There are two targets here that are hard to call ambitious, simply because they’ve been in legislation for years and there’s been little movement, Mr. Speaker. One of them is the local food goal that was added by the NDP government in 2012 and set for 2020. Do we really need to add on another decade to meet that goal? That’s what this legislation does. We have proposed a school food program that would accelerate local food consumption and production. It would be really good to see this as part of the provincial food strategy. It would also be good to see our food goals tied to a goal to address food

insecurity, which is a major problem in this province. We know all of the statistics about food insecurity and poverty in Nova Scotia. Imagine if we could address both at the same time.

The goal on solid waste was set in 2007 for 2015, so two years to create a plan to meet a target that we've already overshoot for six years does not feel very ambitious or bold. Also, in the category of waste, as my colleague from Timberlea-Prospect has talked about, the extended producer responsibility, we know that the municipalities sent a report to the minister about this a year ago and it's not clear why the action is so delayed. Yes, we need to move now.

If a goal does not come with a target or even require a plan or framework, how can we assess that it's successful? One of the things I will say about this bill is I am very happy to see the yearly annual reporting. It does hold the government to account. It holds all of us again in this House to account and it allows for the people of Nova Scotia to keep track of what we're working on, but some of the goals and targets don't have those types of individual targets.

I do want to point out that there are really no goals in this legislation related to equity. We've heard a lot about how the whole bill is centred around the concept of equity and that's great, it's absolutely great, but there are no actual goals to figure out if we're doing that, no measurable targets other than the modernizing environmental assessment.

We could set clear goals of the targets to reduce energy poverty, for example, or to provide redress for environmental racism by certain dates, totally doable things that could be included in this Act.

There's a lot about equity in the consultation for the SDGA. Nova Scotians want and have asked for a just transition. So I think the last point I will address is this - accountability, Mx. Speaker. We've been told over and over again that this is the decade that requires urgent climate action and the window to stay within 1.5 degrees warming is narrowing. There isn't much time left for fudging targets. There is too much at stake.

So will there be an independent expert assessment to tell us that we're on track? What will be the responsibility of government when the targets aren't met? We often hear this government say that climate change is not political. The minister just said it. Well, what do we need to do to ensure that politics is taken out of assessment and that every party that works with this Act is accountable?

I want to reiterate, Mx. Speaker, that I am happy that this piece of legislation is in front of us. I am a proposer of ideas, I am a proposer of improvements. and that is my job and I will continue to do that as this bill passes its way through the legislative process.

For now, Mx. Speaker, I will end my comments and I do look forward to hearing from Nova Scotians at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mx. Speaker, I'm going to stand up for a few minutes to speak on this bill. I do want to say that I agree, I think this bill is a great bill. We are in support of it, we'll be going through it obviously to see what needs to be changed. We're going to call this the Liberal Environment Bill and I want to thank the member for Timberlea-Prospect for all his hard work on this bill when he was Premier of Nova Scotia.

We are again seeing ideas from this side of the floor being introduced and made into legislation on that side of the floor, so I think there are some really good ideas. I know that the minister actually gave a lot of credit to this side for the bill that he is putting forward.

[3:30 p.m.]

I do want to say a couple of things. One of the things that the minister said was our actions today will dictate our future, and he is correct. I just wish he had that mindset when he came to Bill No. 1 and the destruction of the civics program in schools.

They also said that the environment is not a political issue. I beg to differ. That side of the House certainly made it political during the election. They mocked us leading up to an election for the electrification of vehicles in Nova Scotia. They mocked us when we made announcements around the electrification of public transit. They told us that our priorities were incorrect, that they were wrong.

They have done a 180 from their actions in Opposition, Mx. Speaker, and I'm glad they have. I'm glad that when they got into government, clearly someone in the Department of Environment and Climate Change put this bill in front of the minister, and they told him, this is a good bill. There has been lots of consultation on this. All you have to do is stand up and present it.

When the former Premier was first elected Leader of this Party, the very first bill that was presented from the former Liberal government was an environmental bill, Bill No. 1. It was on electric vehicles. That member, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, was critical of our priorities. Mx. Speaker, I don't have those quotes, but I'm sure the member's going to get up and speak, and if he denies it, I'll just go back in Hansard, and we'll present it.

That member was very critical, as was the current Premier of the province, of electrification. In fact, I don't know the exact words, but they essentially called it a bill for

rich people. Making electric cars affordable was a bill for wealthy people, and the average Nova Scotian could care less.

That was our first bill. Our first bill was on the environment. Their first bill is on the destruction of civics in education. I would say priorities, priorities, priorities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: On a point of order, I question the relevance of speaking to other bills. I think we're speaking about the environmental bill right now, not the elections bill.

THE SPEAKER: I would ask the honourable member for Halifax Atlantic to refer to the bill at hand and not other bills on the order paper.

Order. The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What I will say is that I was not speaking specifically to that bill. I was comparing environmental priorities. I was not speaking specifically to a bill. I was showing the priorities of this government when it comes to environment and showing their direction and their behaviour. I apologize if the members got confused and thought I was speaking to one bill. I was speaking on their intent as government. (Interruption)

There's a lot of chatter from the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care. This is a constant thing that has happened during this sitting, Mx. Speaker, and I would appreciate . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like the discussion to return to the bill at hand.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I appreciate that, Mx. Speaker. I would also appreciate it if members allowed us to speak without interrupting. (Interruption) Again, Mx. Speaker.

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

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The reason why I wanted to get up and speak on this is because I remember members opposite for the last few years using a mocking tone and laughing on some of the environmental priorities that were coming from our government, one of them being the cleanup of Harrietsfield.

It just so happened the mess happened under a Progressive Conservative government and was never cleaned up, Mx. Speaker. The current Premier on more than

one occasion, on the record - and it is in Hansard - mocked me for fighting for the community for that cleanup. That is an environmental issue.

When the former Premier, the member for Timberlea-Prospect, stood up and was the first member to talk about environmental racism in this Legislature and to say that word, one of the first I'll say, there was a collective groan from some members. Not all.

I sat in the committee and watched as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party brought forward uranium mining, something that has been banned in Nova Scotia for a long time and has a massive environmental impact on our communities. That was voted down by both the NDP and the Liberals in committee, thank goodness.

One of my first real political lessons in this House was on fracking, and we watched as members of the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia, they filibustered us on fracking. They said we were ruining economies, destroying Nova Scotia. They spent hours, days, potentially a week ...

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I rise again on a point of order. We are still talking about prior debates over legislation that is not on the floor right now. My point of order is on relevance.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: If I could respond to that, we're actually talking about the environment, and part of the environment is uranium mining, part of that is - these are not bills that were put forward in the House.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I would ask all members to speak to the bill at hand and subsequent clauses and content.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mx. Speaker, it just shows how sensitive they are on the environment, that anytime I say anything they stand up to prevent me from saying it.

The environment as a whole is huge, so apparently I can't talk about air, water, trees, because that's not the environment for the members opposite. The environment is just a word and a Liberal bill.

I'm going to continue on, and I suspect the members opposite are going to stand up because they don't want to hear when we had a discussion about the environment and ...

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

BECKY DRUHAN: We have put forward an important and timely bill for debate today, and we are really enthusiastic about conversation around this specific bill, but I rise again on a point of order. We are still not talking about the bill. I question the relevance of these comments.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Thank you for giving me a brief period of reflection.

There is a Rule 24(2) around speaking to the relevance of the bill before us. The relevance of the bill before us talks about environmental goals. I would ask you to . . . (Interruption) Thank you.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I can tie it back if the members opposite give me more than three words before they stand up. (Interruption) I think that was 11 words.

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

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mx. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is arguing with the Speaker's decisions and I believe that is out of order.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I recognize the honourable member for Halifax Atlantic to continue discussing the bill at hand.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mx. Speaker, I would like to see some clauses in the bill. If we were going to make this bill a little stronger, I'd like to see a clause in this bill around fracking. We know the stance of the Progressive Conservative government in the past here in Nova Scotia on fracking. We've seen them fight tooth and nail to have fracking in our communities, so an environmental bill should have a large section on fracking, it really should. I think the majority of people in Nova Scotia don't want fracking.

One of the things I worry about when it comes to fracking and it not being in this bill is that when governments run large, large, large deficits they have to find ways to pay for it. I am afraid, like most Nova Scotians, that they think there's gold in them grounds and they are going to start fracking.

What's more precious than oil? Water. What happens when you frack? It has an adverse impact on our water - our drinking water, our natural environment, so there should be a clause in this bill. There should be an entire section in this bill on fracking. I don't know about you, Mx. Speaker, but I know people in my community don't want fracking, I'm sure the people in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island don't want it either.

I know there are some members over there who are for fracking. In fact, I remember correctly the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was pro-fracking when he was in Opposition, so presenting a bill today on environment should have a section in it on one of the areas that could have one of the largest impacts on our environment. I question why that's not specifically in the bill. Maybe there are amendments coming forward. Maybe they'll listen to the Public Accounts Committee, now we have a virtual Public Accounts Committee. I think that a lot of people are going to come to - Law Amendments Committee, sorry - a lot of people are going to come and speak on this bill.

I'm a little concerned about as the environmentalist that we know him to be, the member for Timberlea-Prospect probably knows more about the subject than just about anyone in this Legislature. I know he is very studious. He has studied this bill back and forth, probably because he wrote most of it, but I mean, we won't get into that.

[3:45 p.m.]

He did make a good point on the Lahey report and pushing the Lahey report off. We've seen in the past what can happen when we don't do proper resource management. Right now, I know a lot of individuals in this Chamber represent foresters. It's an extremely important profession. They call it a blue-collar profession in this province. It's one that's very respectful. They contribute a lot to our communities. They're good people, small business owners. I would like to see something specifically in this bill on responsible forestry.

The other thing that worries me that's not on this bill, Mx. Speaker, is Northern Pulp. I think it took courage, after decades and decades and decades of multiple governments of all stripes, including Liberal governments, that refused to take action, refused to hold people responsible. We saw what's happening down at Pictou Landing First Nation. I would argue that it was a Liberal government that stood up for Pictou Landing First Nation, not their Progressive Conservative representation.

We were told by the members opposite, including the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, that this was going to ruin the economy. The shutting of Northern Pulp and holding them to environmental standards - any environmental standards - was going to absolutely destroy Nova Scotia. Again, there's nothing in this bill on Northern Pulp.

I thank the previous premier from Annapolis, Stephen McNeil, for having the courage; the former premier, the member for Timberlea-Prospect, and all the members on this side of the House and former members who voted for that bill. But I didn't see one single Progressive Conservative vote for that bill. I don't remember. I may be wrong. I don't remember that.

So I ask that - there are some very large and troubling issues that will be arising. I know the Minister of Environment and Climate Change understands that for us to move

forward, it can't just be about the economy at the expense of environment. I think this bill is a good bill. We plan on supporting it, obviously, unless something changes in the next 24 hours.

I think we're going to get a lot of individuals coming to the Law Amendments Committee on this one. I foresee the Ecology Action Centre and some of the other strong organizations.

I wonder what consultation the Minister of Environment and Climate Change had with those organizations before presenting this bill. Did he rely on the consultation of the former government? Or did he meet with those? I'm sure he'll answer that.

One of the most important issues that we face, and I think one of the things that we as a previous government and the federal government helped face head-on when it comes to climate change is carbon taxes and prices on pollution. Again, I don't think this is in the bill.

I know it's another piece of legislation, but I would like to see it strengthened a little - make sure that nothing happens on that side. Because they voted against it. They not only voted against it, but they also filibustered it, and they mocked it. At one point, I remember hearing it being called a Trudeau vanity project. That's what a price on carbon was called. We're seeing all jurisdictions across the world are using this as a tool. Again, no language of that in this bill.

I'm glad that this is coming forward. I know they tout - I think the governments from the 1980s, I think it was - 1970s, 1980s, 1990s - former governments that none of them were a part of - that did all these incredible things for the environment.

That's like me claiming that I did everything that Pierre Elliott Trudeau did on a federal level. I'm going to claim responsibility for Pierre Elliott Trudeau and all the great things that he may have done, but I'm not going to take the negative stuff. When they stand here and they say that previous PC governments have done this, that previous Conservative governments have done this, that's kind of a hollow argument because none of you were part of those governments.

I'm standing here today saying we did this stuff in government. I would like to see stronger . . . (Interruption) Pat Dunn was there, yeah. Can I continue? It's like a Monday night football game: there's pass interference, holding, and all this stuff.

Mx. Speaker, the argument that previous Progressive Conservative governments have done things is not really one that I put a lot of weight or hope into. The current government, which is passing this bill, has a record of voting against everything environment. We've been here long enough to know that it has become a burning issue for everybody.

In 2013, if you mentioned it at the doors - in 2017, people started to talk about it. All of sudden, in 2021, even the Conservatives are jumping aboard the environment train. I thank them for this bill. I think that it will pass. I think we'll have to do a deep dive into it. But I also think that like most human beings, we hear of these targets that are enshrined into legislation: 2030, 2040, 2050, 2060.

Mx. Speaker, I read something the other day: The IPCC said that the effects of climate change will be irreversible by 2030. I wonder if the minister will maybe potentially take a look and see if there's anything that we can put in a little quicker. The reason why I think that - and I'm not just saying this about the current government, I'm saying this about all governments of all shapes and sizes and stripes - when people hear 2050 and 2060 and 2070, nobody believes that.

In 2050, I'd be willing to bet that the member for Argyle will be the only one left here. (Laughter) Maybe the member for Halifax Needham might actually be here too. What I'm trying to say is that governments will come and go. When you have something pushed out to 2050, you can bet your bottom dollar that there's going to be changes. It's going to be scrapped - sometimes for the good, sometimes for the bad.

I do hope that when it comes to this bill, maybe a little more emphasis on greening the infrastructure of this province and making those big investments. We know that total commitments in the Progressive Conservative platform were \$7 million. Ours was \$170 million - it's a big difference. I know they had some programs which I'm really looking forward to, like the adopt a dog program, which I think was \$2 million.

THE SPEAKER: Order, I would ask the member to speak to the bill at hand.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: There was about \$2 million for the adopt a dog program, I think, \$7 million in their platform for the environment. I would like to see real numbers, spending numbers, in this bill. We know they're capable of it. You hear lots of numbers for senior care, which is great, lots of numbers for health, lots of numbers for - well, that's about it. I'm sure I'm missing lots.

When it comes to this bill, when it comes to the environment, we're not hearing numbers and that worries me a little bit because this is a government that has said they are going to do whatever it takes, no matter the cost, on health care, but not as strong a commitment on the environment on this one.

I would like to see the minister stand up today and say, whatever it takes, whatever the cost, whatever the price because we do know that climate change will impact health and that should be enshrined in this bill.

We're hearing that there's a refugee crisis coming across the world due to climate change. In the next decade, they're expecting 200 million people to be displaced from their homes. These are things that we could be looking at in this bill, the protection of our drinking water.

Ensuring that everything we do - and this is one of the reasons why I was very proud of the member for Timberlea-Prospect, because everything he did had an environmental lens on it. Didn't matter what it was - equity, environment. These are things that are very important to him and very important to all of us. I wonder when maybe we could get a clause in the bill that says government spending, new infrastructure, all that stuff has to have an environmental lens to it.

You know a lot of us here are parents. We are going to pass down our communities, this world, to our children. It would be kind of neat - I don't know if it would ever happen, but it would be kind of neat to say we must legislate that we pass on a better world to our children than we have been given. Now, if you want to make headlines, if you want to do the right thing, this is another suggestion.

[4:00 p.m.]

I hope that when we get into the details of these bills, at the Committee of the Whole, when we put forward suggestions on uranium mining - you know, we heard today from the Premier that was kind of a non-committal response to uranium mining, the fantastic NDP of Nova Scotia put forward the question. Was it us? Oh, it was yesterday, sorry. There was a question around uranium mining and it was a non-committal answer, kind of a, "we'll see, you know, what will be will be."

What I would say is it should be enshrined in law or continue to be enshrined in law and be enshrined in this bill. If anyone in this room doesn't think it shouldn't be, then maybe you should open up a uranium mine in your backyard. Open it by your schools or your hospitals or playgrounds, and then you'll quickly find out why there's a ban on uranium mines in Nova Scotia.

Fracking was a big thing that we went through. I'm going to go through this bill again with a fine-toothed comb and see what it's like when it comes to fracking, how difficult and how ambitious it is when it comes to fracking. Again, I will say that when that topic was brought up in Question Period, the response was, we're going to go to public consultation, or we'll talk and we'll figure things out. Mx. Speaker, I don't know if you remember, but there was a lot of public consultation on fracking. There was a lot. Thousands of people responded and showed up in person. Nothing in this bill mentions fracking - nothing.

I think when we get into resource mining, we all understand. I'm not standing here saying we should not mine our resources. We all drive a car. We all have a cell phone. We

all depend on Mother Earth for all the minerals and everything she provides. We have to do it in a responsible way. We have to do it so that we're not taking too much. We can't be greedy.

For too long when it came to resources - maybe not necessarily here in Nova Scotia - I think Nova Scotians are pretty considerate when it comes to the environment. But across the world, I think people have gotten a little greedy when it comes to resource management, some of the larger corporations and stuff. I would like to see something in this bill that talks about processing and resource management of this resource-rich province.

The reason why that concerns me, as someone who has lived in and around a fishing village my whole life, is that we don't have to go back too far to see what happens when we don't properly manage our resources. We can look at the cod industry as a good example. It has taken decades and decades and decades for anything to come back.

In this bill on the environment, there are lots of things that have been kind of left behind. I would like to see something specifically on resource depletion in this bill, on what happens when we get to a certain point with our resources, be it forestry, fishing, or mining. I would like to see that there is actually a concrete plan in place for those individuals who have spent their lives working in the resource industry and who come from families - Cape Breton is a great example - who have worked their whole lives in the resource industry. That there be certain measurements that, when they kick in, this bill has in place who, what, where, and why. The last thing we need to do is destroy local economies or take people's livelihoods away with no possible solutions.

A lot of times, we don't learn from our mistakes. I do think that this could almost be called the learn-from-your-mistakes bill. I think I might have been in high school when Al Gore came out with his movie, and everybody blasted him: "What a fool, none of that's real."

I think one of the reasons why people discount some of the environmental stuff is because science is always changing. We know that. So when dates and times and percentages are put forward and they change, people discount the science and therefore discount climate change. What was it originally called before climate change? Global warming, and there was a whole process to get rid of that name because it sounded terrible, global warming. How about climate change? It sounds a little friendlier.

Mx. Speaker, I would hope maybe that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change will look at possibly enshrining into this legislation dates and times in the Lahey report, bring it closer. This is what I meant when I said 2050 is a long time out, right? This is what I meant about this bill when you get dates like . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

KENT SMITH: Point of order under Section 24(2), repetition.

THE SPEAKER: Could you repeat your intervention?

KENT SMITH: At the risk of repeating myself, I call a point of order under Section 24(2) - repetition within the debate.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you to the member for Eastern Shore for raising the issue. I don't find that the member is being particularly repetitive at this point so I'm going to give the floor to the honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mx. Speaker, thank you for that. Where was I? The science is changing, and I think people who don't believe in global warming use that against people who believe - the 95 per cent of the world that believes in global warming - because science changes, right? Again, to go back to the money issue, the few dollars that the platform put forward for environment - maybe there could be some very direct money to research and development, to science, investment in technology and just working with our climate change experts from around the world so that we can stay on the cutting edge.

I don't think there's any mention in this bill of the green economy, which we all know is the way of the future, right? We're seeing jurisdictions around the world and large corporations that have never, ever invested - in fact, had been against the green economy. We're now seeing a massive investment into the green economy because they are aware. They know that that is how we're going to move forward. Maybe we could see a little bit of that in the bill, some direct spending.

We know that there is a fund available, the Green Fund. That's another question that I would have for this government. Maybe we could enshrine in this legislation that the money that's being made to save the environment goes directly into resources to continue that momentum, be it the solar program or greening of the infrastructure and creating electric charging stations right across this province.

That's where the \$7 million kind of confused me, because we know that there's more in the Green Fund, and there will be more in the Green Fund than just the money they're planning on spending over the next four years. Maybe we could put that in this bill. Maybe we could put in this bill that the monies being made off of the carbon reduction incentive that this government, in Opposition, opposed - cap-and-trade that this government opposed - maybe we could see it directly in this bill, that it will be directly invested into the jobs of the future and the infrastructure of the future.

I really didn't try to get up to annoy anyone. I'm sure I did. I just think this is important. I say this truthfully. All stuff aside, I worry. I have three children. I worry about that. I look in my own backyard, and I know some of the members are from the community that I'm from. It's changed a lot. We used to have a lot of green space and listen, I'm not

“not in my backyard.” I’m not. I believe in development. I believe in jobs. I believe that we need to move forward. We are in a housing crisis. Some of this stuff could be directly addressed in this bill.

We’re seeing our communities change, and it worries me. We’re seeing coastal erosion. We’re seeing storms getting bigger and bigger, hurricanes that would have never ever - Hurricane Dorian was a perfect example. Most people didn’t see the impact of Hurricane Dorian, but it made landfall in Ketch Harbour, and it was devastating to Ketch Harbour, Herring Cove, Sambro, and the Pennants. We’re seeing more and more and more of these. Maybe some of that stuff could be addressed.

One of the things that could help with the rising levels and the sea levels, these dramatic weathers that we’re seeing is breakwaters, which have either been divested or just not up to today’s standards with the rising sea levels. That’s another thing that could be addressed in here. You could use the Green Fund for that.

These are things that I hope - I know the member opposite cares for the environment. I know he has children and he’s an educator. I would say he’s probably a little bit more in tune, as a teacher, to what the kids think and how they view the world.

I think it was the right choice. I think that was the right choice for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I think you were the right choice for it. I hope after this long ramble - I was going to say, with these few words but it was more than a few words . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Please avoid using you . . . (Interruption) Just a minute. Order.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I apologize. Minister of Environment and Climate Change, I wish you all the success on this, and I hope that when the Minister of Environment and Climate Change goes and listens to the Law Amendments Committee, because he will be listening to - you’re going to hear from climate change experts. You’re going to hear from individuals who have dedicated their life to saving this planet. They’re going to tell you some things that you could do to clean it up a little bit, make some changes here and there, maybe drop some timelines, invest some money. I hope that the minister listens with open ears.

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: As I talk a little bit about the bill here, for the senior members in this Legislature and for the new members here, I think everybody knows my approach here in the Legislature. I’m very approachable. I’ve said it before in Opposition,

and I said it here since I've been there in government, that it has to be a collaborative approach. It has to be a non-political approach about environment.

[4:15 p.m.]

I originally stood up to speak to the Leader of the Opposition's questions and statements about the SGEM and I'll get to it in a few minutes, but I do want to share a comment maybe not in a rebuttal, but maybe further to discuss a comment that the member opposite just stated - that science changes. I would argue the fact that science doesn't change, but what does change is the human understanding of how our world changes. If we can't relate as elected officials in this Legislature and understand that individuals can change ideas and thoughts, parties can change ideas and thoughts, then something as important as the environment will never progress together.

Something as important as this bill, I appreciate hearing from the Opposition points that they would like to see in the bill. I greatly appreciate it. That's how we move ahead. That's how we progress a bill as important as this, together. I appreciate hearing the comments back and forth, that Opposition appreciates this bill being presented. We can debate all day on the policies and the goals and the timelines. I know my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, is going to get up and respond to some of the concerns that the Opposition has.

For me it's not a political thing. It's really not. I have family, I have young kids. I've always said, ever since the day I entered politics, I am only here on this Earth for a very small amount of time. When you put it in ratio what I'm here for, we need to leave a legacy. I don't care what political stripe is on this side of the House, we all are responsible, elected to leave a legacy for the future ahead, and this bill will do that. I appreciate the debate going on, but I did stand up to respond quickly to the Leader of the Opposition's statements or comments.

I guess I just want to elaborate a little bit more about the SGEM to do with the Lahey report. The target of 2023 that's in that bill, it's a target. I know the member opposite, when he was minister, his heart was set on this report. I don't debate that one bit. I appreciate the collaborations and conversations I've had with that member opposite. The SGEM was put together when he was Premier, and it was prior to the election. I'm very pleased to let the member know that the boots are on the ground with the SGEM now. The training is taking place.

I would say that the implementation has started on that management guide. I know we've all been looking forward. I know I might have given the member opposite a hard time when he was minister, when he was Premier, but the reason is that we all care about it. There might be differences why we care about it - I come from a rural area and forestry is very important in my area. It's very important in rural Nova Scotia. The triad model that Professor Lahey, under the Liberal government - I will say that, it was under the Liberal

government - the report that Professor Lahey set out in stone was accepted by the whole province.

Are we going to flip the switch overnight? It's impossible to do it to one of our natural resources. Are we taking the right steps? Yes, and why are we taking the right steps in my department, Mx. Speaker? It's because there were steps already taken from previous governments.

My point is: (a) we've started to implement that process they're looking at, 2023 is a target, yes, but we are taking steps with the Lahey report, and I look forward to Professor Lahey's updated report that is a little bit late, but that report is coming too; and (b) it's the right thing to do for whatever political stripe you're sitting in this House, this environment bill is the right thing to move ahead.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm pleased to rise and say a few words on second reading of this bill. I was glad to hear the minister speak, and I will address most of my comments to the forestry and aquaculture provisions in the bill as proposed.

Congratulations to the Progressive Conservatives for bringing this forward. It is a good bill. It's a bill that, as we've heard many times, first came in under a previous Progressive Conservative government, but I do think it is worth noting that it came in in the context of a minority government and so it was genuinely a bill that came in, I think, with the co-operation of all Parties in this Legislature.

I was pleased to see the minister say - although I know that this falls directly under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change - I was pleased to hear the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables refer to the fact that he wanted to hear what the other members thought in terms of substantive comments on the bill or suggestions for the bill, because I think that is the spirit in which this bill came into being and hopefully with which it will continue to be relevant.

I think we do need all hands on deck with this legislation. I think we do need co-operation in this House and I think we do need - also to the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables' point - co-operation within this province. We know that some of the provisions of this bill are going to impact some of our traditional industries, particularly around resource extraction and that that will continue to be a challenge and the way that that has been a challenge for Nova Scotia as we transition into a cleaner future.

That, certainly, is not lost on us, but I will say that I do experience a little bit of a cognitive dissonance having come out of the last day of the last session hearing the now-government, then-Opposition rail against what I would argue are biodiversity targets that are absolutely required to meet the kind of twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate

change, to then, in this first session as government, bring in what I do think, as I said, is a good piece of legislation. But we will be forgiven for being vigilant because I think, as has been raised in this debate, those of us who have been here for a little while have not always seen the Progressive Conservative Party as champions of the environment.

There is a record, there is a commitment, but I think that the track record is a little spotty, and so we are doing our job. We are doing our job here to ensure that this bill can progress in the way that it was originally introduced, which was with the agreement of all parties, which I would argue recognizes that science actually does change. I mean we have seen science change just in the course of this pandemic, in terms of how we understand it and how things move. We're not talking about health, we're talking about environment, but it's not different. I see an acknowledgement from the minister.

With those few comments, I would turn specifically to the Lahey report and I would - I take the minister's comments, but I would echo the comments of the member for Timberlea-Prospect and I would say that I really think that 2023 is too long to wait. We are pleased to hear that there are boots on the ground; I think that's great. I know there is progress being made and, as I said, disrupting traditional industries, which disrupts communities, which disrupts families - we're not casting that aside. We're not eliding that reality and yet we are genuinely in a climate crisis, and because that good work has been done and because it's been in the department for so long, we think that that implementation needs to be faster.

If the challenges of that implementation need to be mitigated by job creation or community work in one way or another, we know there are some already funds set up for that purpose, but if more needs to be done, you will find support for that on this side of the House. At least I can speak for our caucus, but I would say that that implantation needs to happen faster. In particular, we are concerned with clear-cutting and so we would renew the call that we have made for some time, which is regardless of when that report will be fully implemented, we need an immediate moratorium on clear-cutting on Crown lands in the meantime.

We have some questions - and we've talked about this in the context of another bill on the order paper - around aquaculture and the provisions on aquaculture in the bill. The government is bringing in targets, but these targets, as we read them - and hopefully we'll hear more about this in the debate - feel vague, particularly for those folks across the province who are concerned about open-net pen fish farming and its impact on coastal communities and on the environment.

Before Lahey, we had Doelle-Lahey in the aquaculture context, and many key recommendations from that report were never implemented. This piece of legislation, this conversation, would be a great place to put those, but we don't see those in here. So that's a challenge that we see, a gap that we see, in our initial read of this.

Again, if we want to be forward-looking, if we're looking to the future, which is how this bill has been presented, let's see some provisions around closed-containment fish farming or transitioning the existing open-net pen fish farms. I think it's arguable that there's a social licence for those - maybe there is, maybe there isn't. That's work to be done. But if there isn't, which is our sense, then let's talk about how we transition those out of the water and we keep those people employed and we keep that industry going.

I think there's opportunity for all of that. Again, I think this government has really - in the course of the election, what we heard from many coastal communities is that they had faith in the PC Party that there would be action in this area, particularly around open-net pen fish farming. I think people are still waiting, so this would be a place that that action could be taken.

Last, I want to talk a little bit about energy. We're glad to see a renewable energy target back in this legislation. In general, I will say we are glad to see targets in this legislation. One of our big criticisms of the previous version of this bill was that those targets were left to regulation, and while we heard the arguments about why that was, we joined the voices of many who came to Law Amendments Committee and canvassed our offices in the opinion that those targets should be in legislation.

We have some differences on the targets, which my colleague for Dartmouth North spoke of, and which I am sure we'll continue to debate, but we're glad the targets are there. In renewable energy, they could be more ambitious.

Strong targets are a challenge, but they also will help with the clean jobs transition that we need, right? We know that a report commissioned by the Ecology Action Centre in 2018 said that with a goal of 90 per cent renewable energy by 2030 - so if we set that goal and we reach that goal, which we believe we ought to be doing - we could create 3,100 jobs per year for the next 12 years. I think that's at the heart of some of the - those jobs are underneath some of the arguments or disagreements we have, like who is this going to impact and what are the challenges going to be on the communities?

I think this goes back to getting to yes, like mediation training I did a million years ago, right? It's like, what are the real issues, what are we really talking about here? If we all really agree that there is a climate crisis, then let's agree to do everything we can to meet it and let's call the challenges in the way for what they are. They might not be a disagreement on the target. They might be a disagreement on how those targets impact the communities we represent.

If that's the challenge, let's talk about that challenge. Talking about that challenge is a great conversation to have, because that conversation is about how we rebuild our economy in a different way, in a way that meets the needs of the future. I think that's the opportunity in this bill, and it's almost there but not quite.

The same would carry through to community-owned power. That's something we've talked about a lot. Nova Scotia Power is a little bit of the elephant in the room in all of these conversations that we have, because they're kind of ours and they're not ours. But you know, I think we do need to strengthen the possibility of community-owned power.

The target for municipalities is vague. It's not quite connected to energy in a really clear way. We've heard from many municipalities through the last few years that have been held back from doing the energy transition work that they want to do because they find the policies restrictive, there's red tape and there's a lack of investment, quite frankly, provincially. I think that's another area of improvement that we could see in this bill.

[4:30 p.m.]

On energy efficiency particularly, I think we need stronger mid-term targets. I want to say that we spoke this morning in Question Period - or maybe it was yesterday - about offshore drilling and do we know what our resource is, and do we not know what our resource is.

I want to take this opportunity in the context of this bill to remind the House that the International Energy Agency has said that in order for the world to hit net zero by 2050, which I think we're all agreeing we need to do, zero-carbon ready goals need to be the norm by 2030, and that we really can't take more fossil fuels out of the ground. As much as possible, our focus needs to be on leaving them where they are and leaving those hydrocarbons where they are.

Knowing that that is a challenge, our energies, our focus - whether it's on energy or the economy or job creation specifically - need to be focused forward on how are we going to get energy in the future? What kind of world are we building for our children?

The phase-out of coal in the bill is good but we need to think about looking at that around other fossil fuels as well. We're on the eve of COP26 and we know that a huge piece of the conversation there, a cornerstone of the conversation, is going to be how quickly can we get off fossil fuels. I want to be having that conversation in this Legislature as well.

I think, don't listen to me - listen to the International Energy Agency, right? They say net zero calls for no new oil and gas exploration. To the point of that: is what we're doing political, is it partisan? I mean, we're trying to work together on this frontier, I would say. But again, putting a dollar value on an imagined offshore resource creates political pressure to take it out of the ground. I don't think we need that political pressure, I don't think any of us need it.

I think what we need to do is to be focused forward and to take that money and that energy and the expertise of the Public Service that would be brought to bear on looking at

a project like that and put it somewhere else. Help us figure out how to get all of our buildings to net zero. Help us figure out how to green the grid. Help us figure out how to do all those things that are so much more important than putting a dollar value on an imaginary source in the ground. Maybe a real resource, I don't know - I'm not saying it doesn't exist. I'm just saying I don't see any value in putting a number on it at this time. I would like to see something about that in this bill.

There isn't anything in the bill that addresses winding down offshore oil and gas exploration or reorienting, redirecting fossil fuel subsidies towards sustainable development.

I know that some countries have announced that they're shutting down new exploration entirely and have a date. Denmark, the largest producer of oil and gas in the EU in 2020, cancelled their last round of licensing and are committed to winding up all extractions by 2050. I mean, they are an active producer and they're done, and their GHG emissions reduction target is 70 per cent below 1990 by 2030.

We heard some talk about biomass in the recent days in the Chamber. Biomass releases more carbon than coal, people might be interested to know. I know biomass is a contentious subject, but I really hope that we don't see biomass come in the back door under the name of green energy because I don't think that's an accepted fact. I think some people might think it is. I think we don't, based on the science, which can be debated of course, but that's a conversation I think we want to have. Again, it's not here, so I hope we have it somewhere before any decisions are made in that area.

This is an ambitious bill. We've heard how ambitious it is but again, Quebec, right here in Canada, also announced a ban on fossil fuel extraction. So, there's not just a precedent in the world - there's a precedent right here in Canada and it's one that I think we can follow. We can always do more.

I suspect that it is difficult to constantly be criticized when you're trying to do really good work, and you're representing departments that are trying to do really good work. I hope that you will take this and all of my remarks anyway - but I would say those of me and my colleagues - in the spirit in which they're intended, which is that we can always do better. I really do believe that we can do better the more information and input we have.

I offer those remarks in that spirit. I really do look forward to hearing from folks at Law Amendments Committee and to having further conversations.

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

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. TIM HALMAN: I just have a few comments with respect to what has been articulated here. I certainly appreciate the analysis and perspectives provided by my colleagues. When it comes to climate change and preservation of the planet, the ideas expressed here are very fundamental as we move forward.

Mx. Speaker, I believe the goals outlined in Bill No. 57 are challenging. These goals are attainable, and these goals are necessary. It builds on work previously done, and it pushes it out for a decade so that we have certainty, and we know the objectives which we are striving for. Absolutely, as we develop our climate change plan, which is scheduled to be released in Spring 2022, those actions that folks have been calling for will be clearly articulated so Nova Scotians can see the actions we will take to achieve the 28 goals outlined in Bill No. 57.

It was indicated that some of the goals from the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act weren't attained - 16 of those goals were attained. Nine weren't, but those are included in this bill. Just because that wasn't attained, it doesn't mean we give up. It doesn't mean we stop trying. Definitely, that carries over, and we continue to strive and work to attain that.

With respect to some of the comments made with regard to solid waste reduction, I believe Nova Scotians are very proud of their solid waste reduction. I know they want us to do better. We have the best waste disposal rates in the country. We're currently at 400 kilograms per person this year. Our goal is to reduce that to 300 kilograms per person per year. The manner by which we're going to achieve that is through the circular economy, which many of you know is about thinking about waste as a resource. Our plan includes extended producer responsibility and reducing single-use plastics.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, our climate plan for clean growth, which will come in Spring 2022, will deal in more specific detail how we'll achieve some of the other goals included in the bill that was introduced yesterday. I believe there is a better path forward. I believe the bill before this House is that path.

I want to thank my colleagues in the Official Opposition and in the NDP for their support. I do appreciate the ideas put out there. I like the line from my colleague for Dartmouth South about a proposer of ideas. That's something I appreciate, having served time in the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to comments from Nova Scotians at the Law Amendments Committee. With those few comments, I close second reading of Bill No. 57.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 57. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Law Amendments.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

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

The motion is carried.

[4:40 p.m. The House resolved itself into the CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Lisa Lachance in the Chair.]

[8:35 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Keith Bain, resumed the Chair]

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

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Bills has met and considered the following bills: Bill No. 1, Bill No. 27, Bill No. 30, Bill No. 32, and Bill No. 37 without amendments; and Bill No. 24, which was reported with certain amendments by the Law Amendments Committee to the Committee of the Whole House without further amendments.

The Chair has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, that concludes Government Business for today. I move the House do now rise, to meet again on Friday, October 29th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Government Business will include Third Reading of Bill No. 1, Bill No. 24, Bill No. 27, Bill No. 30, Bill No. 32, and Bill No. 37.

Second Reading of Private and Local Bill No. 38 and Second Reading of Bill No. 61, Bill No. 62, Bill No. 63, and Bill No. 64, and Address in Reply.

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

[The House rose at 8:36 p.m.]