



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2021

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 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. Before we begin the daily routine, I'd like to read a Speaker's Decision on members' statements for the House of Assembly.

SPEAKER'S DECISION

I will now deliver my decision regarding the guidelines for Members' Statements. The chamber will recall that immediately after Question Period last Wednesday, the Opposition House Leader had requested clarification regarding "what the rules are around Members' Statements."

To now provide this clarification, I note that Members' Statements were first created as an item under the Daily Routine during the 62nd General Assembly. At their inception in October 2014, this House's Guidelines for Members' Statements were modelled after the Standing Orders of the House of Commons in Ottawa.

This House's guidelines were distributed to all members back then, in October 2014, as well as to the new members during MLA School in September. I have asked the Clerks to distribute those guidelines again to all members today.

Upon reading the Guidelines for Members' Statements again, the House will notice that the guidelines have already included a prohibition against personal attacks. Over the last seven years the precedent that has developed in this House also reinforces those original guidelines from October 2014.

I have paid careful attention to the practices of this House in preparing this decision today. In particular, two precedents involving personal attacks are noteworthy.

The first precedent is from April 29, 2015. Speaker Murphy admonished the former Member for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage for delivering a statement that demeaned the education of another member. The second precedent is from November of 2016. On that day, Speaker Murphy disallowed a statement from the member for Pictou East because the content of that statement put another member's integrity in doubt.

This now brings me to explain the basis upon which I intervened when the member for Sydney-Membertou was delivering a statement during Wednesday's daily routine. Initially the content in that statement reflected upon an inflammatory exchange that had occurred between two other members during Committee of the Whole House on Bills on Tuesday evening.

To be clear, it is true that Members' Statements may be "political" in nature. Last Wednesday, the statement by the member for Sydney-Membertou was out of order, not because it was political in nature, but rather, because it was personal in nature.

Now I am mindful of the irony in the situation presently before me. In running afoul of this rule, the member for Sydney-Membertou was actually attempting to enforce that very same rule, to defend the integrity of another member.

I am also cognizant of the broader background against which all of this has transpired. For further clarity, the rule against personal attacks applies to all speeches and statements made in this chamber, regardless of whether the words are spoken during the Daily Routine, or during debate under any other business. Freedom of speech is not a licence for casting aspersions upon the integrity, honesty, intelligence, or character of another member.

Towards that end, I will conclude by appreciating that all sides and stripes of this House are taking steps towards improving civility and decorum in the chamber.

We'll move on now to the Daily Routine.

The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, just before we move on to the Daily Routine, I'd like to acknowledge that we lost another Nova Scotian to COVID-19.

In honour of the fallen Nova Scotian, their family and community I'd like to ask the members of this House to observe a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, first I'm going to apologize - I just received them yesterday. I beg leave to introduce a petition. The operative clause reads:

"Whereas a growing number of Nova Scotians are concerned about the increasing proportion of low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; therefore

We the undersigned, petition the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to change the employment and labour laws to accomplish the following:

- Ensure that part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same payment and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;
- Promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;
- Offer fair scheduling with proper advance notice;
- Provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;
- Prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temporary agencies, sub-contractors or workers themselves;
- End the practice of contract flipping, support wage protection and job security for workers when companies change ownership or contracts expire;
- Extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating the exemptions to the laws;
- Protect workers who stand up for their rights;
- Offer proactive enforcement of the laws through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws;
- Make it easier for workers to join unions; and
- Ensure all workers are paid at least \$15 per hour, regardless of their age, student status, job or sector of employment."

Mr. Speaker, there are 2,240 signatures, and I have affixed my own, as per the rules of the House.

THE SPEAKER: We will take the petition under advisement until it can be reviewed by the Clerks.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 43 - Motor Vehicle Act.

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

Bill No. 61 - Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act.

Bill No. 62 - Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap Act.

Bill No. 63 - Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act.

Bill No. 64 - Cannabis Control Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendment.

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I'm at Reports of Committees, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: With the unanimous consent of the House, we turn back to Presenting Reports of Committees.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

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

Bill No. 48 - Town of Lunenburg School Annex Lands Act.

Bill No. 50 - Ardnamurchan Club Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendments.

[1:15 p.m.]

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

RESOLUTION NO. 48

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

Attendu que la communauté acadienne et francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse rayonne grâce à ses communautés intimement liées, par le soutien et l'engagement sans faille de ses membres et organismes; et

Attendu que la Société des Acadiens de la Région de Tor Baie, qui a été créé en 2002 pour représenter les acadiens qui habitent, ont un lien ou un intérêt à la région de Tor Baie dans le comté de Guysborough, qui a pour but de promouvoir et d'encourager la culture acadienne, la généalogie, les recherches historiques et de partager des informations; et

Attendu que la Société des Acadiens de la Région de Tor Baie est devenue membre de la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse lors de la dernière assemblée générale annuelle tenue à la fin de semaine du 22 octobre 2021.

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour reconnaître et féliciter la Société des Acadiens de la Région de Tor Baie pour leur contribution à l'Acadie de la Nouvelle-Écosse et pour leur adhésion à la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

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 Acadian and Francophone community of Nova Scotia shines through its closely connected communities through the unfailing support and commitment of its members and organizations; and

Whereas the Société des Acadiens de la Région de Tor Baie, which was established in 2002 to represent Acadians who live, or have a connection or interest in the Tor Bay area in Guysborough County which aims to promote and encourage Acadian culture, genealogy, historical research, and information sharing; and

Whereas the Société des Acadiens de la Région de Tor Baie became a member of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse at the last general meeting held on the weekend of October 22, 2021;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing and congratulating the Société des Acadiens de la Région de Tor Baie for their contribution to Acadie of Nova Scotia and for their membership in the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

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 SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 49

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

Whereas the Tatamagouche Ice Creamery produces ultra-premium, handcrafted ice cream for sale through its retail store in Tatamagouche, as well as wholesale channels from its dairy processing facilities; and

Whereas Taste of Nova Scotia presented the Tatamagouche Ice Creamery with its 2021 Product of the Year Award for its ultra-premium ice cream; and

Whereas Tatamagouche Ice Creamery is a small-batch manufacturer that uses the highest quality local products including dairy, maple syrup, and honey, berries, and fruits, local herbs, locally-roasted coffee, and locally sourced spirits and beer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House congratulate the Tatamagouche Ice Creamery for its commitment to producing the highest quality local ice cream and for receiving this prestigious award.

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 SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 50

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

Whereas Alan McNeill, Director of the Inland Fisheries Division of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, has made significant contributions to the sport fishing and aquaculture sectors of this province; and

Whereas Alan has contributed to many important initiatives over his career such as improving federal, provincial, and inter-provincial dialogue on fisheries management issues, environmental monitoring within the aquaculture sector, instituting online sport fishing licenses during the COVID-19 pandemic, and significantly contributing to the success of the acid rain mitigation initiative on West River, Sheet Harbour, just to name a few; and

Whereas over his 38-year career in fisheries, 34 of which were with this province, Alan provided impactful leadership, made informed and strategic decisions to benefit anglers, and ensured that sport fishing continued to grow and contributed to our economy;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly recognize and thank Alan McNeill for his public service and dedication to the sport fishing sector of Nova Scotia and wish him well during his retirement.

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 honorable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 51

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

Attendu que Madame Jean d'Entremont est une source d'inspiration pour toutes et tous pour ses efforts sur l'avancement de la condition des femmes acadiennes et francophones; et

Attendu que Madame Jean d'Entremont a occupé les postes de la présidence de la Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse, de l'Association des acadiennes d'Argyle et du Comité consultatif sur la condition féminine en Nouvelle-Écosse. Elle a également représenté la Nouvelle-Écosse au conseil d'administration de l'Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne entres autres; et

Attendu que Madame Jean d'Entremont a effectué un travail remarquable sur les dossiers suivants : personnes aidantes, de la violence, de la pauvreté et de l'immigration ou encore sur des initiatives d'équité socio-économique en faveur des femmes acadiennes et francophones en situation minoritaire.

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour reconnaître et féliciter le travail inestimable accompli par madame Jean d'Entremont dans l'avancement de la condition des femmes acadiennes et francophones en Nouvelle-Écosse et au niveau national et pour son engagement sans faille pour des services en français de qualité pour les femmes et leurs familles.

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

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

Whereas Ms. Jean d'Entremont is an inspiration for everyone in her efforts in advancing the status of Acadian and francophone women; and

Whereas Ms. Jean d'Entremont has occupied the positions of president of the Fédération des Femmes Acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Association des Acadiennes de la région d'Argyle, and the Advisory Council on the Status Women in Nova Scotia. She also represented Nova Scotia on the board of directors of the Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne, among others; and

Whereas Ms. Jean d'Entremont has done remarkable work on the following issues: caregivers, violence, poverty, and immigration, as well as socio-economic equity initiatives for Acadian and francophone women in minority situations;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing and congratulating the invaluable work done by Ms. Jean d'Entremont in advancing the status of Acadian and francophone women in Nova Scotia, as well as nationally, and for her unwavering commitment to quality French-language services for women and their families.

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.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 74 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 197 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Health Services and Insurance Act, Respecting Free Intrauterine Devices. (Hon. Kelly Regan)

Bill No. 75 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code, Respecting Sick Leave. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 76 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code, to Stimulate the Economy and Reduce Income Inequality. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 77 - Entitled an Act to Provide Free Menstrual Products. (Lorelei Nicoll)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

SACK. BUS. ASSOC.: RECIPS. OF ANN. BUS. AWDS. - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate this year's recipients of the Sackville Business Association's Annual Business Awards.

Each year, the Sackville Business Association accepts nominations from the community for their Annual Small Business Awards. From the 1,921 nominations received this year, Shawarma King received the Best New Business Award, Alyssa's Formals was awarded the Best Customer Service Award, and Sportwheels was named Business of the Year. The Awards were presented by Mayor Savage at the Sackville Business Association's THRIVE Business Growth Conference held on October 28, 2021, in Lower Sackville.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating this year's recipients of the Sackville Business Association's Small Business Awards and wish them continued success.

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

**LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH:
CONTRIB. OF LEBANESE COM. - RECOG.**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lebanese Heritage Month.

In 2018, Nova Scotia recognized November as Lebanese Heritage Month. This month recognizes the numerous cultural, economic, and political contributions that the Lebanese community has made to Nova Scotia since Lebanese immigrants began arriving here in the 1800s. It's a time for my community to get together and celebrate our strong community and family ties, and to showcase this to the broader public at large.

[1:30 p.m.]

I was proud to attend an event this past weekend where the Lebanese flag was raised at Grand Parade, and it made an extra-special event because my good friend, the Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, who is now Nova Scotia's first Lebanese MP, was also there in attendance. (Applause)

Throughout the month, there's going to be lots of public opportunity to celebrate and laud the greatness that is being Lebanese. We have the Lebanese Film Festival this weekend, we have a Lebanese wine tasting event coming in a few weeks, and on the Remembrance Day weekend, there will be a gala in honour of Lieutenant Edward Francis Arab who was this year's Lebanese Heritage Month honouree.

I would ask that all members join me in recognizing the great contribution of the Lebanese community - even the long-winded ones who take too long at Members Statements.

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

**GRIMMITT, CAROL:
SUPP. TO NDP WORK ACROSS PROV. - RECOG.**

GARY BURRILL: I would like to register today a word of appreciation for the work in the provincial NDP office that is being done by Carol Grimmitt. Carol is the financial administrator for the Nova Scotia NDP and as everyone involved in elections knows, the work of accounting in the three months or so following an election is often as demanding and intense as the political organizing work in the three months or so that comes before it.

This is true for every Official Agent in Nova Scotia, but it is especially true for the coordination of the work of all Parties' Official Agents that takes place provincially following an election.

Carol is attentive to this work in a way that is thorough and diligent. She has been a wonderful addition to the NDP provincial team since before the election and I wish to express our gratitude for the support she provides to those who give of themselves to the NDP's work across the province. Thank you, Carol.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

**E. PASS.-COW BAY FIREFIGHTERS ASSOC.:
FUNDRAISING FOR E. PASS. EDUC. CTR. CHROMEBOOKS - THANKS**

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Today I rise to bring recognition to the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Firefighters Association. The Association was able to present the Eastern Passage Education Centre with funds that will assist in the purchase of 25 new Chromebooks for the students. The Nova Scotia Firefighters weekly 50/50 draw happens each Thursday at the Amherst fire hall. Each week a different Nova Scotian fire association is in the spotlight as the recipient of the draw.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Firefighters Association for their continued support and dedication to giving back to our community through fundraising. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and are always greatly appreciated.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

**PHARMACISTS AND PHARM. ASSTS.:
SERV. DURING PANDEMIC - RECOG.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: I just want to take a moment today to thank all of the pharmacies and pharmacists and pharmacy assistants who, during the pandemic, during the period when we were all getting vaccinated, stepped up and went above and beyond.

I have to say we actually had a situation in my riding where one of our pharmacists let his grass grow a bit long and someone ratted him out to the city. He got a ticket. When he apologized online, the outpouring of love for our pharmacist was quite overwhelming to him.

I must say that our pharmacists stayed open late, they didn't have lunches, they didn't take dinners. They really went above and beyond and I really just want to thank them for all they did during our vaccination efforts. It was phenomenal.

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

**WHITNEY PIER GROUP SOC.:
HOSTING EVENTS FOR FAMILIES - THANKS**

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize the Whitney Pier Group Society. The Whitney Pier Group's mandate is to preserve the wonderful sense of unity and community spirit which encompasses Whitney Pier.

The Whitney Pier Group hosts events in the community, often in support of other community organizations. In September it hosted the largest car show to visit Whitney Pier and Neville Park. The annual Island Tire Car Show featured a barbeque for the BGC of Cape Breton. On October 30th the Whitney Pier Group also hosted BOO-Fest at the park. It was well-attended, enjoyed by all including myself and our family.

I thank the Whitney Pier Group for the many events that they host for families in Whitney Pier and continued success.

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

**BIBLE HILL FIRE BRIGADE:
PRESERV. AND PROTECTION OF COM. - RECOG.**

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the tireless efforts of the Village of Bible Hill Fire Brigade and to commend them on their 75th anniversary. The Bible Hill Fire Brigade embodies leadership, courage, and dedication to the community.

We are so incredibly grateful and deeply appreciative of the time these volunteers take away from their lives and families to risk their own safety for the protection of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to personally thank past Fire Chiefs Dwayne Mellish, Jeff Hoare, Charles Boyce, and Ron Logan, as well as current Chief Joey Bisson, for their efforts in leading such a remarkable brigade, and for all they have done to serve the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**ST. JOS. LEB. & SYRIAN BEN. SOC.:
SUPP. AND PROM. OF LEB. CULT - RECOG.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place with this being Lebanese Heritage Month to recognize the St. Joseph's Lebanese and Syrian Benevolent Society, which has been in existence since 1909. This organization supports and promotes and celebrates the rich Lebanese culture we have in Sydney and across the CBRM.

I also want to recognize many of my friends who are part of the Lebanese community. There are many very successful entrepreneurs. There are some great hockey players, as many would know: Fabian Joseph and Kevin Morrison and a few others from home. I personally want to recognize my constituency assistant, Janice Waye, whose maiden name was Janice Garabb.

It is a proud community. Many people know the Cedars Club in Sydney for not only the events that it holds but the rich history that it shows for all the success our Lebanese community has had in Sydney.

I rise in my place to recognize everyone at home and wish them all the best during Lebanese Heritage Month.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CA/GOULD, DAN & BROTHER/VAUGHN: BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to honour two important men in my life. The first is my constituency assistant - no, not you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you're important too. The first is my constituency assistant, Mr. Dan Gould. Today is his birthday and I'd like to wish him a Happy Birthday. I hope he's listening.

Dan is just an incredible person. He listens every day, he is a very active listener, he is full of compassion, full of kindness and patience to the people that reach out to our office every day. As everyone in this House knows, when people contact us, it is usually when they're going through a difficult time, so I want to say thank you and Happy Birthday to Dan.

I also want to say Happy Birthday to my older brother Vaughn. When we were younger his birthday present was always a portion of my Halloween candy. I do want to say a shout-out to him. He is one of many grandfathers in this province who are raising one of their grandchildren. In my opinion, he and his wife are saints, in my mind, and I want to bring honour to him today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**NOVALEA FARMERS MARKET:
SECOND SUCCESSFUL SEASON - CONGRATS.**

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to congratulate the Novalea Farmers' Market on their second successful season. The market operates out of the parking lot on the corner of Duffus and Novalea in the North End on Saturday mornings. With a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, flowers, baked goods, and so much more, the market has been providing affordable food to the community for the past two years.

This weekend that just passed was the last market of their season, their Fall Harvest celebration. I was honoured to be asked to be a judge for the pumpkin carving celebration. I can't wait to see them back next year.

I'd like all the members to please join me in congratulating the vendors, organizers, and manager on another successful season.

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

**CHUTE, OLIVIA: REP'ING CANADA AT IWWF PAN AM.
WATER SKI CH'SHIP - CONGRATS.**

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, this is the time of year when many families begin their trek to the local rinks and brave the cold to support their children and cheer them on. Not for one family in Windsor Junction. Their daughter, Olivia Chute, is preparing to represent Canada at the IWWF Pan American Water Ski Championships in the under-17 age group. This competition will take place November 4th to 7th in Chapala, Mexico.

During the year, Olivia splits her time between Florida and Nova Scotia. Joining her on the under-17 team will be skiers from Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. Olivia was part of the under-14 national team that won gold at the Pan Am Games in Chile in 2018. The 17-year-old's specialty is what's called trick skiing, an event in water skiing that uses a wider ski to enable various spins and trick moves.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Olivia on making the 2021 Pan American water ski team and wish her the best in her competition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**FORREST, KYLE:
ENSURING SAFETY OF SCHOOL DURING FIRE - THANKS**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to recognize Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School student Kyle Forrest. Kyle exercised quick thinking and sound

judgment recently during a fire at the school. Upon realizing there was smoke in the building, Kyle determined the source of the fire, pulled the fire alarm, and quickly alerted staff member Steve Berry, who then activated the fire extinguisher.

Kyle's actions played a major role in both assuring the safety of the school, its students, and mitigating the damage while waiting for firefighters to arrive.

I'd like to ask this House to join me in thanking Yarmouth Consolidated Memorial High School student Kyle Forrest for his decisive and consequential actions that day and provide a big thank you also to the YCMHS staff for their leadership and assistance and, of course, a big thank you to our fire and RCMP crews and their dispatchers for their bravery and service to our community always.

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

**AUTISM NOVA SCOTIA:
BUILDING UNDERSTANDING, ACCEPTANCE AND INCLUSION - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Autism Nova Scotia. Founded in 2002, Autism Nova Scotia is an organization based in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island with a provincial reach.

A diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder is both the end of one journey and the beginning of another. Autism Nova Scotia provides employment, education, and social support for people with ASD. They also advocate so that people with ASD and their families can access the resources they need. Autism Nova Scotia also undertakes important stigma reduction work to enhance public understanding of autism spectrum disorder.

I ask that all members join me in commending Autism Nova Scotia for all the work they do, and send our best wishes for a successful fundraiser called Best of Local which is on November 4th this year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

GARCIA, FLORENCE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today to rise to remember the late Florence Garcia of Hazel Hill, and to recognize her for more than 50 years of dedication to the Canso Curling Club. Florence lost her battle with cancer in July, and her loss has been felt deeply by her family and friends in Canso and beyond.

The Canso Curling Club in particular was an organization in which she poured her heart, soul, and energy. A member for 53 years, she served as the treasurer, and when fundraising was needed, Florence was there spearheading it, and recruited several new

members over the years. She also took great pleasure in assisting during the annual MacDonal Memorial Bonspiel in memory of her own father, Joe.

Florence was very active in her parish, Star of the Sea, where she also served on the fundraising and maintenance committees. As a former secretary in the local doctor's office, she knew almost everyone in her community. She had a big heart and was affectionately referred to as Momma by many. On a personal note, Mr. Speaker, Florence was at one time my mother's babysitter when she was a child.

I ask that we all applaud the memory of Florence Garcia, her unwavering commitment to the Canso Curling Club, and her love for her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

**BLACK WELLNESS COOPERATIVE:
PROVIDING EXPERTISE & TRAINING TO MARG. COMS. - THANKS**

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I rise in the House today to acknowledge the Black Wellness Cooperative. They seek to provide the Black community an opportunity to learn and grow through their peers and representation, and are committed to providing expertise, knowledge, and training to marginalized and otherwise underserved communities and groups of all ages.

The issues they see within the health and fitness industry they want to be able to address. Some of these issues are stemming from narrow focuses which include a lack of diverse representation, a lack of access to gyms, classes, and coaches, and a lack of inclusivity amongst Black and people of colour. They witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted their communities, and so are geared toward making the efforts and making sure that they are seen in their communities.

I will ask the members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking the Black Wellness Cooperative for advocating for Black and People of Colour, and leading the way to a healthier future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**CRICHTON PARK FRIENDS OF REFUGEES:
HELPING ISSO FAMILY - THANKS**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the Crichton Park Friends of Refugees private sponsorship group was formed in 2016 in response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Led by Deborah Woolway and Rachael Tabor, it was initially a collection of 20 friends and neighbours but grew to many more. From raising money to locating and furnishing an

apartment, to finding schools, doctors, and dentists for a family that was due to arrive, it was an extraordinary group effort.

When Janso Isso, Himo Hussin, and daughters Mavie and Melly arrived one cold November day five years ago, they'd given up everything that they'd known and were overwhelmed by the kindness of strangers. A second wave of helpers stepped in, doing everything from babysitting while the parents attended ESL classes, to helping Hima qualify as a hairdresser, and assisting Janso in finding freelance work.

The Issos have worked exceptionally hard to create a new life here in Nova Scotia. Just last month, Himo passed the citizenship test and officially became the first Canadian citizen in her family.

Please join me in extending gratitude and congratulations to the Crichton Park Friends of Refugees and the Isso family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

FRIENDS APPAREL: SUPP. FOR LOCAL CHARITIES - CONGRATS.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, Friends Apparel is a youth-owned business that was started recently in Richmond County when eight-year-old Levi Boudreau, ten-year-old Cayden, and eight-year-old Jaelynn Clannon went to an entrepreneurship camp this Summer. They created the idea of a tie-dye T-shirt company.

They created a Facebook group for the company on July 14th of this year, and the first person who bought a shirt from them challenged the children to donate \$1 from every sale to a local charity. By September 1st, Friends Apparel has sold 477 T-shirts and have donated \$477 dollars to the Leaside Transition House in Port Hawkesbury. They also recently donated 20 T-shirts to the local annual IWK toy drive.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Levi, Cayden, and Jaelyn on their successful venture into business and their support for local charities. I know their success will motivate other youth in the region to think like entrepreneurs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

FONG, FRED: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Fred Fong. Fong's Family Restaurant has been a huge part of our community and a definite staple in Cole Harbour since 1978 when brothers Henry and Fred started their business, with Henry being the silent partner, and Fred running all the day-to-day aspects of the restaurant.

Fred is a Cole Harbour celebrity, Mr. Speaker. Everyone knows Fred. It has been said that if the math is correct, Fred and his staff have served more than 6 million egg rolls since their doors opened 43 years ago. This is credited to the dedication and the loyalty of his customers.

Fred, now 70 years old, is happily retiring and has sold his business to a young couple from Halifax. They are happy to keep the name of the restaurant and the hard-working staff for Fred's appreciation, so now Fred can enjoy his time in Cape Breton golfing.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**AMHERST ROOMING HOUSE FIRE:
NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING - RECOG.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to draw attention to a dreadful mishap situation that happened yesterday in the Town of Amherst. We had another fire. Thankfully, there were no deaths in this fire. I want to say thank you to the firefighters who attended so quickly, made sure that all 20 residents who lived in that apartment complex were saved.

I also want to say thank you to the Red Cross for their immediate quick action finding urgent immediate housing for 16 of those residents. The other four were able to find a place with family members.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to draw attention to that because there are now 20 more people without a place to live in our community. We have a housing crisis not only in HRM, we have a housing crisis throughout all of Nova Scotia, including Cumberland North.

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

**MEN OF THE DEEPS:
PRESERV. OF FOLKLORE OF MINING COMS. - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I concur with the member.

This week is Music Week. In honour of that, I rise to recognize the Men of the Deeps, a choir of coal miners from Cape Breton Island, including from Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

For more than 50 years, the singing miners have donned their signature overalls and helmets to sing about the work and life of Cape Breton miners. Their music preserves the rich folklore of the Island's coal mining communities. They have travelled all over the world promoting it.

Today the Men of the Deeps is more than a singing group: It is a part of our social fabric. There's a solidarity amongst the members of the group that carries over to the audience whenever they perform.

With songs like "Working Man", "Their Light Will Shine", "The Men of the Deeps", and "Coal Town Road", the Men of the Deeps remind us of the toll mining takes on a miner and their family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

**LEDVINA, TIM & DIANE:
DONATION TO QUEENS GEN. HOSP. FDN. - RECOG.**

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Tim and Diane Ledvina. The Ledvinas bequeathed \$4.8 million to the Queens General Hospital Foundation, the largest single private donation received in the foundation's history.

Originally from New York, Tim and Diane fell in love with the South Shore in the 1990s and retired in Western Head, Queens County. They became active volunteers in the community and are remembered by residents as loving and kind neighbours.

Sadly, Diane passed away in 2012 and Tim in 2014. Both were well cared for by the staff of Queens General Hospital during their illnesses. A custom-made sign on the newly named Queens General Hospital Foundation's Ledvina Building honours their memory.

I would like to take this moment to remember the Ledvinas and express sincere gratitude to their family. The broader Queens region will benefit from their generosity for years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**IRVING SHIPYARD & ILA WORKERS:
SERV. DURING PANDEMIC - THANKS**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 was tough on all of us. For most of us, it changed the way we worked and live.

Most of us had the option to work from home, but the hard-working men and women at the Irving Shipyard continued to go to work, day after day, building and repairing our ships. Also, the members of ILA went to work and operated our ports and unloaded our ships.

Because of their work, our supply chain continued on and our local economy was kept moving forward. Thank you to all the workers from hard hat to white hat. We appreciate all of you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

JOE THOMEH'S KWIK-WAY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, corner stores can be cornerstones of a community or street. They're the cream for your coffee, Popsicles on a hot day, and movie rental memories - and, of course, there are the familiar faces behind the cash. This is the case with Joe Thomeh's Kwik-Way.

Joe Thomeh's Kwik-Way was established in the 1970s. Located on the corner of Maynard and Cornwallis Streets, this mom-and-pop convenience store features homemade dishes "à la Mom" that are enjoyed by many members of the North End community. The Thomeh children have always helped out in the store - and I remember this growing up, because I used to walk past the store on my way to go to high school. I'd always chat with Mom and Dad and go in the store and grab some snacks. They truly live by the words of their father - love, loyalty, and family.

I want to remember Moma - her name is Kim, and she's Moma in heaven now, and thank Joe, Nassim, Najah, Rima, and Samira for continuing the legacy of your family.

I would like all of our members to acknowledge the community stores and family-run businesses like Joe Thomeh's Kwik-way. They truly are the heart of our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**SPRINGHILL CENTENNIAL GOLF CLUB:
FREE GOLF CLINIC FOR YOUTH - THANKS**

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge the Springhill Centennial Golf Club in Cumberland South.

This summer, the golf club opened up its beautiful grounds to offer a six-week golf clinic free of charge to children between the ages of five and 15 who had an interest in golf.

The sessions were designed to be fun, interactive, and informative, and were open to all levels of golfers, and the challenging games showed that golf can be fun and exciting for some - not myself.

I ask that the House join me in recognizing the volunteers and staff who took their time every Wednesday morning to make this free clinic available to those wanted to learn and otherwise might not have the opportunity to partake in the sport of golf.

We thank the Springhill Centennial Golf Club for the outstanding event, and we wish them success in the future of this project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

DICKIE, KEVIN: RETIREMENT - THANKS

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the remarkable 34-year career of Kevin Dickie, who recently retired as the executive director of Acadia Athletics. Kevin's career at Acadia started as the head coach for the Axemen hockey team for three seasons, starting in 1977, and continued when he returned to Acadia as executive director of Acadia Athletics in 2011, where he built one of the best athletics programs in the country.

Kevin's strong leadership has truly put Acadia on the national stage, with the hosting of four national championships in the past five years. Kevin Dickie should also be recognized for the remarkable 50 per cent increase in the number of student athletes achieving All-Canadian recognition.

In 2019, Acadia celebrated 122 academic All-Canadians - the highest number in the school's history.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking Kevin Dickie for his years of leadership for the Acadia University athletic community and wishing him all the best in his well-deserved retirement.

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

DALHOUSIE FACULTY OF HEALTH: 50 YRS. OF IMPROVING HEALTH FOR NOVA SCOTIANS - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, the Dalhousie Faculty of Health is celebrating a milestone. In 1961, the Faculty of Health Professions was established when the College of Pharmacies joined forces with the School of Nursing. This union became the first faculty devoted to health in Canada, beginning with 107 students.

Over time, the faculty has grown into an innovative leader within the national health research sphere and an international research powerhouse. It was renamed the Faculty of Health, fondly known as Dal Health, in 2017 and now includes ten academic units, nearly 300 faculty and staff members, a student body of more than 3,000 students, and over 25,000 engaged alumni.

As a current student of Dal Health, I can attest to the dynamic environment that comes from this mix of disciplines. I ask all members to congratulate Dal Health on 60 years of improving health for Nova Scotians.

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

VIDDAL, PAULINE: 90th BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and celebrate the 90th birthday of Mrs. Pauline Viddal on November 5th of this year.

Pauline was born in 1931 and was raised in Blandford. What is very remarkable is she has spent her life in this community and still lives there today. Pauline has been a long-time active member of her community. She has been a devoted member of her church guild and is still an active member of the Seaside Club.

A cherished mother to three daughters, Pauline is known for her kindness and thoughtfulness. I want to congratulate Pauline for this milestone birthday and wish her a healthy and happy year.

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

**FLEMING, THOMAS:
NAMED OFFICIAL DJ TO VANCOUVER CANUCKS - CONGRATS.**

LORELEI NICOLL: I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate Thomas Fleming, known professionally as DJ Tom Fleming, on becoming the official DJ to the Vancouver Canucks of the National Hockey League.

Thomas grew up in Cole Harbour, attended local schools, and graduated from Saint Mary's University. Sports were an important part of his youth. He was involved in a number of sports, but like so many Cole Harbour kids - some, Mr. Speaker, you may have heard of - hockey became his passion, namely goaltending.

In his final year of minor hockey, Thomas developed a health issue that suddenly halted his activities in sports. It was during this frightening and challenging time in his young life that he decided to use his spare time outside of school and university to teach himself the art of DJing.

Fast-forward to 2021, with several national competitions and awards behind him and a developing career as a DJ, DJ Tom Fleming entertained the crowd at the Vancouver Canucks home game opener in Vancouver on October 26th of this year. Tom recently said, I finally made the NHL.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Thomas Fleming.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**LEE, OWEN “O’SOUND”:
NOM. FOR N.S. MUSIC AWDS. - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: This Thursday marks the beginning of Nova Scotia Music Week, and I’m happy to say there are several nominees for Music Nova Scotia awards that live in Dartmouth North.

One of these artists is Owen “O’Sound” Lee, whom I admit I gushed over when I was canvassing this past election and realized he was a constituent. It was very exciting. I am a big fan of his music. I am not the only one. This year Owen “O’Sound” Lee has been nominated for African Nova Scotian Artist of the Year as part of the 2021 awards, which will be presented this Sunday.

Owen Lee is a multi-talented musician, songwriter, vocal arranger, and producer whom I first saw perform in his former role as director of the Nova Scotia Mass Choir. He’s a graduate of York University’s vocal performance in jazz. Owen Lee has released his own music, including powerful singles “Listen” and “Father’s Song,” and collaborated with an impressive list of artists including Classified, Jordin Sparks, Maestro Fresh Wes, Drake, and Mariah Carey.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Owen “O’Sound” Lee for sharing his musical gift with all of us and congratulate him for this most recent accolade.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

SABEAN, KATIE: DONATION OF PART OF LIVER - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: Let us recognize a truly kind and selfless individual. Her name is Katie Sabean and she lives in Digby. Katie was sitting at home one evening nursing her own infant son when she came across Owen LeBlanc’s GoFundMe page.

Owen was 4 months old and in end-stage liver failure. Katie flew to Toronto on October 13th and had a full day of tests at the Toronto General Hospital to see if she was

healthy enough to donate a piece of her liver to Owen. The tests came back fine, and the transplant surgery was scheduled.

But it is with great sorrow that I say that Owen passed away on October 25th in his mother's arms. May we in this Legislature share our remorse for the entire LeBlanc family by standing with them today from afar.

Let us recognize Katie Sabean's thoughtfulness, as her efforts to donate a part of her liver are indescribable.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN WORKERS: HELP IN ELECTION - THANKS

ALI DUALE: Today I rise to give thanks to all those people who have helped me in my journey as an elected official.

There has been little doubt about how hard running an election campaign is, especially in the heat of the summer, every day of the week, from the morning until the sunset. I had a team assisting me with knocking on doors and organizing my time.

I want to take this time today to thank those who helped me organize where I needed to be, those who were with me walking through the neighbourhood, knocking on doors. Finally, all those who helped me on election day, running back and forth for 14 hours.

Without this team, I would not be standing here today, so I humbly give thanks to those who walked with me.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is now two o'clock. We will finish at 2:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: DOCTOR PAY COMMITMENTS - UPDATE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start off today's questions around access to primary care. We know this is very important for all parties. It was important for our government to attach as many Nova Scotians to primary care, to family doctors, and we had tremendous success. One of the ways we were able to do that was increasing their

remuneration. They were the highest paid, and are, to my knowledge, the highest paid in Atlantic Canada.

[2:00 p.m.]

There were a number of promises from the PC Party to increase their pay even further with pension plans, and to immediately increase to match those that are hospitalists.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Has he started to deliver on these commitments?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about our election platform, which resonated so soundly with Nova Scotians during the summer election we just had here.

We're very serious. We're very, very focused on fixing health care in this province. We know there's a lot of work to do. The train is moving in a very negative direction with health care in this province, for sure. We've got to slow that train down, stop it, and then move it back in a positive direction. I will assure Nova Scotians that we are completely committed to doing just that.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, my question is, when does that start? We are asking to see some improvement. We were making tremendous progress. The attachment list for Nova Scotians was going down until COVID-19 hit, and under this government it is going up, Mr. Speaker.

There was urgency in this issue. Certainly when they were in Opposition, there was urgency, and in the campaign they campaigned to fix this scenario. They have ideas in their platform, but we're asking: When will we start to see some action in this area?

Nurse practitioners are also an important part in how we attach patients to primary care. There is an incentive program that we put in place to allow nurse practitioners to practise in areas that need it for five years and RNs would get their tuition covered by that.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he extend this out to RNs to become nurse practitioners?

THE PREMIER: Look, everything is on the table. We have a lot of work to do in health care in this province. We want to make sure that our health care professionals feel supported, which they haven't in a long time, and that our health care professionals feel respected, which they haven't in a long time.

I'm happy to say that with the work that we've done right out of the gate, just in the first few weeks, really - touring the province, showing them the respect and decency to look them in the eye and hear their concerns - and their concerns are many.

What I want to tell Nova Scotians is that we have gotten to work, opening up an acute-treatment centre, addressing challenges in the patient transfer system, and extending to every nursing student in this province that we want them here in this province. They have a job offer in this province. We want them here.

There is much work to do, but we will continue to do it.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting for the action that they committed to. Hundreds of millions of dollars of new spending is what they committed to. Now they are basically endorsing our previous budget. There's a lot of work to do, for sure - there always has been and there always will be. We're proposing ideas on how to recruit more nurse practitioners, incentive programs, new seats.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Will he be considering expanding the scope for pharmacists - and not just an answer of "everything is on the table." When will we see action in specifics, to see the decrease in the list?

THE PREMIER: I think those who are actually looking are seeing action. I mean, that's certainly what I'm hearing from Nova Scotians and from health care professionals. As a matter of fact, I personally just got off the phone with a Nova Scotian who is practising medicine in the United States. We had a great conversation about what it might take to attract that family back to this province.

We are taking action. We were very frank with Nova Scotians that there is a lot of money to be spent to fix the health care system. I know the honourable member wants us to spend it quicker, but we will spend it smartly.

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

PREM. - MIN. WAGE: WORKING PEOPLE - FOOD BANKS

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, just last week Food Banks Canada issued their annual report, it's called *HungerCount*, and the numbers this year show that in a month there are in the area of 26,000 visits by people from Nova Scotia to food banks. They also show that around 3,500 of those people identify themselves as people who have jobs. These are not \$25 an hour jobs, Mr. Speaker, they are not either \$15 an hour jobs - they are minimum wage type jobs.

On a day when the province of Ontario is instituting a \$15 minimum wage, I would like to ask the Premier: Will the Premier admit that our having a minimum wage of \$12.95 is relegating a lot of working people in Nova Scotia to have to rely on food banks?

THE PREMIER: It's no doubt that many Nova Scotians are struggling and the cost of living is going up. There can be absolutely no question about that. I have visited a lot of

those food banks and talked to a lot of people on the way in and out of those food banks. I understand that people are struggling. There is no question about that.

Ontario's move today is - you know, we are looking at that. Obviously, the situation in Ontario is different than it is Nova Scotia. We know that for sure. The cost of living is different in Ontario than it is in Nova Scotia. I don't see a scenario which should have the same minimum wage, but those Nova Scotians - no, I honestly don't - those Nova Scotians who get up and go to work every day should have every right to expect that they will earn enough money to pay for food, to pay for housing, to pay for our children's activities.

Everybody should have an opportunity in this province. I know people are falling behind and I am very concerned about it too. (Applause)

GARY BURRILL: One of the other things indicated in this year's report is that in Nova Scotia, more than half of those who rely on food banks receive their living from provincial income support and disabilities supports.

Anyone who is following at all anything that is going on with the price of groceries knows that the level that income supports, income assistance, and provincial disabilities supports are set at in Nova Scotia is so low that if that is your only means of income, you are not going to be in a position where you can be able to get all of your food from a store. You are going to have to get some of it from a food bank.

I would like to ask the Premier: Does he find it acceptable that our province, the province of Nova Scotia, is relegating setting the income assistance level at such a point that thousands of the people of our province are relegated to having to receive their food from food banks?

THE PREMIER: No, and I know that the former government has done some work on those rates, as well. I know the department, under the work the minister is doing, is looking at these things.

For sure, people need to know that they have opportunities in this province and when they are not able to work, that their government offers a support for them that is meaningful and maintains a quality of life that we would all deem acceptable.

Absolutely, but at the same time, as well, I also know that we - one way to get a raise is to get a different job. Investments in training and opportunities and growing the economy will create opportunities for all Nova Scotians. We are also focused on that.

The rates are always under review. Looking at them, what can we possibly do to support people. We all want that but we also all want to make sure we have a growing economy where there are opportunities for everyone.

GARY BURRILL: *HungerCount* this year, also it says, that in Nova Scotia right now around 70 per cent of people who rely on the food banks are tenants in market rental units. The report makes a particular recommendation this year that governments act to make sure that existing, affordable housing units are not removed from the market by being converted into more higher-market units that lower-income people can't afford.

So we know that the government is planning on adding new, affordable units, but we also know that private developers are taking hundreds of existing units out of the affordable housing market. The development on Oxford and North streets in the constituency I serve is a . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question, please?

GARY BURRILL: . . .primary example. I would like to ask the Premier: What is the Premier's plan to make sure that we don't lose any more of the affordable housing units that we now have?

THE PREMIER: I thank the member for the question. I think this is one of those areas where maybe we have just a philosophical difference of opinion. I honestly believe that the answer to the housing crisis is more housing supply across the spectrum.

Of course, we've demonstrated our commitment to protect tenants with extending the rental cap, but we also know we need more housing supply in this province. There might not be complete agreement in this Chamber on whether more supply is the answer, and that's okay, but I personally believe we need more housing supply. I would not discourage any construction of housing stock in this province. We need it across the spectrum to open up opportunities for everyone.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DHW - VACCINATION: CHILDREN - SCHOOLS

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about vaccines. We haven't heard very much about the booster shots as of late. We talked about long-term care needing them very soon, we talked about other cohorts that still haven't gotten their first dose, like our children.

We asked about the possibility, like other provinces are doing, in schools, and ensuring that our children are able to access, given that the large percentage of people getting COVID-19 are now children, with now Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan all making a plan to give vaccines in school.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Why is this out of the consideration?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'll respond to that because I just recently had a briefing with Public Health about that.

We do continue to wait for NACI statements to ensure that we can move forward in a way that is appropriate. While we don't agree with in-school based vaccines, we're going to go with pharmacies first. If there are people who are underserved or need additional support, we are certainly willing to lean in with a variety of different means in order to make sure that the most number of people in the province are vaccinated.

IAIN RANKIN: While the Ontario Science Table disagrees, saying that including using schools as clinics is part of their recommendation. Saskatchewan is planning to offer vaccines in schools, also libraries, community and sport centres because they are accessible in communities, and Alberta has said the same thing. These provinces take recommendations from NACI as well.

I just wonder if it is a resource thing, why we're not able to offer them in schools, or is it a supply issue, which is under the federal government?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: There are a number of things. There is a bit of - in terms of the resources, what it would take to stand up and vaccinate all those children, right? There's a large number of people. We also know that we've had good partners with pharmacies, and they are accessible, and we're working with pharmacies to open at different hours to improve accessibility.

We won't be offering in-school - so, during school hours - but if there's a community, use it as a site outside of regular school hours, it would be considered.

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

DHW: VACCINATION BOOSTER SHOTS - TIMELINE

IAIN RANKIN: Recently, NACI also recommended that those who have had two shots of AstraZeneca should now be eligible for their booster shot. All Canadians should be looking at that.

For people over the age of 70, I've asked before in this House - for the Premier or the minister - when are we going to be able to see booster shots in arms, and can we guarantee that those who have received AstraZeneca - which was a recommendation from the government at the time; lots of Nova Scotians took that recommendation and don't have the same type of protection as those that have mRNA vaccines - when will these people start to see their booster shot eligibility?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Currently, we are in the process of doing the long-term care campaign, where residents in long-term care facilities are receiving their influenza vaccines as well as their booster. We are also looking at people who have to travel for work, so that it's a mandatory reason for them to travel. The next stages of that will be unfolded in the next couple of days, so you should expect to hear something very soon about our next steps.

IAIN RANKIN: Thank you. Just to follow up with that, we are seeing other provinces already getting those doses out. The thing about this province is we were able to get our second doses into arms of long-term care residents sooner than other provinces, so they're way past that six-month mark for protection. A lot of them had it last Winter.

[2:15 p.m.]

I'd like to ask the minister - if that's who's going to answer my questions on this - what is the holdup? Do we have supply just sitting around or are we waiting for supply from the federal government?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'm quite familiar with the vaccine rollout in long-term care. There were vaccinations happening as late as March last year, so we know. The residents in long-term care are currently having their vaccinations right now, as we do every year through the influenza vaccination process. They're having their booster shots as we speak.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DHW - C.B.: HEALTH CARE REDEV. PROJ. - UPDATE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness or the Minister of Public Works. The Cape Breton redevelopment project is something that is very exciting for our community at home. It has been designed by the doctors and the medical professionals within our community. It is exactly what they've asked for to help recruit and retain medical professionals and provide the best care at home for Cape Bretoners.

My question to either the Minister of Health and Wellness or the Minister of Public Works: Can they provide an update on the Health Care Redevelopment project, particularly at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital? All of the plans that have been put in place, are they still on schedule and are the plans the same?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Yes, last week we did table a document around the infrastructure projects, and we do feel that those things that were approved in the past are on schedule to continue.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer from the minister, because there is some concern on the ground that there are some alterations that are taking place with the project, particularly around operating rooms and the new operating rooms that were going to be designed as part of the redevelopment.

My concern was that as a government that is promoting and promising 24/7 surgeries, to see a reduction in that new infrastructure that the doctors have asked for is a concern for me and others in the community.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness or the Minister of Public Works: Is there, or have there been, conversations about the reduction of OR rooms in the new development of the Cape Breton Regional Hospital?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard of this. If there is an issue with that and you would like to let me know what the concern is, I can certainly check, but I am not aware of any conversations around reductions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EECD - HRM: INSTRUCTIONAL TIME CUTS - EXPLAIN

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. At the end of the last school year, without any explanation or public oversight, the Halifax Regional Centre for Education eliminated unassigned instructional time. This is time in the school day that teachers had to prep and do supervision duties, provide student help, and collaborate with other teachers.

A report on a survey conducted by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union included the following quote from a teacher: Unassigned instructional time, especially during the pandemic, has been essential in controlling student volumes moving throughout the school and to monitor safe numbers in bathroom spaces.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why the unassigned instructional time was cut for teachers in HRM?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. With respect to instructional time, my understanding is that some adjustments were made as a result of collective bargaining in the last collective bargaining session that equalized instruction time for teachers across the province, to great benefit to the students.

That's the explanation for the rollout that the member's asked about. Thank you.

SUZY HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that. I want to let the minister know that that was something completely different.

Mr. Speaker, the NSTU president, Paul Wozney, said that the union had presented HRCE and the former minister with data about the importance of this unassigned time to pandemic safety, as well as the positive impact it has on student attendance and achievement. When these cuts were announced in May 2021, the PC caucus issued a news release headlined “Rankin Government must stop sneaky education cuts.” In the release, the member for Dartmouth East called the cut to unassigned instructional time “the wrong move.”

Mr. Speaker, it was the wrong move then and it is the wrong move now. I’d like to ask: Will the minister agree to restore unassigned instructional time for all teachers in Nova Scotia?

BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I haven’t been briefed on the specific issue that the member has asked about. As I mentioned, I understand that changes were made as a result of some great negotiations and improvements to the collective agreement. I’d be happy to follow up and speak with the member about her question.

THE SPEAKER: Just for the member for Halifax Needham, just one thing: You do not use personal names in the Legislature. (Interruption) “Rankin.”

SUZY HANSEN: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

SLTC: CCA PAY INCREASE - UPDATE

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, we were pleased to see the new government continue to implement the recommendations out of the expert panel on long-term care from 2019. Recruitment is a critical area of focus, but more needs to be done for our current CCAs.

On October 13th, the Premier agreed to give all CCAs working in long-term care centres the same pay increase that was negotiated by the previous government with the NSHA - an extra 5 per cent above current plan, which I will table.

My question to the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care is: When can current CCAs expect this pay increase so that they, too, feel supported and respected?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Right at the moment, there are over 170 contracts that are to be negotiated that the previous government had on their plate that weren’t finalized.

Places like Northwood have already had their contract negotiation settled. Those arrangements were already published. We are committed to fair and open union negotiations with the rest of the unions when they come to the table.

FRED TILLEY: The commitment was for 5 per cent over and above current patterns, so I would expect the minister to put that on top of negotiations.

We're in a national health care shortage. To help them remain competitive and ensure they have the employees that they need, many long-term care centres are offering signing bonuses and incentives to new employees but are leaving current employees without any bonuses or any incentives.

My question to the Minister of Labour Relations is: Has he had discussions with any unions to offer incentives for current health care workers, including CCAs, so that we can keep many of these workers in this very important industry?

HON ALLAN MACMASTER: I think the member highlights something here that is very important. People going to work need to feel valued. They need to feel well-compensated.

Certainly in the health care sector we see the shortage we have of the people we need. These are all things that we're thinking about as a government. They're all things that we will be discussing, but it will be at the negotiating table. It won't be something that will be said here in the House. It'll be done at the table out of respect for the people we're negotiating with. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PREM.: HEALTH CARE CAMPAIGN PROMISES - DELIVER

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this government did run on a platform to immediately improve our health care system. Over the last two months, we have seen some metrics that would indicate things are not improving. The unattached patient list has gone up since the election by about 6,000 individuals. This would have been something that the previous Opposition party would have obviously pointed out.

We have seen ERs closed at a more rapid rate. This week, for the first time, we've seen a Code Critical campaign two out of the last three days, where the whole province was without coverage of ambulance care.

Mr. Speaker, in July . . .

THE SPEAKER: Is there a question?

ZACH CHURCHILL: There is. In July, we initiated a pilot program to hire folks at the QEII to deal with the off-load wait-times there.

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We have not seen those positions, whether they're in or not. Could the Premier please tell us if those positions have been filled?

THE SPEAKER: I'll ask the honourable member to table those reports.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: I just want to correct the member on one thing, because I think it's really important. We never said we would immediately fix health care. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we were very honest with Nova Scotians. It will take time. It will take money. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Premier has the floor.

[2:45 p.m.]

THE PREMIER: In fact, I think why our platform resonated with Nova Scotians so much is because we were so frank and honest. As a matter of fact, in a Leaders' debate, I was very clear that it would take time and it would take money.

My honourable friend the former Premier said in a Leaders' debate that there were 80 physicians waiting to show up. I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, if that had been a fact, that list would be going down. Unfortunately, it wasn't.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: In fact, I remember seeing a commercial where the Premier said, the time for waiting is over. Change is going to happen now. As was reported on allNovaScotia.com, there were 80 physicians who were coming in, and allNovaScotia.com had access to the documents that said that.

What the Premier just said isn't true. There were 81 physicians that were coming in, and the documents demonstrated that.

Again, to deal with this Code Critical issue, with ambulatory coverage across the province, which I'll remind the members opposite, it was brought up every day when they were in Opposition, we've now had two of the worst days of coverage in our province's history...

THE SPEAKER: Is there a question?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Will the Premier commit to moving forward with the pilot to deal with the off-load wait times at the QEII, which is contributing to this ambulatory coverage issue?

THE PREMIER: We're moving forward with many aspects of improvements to the health care system, but I can't say clearly enough: This will take time. We have eight years of deterioration in our health care system that we are trying to take all of that negative momentum and slow it down and bring it back in a positive way. It will take time.

It will take money, but we will spend the money and we will invest the time, because we care about Nova Scotians too much to look the other way. They've had enough of that.

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

PREM. - JOINT REG. TRANSP. AGENCY: CROWN STATUS - EXPLAIN

LORELEI NICOLL: Last week it was announced that this government would create a joint regional transportation agency that will conduct a comprehensive review of all modes of transportation associated with the Halifax Regional Municipality, which will operate as a Crown corporation.

It was also announced last week that an executive panel on housing will be established, which will recommend ways to accelerate and increase a supply of housing, which will not be a Crown corporation.

Given the cost of Crown corporations to the public, can the Minister of Public Works please provide justification as to why it's necessary for a joint regional transportation agency to be a Crown corporation?

THE PREMIER: Of course. These bills are before the Legislature right now. There will be lots of time to debate them on the floor of the House. What I will say to Nova Scotians is we are very focused and very cognizant of the fact that there's a housing crisis in this province. We will do whatever it takes to make sure we address these problems.

We want to partner with problem-solvers. Anyone who wants to step up and help us solve this problem, they're welcome in. Anyone who wants to stretch the problem, we have no time for problem-stretchers in this House. We're about problem-solving.

THE SPEAKER: As mentioned, I'll remind the member that questions cannot be asked on a bill that's on the order paper.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

LORELEI NICOLL: I will just say it's not a question, but the whole area of open to debate is questionable.

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

DCS - BIRTH ALERT SYSTEM: ELIMINATE - COMMIT

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. For pregnant people who are involved with Children and Family Services, the birth alert system flags a parent's health file so that hospital staff notify social workers as soon as the baby is born.

The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls called upon provincial and territorial governments and child welfare services for an immediate end to the practice of birth alerts.

[2:30 p.m.]

Will the minister agree today to end the discriminatory and racist practice of issuing birth alerts for parents and their babies? I will table that.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: To the honourable member, absolutely yes.

KENDRA COOMBES: I thank the minister for that answer. I guess my follow-up question will be: When can we expect those birth alerts to end?

KARLA MACFARLANE: For the member to follow up, this is one thing that I wanted to see happen immediately. When I investigated, I learned that there are some logistics in making sure that there are other services in place before ending, but I can assure the member that just in the coming weeks, it's over.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

FTB: BETTER PAY CHEQUE GUARANTEE - TAX CONCERNS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm looking for some clarity on the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee. Surprisingly, it's long on slogans and short on details. The PC Party says businesses would be able to divert 50 per cent of their Nova Scotia taxes away from government coffers and toward hiring new staff, wage increases, or bonuses for workers.

My question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: Has the minister thought about how this could affect workers who are pushed into a higher tax bracket so their company pays less tax than they pay now and they pay more?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this is a unique idea that could bring a lot of good news for many Nova Scotians. It's something that the department is working on as we speak.

I foresee this as being very good news for many people in the province. If people are making more money and paying more tax but are, on the net, better off because they are actually making more money at the end of the day, that's a good thing.

KELLY REGAN: So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have workers making more money and paying more tax, but their company is going to be making lower payments in tax. I'm not sure how that leaves Nova Scotians ahead when they are paying more tax.

It appears that Nova Scotian taxpayers will, in fact, be paying for raises for workers, even in companies that did really well during the pandemic and who are totally able to pay for increases to their employees.

My question to the minister is: Will all Nova Scotia companies be eligible for this program, even ones that saw their profits rise last year?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we are hopeful that this is going to open the doors for companies and their workers. Workers who have a chance to get better compensated can grow in their own skills and training.

At the end of the day what we're trying to do here is put more money into the pockets of workers in the province. That gives them more confidence, that gives them more ability, gives the employer more ability to ask more from them, in terms of maybe being able to do new and different things, be more innovative. Those are all good things for the economy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

NRR: GEORGES BANK REVIEW - UPDATE

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

The Georges Bank moratorium is set to expire on December 31, 2022, meaning that a review process examining the environmental and socio-economic impacts of drilling activities is necessary to move forward. By renewing the moratorium, this government would secure tens of thousands of long-term jobs in the fishing industry and a large economic driver for our communities.

My question to the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables is: Can the minister please provide an update on the status of this review process?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. It's a very important question. I know it's very important for the members' area.

Part of that negotiation is at the federal level as well. Whoever formed government would have had to wait for the new minister to be sworn in so those conversations can take place.

I can assure the member that my intent to go to that meeting is to ensure that that moratorium, from our perspective, stays in place.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I thank the minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, under current legislation the Georges Bank moratorium goes up for review every 10 years. Given the government's commitment to the environment and this moratorium renewal on the horizon, will the minister commit to creating legislation mandating an indefinite moratorium on Georges Bank?

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, out of those conversations that happened with our federal counterparts, I will certainly take that into consideration. I look forward to communicating with the member opposite to fulfill that commitment that we have, as a government, to secure those jobs in that area. Those are very important to his area, they are very important to our economy in Nova Scotia. I look forward to having those conversations after we have that meeting with the federal level.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DOJ: COURT BACKLOG - PRIORITIZE

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, victims of violence, whether it be domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, or other unspeakable traumas, wait far too long to have their cases proceed in court.

Right now, there are 1,046 pending cases currently over the Jordan threshold in this Provincial Court; the Supreme Court has 68. Why? Because there is a lack of resources? It is unacceptable that crimes such as murder and sexual assaults are being stayed due to delays in the judicial system

There is one person who could make this a priority and that is the Attorney General. My question is for the Minister who is the Attorney General: What immediate steps is this minister going to be taking to address the court backlog and give these victims their day in court?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I want the member, as well as Nova Scotians, to know that although an extension of DOJ and at an arm's length independently, the Public Prosecution Service is aware of the Jordan case. They have prioritized cases so far and we do have a special prosecutor as well.

There is the ability there to ask for extensions under extraordinary circumstances, i.e., COVID-19, and that has happened. We are looking and meeting - although I have had one initial meeting with the Public Prosecutions Service prior to the House going in - we will be meeting monthly to try to make sure that anything that is there doesn't fall through the cracks.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Thank you. I am aware of the hire for the special sexual assault unit, so the one hire. That does address maybe some of the small gap resources, but every day there is another victim added to this waiting list. I did mention it is not just about sexual assaults, it is also human trafficking, it's about murder, it's about these crimes that are unjust.

Because I am a solutionist, I'd like to offer some immediate actions. There are two vacant judicial appointments: one in Halifax, and also one in Antigonish. I would like to ask the minister: Will these judicial appointments be filled by the end of 2021?

BRAD JOHNS: Yes, they absolutely will be. For clarification, there were two as of October 31st - Justice Beach also retired, so there are now three. We were hoping to get all those applications together so that we can go through filling those, making sure that we have regional diversity as well as meeting needs - making sure there is an African Nova Scotian there - and taking all the considerations in as we move forward.

The two priorities that I've suggested to the DOJ was the judicial appointments and meeting with DPAD. Those will both happen before the end of November.

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

FTB - HOUSEHOLD DEBT LEVELS: BUDGET RISKS - PLAN

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Household debt levels and changes in consumer spending have been identified as potential risks in government budget documents for a number of years.

In 2019, Nova Scotians were carrying a total of \$3.7 billion in debt and last month we saw inflation in Nova Scotia hit 5.2 per cent. Although the Bank of Canada is holding the line on interest rates for now, we can expect to see the cost of borrowing money rise in the new year.

I would like to ask the minister: What is the minister's plan to manage the budgetary risks of high household debt levels?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think I have to look beyond my own department in that case. Our government has to be cognizant of the impact of inflation on Nova Scotians.

I think about some of the things we've been doing: We have instituted rental caps, knowing that the cost to live and have shelter is a significant component of a person's budget. We have gas price regulation in the province, which ensures that people can have faith that the prices they are paying are based on something, that somebody is watching to make sure. We are making efforts for more affordable housing supply.

If we can get more housing on the market, we can help people with the cost of housing. I think, Mr. Speaker, keeping the economy moving - I think of the work of Public Health - a very significant component in keeping the economy moving, keeping people employed, and keeping the tax revenues coming in for the province so that we have it to support people who are in need.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, our caucus has repeatedly raised concerns about payday lenders, their concentration on low-income and racialized neighbourhoods, and their role in continuing the cycle of poverty. We've also proposed alternatives, potentially solutions.

In August, we saw online ads for same-day loans targeting people in the province struggling to pay rent. Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain what action this government will take to stop payday loan companies from exploiting vulnerable people in our communities who are facing low wages and rising costs?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I'd like to thank the member for the question. Certainly, there are a lot of restrictions on payday lenders. We saw measures put in by the previous government to help reduce their impact and their ability to influence people who may be in a bad position, where they don't have a lot of options.

Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly look at suggestions the member has put forth, and we'll consider anything that might be of help.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

EECD: J.L. ILSLEY SCHOOL SPORTS FIELD - UPDATE

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

During this session, I asked the minister about the new J.L. Ilsley High School sports field. Can I get an update from the minister on this project for the residents of my community?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I believe I mentioned when I was asked about this previously that if there were plans in place that were put in under the last government, they would have proceeded.

I've looked into the question, and my understanding is that there are a number of sports fields within walking distance of that particular high school, which makes the access to sports fields in that high school greater than almost any other school in the province. I have no particular update at this time in relation to that question.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, that's certainly not true, and the minister can come to the community and we can walk from J.L. Ilsley to Graves Oakley, and she'll see that that's probably about a half-hour walk.

I would like to table a document from the Department of Public Works to HRM where they are declining funding from HRM to build a sports field at J.L. The minister spoke positively on it the first time around. The Premier also said that no projects approved by the previous Liberal government would be scrapped under this government.

So, HRM has committed money, the previous Liberal government committed money. Tell me why the department is now scrapping this project, and will the minister commit to not only this project, but come on out to the community and let's go for a walk?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I live in a fairly rural area, so the walk from one field to another is quite extensive. I'd be happy to join you for a half-hour walk.

I won't commit at this time without a full briefing on the situation, but I will join you for a walk and I'll look into it further.

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

EECD - FAIRVIEW-CLAYTON PARK: NEW ELEM. SCHOOL - COMMIT

PATRICIA ARAB: We have a nice little bonding experience happening, like the former members of this House, Alfie MacLeod and Lloyd Hines.

My question is also for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. The riding that I represent is one of the most diverse and growing communities in Nova Scotia, and yet not on the five-year plan.

Duc d'Anville was built in 1964; its population has grown 21 per cent over the last five years. Burton Ettinger was built in 1959; it's grown by 24 per cent. Fairview Heights has two buildings, one built in 1967, one built in 1959, and the population has grown by 31 per cent and 51 percent respectively. The last time an elementary school was built in Fairview-Clayton Park was when Robert Stanfield was premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to brag about being from Fairview, so will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development commit to building a new elementary school in the area so that future premiers from Fairview have a place to learn?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I do understand and fully appreciate the needs of growing communities and the excitement relating to growing communities, but also the challenges relating to the building of schools in those areas and ensuring that people get the space that they need.

I believe I've said it before and I'll say it again - I will not personally commit or make any commitments to building schools. There is a process around that. I want to make sure all the right procedures are followed, and all the right stakeholders are consulted, so you will never hear me independently commit to building a school without all of that having happened.

PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's position on this, but as opposed to other governments, her government has made a promise to accelerate growth and housing and homes being built. We're not existing in a world anymore of a five-year plan where you have the luxury of the time and the precedence. I feel like I am repeating myself.

[2:45 p.m.]

My question to the minister is: Is the minister's department prepared to take a look at these advance housing developments and accelerate the five-year plan, along with the housing acceleration?

BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, yes, with respect to the question of the five-year plan and whether we review it and adapt it and adjust it, based on ongoing needs - absolutely. It would be folly to blindly follow a five-year plan without continuing to consider how areas develop.

For sure we'll continue to do that but, as I mentioned, there is a process which involves the regions making priorities, based on their own regional needs. My priority is to make sure that that process is followed, all of the stakeholders are engaged, and that we follow a rigorous plan to have the best outcome, with the right schools built in the right places to meet students' needs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DPW: MINISTERIAL REVIEW - UPDATE

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works. The minister's mandate letter asks her within the first six months to review ". . . the role and effectiveness of Agencies, Offices, and Crown Corporations with a goal of ensuring the most efficient and accountable methodology for the undertaking of their respective tasks."

While the writer in me cringes a bit at that sentence, I am interested, in all seriousness, in an update from the minister on that review.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for the question. I can't provide you an update on that right now, but certainly in the next couple of weeks I can do that for you.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that response. I do know that the government is moving on creating some Crowns, dissolving others, so I wonder if the cart is a bit out in front of the horse here.

We hear efficiency and accountability in the mandate letter, which can often be synonyms for downsizing and closures, so my question to the minister is: Does this government intend to close or merge any further agencies, offices, or Crown corporations?

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I again thank the honourable member for the question. I'm not aware of us looking at making any changes, but again, certainly something that I can talk to you about in a couple of weeks time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MAH - AHANS HOTEL PURCHASE: FINANCIAL SUPPORT - PROVIDE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week it was reported that the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia would be buying a hotel in Dartmouth North - and I can table that. The building will be converted to supportive housing for 65 people. This is an example of the kind of action our caucus has been calling for - investment in non-profit housing, using existing buildings to provide rapid support for the people who are without appropriate housing.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister provide financial support to protect existing supply by purchasing more existing buildings to convert to not-for-profit housing - affordable housing?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. We're constantly in talks and negotiations with service providers across this whole province, looking at land and buildings that we can convert in order to ensure that we find permanent housing with wraparound services for individuals, whether they are homeless or not. Those discussions continue on a daily basis.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, we can add the following idea to that list of discussions. We know that the government plans to add 675 new units of housing; however,

that is a drop in the bucket compared to the number of units we need. We know that 397 units are currently up for sale as part of Ocean Breeze Village in Dartmouth North.

Acquiring buildings that are already built, to prevent them from being lost as affordable rentals, is an important strategy to maintain and increase affordable housing supply.

My question to the minister is: What is the minister's plan to ensure we don't lose affordable housing units as private landlords and big developers take advantage of opportunities for profit?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're well aware of that situation as well. What I would just say in the waning seconds of Question Period is that we're committed to making sure we increase the housing supply.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

[GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, before we start, I would like to put forward a motion.

I move that the hour of adjournment for Wednesday, November 3rd be not 5:30 p.m., but 11:59 p.m.; that Thursday, November 4th, the hour of adjournment be not 6:00 p.m. but 11:59 p.m.; and that Friday, November 5th, the hour of adjournment be not 1:00 p.m. but 9:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the hour of adjournment for Wednesday be 11:59 p.m.; for Thursday, 11:59 p.m.; and Friday, 9:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 68.

Bill No. 68 - Executive Council Act and Public Service Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 68 be now read a second time.

It is my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. Since assuming office at just the end of August, our government has been working hard to deliver on the priorities that Nova Scotians told us matter to them: improved access to health care, positioning our economy for growth, promoting equity and inclusion, and keeping our communities safe.

We have our mandate from Nova Scotians to fix health care and to build a healthier Nova Scotia. We have clearly outlined these priorities in the mandate letters for ministers. There has been quite a bit of discussion about the mandate letters for ministers in this Chamber, which I'm very proud of. I'm glad there's such an interest in those mandate letters. The ministers know and Nova Scotians know what is expected of our ministries, of our departments.

Today, with the introduction of amendments to the Public Service Act and the Executive Council Act, we are ensuring that the legislation reflects the current structure of government. There have been a number of restructuring changes to government and transfers of ministerial responsibilities through Orders in Council over the past few years. This is permitted by the legislation. What has not happened until now is for the amendments to be made to the Public Service Act and the Executive Council Act. Today we are taking the step to bring things back in line.

The changes captured in the amendments that are before this House include the creation of the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care; updating references to various departments to reflect new department names such as the Department of Public Works; consolidation of the Department of Lands and Forestry and the Department of Energy and Mines into the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables; creation of the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment; reflecting the renamed Office of Priorities and Planning; the previously-created Offices of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives and Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness; assignment of responsibility for improving the health of Nova Scotians through participation in physical activity, sport, and recreation to the Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage; assignment of environmental services for the government of the Province, superintendence, and management of government buildings and property to the Department of Public Works;

and explicitly stating the mandate of the Executive Council Office in the Public Service Act. Those are just a few of the changes that we wanted to highlight in today's debate.

Incorporating the changes into the Acts makes it easier to understand the ministerial and departmental organization of the government. It is part of keeping our commitment to Nova Scotians that we will act on what is important to them.

Recently I was pleased to join our health care leadership team as they travelled around the province to hear directly from front-line health care workers about the challenges they face in serving Nova Scotians. The Minister of Health and Wellness and I appreciate the willingness of our dedicated health care providers to share their experiences, their challenges, and their ideas for solutions. We know what a challenging time this has been, as they have faced the twin challenges of responding to the pandemic and looking after the many other health care needs of Nova Scotians.

Mx. Speaker, I'm looking forward to working with those delivering care on the front lines; individual Nova Scotians who are worried about their access to a doctor and the health care system and all members of this House to deliver for Nova Scotians. We feel the urgency to address the challenges within our health care system and to help communities rebuild, post-pandemic.

We want to be part of the solution as we create a healthier Nova Scotia. On that note, Mx. Speaker, I shall take my seat and I look forward to hearing from the members opposite with their thoughts on these two important pieces of legislation. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I have just a couple of points here along the way. I know that governments often choose to rename departments and move various duties around. There are a couple of things that I've noticed here, and perhaps the Premier will be able to respond as debate continues.

I will just say that when it comes to the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care, it was made very clear to me when I was the minister responsible for seniors that the reason there was a Department of Seniors was because seniors did not want to be lumped in with long-term care.

Many of us will spend 20, 25, 30, or 35 years as seniors. I was basically told this by the Group of IX which is now the Seniors' Advisory Council, that they wanted a Department of Seniors because their needs were different than they were in long-term care - or that long-term care, rather, was a subset of what the entire needs of seniors were, number one.

Number two, they also wanted to make it very clear that seniors contribute in a massive way to this province, even after some may leave employment. Some continue to be employed and many have their own businesses. They lead rich lives and they wanted to have that recognized. That's why we had the Silver Economy Summit and things like that.

I just did want to raise that with the Premier that, in fact, there is concern about losing that Department of Seniors. I understand that it may have been the desire of some to lump in long-term care with that, and certainly to remove long-term care from that massive department that is the Department of Health and Wellness. As a beast that takes up half of our budget or more, it is a large amount of responsibility for one minister, et cetera.

I would just say that for seniors, and particularly the seniors who have been advising us, the indication was that they wanted something different there.

I do also have a question around the particular issue of the one place where the responsibility for the Status of Women is removed from the the Department of Community Services. I actually wanted to ask about that. I think that the minister does have responsibility for the Status of Women, so I didn't quite understand that reference. I didn't know if I missed something. I just would like some clarity on that particular piece there. Thank you very much.

Oh, one more thing - the naming of departments. We've removed "active transit" from transportation. I just wondered why that is, that we would have removed something that is of such importance to Nova Scotians - is it a reflection of the government's intention to remove a focus on that particular area?

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

The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I rise to close debate on Bill No. 68 - the Executive Council Act and the Public Service Act

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to for second reading of Bill No. 68. All those in favour? Contrary minded?

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 71.

[3:00 p.m.]

Bill No. 71 - Tourism Nova Scotia Dissolution Act.

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

HON. PAT DUNN: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in my place and speak to Bill No. 71, the Tourism Nova Scotia Dissolution Act. This bill will formally transition Tourism Nova Scotia from a Crown corporation to a division of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. Taking this step was one of the priorities of my mandate letter and I am excited about the possibilities it presents.

Tourism is a vital part of a strong Nova Scotia economy. This province has so much to offer to visitors from around the world but, as we know, the COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on the industry. Air traffic and visitors from outside Nova Scotia decreased dramatically in 2020 and the first part of 2021, as they had to. Protecting the health and safety of Nova Scotians has been and continues to be a top priority.

In the face of enormous challenges, we have seen tourism operators get creative. We have seen an increase in home-grown tourism, Nova Scotians discovering parts of their own beautiful province that maybe they had never visited before. Madam Speaker, we have seen communities and operators explore ways to expand their seasons and market new opportunities and experiences. We have seen people look to Nova Scotia as an attractive place to visit and to live and the rebound is already beginning.

Nova Scotia welcomed 365,000 visitors in July and August. Accommodation operators sold more than 513,000 room nights in July and August, an increase of 82 per cent compared with the same months in 2020. We had more visitors arrive by air in August than in the first seven months of 2021 combined.

Going forward we don't just want to see tourism recover, we want it to grow and thrive. We want to promote local operators and encourage home-grown tourism. We want to celebrate and share with the world all that makes Nova Scotia special. That's why we are bringing tourism into the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, where it will be even better equipped to promote all that Nova Scotia has to offer, from our unique events and destinations to this province's diverse cultures and vibrant communities.

The department already includes Events Nova Scotia, which helps attract, support, and promote some of the premier events that take place throughout this province. The department also includes museums and libraries, arts and music, sports and recreation, so many of the cultural touchstones that not only make this a great place to live but an attractive destination for visitors from across Canada and beyond.

Of course, the provincial offices are also connected to the department, including African Nova Scotian Affairs, Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, and Gaelic Affairs. With that in mind, it makes sense to have our tourism team working hand in hand with the rest of the department to promote the incredible range of diverse opportunities and experiences available here in Nova Scotia

For example, Madam Speaker, in 2023 Nova Scotia will host the North American Indigenous Games, the largest multi-sport event ever hosted in Atlantic Canada. This event could bring up to 5,000 participants to our province along with family, friends, and fans.

In 2024, the municipalities of Clare and Argyle will host the Congrès mondial acadien, an international gathering of Acadian culture held every five years. This is a tremendous opportunity to attract Acadian and francophone visitors from all over the world.

As well, the culture sites that tell the stories of this province's historic African Nova Scotian communities, such as the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Birchtown and the Black Culture Centre for Nova Scotia in Cherry Brook, have so much to offer visitors from across this country and beyond.

We want to expand these opportunities to share all of Nova Scotia's unique history and cultures. Bringing tourism into the department will help continue the good work under way and allow us to go even further.

Before I close, I want to thank the Tourism Nova Scotia Board for their hard work. This legislation will bring their time of service to a close and I want to recognize their great efforts in supporting this vital industry. We will continue to work with staff, tourism operators, and with industry partners to make sure that tourism bounces back stronger than ever.

As my mandate letter states, we'll be working on a provincewide program to promote the assets, events, food, and culture experiences that Nova Scotia has to offer. We want to help the industry continue to expand and explore off-season opportunities that will make Nova Scotia a prime destination year-round.

The possibilities are truly exciting. I believe the steps that we are taking through this legislation will position us well for the future. With those words, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Under the previous government, tourism to Nova Scotia reached record-breaking levels. Arrivals to Halifax Stanfield International Airport soared past 4 million per year. Nova Scotia was on its way to becoming one of Canada's premier tourist destinations.

COVID-19 did slow us down. Nova Scotia's tourism sector needs support now more than ever. Our government made the move to create a Crown corporation to handle tourism because we wanted increased accountability and more ambitious targets for growth.

During Tourism Nova Scotia's tenure as a Crown corporation, the growth in tourism to Nova Scotia was among the fastest in Canada. As my colleague just mentioned, in July and August we saw this return to 82 per cent increase again under the same Crown corporation.

From the beautiful vineyards in the scenic Annapolis Valley to the Sydney waterfront to the north end of Halifax, Nova Scotia's tourism sector should be ground zero for post-pandemic recovery. Madam Speaker, as the saying goes, "If it ain't broken, don't fix it." I'm Canadian now because I can say it correctly.

This is so puzzling to all of us. Why are we changing this Crown corporation when tourism has shown so much success? This will make the new department less effective and less focused by handing it back to the department. This makes little sense, honestly. I am not sure what benefit could possibly be gained through this move. I can imagine many hiccups and inefficiencies created by needless and untimely bureaucratic reshuffling.

How can we attract talent to Nova Scotia when there is uncertainty about the future existence of Crown corporations? How do we attract investors with this type of added instability and uncertain economic times? Shouldn't the hard-working employees at Tourism Nova Scotia be focused on preparing for the next season, not worried about their government meddling and rearranging their affairs?

Tourism Nova Scotia was exceeding the expectations set for them. Millions visited Nova Scotia every year prior to the pandemic, generating millions in tax revenues and thousands of jobs. This is not a situation where there is underperformance. They are doing an amazing job. Why are we doing this? They are doing exactly what they are supposed to do, and they are doing it so well.

Madam Speaker, this move makes me wonder if this government is going to make other needless bureaucratic changes at a time when we are focused on getting our economy back to normal. This is not the time to change what is working and what is working so well. This is the time to focus on systems that are not working.

When Nova Scotians elected this government, they were promised solutions from passing through permanent Summer elections to abolishing a well-known Crown corporation. I don't think this government is delivering solutions at all. Not one person I spoke to in my beautiful riding of Clayton Park West asked about the structure of Tourism Nova Scotia or its status as a Crown corporation. The tourism workers I spoke to praised the organization for being effective and responsive.

What is the motive behind this government's shuffling of the tourism file? What does this government hope to accomplish with this? How does government plan on boosting the tourism sector in Nova Scotia? These are the real questions, Madam Speaker. With that, I take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise and speak to this bill. It was very encouraging to see a rebound in our tourism numbers this morning. Obviously, tourism is a huge and essential part of our economy and our culture here in Nova Scotia. As the minister said, we've seen a renewed interest in world tourism in Nova Scotia during the pandemic.

It is amazing - I think I hate this word at this point - how Nova Scotians are able to pivot in times of difficulty, but we did see it happen with our tourism industry. I confess that although I didn't really get to do much travelling in the last couple of years anywhere, I heard a lot of people say, oh, well, we went to this community that we've never been to before in Nova Scotia during the pandemic, and I felt very jealous of people who were able to travel. So I intend to see more of the province one of these days.

We definitely need to leverage that expansion that happened in rural tourism in Nova Scotia. It was good to hear in the bill briefing that the government is looking to strengthen regional plans for tourism.

Obviously, there is a direct link between tourism in Nova Scotia and our arts and culture sector - 100 per cent - which is why, as an arts worker, I have always tried to point out to whatever government was in power how essential the arts sector is to our overall economy. Part of that is the direct link to tourism, to things like cultural sites and museums.

The minister has mentioned many of these, but I will also say them: ecotourism; performing arts; craft and visual art; culinary art is a huge one now in Nova Scotia; film; and of course music and festivals like the Congrès mondial acadien and other such cultural festivals. All are so significant to the economies of the towns and cities that they happen in, but to the general overall economy as well. I know many times people come to Nova Scotia for one event and stay for an extra two weeks and see what there is to see in other parts of the province.

That being said, I hope that moving tourism back to Communities, Culture and Heritage - or now it is called Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage - means better relationships and use of provincial assets, like our trail system and investment in our trail system, so that ecotourism can be real thing and we can be a real destination. Or our film industry - let's call it film tourism - places where movies and TV shows are shot become tourist destinations because of that film or television show.

[3:15 p.m.]

Very importantly, we hope - and we will try to figure out during the course of this bill going through the Legislature - we hope we are not asking the cultural sector to spread thinner their current resources. Adding that whole section of tourism back into the department does make sense, but at the same time I really worry that it is an added burden for the folks who already work and do the work in that department. I want to make sure that there's a real investment making sure that they work hand in hand but don't spread the resources thinner.

All that being said, I have enjoyed listening to my colleagues' concerns from the Liberal Party, and I've enjoyed listening to the minister about this, so now I look forward to hearing from the public at Law Amendments Committee. We'll go from there.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'd like to say a few words - maybe even more than a few words - about this bill.

I would like to applaud the government for this change, and the reason I say that is because the people I represent - and that's why I'm here in this House - were not well served under the current Crown corporation. Cumberland North - Cumberland County in general, basically anywhere north of the Cobequid Pass - has been ignored for decades. Tourism was one of the large areas. In fact, if you would go on tourism government websites, it often didn't identify one community in Cumberland County on Nova Scotia provincial tourism maps. It was unbelievable.

I would often identify this to them, but didn't always see any changes. It was so frustrating, because I know we all love the areas that we're from, but I'm here to say Cumberland North and Cumberland County is one of the most beautiful places, not only in Nova Scotia but in the entire country. We want to showcase it and we want a portion of provincial funding for tourism. It's right. It's what needs to be done.

When you enter Nova Scotia, the first place that you can stop, off to the right, off Exit 1A, is our visitor information centre. I know the previous MLA for Cumberland North, Mr. Terry Farrell, I know that he fought hard to keep that visitor information centre open, and we were very pleased. He did a good job making his government understand the importance of that visitor information centre when you enter our province. It needs to stay, but there needs to be positive changes made.

We have many artisan galleries in Cumberland North. We have Dayle's Grand Market, which has a business called Maritime Mosaic that has hundreds of vendors, all local products. There is also an artisan gallery in the Amherst Centre Mall that hosts hundreds of artisans. When people entering Nova Scotia stop at the visitor information

centre, they can purchase items made in China with the Nova Scotia flag printed on it. People aren't looking for that. People are looking for authentic Nova Scotia gifts.

I know for a fact that the owners of the Amherst Artisan Gallery in the mall and the owner of Maritime Mosaic in Dayle's Grand Market have had several meetings, written several letters - I've written several letters supporting them - asking for Nova Scotia products to be sold at visitor information centres welcoming people into this province.

I'm hoping that the new governance structure for tourism here in Nova Scotia will look at some of these important issues, not just for Cumberland North but for all of Nova Scotia. We don't need things made in China to promote Nova Scotia. We have enough Nova Scotia-made products, things that we're proud of.

One of my good friends, Deanne Fitzpatrick, is a world-famous rug hooker and sells a lot of rugs around this world. Why are her rugs not showcased at our Visitor Information Centre? This is one example of hundreds that I could give.

When you cross into Nova Scotia, also up to your right if you go a little bit further, past the Visitor Information Centre, you'll see a cross that was put there a few years ago. It was when there was a celebration of our Acadian people. The Acadians had a village right there when you enter Nova Scotia, called Beaubassin. We have rich history and former member of Parliament Bill Casey, who was my opponent in the last provincial election, he is well-respected in our area and he was able to get the federal government to put some money into Beaubassin so it is recognized as a national park, but has so much more potential but we've never been able to get our own province to recognize that potential that is right there for when people enter our province, to capture.

When we think of what Grand Pré does and the Acadian Village in Pubnico - Acadians want to be able to visit where their ancestors were. I want to work with the people in our area who are interested in developing Beaubassin. Let's do it. I'm really hoping that the tourism work under this province under the new governance structure will be interested and will be willing to work with the people of Cumberland North and Beaubassin.

Right now we have a community group who are working on building a connecting trail between Fort Beausejour and Beaubassin. There's a really rich history of those two forts back in the 1700s, when the English came and Beaubassin was burnt to the ground and the Acadians fled. There's so much rich history there. There are so many plans that people want to take advantage of with Beaubassin. We'd love to build a replica village. We'd love to have interpretive panels.

Of course, right there we also have the dykes that were built in 1671, the first dykes, by the French settlers. Of course, those are the dykes that I spoke about last week that are in disrepair that need some attention.

Also, right there at the border is the long history of the Chignecto Ship Railway. Again, many people in our communities have tried to get the attention. There has been proposal after proposal and studies done proposing all of these great tourism ideas but we've not been able to get our own province to invest in Cumberland North, in these areas that are just as rich in history as anywhere else in this province.

The people I represent are so frustrated, because when people enter the province of Nova Scotia and they stop at the Visitor Information Centre – no offence to Peggys Cove and Cape Breton, I love both areas - when people come into Nova Scotia they are told to get back on the highway, bypass everything, and they are given information about those two areas. If they ask about other areas, but traditionally those are the main areas that our province has focused on and there's so much more.

In our area of the province in Cumberland North we want to showcase everything that we have. I want to share with the House today just some of these things. One of the things I did my first year in my MLA budget was I took out an ad in *The Chronicle Herald* and I said if the province won't promote Cumberland North then I am going to do it. I took out full-page ads in *The Chronicle Herald* and shared all the incredible places that we have in Cumberland North to visit.

If you are coming from Tatamagouche in my neighbouring Colchester North area, once you get through Tatamagouche, you come to Malagash. In Malagash we have a cidery and they have incredible cider. There are hundreds of different varieties of apples that you can pick - U-pick. Then in Malagash we also have an oyster farm where you can get fresh oysters. They're really good. I've had them. Then, many of you have heard of Jost winery. Jost winery is in Malagash. We also have Cambra Sands, this new development of cottages all along the Northumberland Strait.

Also in Malagash we have the first salt mine in the country. The first salt mine in the country, and there's a museum highlighting that salt mine. We also have the Blue Sea Beach, one of the most beautiful beaches in the province along the Malagash Bay.

The next community is Wallace. Wallace has the most incredible museum that actually holds - you can see the deeds when the first settlers came here to Nova Scotia and to Cumberland North. It actually shows the land deeds that were handed out to the Mills family and to other families. It's incredible, the rich history.

Also along that same shore is a five-star resort, Fox Harb'r Resort. I remember a couple of years ago, one of the departments held a conference there, and someone in my former party called up and said, we're going to highlight that, how the government shouldn't be going to Fox Harb'r and spending taxpayers dollars. I said, "No way! Why should people not go to Cumberland North and go to a five-star resort? Why is it okay for them to go to another resort in the province, but not Cumberland North?" I would not stand

and say that that was wrong because I want people to come to Cumberland North and see what we have to offer.

Fox Harb'r has its own private airport, and people fly into Fox Harb'r - a lot of famous people - from all over the world and get to enjoy what we have to offer here in Nova Scotia, in Cumberland North. I'm happy to say the president, Kevin Toth, is continuing to grow this incredible resort. I was there a couple of weeks ago and got to see the new construction - they're building a new conference centre. It's a five-star golf resort, incredible place to play if you're looking to play a round of golf, as well.

Wallace has a really unique golf course. So this man had some land, and he had a passion for golf. He built a golf course himself out of the land. It took him years and years, but it was his personal passion. If you're looking for a beautiful, unique place to play golf in this province, go to Wallace and play their nine-hole course. Also, along Wallace area we have another provincial park and it's called the Fox Harbour Provincial Park.

Then we come to Pugwash, and Pugwash has incredible history. I'm sure most of you have heard of the Thinkers Lodge where Nobel prize winners were. I won't give the in-depth history on that, but people around the world know about the Thinkers Lodge. Why is our province not promoting this incredible piece of history that we have to boast?

One of the reasons that I support this bill is because I've worked a little bit with Develop Nova Scotia over the past couple of years and I think that they've done incredible work across this province. I'm really hoping that they'll work with the community in Pugwash who have a marina and a Pugwash Yacht Club and an estuary - the Pugwash Estuary - which is, again, the most beautiful place if you're looking for a place to hike, canoe. It's protected - there are newly protected lands there. I'm really looking forward to working with Develop Nova Scotia on investing dollars into that beautiful tourism area.

The Pugwash golf course is also incredible, one of the best in the province, that we have to boast as well. The Pugwash Farmers' Market has been in existence for over 15 years. One of the best farmers' markets in the province and one of the busiest.

Once you get through Pugwash, you come to Port Howe, and Port Howe has Heather Beach. Heather Beach is a provincial beach that has an accessible component to it, so people in wheelchairs can get down to the beach. This is something that's been brought up.

We have a lot of seniors in Cumberland North, and we've asked our department responsible for our provincial parks to try and make our provincial parks more accessible to people with disabilities, and especially to our seniors. I'm really happy to say Heather Beach is one of those, but we'd love to see even more of our provincial parks and beaches made accessible to those in need.

[3:30 p.m.]

I'm a little biased, but the community of Linden, where I grew up, is next in the area. Northport has an incredible provincial beach, as well. Shinimicas, Lorneville, Amherst Head - Amherst Shore Country Inn is an incredible place to stay. Their rooms have Jacuzzis and they're right along the Northumberland Strait. I encourage anyone looking for a little getaway with your partner to consider the Amherst Shore Country Inn.

There is also the Amherst Shore Provincial Park campground, which is a very popular place to go. Tidnish hosts the Chignecto Ship Railway. There's a pedestrian walking bridge there that I've been trying to get some funding for; it needs some repair. The Tidnish area also has the Tidnish Dock Provincial Park.

Then after you come through the Tidnish area, you come right into the town of Amherst, a town of over 10,000. We have so much to offer. A lot of people will stop in Amherst to grab a bite to eat, but because we have not had the tourism dollars in our area, a lot of people are unaware of all of the things that our town of Amherst has to offer.

Again, right outside the town of Amherst, we have the Amherst Golf Club golf course. We have four incredible golf courses in Cumberland North. Also, in the town of Amherst, we have the armouries and inside the armouries is a regimental museum.

I have to say again that it's not just the Province of Nova Scotia that has neglected our area, it's the federal government. The federal government - again, no offence to my friends here in HRM - made a decision about four years ago to invest in restoring the Halifax Armoury. Over \$200 million has been spent.

There was an article in the paper, or CBC did an article last week, saying that they're \$30 million over budget. I'm happy for the people of Halifax to have that investment. At the same time, the same federal government divested the Amherst armoury.

Our armoury in Amherst has just as much, if not more, history. More people who trained to serve this country and lives lost by people who trained in our armouries - reservists. It's still used by our cadets and was still used by the military for reservists up until a couple of years ago.

I want that back. I think it's wrong that our federal government is divesting in rural Nova Scotia and only investing in urban areas. We need to invest in rural Nova Scotia. I'm hoping to see that by our province through tourism, as well. We have rich history in our area. I know other parts of rural Nova Scotia do as well. Those members who are from rural areas, they understand.

I am very passionate about our armouries because I respect the women and the men who serve this country. By divesting our Amherst armoury, I believe shows complete

disrespect to them, to their families, and to our community. I applaud Ray Coulson and the team that has kept the regimental museum open inside the Amherst armoury. There is a strong movement in our community to make sure that armoury never closes. I'm right there with them, shoulder to shoulder, to make sure that happens.

Amherst also hosts the Cumberland County Museum. We recently had our Lieutenant Governor and his wife visit to celebrate an anniversary there. We're so proud to share our incredible museum with them.

We have a federal park called the Amherst Bird Sanctuary. It's quite a few acres of land around lakes, where people can go and walk and hike. One area that I believe is really untapped for tourism potential - again, we've met with the previous government on this and there wasn't a lot of movement, and I know other areas around the province have the same potential.

In Cumberland, we have huge potential for off-highway vehicle and ATV trails. There's one missing link and that is, in order for our trails to be legal, we have one particular area that needs our Department of Public Works to be able to make a legal crossing. We will continue to work with that department to try to make that happen.

We have people in our communities like Greg Nix. He's a retired teacher and he just gets up every day and works with the community, and finds money to rebuild these trails throughout Cumberland County. I know that my colleague in Cumberland South, he has equally as beautiful of an area and equally beautiful trails and we want to connect those.

We want to promote Cumberland County and all of Nova Scotia as a place for people to come and spend their dollars, spend their tourism dollars in our communities. They don't have to go to Newfoundland and Labrador to drive their snowmobiles and drive their ATVs. There are people who will come and plan weekends and weeks to go and just drive these trails and we want to bring them here to Nova Scotia. We want to bring them here to Cumberland County, but we need to be able to market, we need to be able to showcase our area and in order to do that we need to be able to have legal trails and maps that we can promote.

That is an area, again, that I would love the new government structure under Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to be able to work with us to be able to - we're like 95 per cent there. We just need a little bit more help and we will be able to really tap into the potential for this trail system.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, Cumberland North has a lot to offer. We are situated - we are where Nova Scotia starts. We are the beginning of Nova Scotia and when people come into our province, we welcome them, and we want to showcase what we have along the Northumberland Strait from Amherst to Malagash.

I look forward to working with the minister responsible for this department and his new governance structure for tourism here in Nova Scotia and I can't wait to see what we are able to do together.

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

The honourable Minister for Communities, Tourism, Culture and Heritage.

HON. PAT DUNN: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the members opposite for their comments. Perhaps I will end by just making a few comments.

To the member from Clayton Park West, I don't think at any time we said the system was broken, but we did say that we are going to certainly improve the system and improve tourism. The move makes a lot of sense. The knowledge and the resources and the events that we are involved in within the department will only enhance the tourist industry.

I have to agree with the member for Dartmouth North that we are blessed with a vibrant arts and culture sector in our province. We have some of the country's best film producers, screenwriters, and performers, and we have to support them in their various industries.

To the member for Cumberland North, we have so much to showcase. The member mentioned about our homemade arts and crafts and so on, and all the areas that are so beautiful in our province. It is time we took advantage of every area of the province, from one end to the other.

Madam Speaker, I move to close Bill No. 71.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 71.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, I move that the adjourned debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be now resumed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North. (Applause)

TOM TAGGART: Madam Speaker, I would like to begin my first comments in the Legislature by remembering the victims of the 2020 April mass killing that started just five minutes from my home.

This horrific event, which began with the murders of 13 innocent men and women in the community of Portapique and ended with the violent deaths of 22 Nova Scotians and one unborn child - there is not a person in my community who was not related to, worked with, worked with, or were friends with one or more of the victims or their families. We will never forget the victims, and I am committed to ensuring that the families get the answers they need in the public inquiry.

In this speech, I will try to paint a picture of Colchester North, who I am, what I believe in, and what brought me to this honoured House of Assembly. It's a true honour to stand before you today. One day many, many years ago, before I was old enough to vote, my grandfather, Willard Fletcher, had me working in the polls as a scrutineer. From that day forward I have had a passion for politics, governance, and community service.

This involvement in the political process and the journey toward today has been personally rewarding. The friendships, and I mean true friendships, that I have made from all sides and views on the political spectrum have been truly rewarding. I have the honour of following great leaders in Colchester North: former MLAs Bill Campbell, Jack Coupar, the honourable Ed Lorraine, Bill Langille, and the honourable Karen Casey, all of whom I would consider great friends and mentors.

Please allow me to say thank you to the great residents of Colchester North, who placed their trust in me and allowed me to fulfill my dream. Thank you for a very committed campaign team, from my campaign chairs Scott Armstrong and Mike Eddy, and our outstanding official agent Allan Sutherland, to our very effective campaign office staff of Holly Grew and Marsha Eddy. Elaine Orr did a tremendous job leading the team that got out the vote, all the while supporting two other very successful rookie candidates.

To Emily Gratton and Thomas for their great work on communications, and my driver Don Myatt and his blueberry pie. It was better than an energy drink. To my own Statler and Waldorf, also known as Gary Burley and Ray Cameron, who are undoubtedly the best sign team in Nova Scotia, but also kept everyone in our campaign office alive and on their toes.

A second and very special thank you to Ray, who knows that they did a fabulous job fundraising. To my niece, Carly Taggart, who was involved in several ways, predominantly to get out the vote with me at the doors. To the crew in Tatamagouche, Mike Gregory, Brad Smith, Bob and Shirley Langille, Allan Fahey, Marilyn Roberts, and the

mayor of Baxter Mountain, John Hansen. To the truest and long-time most loyal PC on the team, Tilly Armstrong, who managed the calls and identified the vote.

My final and most heartfelt thank you to my family, to my wife Zylpha, son Thomas, and daughters Alysse and Megan for their support, their work, and their understanding.

Please permit me to attempt to paint a picture of the constituency of Colchester North and the community that makes it so special. I just digress for a minute, because I want to thank my good friend the member for Cumberland North for allowing me to segue into this. Great job, thanks.

[3:45 p.m.]

I will begin with West Colchester, my home, and the communities that I have represented for the past 12 years as municipal councillor. Primarily running along the shoreline of the Minas Basin and the Bay of Fundy, Five Islands continues to be a true traditional community with employment focused around the forestry and fisheries, predominantly the clam fishery. However, future growth potential is clearly as a tourism recreational destination - the designation of Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark with the Five Islands as an integral part, providing some of the most spectacular views within the Geopark.

I wish we were permitted to use props. This would permit me to show photos of some of the amazing geological formations that the tides of the Bay of Fundy have revealed along the cliffs at Five Islands Provincial Park or the view of the actual Five Islands from the municipally-owned Five Islands Lighthouse Park.

Combine these natural wonders with the fact that residents and visitors alike can dine in any of the small family-owned restaurants and enjoy the best and freshest clams and fish, often harvested the previous day from the Bay of Fundy.

Madam Speaker, I will move along the shore to Economy, another very picturesque and peaceful shoreline community where the Cobequid Mountains meet the Bay of Fundy - a destination for the recreational-minded hikers. Mountain bikers and ATV enthusiasts flock to the area to enjoy the hundreds of miles of trails within, most notably the Economy Falls, and the trails within the provincially owned 15,000-acre protected Economy River Wilderness Area, as well as the Thomas Cove hiking trails along the bay.

We will next trail to Bass River in my home community and on the beautiful shoreline community historically famous for the Bass River chairs. Madam Speaker, it is amazing to consider, compared to today, when goods are shipped around the world by modern, gigantic, carbon-emitting container ships, that in the late 1800s chairs manufactured from the trees grown on the Cobequid mountains were transported by sailing

ship, loaded from a small wharf in Bass River to faraway places like the West Indies. The historic Dominion Chair Company store continues to serve the residents of Bass River and surrounding communities to this day. Bass River is home to a nationally recognized, award-winning Cobequid Veterans Memorial Park.

Portapique is the next stop along the way, home to a beautiful new park, a true labour of a love by a community that had its grand opening this past weekend - that would be two weekends ago now: a wonderful, welcoming playground for children to enjoy in the heart of the community, which plans to renovate and expand the community hall first built in the mid-1800s.

Madam Speaker, I will continue along to Great Village, historically a great shipbuilding community and the home of the world-recognized author Elizabeth Bishop. Ms. Bishop's childhood home has been preserved by a wonderful group of local residents, recognized as the Elizabeth Bishop Society, who makes this property available to aspiring artists and writers as a place to enjoy and allow the creative images and energies to flow. Great Village is also rapidly becoming a destination for antiquers and contains some of the best top antique shops in our province.

Great Village is fortunate to be home of some of the most fertile, Class 2 agricultural land in Nova Scotia. Today, thanks to bold entrepreneurs, often second-generation farmers, there has been a tremendous growth in high-value horticultural crops, as well as large beef- and grain-producing farms. I look forward to showcasing and promoting these modern agriculture operations as our government moves forward with the Nova Scotia loyalty card program. These farm men and women are working hard to ensure food security in this province.

Madam Speaker, the last community along the west Colchester shore is very well known: the combined communities of Glenholme and Masstown, located along the Trans-Canada Highway and home to the famous Masstown Market, a family business that began many years ago as a roadside vegetable stand and has become the very popular destination it has become today.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the role that two very popular, long-time restaurant truck stops play in support of the critical role that the trucking industry plays in this province: the Double C Truck Stop and the Petro-Can. The Petro-Can is affectionately known or called Angel's Diner for the role that Crystal Blair and her staff played in staying open and providing takeout meals free of charge to one of our most underrecognized essential service providers, long haul truckers, during the height of the pandemic when the state of emergency was first declared.

The final community in west Colchester is Londonderry, another historic community, just inland of the bay. That was the home of the Londonderry Iron Ore

Company. What was in the late 1800s, early 1900s a very vibrant and bustling mining community is now a quiet and peaceful bedroom community.

I would characterize Londonderry and its residents as extremely proud and community-minded: a community that is slightly off the beaten track with families that are proud and committed. I would say that Londonderry's current claim to fame is the legendary hunters' breakfast where, with the exception of during COVID-19 closures, every Saturday morning during hunting season the community hall was packed with hunters, as well as those from away enjoying a hearty, traditional, country breakfast.

Madam Speaker, that's it for West Colchester. We will now move along to the portion of Central Colchester that is located in Colchester North. Debert is probably the most prominent of these communities. It is important to recognize that the lands around Debert are the site of the historic home of the Paleo-Indians.

It was astounding to me that a few years ago, as my wife and I toured the National Museum of History in Ottawa and we viewed a display that was noted that the Indigenous peoples first arrived in North America approximately 11,000 years ago. I must note the fact that there are artifacts recently unearthed in Debert that date some 13,000 years. It is very important that this be recognized as we celebrate the historic significance of the Indigenous people in Nova Scotia. This area will be the future home of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre and is the current home of a series of Mi'kmaw interpretive trails.

Debert is home to the lands of a former military base. The large and sprawling base in Debert was used as a staging area for troops prior to being transported to Halifax and shipping across the Atlantic. Also, the base airport was used as training for pilots. Much of this industrial land is currently owned and is being developed by the municipality, and these lands are known as Debert Air Industrial Park.

Every community in Colchester North is unique and plays a vital role in the overall success of this wonderful constituency. It is my belief that Debert has the greatest potential for growth in Colchester North. Located along the 104 Highway with all freight traffic to and from the ports of Halifax and Sydney, it is ideally located and currently recognized as a Canadian distribution transportation hub. Currently the home of the distribution centres for national companies such as Home Hardware, Tim Hortons, and Sobeys, as well as manufacturers such as Kohltech windows, Thermo-Cell insulation, and Specialty Steel, Debert provides easily developable land. Currently, water and sewer services provide great opportunities for future growth.

We will continue along the shore with the community of Onslow. This traditional rural farming community shares a common boundary with my good friends from the constituencies of Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley and Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River. This unique boundary and commonality of the residents and the businesses,

along with Truro being the historical hub of Nova Scotia, ensures great opportunities as we work together as a team for the greater good of our overall communities.

When we speak of Onslow, we will paint a picture of several small rural communities with historic ties to agriculture and family farms. Onslow is one community along a series of inland communities including Belmont, Onslow Mountain, and North River: again, very traditional farming areas that have been showing tremendous growth in residential properties, all nestled between the Bay and the Cobequid mountain range, wonderful rural communities with many hobby farms or horse farms, all within a peaceful 15-minute-or-less drive along uncongested country roads to either the Trans-Canada Highway, where they can go east, west or south, or into the traditional and growing town of Truro.

Next along the way in Colchester North is the urban core that hosts a large portion of our population. The community of Valley is a series of modern, growing subdivisions that are very popular bedroom communities to Truro.

Now we are going to cross the Cobequid Mountain range to North Colchester. We will travel over Nuttby Mountain, past the Nuttby Mountain Wind Farm, into Earltown, which has another very popular historic Earltown General Store, the Hobart Mountain hiking trail system, the Gully Lake protected area, and Sugar Moon Farm, to name a few. We will follow along Highway No. 236, along another beautiful, winding country road, passing the historic settlement of Steam Mill, The Pork Shop, through Denmark to Brule Shore.

Madam Speaker, we are very fortunate in Colchester North that we have two very beautiful shorelines. Back in my council days, it was an ongoing banter - or jousting - between my good friend Councillor Mike Gregory and myself as to which of us actually lived in God's country. We may never formally resolve that debate; however, I must say that the North Shore region is clearly a gem.

The community of Brule is located along the Northumberland Strait and is cottage country. A very beautiful shoreline with the backdrop of family farms leads us into the village of Tatamagouche. I would describe Tatamagouche as a slightly isolated, extremely proud, community-minded village.

Common phrases in Tatamagouche are "over the mountain" or "this side of the mountain." Cut off from the rest of Colchester by Nuttby Mountain, the residents in this catchment area are fiercely loyal to the village. Tatamagouche is a very vibrant community, one that more than doubles in population from Spring through Fall. It is a community that will always rise to the challenge and regularly punches above its weight, so to speak.

A fine example of that is the Creamery Square project, a multi-million-dollar project of historic waterfront development that includes the Margaret Fawcett Norrie

Heritage Centre, the Grace Jollymore Arts Centre, the Tatamagouche Farmers' Market, and the Boat Shop. The very colourful main street is an attraction on its own with traditional shops like Dexter's Butcher Block, the Tatabrew Chowder House, Appleton Chocolates, the Train Station Inn - the list goes on and on.

Mx. Speaker, the one challenge still remaining, which I intend to work hard to meet is the Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital. The Lillian Fraser continues to struggle with emergency room closures and reductions in the number of available patient beds.

I have taken you all on this tour of Colchester North not only to introduce you to the constituency that I am so proud of, but to allow me to segue into a subject that I'm very passionate about.

Colchester North is very similar to a great many other constituencies in Nova Scotia - predominantly rural surrounding an urban core - a number of smaller communities blending together to make one larger, overall community. They succeed because they recognize their individual uniqueness. They also recognize that working together when decisions are made for the greater good, everyone benefits and grows.

A rising tide floats all boats. Our region - or possibly I should refer to it as the overall Municipality of Colchester, which includes three provincial electoral constituencies of Colchester North, Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, and Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley - it includes two villages and two towns and dozens of rural communities - is a great example of regional co-operation.

Looking back at my time in municipal government, working as a team with many, many written inter-municipal agreements, Colchester was recognized as leader with respect to core municipal responsibilities such as water, waste water, and solid waste. Most importantly, the 2020 CMHC statistics will show that this region led all Nova Scotia in price increase per unit and was second only to HRM in home sales.

A clear indicator of success, our communities - all communities, urban and rural - are growing and succeeding. This province is recognized as one of the greatest places in the world to live and raise a family. Current statistics with respect to both interprovincial and international immigration will confirm this.

Mx. Speaker, I would like to tell a little story: a story about growing up in a small community of approximately 400 residents that is located 30 miles from the nearest town, where, as a child, we got our spending money not from collecting refundable beverage containers from roadsides, but from collecting and selling used newspapers by the pound to the Dominion Chair Company store, where they were recycled as the protective wrapping around chairs that, as I previously mentioned, shipped around the world long before recycling and reusing was in vogue.

A community that at one time had an Acadian Lines Bus service twice a day; a community that had an elementary and a high school and that had previously housed a senior high; a community where in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the powers-that-be decided they should have a large regional high school in Truro. It would be much better and much more cost-efficient. This began the downfall.

Now the students get on the bus in Five Islands at 7:00 a.m. for an hour-and-twenty-minute trek to school in Truro on a carbon-spewing school bus. These students never got the opportunity to take part in after school sports or drama or clubs because they had to be back on the bus for that other hour-and-twenty-minute carbon-spewing drive back home. This caused many families to make the decision to move from those communities closer to town so their children would have the same opportunities and advantages as those who lived in communities where schools were located. Thus began the decline.

[4:00 p.m.]

Now, Madam Speaker, in more recent years when my children were in the school system the call came to close the elementary school. As a result of rural decline, there were not enough students to keep our little school open; it was not economical, not enough students, too much maintenance. Guess what? I agreed, it was not financially viable.

Now the Acadian Bus Lines provincial bus system - twice a day to our community - from Halifax to Truro, to rural communities, to Parrsboro and then Amherst and back. Modern transportation became more common. We parked the horse and buggies, started spewing carbon. Less and less, we used this public bus system. Soon the bus travelled only every second day and eventually those routes were cancelled. Ours was one of them.

Now there is an outcry. The government says, well, we cannot subsidize a private business like that. The migration to the urban core continues.

I will jump ahead 20 years and I am now a municipal councillor. The municipality and the town commissioned a study on public transit. We sat together as a joint council and received this report. Oh my gosh, we're going to have to subsidize this. We can't raise taxes, too costly, can't afford it, just put it on a shelf.

Madam Speaker, over the past six years, as I sat on the board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, I attended dozens of meetings on challenges governments face with respect to affordable housing, social and economic development. I now have a totally different view or outlook.

I look at most larger jurisdictions that have implemented and subsidized mass transit - subsidize, that dirty word - so today many, if not most, urban centres operate transit systems with public money. They do not view this as an expense, they rightly view it as an investment in the community.

Over the past years the feds alone have invested hundreds of millions nationally to mass transit - I'm not being critical here - but almost exclusively to cities in efforts to reduce traffic congestion and carbon emissions. Some type of hybrid transit system in rural urban jurisdictions would indeed be an investment in our communities.

I have attended many meetings, many discussions with respect to affordable housing. I would advocate for affordable housing in rural. The very next statement would contain the words "energy poverty." We've got to reduce carbon. There's no current means of public transit. We need to build affordable housing near the current services. For years government policy has been designed to encourage folks to move to urban centres.

I wish to speak briefly about these rural communities that I am so passionate about and that I believe provide a quality of life that is second to none. We must support each other: a rising tide floats all boats.

Madam Speaker, I'm getting close to the end but please allow me to bring to your attention one more item, one I feel many of us have, over time, moved toward an unintended bias towards rural.

Critical programs and community services are provided to an entire region. The centres receiving the funds are often in the urban core. Due to high foot traffic in the urban core and an extreme need for these community programs - many supporting physical and mental health - the services do not have the opportunity to fully serve the entire region. They reach their capacity before they have the opportunity to perform outreach to our rural communities, which also require these critical support services.

This is not the fault of any community organization, as we all know full well everyone is doing their best. However, it does point to a larger issue within a system which is crippled by capacity issues.

It is my desire that we can work together to find a way to include rural communities in programming provided in the urban core so that the population is no longer hindered by its proximity to these urban cores. If funding is given to an organization to support the entire region, we need to ensure there is fair distribution of the services wherever possible.

I recognize that this is an issue with many layers, but I believe that it is an issue worth addressing and I am hopeful that someday we'll find the right solution. Madam Speaker, I guess my point is that we must try and make a conscious effort to ensure that those in the outlying or rural communities are included and specifically identified as we fund community social programs.

No doubt it is more challenging and costly to provide this support; however, it is deserved. Clearly, the trends are changing, and our rural communities are no longer in decline. More and more families trade convenience for quality of life. As this province

grows and prospers, we must always keep in mind and ensure that a rising tide floats all boats, and this province is a rising tide.

Finally, Madam Speaker, what you're all waiting for: my closing. Politics and public service have always been a passion of mine. The opportunity to sit in this honoured House and represent the people has long been a dream. My mother dreamed along with me, a great woman of an earlier generation of great women where, outside of her family, absolutely nothing was more important to her than her community and her neighbours. A schoolteacher in one of those small schools that used to dot the rural communities, she was absolutely dedicated to her students.

Today that great woman sits in a long-term care home, stricken with dementia, and I have no idea if she is aware that I have reached my dream. To close, I wish to thank and honour my mother, Hazel Taggart.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Before I start, I would like to acknowledge MLA Taggart's comments about - the MLA for Colchester North, sorry, I said the name - his acknowledgement of the mass shooting and the connection that Cole Harbour has and my friend Constable Heidi Stevenson. I want to say that's the way Nova Scotia is. Many in this House don't realize we're very connected in many ways. I just wanted to say that before I started.

You must do the thing you think you can't. Eleanor Roosevelt said those words, and it's the words I often reflect on as I challenge myself, including right now, as I deliver my first Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Madam Speaker, I'm really glad it's you in the chair as I'm speaking. May I begin by congratulating the honourable Premier, our Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the NDP, and all new and returning members of the House on their election. I know how much hard work and dedication are required for electoral success. I'm truly honoured to serve the people of the new riding of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth as their very first MLA in the House of Assembly.

I would like to publicly thank all of those who helped my campaign. I would like to point out that many of my volunteers were youth, as young as 15 years old, who have an interest in our political process and wanted to see me succeed in becoming their MLA. Among them were Joan MacLeod, my diligent official agent; Gillian Conrad, my campaign manager; Ellen Flemming and Julia Winn, who are now working as my co-constituency assistants; Jenny Hanlon; Alison Flewelling; Jennifer Flynn; Samantha Graham; Anne Swinamer; Cameron Swinamer; Regan Laird-Goodwin; Colin Aquino; Todd Billard; Jeff Harris; Dave McBride; Loreen Simpson; Jeff Hurley; Leo McKenna; Hugh Leadbetter; Senator Jane Cordy; former MLA Hon. Diana Whalen; Judy Edgar; Kevin Sangster;

Sheldon Miller; and John Suretta - and especially my extremely supportive husband, Jim, better known as my sign guy; and our children - Matthew, Ben, and Elizabeth - for their unwavering commitment, love, and support. I am so proud of them all.

I also want to thank all my opponents for running an amicable campaign, and finally I want to thank the people of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for placing their trust in me, especially the 52.3 per cent of eligible voters who cast their vote for me.

Madam Speaker, given that the riding of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth is a new riding, I would like to begin by familiarizing the House with the riding. Created as a result of the 2019 Electoral Boundaries review, the riding consists of the neighbourhoods of Colby Village, Portland Hills, Portland Estates, Russell Lake West, Baker Drive, and the Millbrook First Nation on Caldwell Road.

These are largely residential neighbourhoods on the south side of Portland Street-Cole Harbour Road from the Circumferential Highway to just east of Bissett Road. They are supported by retail, restaurant, and service businesses along the corridor and on Baker Drive, east of the Circumferential Highway. Until recently, all these areas were farmland, cultivated in the mid-1700s by Euro-Canadians from Nova Scotia's South Shore with names such as Isnor, Giles, Harris, Bissett, Conrad, Turner, Geldart, and Morash. Indeed, it was often referred to as the food basket for Halifax.

It remained largely agricultural until the early 1970s when the opening of a second bridge connecting Dartmouth to Halifax made the east side of the Halifax Harbour more attractive to suburban housing. In the years since, the farmland has been gradually replaced by subdivisions beginning with Colby Village in 1970, followed by Portland Estates in 1984, Portland Hills in 2000, and Russell Lake West in 2006. These areas continue to grow and develop, and today the riding is one of the largest in the province in terms of population at just over 16,000 eligible voters.

The growth of these areas was sparked by the development of the adjacent Forest Hills subdivision conceived, designed, and executed by the former Nova Scotia Housing Commission in its Forest Hills New Community Master Plan report. Released in 1974, this master plan was an early example of planning for increasing the stock of affordable housing at a time when housing on the Halifax peninsula was becoming scarcer and out of reach for the average family - sound familiar? The summary section of the plan document describes it as the master strategy for the development of a completely new community to be named Forest Hills.

It goes on to say that Forest Hills is a bold concept in Canadian residential development. Most families who will choose to live in Forest Hills will be on low to moderate incomes, yet home ownership will predominate. Serviced, residential lots will be produced and sold at low cost, yet that cost will cover the development of a full range of community facilities.

Finally, it states that implementation of such a bold concept will require full co-operation of all three levels of government. Many of the concepts outlined in the Forest Hills Master Plan serves as a blueprint for future developments within the riding of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. It provided for various forms of housing and related commercial shopping and recreational services, creating a very livable, complete community.

[4:15 p.m.]

There are lessons to be learned from that initiative to help with our current housing crisis. Communities must be planned, then built - not just built. Adequate housing is a key determinant of health and must be recognized in any future health care plan. But that housing must be within a complete community to realize its full benefit. The conversion of what was traditionally farmland into a vibrant part of HRM came at a cost to our rural heritage - to many of the farmers who had land either purchased, mostly expropriated, to make way for development and the loss of farmland impacted our food security.

We are fortunate to have the Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Society working to ensure our rural roots are not forgotten. While the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum is not located within the Cole Harbour-Dartmouth riding, much of the land and many of its original farmers were within the boundaries of that riding.

Today, the housing stock within the riding is a mix of single- and multi-family dwellings, townhouses, and higher-density apartments. The riding is also home to the Shannex Parkland at the Lakes campus and The Berkeley Dartmouth, also providing options for senior living. The riding has a diverse population of many ages and includes many recent immigrants to Canada.

The area is served by Halifax Transit and is the home to the Portland Hills bus terminal. There are four elementary schools and a junior high school located in the riding, with students from the riding eventually feeding into Auburn Drive High School and Cole Harbour District High School in the Cole Harbour area, and Prince Andrew High School in Dartmouth.

The Woodlawn branch of the Halifax Public Libraries is also found in the riding.

There are three large lakes within the boundaries of the riding: Russell Lake, Morris Lake, and Bissett Lake. There are residential developments along the lake fronts of each lake, but each also has adjacent municipal parkland.

The Kiwanis Club of Cole Harbour-Westphal operates the Kiwanis Centre Beach and Park on Morris Lake, allowing for convenient recreational use of all the lakes. The Kiwanis Park on Morris Lake is also home to the Water Ski Wakeboard Nova Scotia's Skiability program, providing adaptive equipment to make waterskiing accessible to differently abled people.

The beauty of nature, kayaking, boating, water sports, and swimming can all be enjoyed in and around these lakes. They are a gem. Preservation of healthy lake environments is a major concern of residents in the riding.

Many of the streets within the riding are connected by pedestrian walkways and significant investments have been made in green spaces, trails, and active transportation greenways within the riding. Many of these trails and greenways ultimately connect to the Cole Harbour Heritage Park and the Salt Marsh Trail and beyond along the Eastern Shore.

Investments in green space, recreation, trails, and active transportation contribute to our physical and mental well-being. Preventive health care must be considered an integral part to any and all our future health care plans for this province.

As I mentioned earlier, the riding of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth has a large population. Transportation is another major concern among its residents. In earlier days, Cole Harbour farmers travelled to the Halifax farmers' markets with carts so loaded with goods and produce it was said to break the hearts of many a horse going down that steep hill between Caldwell Road and Portland Estates. Hence the name given to that hill today as Breakheart Hill.

Today the Cole Harbour Road-Portland Street corridor is the busiest traffic corridor of all of HRM and is currently well over its capacity. The development of the Shearwater-Mount Hope connector road is a necessity to relieve traffic congestion on Portland Street and accommodate future land development in the area.

Opening access to land within HRM, supported by the necessary infrastructure, is one component of the solution to the current housing shortage. It's my hope that this government will work expeditiously with the federal and municipal governments on this file, making it part of whatever plan they put forward to address the housing crisis.

As a new Member of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to provide some background about the life experiences that shaped the values and priorities and approach which I bring to this House.

I was born one of four children to Bernie and Marie Fougere in a small Acadian fishing village called Petit-de-Grat on Isle Madame on Cape Breton Island. As I like to say it, I am from an island off an island. I looked after my siblings from the age of nine so both of my parents could work at the local fish plant located across the road from our home.

As an Acadian, I like to keep my life private, so again I will rely on the quote by Eleanor Roosevelt, to do the thing I think I can't.

My early 20s while working for various chartered accounting firms, first in Halifax and then in Cape Breton, I secured a loan and purchased my first car. She was a beauty. A

Ford Mustang Cobra with a decal, five-litre engine and complete with that beautiful thing. I'm showing you my Cape Breton roots - to have my nice Mustang. But less than 10 months later I was involved in a very serious accident with the car. Fortunately, I was not physically hurt because I was in the habit of wearing my seatbelt, even though it was not mandatory at that time. However, the car was written off and even after the insurance claim came through, I still owed the bank more money.

This was a pivotal moment in my life, having survived the accident. I also realized just how bad that investment really was. I decided right then and there that a house would be a much better use of my very limited funds, so I went about purchasing land, contracting most of the work out as I was able to afford it, wielding a hammer, paint brush or any other tool I could, to save money, because my father taught me one thing - if you want something in life bad enough, you'll figure out how to do it.

Three years later I married my husband Jim, and we moved into our new home, owing nothing. Shortly after moving in, and now with our first child, both my husband and I lost our jobs - a common occurrence in Cape Breton in those days; it may still be the case. Jim was fortunate to find a new job in Halifax and an office on the Halifax peninsula. It would have been convenient to live close to his office but the cost of housing on the peninsula was beyond our means.

After looking at many years in and around the city, 36 years ago we moved to Cole Harbour and raised our three children here. I often say that growing up in Cape Breton, we knew we'd always have to move west at some point. Cole Harbour was as far west as I was willing to go.

Growing up in a small, tight-knit village taught me how important community involvement and sense of place are. It showed me the need for strong community leaders. This was a community where neighbours helped neighbours and everyone from the very young to the very old pitched in at weddings, funerals, anniversaries, special events and sporting events, especially those Sunday afternoon ball games.

When I moved to Cole Harbour I wasn't sure I'd be happy in a new community. To my delight, I found that as a new community, nearly everyone came from other close-knit communities in Atlantic Canada, whether it was Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, P.E.I., Cape Breton or some other part of Nova Scotia. Having that common bond, the same feeling of belonging, of helping your neighbour, and sense of community was found in Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, which made it feel like home very quickly.

These principles have guided me throughout my life and led me to become very active in my new, adopted home. Since moving to the area, I have served as youth group leader, soccer coach, Sunday school teacher, sat on many volunteer boards, including the Cole Harbour outdoor pool and tennis complex, and Cole Harbour Place. I organize street parties and wanting to have residents have that feel of sense of belonging and pride of

place. I created and was the founding chair of the long-running Cole Harbour Harvest Festival.

I am also a member of the Cole Harbour Parks and Trails Association and the Cole Harbour Rural Heritage Society. I served as chair of school advisory committees at all three school levels over a period of almost 20 years. After working with students, teachers, parents and administrators for so many years, I'm very aware of the challenges students and teachers face within our education system. Education is another determinant of health and is key to the economic well-being of our province.

A previous government made a significant investment in trades training facilities at Cole Harbour District High School which today remains underutilized. Changing this situation would be a good start to meeting the goal of increasing the capacity of trades education in Nova Scotia, as contemplated in the Speech from The Throne. I hope this current government will help me to address this very soon.

My community involvement led me to pursue politics to further improve our communities and our municipality. I served 12 years on Halifax Regional Council, winning three elections, the last by acclamation, and being only the second female elected deputy mayor by my fellow councillors in 2014-15. (Applause) Thank you.

My time on council taught me how critical it is for there to be co-operation and collaboration among all orders of government. Note that I don't say "levels" of government. I'm saying this because I would like you to consider it as well. I say "orders" of government.

We don't have a tiered system of government where one has authority over the other. Instead, each order is equal, including Indigenous governments. In this system, municipalities must be given the mandate, tools, and resources to be an effective partner in delivering housing solutions. The province must work together with municipalities on all matters of mutual concern, while understanding and respecting each municipality's existing policies and plans.

Growing up in Petit-de-Grat, I saw first-hand how important a strong local economy is to the well-being of a community and its residents. I saw the terrible consequences the collapse of the cod fishery had on my community, as many people suddenly found themselves without employment. I also saw the strength and resilience of its people as it rebuilds its economy. As a result of this life experience, I was determined to use my time on regional council to help develop a strong, vibrant, and sustainable economy for HRM and our province.

I joined the boards of the Halifax Partnership, Trade Centre Limited, Destination Halifax, and others as HRM's representative, where I could work towards a shared vision for growing the economy of our region and building strong relationships to create

opportunities for people in businesses to succeed within a diverse, vibrant, sustainable, and livable community.

I believe in the power of engagement, in transparency, and in collaboration and I'll push for these principles in all of my words and actions in this House. I'm not afraid to speak up for what I believe in and will represent the residents of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth and all residents of this province with honesty and integrity.

Another area of particular concern to me is that of drug and alcohol abuse and impaired driving. I know first-hand the emotional toll of growing up in a household defined by alcohol abuse. Far too many of us do.

In 1983, I lost a brother and his girlfriend to a drunk driver. This was an unimaginably difficult time for us. I made a promise to myself that in his memory, I would speak up on these serious issues at every opportunity including this one. (Applause) This was a driving force in my entering politics. Nova Scotia has a culture of alcohol abuse, and this must change.

With the legalization of cannabis and the excessive use of other drugs, I'm afraid that we will see more instances of impaired driving. We need to address the medical use of cannabis to help reduce the instances of self-medication using recreational drugs and provide the mental health supports necessary to address root causes rather than just treat the symptoms.

It's no coincidence that I personally have had debilitating experience with anxiety and depression. I know the hard work that it takes to heal. We must make sure everyone has access to appropriate and timely mental health services.

Madam Speaker, as this House found out, my family also had the recent personal experience with pregnancy loss. Our daughter, Elizabeth, has been incredibly brave in speaking out about her experience with stillbirth and advocating for grieving parents and their babies. I will continue to push for improved physical and mental health supports for women and men dealing with pregnancy loss.

Madam Speaker, during my time on Halifax Regional Council, there was never more than 40 per cent women on council. In my last term there were only two out of 17. Further, many of the policies and practices currently in place failed to adequately address women's concerns, such as gender parity, public safety, or menstrual product availability.

This realization and the instances of subtle and overt misogyny I witnessed over my time volunteering and in public life led me to understand the importance of feminism. I'm pleased I was able to help address some of these concerns at the municipal level and initiate a chairman's very first Women's Advisory Committee of Council. It had the goal

of ensuring women's voices are heard in policy discussions and women of diverse backgrounds can succeed at all organizational levels.

[4:30 p.m.]

I also participated as a mentor in many campaign schools for women contemplating entering politics, something I will continue to do as long as I am living. In the last municipal election, HRM Council achieved gender parity. Sometimes you have to have a real good succession plan - you leave and then you get gender parity.

I am happy to see 20 women in this Assembly, although it could be better. I am especially happy to see the appointment of our first Black female Deputy Speaker and our first Mx. Deputy Speaker. However, I was extremely disappointed that there was no mention of women whatsoever in the Speech From The Throne.

Gender equality reduces violence against women and children, results in better health outcomes for both women and children, and makes good business sense. We must keep the interests of women and marginalized communities top of mind in all our deliberations in this House.

Madam Speaker, in closing I want to say again how truly honoured I am to serve the people of the new riding of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth in the House of Assembly. I recognize we face many challenges in this province. I'm ready to step up to these challenges. I thrive on serving the public and I'm no stranger to hard work. I love where we live and I am passionate about our communities. My many years of community involvement in leadership and my 12 years on regional council have prepared me well for the challenges at hand.

As a councillor, I resolved issues with my constituents, making connections among residents, all orders of government and business leaders, to get things done. My approach as MLA will be the exact same as I help hold this government to account. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Madam Speaker, fellow MLAs, I rise in this place for the first time to honour the tradition that precedes us by hundreds of years of democracy. First and foremost, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the people of Hants East and I want them to know that I will honour their trust in me by serving everyone to the best of my abilities. I stand here to work for the best possible outcome for the people I represent and the people of Nova Scotia.

My parents were never politically involved. My father was a blue worker, he was a boilermaker, Hugh. He is now retired, lives in Trenton, Nova Scotia. My mother, Shirley,

a stay at home mom, lives in Lower Sackville where I grew up. I was the second oldest, as Paula was my older sister, Roger was my younger brother, and the youngest was Lori.

No one that knows me was ever surprised I'd run for politics as I enjoy healthy debates while finding solutions for people's issues. I have two sayings: If we're not here to help someone else, why are we here then? When people ask how I am, "Always well" is my reply. No matter how bad your day is, somebody's day is worse. We have to try and find the good because there's enough bad out there already.

I'm also aware of the long line behind me. I'm speaking of those who have served the people of Hants East before me. During the election, an online debate was hosted by the East Hants Chamber of Commerce, where in my opening statement I recognized some of those people - Margaret Miller, John MacDonell, Bob Carruthers, Jack Hawkins, and Cora Etter. They represented all three major parties; however, they represented all the people of East Hants all of the time.

I'm told of Cora Etter's first speech in this place in 1984, where she outlined her role of business in the community:

Mr. Speaker, we cannot survive in watertight compartments. I believe it is sometimes hard to separate the corporation from the community because, more often than not, they are one and the same, at least, this is how it is in East Hants, for people who work in the business are drawn from the community that surrounds it, and they must be mindful of their social responsibilities to the community.

I think she meant that personal responsibility and corporate responsibility go hand in hand. I understood this when I moved to Lantz in 1999. I had worked in Oklahoma - not in the oil fields, but chasing electrons in the world of computing, where I found a niche in telling those electrons where to be when it pertained to the transportation industry. My daughter, Teresa, was born in Oklahoma. Soon after she was born, we realized we missed our family and friends. We decided my business could be delivered anywhere in North America.

Coming back home was the best place to be. While raising a family and running a business, I also volunteered in my new community of Lantz at the schools, at the fire department - 10 years as a volunteer - and other activities found in any town or community in Nova Scotia.

As usual, one thing led to another, and in 2004 I first put my name on a ballot for municipal council. There were five on the ballot. I finished third. That didn't discourage me. I still continued to be involved in the community, and in 2008 I put my name forward. Then I got a call at 5:05 and they said, there's no election, I was acclaimed. I had already

bought my signs, so it really didn't help. I have had the privilege and honour of serving the people of Lantz for nine years. This provincial election was actually the seventh time that I ran either provincially or municipally.

In 2020, I was trying to decide - should I run municipally or wait for the upcoming provincial election that was going to happen sometime between then and May 2022? After discussion with family and friends, I decided to run again municipally. My daughter was going into her final year of a bachelor of education at St. F.X. In October 2020, I was elected and, at the first meeting of council, elected as deputy warden. East Hants has now its first female warden, Eleanor Roulston; and the first Indigenous council member, Ian Knockwood.

I'm sure you're wondering how, in less than a year, could you decide to change and run provincially? Well, that's an easy and a hard answer. In February, a 52-year-old family member had an unexpected medical condition, had two surgeries, and spent a long time in the ICU. As she started to recover, we were told she was going to have to go to long-term care. It's the only place with her level of care. Luckily, we found a long-term care facility that would accept her.

Mx. Speaker, I decided I had to offer because the Nova Scotia government must ensure our health care system has the direction and support to deal with today's issues - not the issues from decades ago. Previous governments - all of them - did not respond. The last government to actually expand long-term care was the Rodney MacDonald government in 2008 which added 1,100 beds. We can't afford to wait longer.

After talking with friends and family and with their support I decided to file my papers. Hants East PC Association had three candidates who put their name forward: Dorinda MacIsaac, Tim McDermott, and myself. I was fortunate to win the contested nomination. I would also like to mention my fellow candidates Michael Blois, Abby Cameron, and Simon Greenough. Each ran a clean and great campaign.

Incidentally, after I won the nomination, my daughter Teresa, who is involved with politics, thought she should run so it would be dad against daughter. I was able to say, sorry, hon, they - not the PC Party - already had a candidate and nominations were closed. In May, Teresa completed her degree, Bachelor of Education at StFX. She's currently teaching Grade 5 on a contract in the U.S.

My team was small, but when they were needed, they were there, whether it was donating time, money, putting up the signs - then, of course, taking down the signs - making calls, going door to door, driving me, or reminding me just a couple more doors today.

Mx. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that it was sad that when I found out I won. I was unable to let my 2017 campaign manager and sign expert know. Yvonne Olson, a strong woman who never had a filter - I could guess it's because she did come

from Cape Breton. She told you what you needed to know, not necessarily what you wanted to know. Sadly, she passed two months after the 2017 election and her husband, Roger, also passed October 7th, 2018. He was my sign expert.

I honestly can remember like yesterday. We'd get a call. There's a sign somewhere where he never put one, so we went and got it. We're driving back from Maitland and all of a sudden, Roger says, stop. I said, why? He goes, there's a perfect place for that sign right there. So, we pulled over, put the sign up, then we headed back. To say Yvonne and Roger were involved in any Party would be an understatement. They were always at executives, leading fundraisers, or just helping in any election. They'd always said we can get this seat back to PC, just need to keep pushing forward. I still to this day believe that Yvonne was watching and saying in my ear, just get out a couple more doors, John, now!

Mx. Speaker, I've heard people say over the years, if you just wait another week, you'd have more information. Guess what? If you wait until the wind and the weather are just right, your ship will never sail. In my life, I've known many times when people never finish things because if you wait for things to be perfect, nothing gets done. Government needs to make the best decisions based on the facts in front of them and have the courage to pivot - sorry - when facts change. It's not backtracking or retreating. When you see the road you're going down is not taking you where you want to go, you stop, you re-address, and you adjust. I will remind all members of an old sailor saying: when the weather changes, adjust the sails.

Mx. Speaker, I've learned so much about the issues and opportunities in East Hants, the people and the challenges, about what works and what doesn't work. We have a great history. In the days of wooden ships, iron men and women, to the effort to cut timber, yard it to the roadside and turn it into lumber, plow fields and harvest crops, or turn clay into bricks. Our accomplishments change as new technologies have led us to even greater things, but in all of our accomplishments, we left behind one segment of our society: the First Nations people. We were told they were a federal responsibility, but we could have and should have done better to help them in everyday struggles, to cope with the terrible hand they were dealt.

I believe that we have to improve how we interact with cultures other than our own. We were always told the golden rule, but we don't always follow it. With each new day, we must strive to do better than yesterday, to overcome our fears, and reach out to help others. I believe that is one of our duties here. We cannot keep doing the same things and expect better results. Society must continue its path of change for the better in terms of equity, fairness, and compassion. We can only call ourselves Progressive Conservatives on this side if we take that challenge every day. I believe we were sent here to do our best to improve everyone's life and not just muddle through.

In my former world as a municipal councillor, we sat together in the same room, were given the same information at the same time by hardworking staff members and made

decisions in a collaborative way. Everyone expressed their view and a decision was made. In this place, the process is more competitive, because we think the stakes are higher. In fact, they're the same. We serve the same people.

[4:45 p.m.]

Our Leader and Premier has promised a more open approach to government, and I welcome and support this. I believe that when we know more, we can make better decisions in a more positive way. The people of Nova Scotia deserve nothing less.

I fully support our Party campaign pledge for more discussion and disclosure, for less division and detachment. I believe that this is essential for two reasons: first, we will make better decisions with more disclosure and discussion. Legislators and civil servants will make better decisions when they understand that the walls are being replaced by windows.

All we have to do is look at Question Period for this session. I've watched Question Period over the years, and I've always been told Question Period is not Answer Period. But hold on. The Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia ran on open and transparent, and as the Premier has said, we will walk the walk.

I remember the surprise on the member for Yarmouth's face when he asked his first question of a minister. I'm pretty sure it was Health and Wellness. The minister answered it: Yes, if we have an answer, we'll give it. If we don't, because the ministers have said, I will get back to you. After the first question, the answers have come back. You may not always like the answer you're given, but at least we're giving the answers we have.

Second, in order for substantial improvements in service delivery to be achieved, we must bring everybody together in open air and sunlight. The veil of mystery over delivering health care and education and services to people must be removed. The public needs to know more rather than be left in the dark. Today, people are very disenchanted about politics and government, and rightfully so. People have removed themselves from the process. It has been said many times in this Chamber. People say politicians say everything to get elected but do nothing after elected. Just over half of eligible voters actually voted. Hardly any participation in between elections. Fewer still belong to a political Party.

I plan to hold open houses all over Hants East to not only explain what government is doing, but to listen to the people as a means to better involve the residents - not voters, not taxpayers, but residents. Whether they can vote or not, we are there to represent them. We must spend our future years here communicating more about the state of health care, housing, education, if we want to build a better consensus and a better province.

I'm sure my caucus colleagues have already realized that I love to ask questions. I also want to help ensure we are not afraid of the answers. Our economy needs a lot more outside private capital in order to create lasting jobs that will build a better place for everyone to live. We need to build on real capital, not borrowed money. Government spending should not take away from incentives to work or compete.

Finally, I know the best words in any speech: We can't be all things to all people. The Rolling Stones's "Satisfaction" implied satisfaction was unobtainable. I think people accept that you don't always get what you want, but it's on our shoulders to make sure taxpayers get what they paid for, that they get the best value for their hard-earned taxes, and we darn sure make sure we're getting their money's worth. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Before the honourable member begins, I've been asked to let everyone know that there will be food available in the lounge as of 5:00 p.m.

The honourable member for Clare. (Applause)

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mx. Speaker et chers collègues. C'est un véritable honneur de m'adresser à vous aujourd'hui dans ma langue maternelle pour représenter la communauté de Clare. En don de mes électeurs, j'aimerais exprimer ma gratitude envers la Commission indépendante de délimitation des circonscriptions électorales, la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, la Société acadienne de Clare, et le gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Écosse qui ont recommandé, combattu et fait avancer respectivement la réintégration de la circonscription de Clare, avec Argyle, Richmond, et Preston dans cette élection. C'est une action qui reflète clairement la caractéristique unique de ma communauté, une communauté que j'appelle chez moi toute ma vie.

Mx. Speaker and dear colleagues, it is a true honour to speak with you today in my mother tongue to represent the Acadian community of Clare.

On behalf of my constituents, I would like to extend my gratitude toward the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, the Société acadienne de Clare, and the Nova Scotia government which recommended, fought for, and moved forward with the reinstatement of the constituency of Clare along with Argyle, Richmond, and Preston. (Applause)

In this election this action clearly reflects the uniqueness of my community, one that I have called home all my life. As a first-time member of Nova Scotia's House of Assembly, I would like to congratulate my fellow newly elected colleagues. We already share a common bond of getting to know each other and our role in these uncommon times.

I also show my gratitude towards those experienced MLAs who have patiently and willingly supported us for these last few weeks. That I can attest to. I look forward to working with all of you as we move forward together this term.

Mx. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the residents of Clare for instilling their trust in me as their representative in the House of Assembly. For 21 years I've served on council as councillor, deputy warden, and warden. It was a privilege to work for my constituents and I humbly acknowledge the community of Clare for allowing me that opportunity. (Applause)

I would like to thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for entrusting me with the roles of Critic for Fisheries and Aquaculture as well as Acadian Affairs and Francophonie. These are two files that I value enormously and have greatly influenced my life, both politically and personally.

I would like to show my gratitude to my knowledgeable assistant, Jeanne Alice Comeau, who served under MLAs Gordon Wilson and Wayne Gaudet. My transition into provincial politics would have been a lot rockier without her support and insight. Thank you, Jeanne Alice. I know she's not going to like that. (Laughter) She's very humble.

I would also like to extend my appreciation towards my talented and dedicated campaign team. I couldn't have asked for a stronger line up - my wife Tina and my daughter Mattea, whom I hope I make proud while I occupy this seat. My political sounding boards, former MP Robert Thibault and Gerard Pothier, former MLA Wayne Gaudet and his wife, Ghislaine. In fact, I volunteered on Mr. Gaudet's first campaign back in 1993.

To my core campaign managers, Jason Deveau and Adrien Comeau. Adrien is a student at Université Sainte-Anne and the 2021 recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's Award of Excellence for l'Acadie and Francophonie of Nova Scotia. My hard-working sign team from Joyce d'Entremont, who fielded phone calls to Russell Comeau, Alex Comeau, Trevor Melanson, Cedric Maillet, and Norbert Comeau who put up campaign signs all over Clare and, in some cases, put them back up on windy days. Yes, there were windy days.

My parents-in-law, Joe and Ann Dodman who also lent a much-appreciated hand on putting up signs in the riding. My office manager, Charles Swivert, and Yalla Sangaré, Director of the Department of Administrative Sciences at Université Sainte-Anne, and also my communication manager and a close friend; Dr. Michel Comeau and his wife, Beth Meisner, my closest friends, veteran entrepreneurs who operate a family dental practice in Southwest Nova Scotia; and Dr. Sukhdip and Rashmi Singh, who moved to Clare from India in 2018 and whose two sons, my youngest volunteers, are now avid ice hockey players and are also speaking French. Those are just a few of the campaign volunteers, but they are an accurate reflection of the portrait of the community of Clare.

The Acadian riding consists of more than 25 villages that line the coast of St. Marys Bay in Southwest Nova Scotia. To honour our Acadian heritage, we are unique in the sense that we are the only municipality in the province that conducts businesses and offers services in both English and French. We are fortunate to have some of the most beautiful

coastlines in the province, as well as a system of tranquil rivers and lakes. Some say we have the most stunning sunsets in the province and I wouldn't contest that statement.

As a coastal community, much of our business activities have traditionally relied on the sea. We are boat builders, fishers, and fish processors. I've been a fisherman for 31 years; in fact, this is the first year that I will not be fishing when LFA 34 opens the season this Fall. In passing, I would like to wish the fishers who are currently working their preparation for a safe and prosperous season. (Applause)

Our season runs from the last Monday in November until the end of May. The conditions may be cold and harsh, but I love being out on the sea. I feel a great sense of accomplishment after working a long day on the water and it is equally comforting to see the familiar coastline on the horizon when it is time to come home. It's a dangerous job, but I do say that I love it.

Like the changing waters of the sea, I admire the people of Clare for their ability to change and adapt as tendencies move and shift. For instance, A.F. Theriault & Son in Meteghan River, which was founded more than 80 years ago, originally crafted wood sailing vessels for local fishers. Today, not only do they build and repair modern boats for an international clientele, they also manufacture Hammerhead target drones for the Canadian military.

In Saulnierville, Comeau's Seafoods began as a scallop and herring harvester 75 years ago. It has since expanded into the processing and transformation of a variety of seafoods, offering ready-made food products for busy customers searching for quality, time-saving food options for their dinner table.

Employers such as fish processors Riverside Lobster in Meteghan and Synergy Seafoods in Comeauville, which due to our local labour challenges, have participated in the Atlantic Immigration Program in recent years and have welcomed newcomers from countries like the Philippines, Mexico, and South Korea. Clare also boasts cutting edge start-ups that are making waves in their respective industries. The people behind construction venture JD Composites in Meteghan are modern-day pioneers that partner with business, community, and neighbours to create a new line of hurricane-resistant architectural structures using materials made of 100 per cent recycled pop bottles. (Applause)

A large part of the riding of Clare extends inland to our mixed forest and freshwater lakes. Our woodlot owners, who once harvested lumber for wooden fishing vessels and lobster traps, today strive for ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable forest management. The mink industry, meanwhile, has had several difficult years due to a shift in global demand for pelts. Some farmers have persevered in the riding of Clare and are looking into the new and innovative way to maintain their business.

As we navigate through these unprecedented times in a global pandemic, I vow that I am here to listen to my community's industry leaders and, whenever possible, work with them and my government colleagues to help them survive and thrive.

Ask my wife and she will tell you without skipping a beat that I have always been fascinated with the political process. Even in our early years, our first trip to Halifax was to the Don Downe and John Savage nomination convention. On the night of the past provincial election, Tina was the least surprised person in the room. She knew that I would earn my seat in this Chamber one day. She has always believed in me, even when, at times, I struggled to believe in myself.

[5:00 p.m.]

I am the son of a resilient single mother, and I have seen first-hand the good that politicians can do for a community, those who could benefit from a helping hand. I later remember listening to my stepfather, Lloyd, who came later in my life, talking about politics at the dinner table with great enthusiasm. The two life lessons that he instilled in me were, when it comes to work, always be early, and when it comes to politics, always vote Liberal. When I told him I was thinking of running, he asked me which party. He said if I wanted his vote, I had to run Liberal. I am forever appreciative of my mother and stepfather for their guidance and mentoring, and I will think of them often when I occupy this chair.

No doubt influenced by those early years, it was a true honour to represent my constituents and collaborate with residents and community leaders at the municipal level. I have had the great opportunity to work with great councillors and great councils on many projects.

One true success story is our municipally-owned and -operated medical clinic. Back in 2003, a team of medical professionals and concerned citizens led by Dr. Lionel d'Entremont approached the Municipality of Clare warning of an imminent health crisis. Local council made health care for the residents of Clare a priority. A committee was formed and given a mandate to build a new health centre. Today, bearing Dr. d'Entremont's name on its brick façade, the Clare Health Centre is a state-of-the-art collaborative care clinic that offers a range of bilingual medical services to more than 8,000 residents.

Our recruitment efforts are paying off. After enticing our hometown medical students studying outside of Clare with care packages of dried fish and other comforts from home, we have successfully attracted enough medical professionals to fill our doctors' offices within the Clare Health Centre - and maybe, I'll add, looking to expand.

Another institution of great importance in the riding of Clare is the main campus of Université Sainte-Anne, Nova Scotia's only French-language post-secondary institution. At 131 years old, it is known for high-quality curriculum, personalized approach, and focus

on student success and engagement. It has found a niche in offering quality French-as-a-second-language training to teachers and other professionals all over Canada with its immersion program. Meanwhile, roughly 30 per cent of its student population is made up of international students from countries such as Cameroon, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Université Sainte-Anne is a leader of diversity and inclusion in the community of Clare. It has also been a strong community leader, opening its doors to Clare residents who look to take up swimming lessons at the Marcel-R.-Comeau Sports Centre, watch a music concert at la salle Marc Lescarbot, or check out a book at the Louis-R.-Comeau library.

Thanks to the partnership with municipal, provincial, and federal governments, the community of Clare has welcomed a host of outstanding projects in this area. With associates at Mainland Telecom and with support from Develop Nova Scotia, Clare is in the process of rolling out fibre optic high-speed internet throughout the municipality. Once complete, this nearly 300-kilometre network will be available to some 5,000 homes and businesses throughout the community of Clare. It's widely recognized as a transformative project for Clare.

New infrastructure is coming to our community, and I have to thank the past Liberal government for those announcements. We are currently in the process of installing a contemporary community track and field on the campus of Université Sainte-Anne, a brand new 96-bed long-term care facility, which is now under construction, which will offer a welcoming and safe environment for our residents and seniors, that reflects the unique identity of our Acadian community. We will soon be breaking ground on a new French-language elementary school in Clare which will serve as a community hub for students and residents alike.

With funding from Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, Clare has been recognized as one of the 14 Canadian communities to participate in the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative. Until 2023, this pilot project aims to attract and retain newcomers who wish to settle in French by promoting diversity and inclusion in our community.

Mx. Speaker, ce n'est pas un secret que Clare dépend de l'immigration pour maintenir sa viabilité. Un avantage inestimable de l'accueil de nouveaux arrivants dans notre communauté est la richesse culturelle, qui s'ajoute à notre tapisserie acadien, les rapports communautaires auxquels nous participons, les liens que nous établissons lors de nos matches de soccer, et l'amitié qui se forme sur les cours d'écoles et dans les cafés au coin.

It is no secret that Clare depends on immigration to maintain sustainability. An invaluable benefit to welcoming newcomers to our community is the cultural richness that is added to our Acadian tapestry - the community meals that we partake in, the connections

that we make in our community, the soccer matches, the friendships that form in the schoolyards and at the coffee shop.

One major investment through our Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative is the future installation of an artificial outdoor community skating rink which will allow new immigrants to learn to skate with friends and neighbours without having to overcome the challenges of bundling up on harsh Canadian Winters. Our organizers are hoping to host an outdoor three-on-three hockey tournament early next summer if anyone would like to attend.

Clare is also investing in its public spaces as a means of offering residents a better quality of life. These efforts will also benefit the local tourism sector and will enhance our capacity to house - one such event is the Congrès mondial acadien 2024, a world-class cultural gathering that takes place every five years which will be co-hosted by the municipalities of Clare and Argyle in the Summer of 2024. I look forward to working with my colleague from Argyle on the other side.

Playing a prominent role in the international Acadian celebration will be Clare's artistic community. There must be something very special in the waters of Le Bassin Marie, because our community is traditionally renowned for its illustrious pedigree of artists - veteran visual artists like Denis Comeau and Nadine Belliveau, award-winning filmmaker Phil Comeau, former Canadian Parliamentary poet laureate and writer Georgette LeBlanc, comedian Ryan Doucette, musicians like Kenneth Saulnier, Grand Dérangement, Arthur Comeau, Cy and P'tit Belliveau and scores more.

These artists have painted their unique interpretation of life in Clare. They are our storytellers and our story keepers, and we are indebted to them for cultivating and curating the abundance of our culture in our community.

En tant que préfet, j'ai également eu l'occasion d'écouter aux jeunes de notre communauté et de collaborer avec eux. Dans le cas d'un projet d'engagement civique financer un parti pour la municipalité de Clare, quatre élèves de l'école secondaire de Clare ont demandé l'appui de notre conseil municipal pour obtenir des panneaux d'arrêt bilingues dans la région de Clare. Au printemps dernier, le gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Écosse a approuvé le demande du gros. Par conséquent, des panneaux d'arrêt bilingues seraient installés non seulement dans la municipalité de Clare mais aussi dans les communautés francophones tous au long de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

As warden, I had the opportunity to listen and to collaborate with the youth in our community. As part of a civic engagement project funded in part by the municipality of Clare, four students from École secondaire de Clare sought the support of our municipal council to obtain bilingual stop signs in the Clare area. Last Spring, the Nova Scotia government approved the group's request. As a result, bilingual stop signs will be installed

not only within the municipality, but also in francophone communities all over Nova Scotia.

Despite our success, the riding of Clare is experiencing its share of challenges, many of which are shared by communities all over the province and across the country. The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up Clare and other rural areas. There is a strain on the general health care system. Waiting lists for specialists are long. In these times of high anxiety and stress, mental wellness is at risk for many. We see it in our monthly police reports. Distress calls are on the rise in our community. Our system is in need of help.

There is a workforce shortage in many of our industries. Over the years, the community of Clare has experienced migration of qualified workers towards urban areas or cities out west. Recently throngs of front-line employees are suffering from burnout. Employers are struggling to retain enough staff and keep their businesses going. Child care is a challenge and has forced some parents to put their careers on hold and stay home for the sake of their family.

Our workers and employers are waiting for a boost to have them back on their feet. I am willing to work with this government and my colleagues to try to address some of those challenges.

Clare, like other rural communities in Nova Scotia, is facing a housing emergency. One of the safest areas on the planet, the face of the real estate market in Clare has changed virtually overnight. The rising cost of housing, while attractive to out-of-towners, is now unattainable for many of my constituents. While we welcome anyone who chooses to call Clare home, we can't hide the fact that there is a lack of affordable housing for young people, seniors, modest-income families, and newcomers.

Homelessness is invisible in many rural communities, but trust me, it is there. Without access to housing, our residents cannot live to their fullest potential. The community of Clare recognizes that housing is a huge piece of this complex puzzle. Newcomers cannot settle without affordable housing. Residents cannot make roots. Young people cannot pursue higher learning. Employers cannot expand without affordable housing. People suffering from illness cannot heal adequately. Families cannot afford child care. Parents cannot go back to work without affordable housing.

Clare has begun to tackle the housing crisis on its own. In August, the Municipality of Clare released its housing action plan, and I was fortunate to be able to work on that plan as warden. One of the first municipally-led and municipally-organized housing assessments and road maps conducted in Nova Scotia, the study underlines the need for more safe and affordable housing options for residents. The plan also indicates that current housing challenges are impeding the private sector's employment recruitment and retention efforts. Community stakeholders are currently identifying options for buildings that could

have the potential for being converted into housing units. Meanwhile, the municipality is in the process of creating a land bank for future real estate development projects.

Mr. Speaker, my years in municipal government have taught me an important lesson: one of the best ways to spearhead an obstacle is through collaboration and partnership. Whether it is with various levels of government, interest groups, or colleagues around the table, when you have a group of people working together to achieve a goal, the proverbial boulder loosens and shifts and eventually rolls out of the way.

It is therefore with great enthusiasm, as a new MLA, that I announce that I am ready and eager to get to work for my constituents and for my province. Merci, Monsieur le Président. (Applause)

[5:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, let me start by thanking you for returning to the Chamber because I have “Mr. Speaker” written throughout this. I am unable to deviate from the script.

What an absolute honour and privilege it is to stand here in this historic venue. It’s very humbling and exciting all at the same time. This experience has been incredible so far. I can’t thank the good people of Guysborough-Tracadie enough for giving me this opportunity to represent them in the Nova Scotia Legislature.

Guysborough-Tracadie is the largest geographic riding the province. That remains true even after it was reduced from Guysborough-Eastern Shore-Tracadie in time for this past election. I’d like to thank my friend and colleague, the member for Eastern Shore, for taking some of that load off my plate. That was very much appreciated during a short election campaign.

The constituency includes the eastern end of Antigonish County from the Tracadie River east to the Canso Causeway as well as all of Guysborough County. It includes four municipal units - the Town of Mulgrave, Antigonish County, St. Mary’s, and the Municipality of the District of Guysborough. It includes three prominent African Nova Scotian communities: Lincolnville, Sunnyvale, and Upper Big Tracadie. I’m proud to represent them. Key industries include, but certainly are not limited to fishing, agriculture, and tourism - not unlike many other rural areas of this great province.

We’ve heard some incredibly moving Addresses in Reply the past few weeks since the Fall session started. No doubt there will be more to come. I’m not going to pretend to have faced the same challenges of some, but this is my story of how I ended up here.

I spent a lot of my time growing up with my grandparents Bernie and Barb Worth on Church Street in Guysborough playing games of baseball, Capture the Flag, and many others in a field that today doesn't seem nearly as big as it once did. I remember walking to the Wonder Store or going to church next door on Saturday night or Sunday morning. Guysborough holds such a special place in my heart with so many great memories with family and friends. It's great to be back representing the area as its MLA.

I grew up in Monastery and started pumping gas for my parents, Terry and Tee Morrow, at the Monastery Auto Service Centre. We don't need to discuss how young I was when I started - my friend in the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration might take issue with that based on current labour standards. (Laughter) We can just say tiptoes were required to get those windshields clean. This was a time when vehicles weren't nearly as high before bigger vehicles were as common as they are today. I've often said my father Terry is the hardest-working person I know. I'd like to think I inherited his work ethic, but he continues to outwork me to this day with close to 30 years on me.

Mr. Speaker, the two schools I attended no longer stand. Tracadie Consolidated School and Antigonish East High School - "AEHS yes!" - have since been replaced by East Antigonish Education Centre Academy. The new school was built just behind the old school. The name change seems very subtle from Antigonish East to East Antigonish, but there is a lot of pride in being from the old East. My class of '99 was the second-last graduating class. There's now a new generation of Mustangs proud to be part of East Antigonish, even if they have no memories of the old East, and only eye-rolls as their parents tell them stories.

We were two small rural schools, but we consistently punched above our weight class when it came to academics and athletics. We had great teachers who would often spend their entire careers at these schools. They truly cared about their students and spent their own time before and after school and weekends coaching the various sports teams. If we didn't appreciate it enough then, I can say with certainty, we appreciate that commitment now. Those memories mean so much and wouldn't have been made without teachers volunteering their time.

We all have had teachers who help shape us and get us to where we are today. There are too many for me to mention them all individually, but if you're listening to this right now or you've gone back to watch me ramble on for some reason later, thank you for all you've done. In particular, I'd like to thank two: Jerry Berthiaume and Darryl Breen. I've previously expressed to them their impact on me, but I'd like to go back and do it again. Thank you.

From high school, it was off to the big city to study political science and history at Dalhousie University. All four of my years at Dal were spent on campus in the all-male residence known as Cameron House. We were also proud to be Killer Cod, but unlike my old AEHS chant I just shared, I'm not sure any of our old Cameron House chants can be

shared in this esteemed Chamber. Indeed, what happened in Cameron should probably stay in Cameron. I met some great friends, some of them I'm still in touch with, none of them I have forgotten.

Because I was such an eager student, four years of school just wasn't enough. I followed up my education at Dalhousie with the one-year Bachelor of Journalism program at the University of King's College. This was really the bridge that brought me here today. My career started with stops at C100, Q104, CoolFM, and News 95.7. I had a wonderful opportunity to learn from some of the very best, from Rich Horner to Doug Reynolds to Rick Howe to Scott Simpson, just to name a few.

I thought I would be alone as a former journalist in here, but I'm pleased to be joined in very exclusive company by the members for Lunenburg, Bedford Basin, and Bedford South. I have always tried to be fair as a journalist. Sometimes we get a bad rap, but that was my number one goal. As I look around my current surroundings, I have interviewed my friends and colleagues from Inverness, Richmond - the member for Richmond is our Party's whip, and he is tough; it makes me wonder if I asked him some tough questions back in the day and now it's payback time. I have interviewed the member opposite for Yarmouth in earlier stages of his life, before he made the jump into politics.

I have interviewed MLAs from all three parties in the House, some parties that have never made it to the House, and Independent members. Regardless of the party I represent now and where I sit, I do believe, or at least hope, they would all say that, if nothing else, I was fair. I also hope the members opposite believe I and members of this government will continue to be fair, and we can all work together for a better Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, my career and life in general took quite a turn in 2009. I lost my only brother, Scott, in March of that year, and my mother, Tee, that same November, a span of less than eight months. Literally half my family was gone in, what felt like to me at that time, a blink of an eye. Scott's death devastated a lot of people. He was the most special person I knew. His challenges were many, but his complaints were very, very few. His outlook on life and his joy in the simple things - such as visits from family, Lay's regular, apple juice, and Regis and Kelly - would make you step back and appreciate everything you had around you.

My wife, Suzanne, daughter, Kate, and I were still living in Fall River when he died. It was actually Sue who said we need to move home to be closer to my parents, who were both heartbroken, but especially my mother, who spent every minute of the day with Scott. So, we did. We packed up, sold our home, stepped away from jobs that we loved, and came back. Unfortunately, Mom died a few months later of H1N1. COVID-19 has been much different in terms of the global impact, but this current pandemic often brings me back to H1N1. Because of that, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Premier McNeil and the honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect for their leadership

and courage in following the advice and guidance of Dr. Robert Strang and his team of Public Health experts, and our current Premier for continuing in that exact same direction.

I'm not one to dwell on past sad events. I like to stay positive and look forward. I only share a little bit about these two important people because in the last few months, I have heard how certain people would have been with me and proud of me, and these are the first two that come to mind.

Our move home wouldn't have been possible without Steve Smith at Central Home Improvement and Bob and Brenda MacEachern at 101.5 The Hawk. They hired us very early on and allowed for this change in life direction to happen. My job at The Hawk was definitely a homecoming. I worked there in high school and during Summer and holiday breaks from university.

My new role as news director gave me the opportunity to run a news department before the age of 30. I took my role as a journalist very seriously, but the opportunity to co-host The Hawk morning show with the famous - maybe infamous - Scottie O allowed us to have fun at work every day. It's important to never take yourself too seriously. My ever-loving wife has made multiple offers to give me a whack in the back of the head if I ever do. The fun at work included celebrity birthdays, Don Cherry impressions, Thursday theatre, and Friday morning karaoke.

This job allowed me to spend a day with the Stanley Cup; play an alumni game with - not against - former Montreal Canadiens, although pulling on a Habs jersey made me feel very conflicted; perform in a wrestling ring on multiple occasions, and rap the Classified part of Inner Ninja with David Myles live in concert. Maybe I shouldn't tell my new colleagues, but there is video evidence just in case you don't believe me. YouTube lives forever.

I couldn't talk about my journey here without talking about the importance of minor hockey. Many people who play the game have fond memories of their playing days. I certainly do as well. But my best memories come from coaching. I'm in my eighth season. I started with no motive other than helping my oldest daughter, Kate, learn to skate. It turned into my single favourite part of the last seven years.

It's amazing to watch the girls improve and become better players, but it's even more amazing to watch them grow from little girls too shy to speak into young women who are confident, funny leaders. I've said it before: We aren't coaching hockey players, we're coaching our future leaders. Winning is great, but the most rewarding part is watching them grow both on and off the ice. That's better than any provincial championship or SEDMHA jacket, and anyone who knows me knows how much I love my SEDMHA jackets - plural, jackets. (Interruption) Nope.

One of my favourite parts of the campaign trail was a video message the girls I have coached through the years sent to motivate me in the dog days of the campaign. Their second-intermission pep talk really kept me motivated moving into the third period of my big game. I want to thank all the girls for that. It meant so much to me.

Their parents have become our friends, our social circle. Hockey parents are great. It really is a community, and the phrase “It takes a village” certainly applies. You don’t need to ask another parent for a drive if your kid needs one. They either offer or have already done the pickup before you realize it, and your kid is where you need to be. I have appreciated like-minded parents who recognize the important lessons that come from winning and losing. We don’t always need to shield our kids with participation trophies. I have seen the girls learn that hard work pays off, and I have seen them learn that sometimes you work as hard as you can, and things might still not always go your way. Both are great lessons.

I have also enjoyed the camaraderie that comes from working with others and coaching people like Frank Isherwood, a true mentor; Craig MacDonald - how many people can say they have coached with a former NHLer; Liz Harrison; Scott Boyle; Brian and Brittany Morrel; Blake Beaton; and Dustin Landry, just to name a few. One of the most thankless jobs of running a minor hockey team is the parent manager. We have had some good ones through the years, including Margaret Boyle, Jennifer Connors, Angie Glenn, and Kendra Landry. Kendra, Joey, Myra, Neil, and Flora should know that they have an entire hockey community and hockey family with them right now.

I have come to realize my older daughter, Kate, is closer to the end of her playing time than the beginning, and I’m trying to make my peace with that. I keep telling my wife I’ll just continue coaching once our girls are done. She doesn’t seem quite so excited by that possibility, but maybe she’ll come around.

Mr. Speaker, on the political process that got me here, it started with the party nomination. I was successful among four candidates who put their names forward in Guysborough-Tracadie. That process seemed like a lot of work, but with a small but mighty team. If I’m being honest, that team mostly consisted of family. I had a wife and two girls willing to do whatever was asked of them, and would then say, “What can we do next?”

The Saturday of the May long weekend was spent on an assembly line around the kitchen table, stuffing 350 envelopes to go out to 500 Party supporters at the start of the week - not a single complaint. After a successful vote, the team expanded. We had amazing support from people like the sign guy, Kyle Seer. I know the member for Colchester North said he had the best sign team in the province. I would challenge that, but we could debate that another time and venue.

David MacDonald and his social media genius; Annette Parker, Jake MacKinnon, Michelle Brad, and Eric Giles for their help in the final days of the campaign; Marcus

Wilmott, who ran for the nomination and helped out with the campaign in a true sign of unity; Neil DeCoste, Danny Rogers, former MLA Ronnie Chisholm, Lauren MacDonald, Herman Long, Martin Martin, Reggie DeCoste, Brittany Williams, Johnny Fenton, Rocky de Coste, Gloria Boudreau. There are so many others, I couldn't possibly thank them all in the hour I'm allotted here today.

Like so many other things, this one came down to family. My wife Sue and aunt Lisa Morrow-DeCoste worked tirelessly on the campaign while not forgetting their full-time jobs and courses. I have often said, and it's very true, they did the hard work - often unnoticed work - of organizing, scheduling. All I had to do was knock on doors. That really was the easy part.

[5:30 p.m.]

My amazing wife has always been and continues to be my rock. Regardless of how the day went on the campaign trail, I was always excited to come home and share my stories with her. Obviously, she's continued to be amazing by picking up at home where I've fallen off while being away. She's rocking it.

My two girls, Kate and Lucy, did plenty to help out when and where they could, but their biggest contribution was the understanding that I couldn't make soccer games or softball provincials. It even went beyond understanding to the point they would encourage me to keep knocking on doors instead of ending a bit early to try to make part of their game. My dad, Terry, for all his driving and company. His wife, Pam, for all the late-night homecooked meals. There is simply no way I would be standing here today doing this without all of their hard work, motivation, and love.

The campaign brought me to every corner of the amazing constituency of Guysborough-Tracadie, from Mulgrave to Marie Joseph, Canso to Cameron Settlement, and everywhere in between. The stop in Cameron Settlement provided the most interesting, talked-about, and quite frankly terrifying moment of the campaign. Friends, I was attacked by a backyard turkey. A turkey that rammed me not once but twice in the leg as I approached to knock on a door. I still feel where it hit me. Your reaction is not unlike my wife, who instead of fearing for my safety was back in the car taking pictures of this altercation through the tears of laughter streaming down her face. Those pictures can still be seen on my Facebook page. Why are you snapping at that part?

I'm more than happy to give anyone a more complete, in-depth account of the events at a later date, perhaps again at another venue. It's safe to say I'm hoping for a warmer reception when I start my tour of farms in the province following this sitting of the House. Things should go smoother.

During the campaign we travelled Highway Nos. 104, 316, 16, 7, 276, 348, 374, 347, 211, and pretty well every backroad and sideroad in between. One of my biggest

compliments during the campaign was, “I’m shocked to see you at my door. The UPS driver can’t even find us.”

There was also some amazing food and hospitality along the way. Where are my foodies? If you’re travelling through Country Harbour, stop at Smokey Hollow and try their famous Smokey Burger. I get mine without onions, even though I keep telling myself I’m not a picky eater. You should also try the Philly cheesesteak at Whitney’s in Port Bickerton. Again, no onions for me. You can enjoy a delicious fresh-baked treat at the Front Porch in Mulgrave or an amazing meal along with great hospitality at Liscombe Lodge, a hidden treasure on the Eastern Shore. You might be fortunate enough to have someone like Germaine Bushey or Mary Teresa Rogers to take you in off the road to feed you like they did for me so graciously while I was knocking on doors.

To have all the hard work by the team pay off is truly amazing. What an exciting night. To later learn I’d been elected as a first-time MLA as part of a new majority government was incredible. I told a few people that night, as a long-suffering Toronto fan, the only thing that’s left is a Leafs Cup. I won’t hold my breath for that one.

Now that I’m here in this historic place, this is really cool. I’m sure some of the shine will wear off eventually, and there have been some difficult days. There have been some already. It’s incredibly tough being away from family, especially at this stage in their life. There are certainly some lonely days and nights, but there isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t stop and look around, either in here or walking around somewhere, and think, wow, this is really amazing. I can’t believe this is my life right now. I hope that feeling never goes away, because it’s very special. (Applause)

This was my dream for a long time and now I’m living it. This all started as a personal goal. I soon realized it was turning into a lesson for my two daughters that if you dig your heels in, put your head down, and work hard, while surrounding yourself with great people, you will be successful more often than not. I’ll carry that philosophy forward. Sue, Kate and Lucy make me so proud every day - Sue by being an amazing mum, wife, daughter, sister and professional; and Kate and Lucy through academics, athletics, leadership and their kindness - slay, girls, slay. I embrace this great opportunity to reverse the roles and hopefully make them proud of their husband and dad.

My constituency office is set up and being run by Charlotte Cosgrove - the term “assistant” does not do her justice. Charlotte likes to point out her father and my grandfather worked together with Nova Scotia Power and now we’re working together. I’m also extremely fortunate to have Nicholas Gear working alongside me. Between the two of them they’ve managed to make what at times seemed like an impossible transition possible. They’ve done a tremendous job slowing down the fire hose I’ve been drinking from for the past two months or so. I can’t thank them enough.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am so thankful to be here and I'm so thankful for everyone who either helped or voted for me to get me here. I made no specific promises on the campaign trail, only that I would work hard, be honest - that got a few eye-rolls - and return calls and messages, or at least someone would on my behalf.

I want to people of Guysborough-Tracadie to know that I am ready to work for them. I've already been working for them, pretty much as soon as the election was over. I'll continue working for them for the next four years and hopefully beyond. We've already had some wins and some losses. There may be more, may one greatly outnumber the other going forward.

I also promise to keep working with this government and the members opposite to do my part to make this province a better place for all Nova Scotians. Let's work together. Thank you.

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

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I've got to tell you, I wasn't chased by a turkey, but I did retrieve a shoe from the roof. That was kind of interesting, but no turkeys in Glace Bay and Dominion.

I'd like to start by thanking you and the members here for this rare opportunity. The opportunity to stand in such a public place and to thank those whose shoulders that I stand upon now is not lost upon me. I really think that is an amazing opportunity and I really want to take advantage of it. It is such an honour to stand here before you as a newly elected member to the House of Assembly representing the constituency of Glace Bay and Dominion.

Our towns of Glace Bay and Dominion are very small. Glace Bay at one time was the largest town in Canada and Dominion is known for Italian Hall; the Sand Bar - good places; the Shamrock Club, which was just reopened in the middle of a pandemic, so hats off to Paddy for that; and the Dominion Beach. Sorry, I can't talk about Dominion without talking about the Hawks Club. We all know about the Field of Dreams opening right now, thanks to the Liberal government as well. You guys did a good job on that, thank you very much, and Dominion Beach, of course.

Glace Bay is known for coal mining, of course, the fishing industry, the Savoy Theatre, Miners Forum, the Miners Museum. I think the Miners Hockey Association is the most successful association in North America. The Vince Ryan Hockey Tournament is the biggest volunteer tournament in North America, so we have a lot there.

We have Colette's now - Colette's Family Restaurant was featured on *You Gotta Eat Here!* That's a great place, so there's lots to do in Glace Bay for sure.

I feel immense appreciation to the residents who voted for me and who I represent now. I want them all to know that I understand the great responsibility that comes with being their elected representative. I promise to give all I have to represent the people of our great community. After hearing so many amazing speeches this past three weeks and again today - wild turkeys, how do you compete with that? I am humbled to tell my story, but I really am looking forward to using your time effectively and hope that by the time that is over you'll get to know me a little better.

I think our stories matter and why we're here is important, so I'll provide some history just to lend some perspective as to who is standing here before you as the representative for Glace Bay-Dominion. My dad's parents, Sam White and Drusilla Cole, came across from Victoria Village in Newfoundland and Labrador in 1925. They were kids themselves and they raised 17 kids in Glace Bay, so they were busy for sure. (Interruption) In many ways, absolutely. They were busy with 17 mouths to feed. The house they built, they built themselves. They dug out the foundation themselves by hand, they had their own garden, and stuff like that, so they were very, very busy.

My mom's family, they were Dunlaps in Cape Breton and they had eight children. So things were not easy for either family. As I said, my mom and my dad's parents, they told stories about passing soup bones around the community, collecting them to reboil them to make soup. They lived in total poverty; there is no doubt about that. My mom's family actually lived in the woods on Wallace Road where I live today.

My mom's parents, my grandmother went into hospital and the stepfather who was looking after them took them to the woods and said they were going camping and dropped them off and left them there. When they were rounded up by authorities, they were taken to an orphanage and lived in Sydney for a while. But anyway, when my grandmother got out, she took them back and took them home again.

So raising our family was not easy for my mom and dad either. Bob and Evelyn White worked non-stop to keep us fed, safe, and a roof over our heads. I can still remember how proud they were when we bought our first house in New Aberdeen which was \$6,000; they were happy because they were able to move out of regional housing. To own their own house was a dream of theirs. I remember the house. As small as I am now, as a kid I was even smaller, but I remember crawling out the house with my dad and cutting 12 inches off the blocks to try and level the kitchen floor out. It was that kind of house; it really was total poverty, as well.

School wasn't that important because university was something that other people did. It was more important that we were ready to go to work and that's what most of us did; worked the fish plant and everything else. Dad had a Grade 6 education but to this day he is still proud to say he has two years of it. So to him, that's a great thing. Don't get me wrong, he's a smart man, but he has two years of Grade 6, and he is quite proud of it.

He worked in the coal mines for awhile, but after being dug out from a mine collapse of nine feet of coal on top of him, he had a hard time going back in. Then he worked on Grant Street department and stuff like that, and eventually he got full-time as a mechanic's helper. So right up until he retired, dad was saving money and hoarding it away for the day he was going to be laid off. That's just the kind of guy he was. He was extremely humbled by having to accept handouts.

Mom was mostly a stay-at-home mom. She raised my brothers and sister and I - Mike, Wally, Alec, Bobby, and Lillian. Later when mom did go to work, it was more of a social event for her. She worked the fish plant down in Glace Bay.

I remember when she'd come home for supper in the evening, Dad was known for making spaghetti and meatballs and he'd make a supper for them. All I recall is the smell of fish in the house from the girls coming home from the fish plant, but it was nice to see that it was really social for her. It didn't matter what job they were doing; they were happy, and they were engaged, and it was really important for her. That's all Mom wanted to do, was socialize.

So, in a three-bedroom house, \$6,000, my parents had one room, my sister had one room, and the five of us boys had another room. My two younger brothers and I slept in a single bed. I didn't know we grew up in poverty until I did my counselling degree at Acadia. I had to dig up small pictures and I could see the mould coming down the back wall. I had just forgotten about it because everybody in New Aberdeen was the same, so it didn't matter. How I lived was how everybody lived. It's a kind of funny story. It's just the circumstance you're in; you don't realize, right?

We had very little, but we had a loving and supportive family. I remember coming home from school for egg and hole sandwiches. Does anybody know what that is? You do? Egg and hole sandwiches - you cut the centre of the bread and you put the egg in it and fry it up - I think they're on menus now, but I thought that was us. That was our thing. (Laughter) And peanut butter and jam sandwiches and grape juice in the Summer - that was our hit. That was really because we couldn't afford anything else, but it became a favourite. I still enjoy it, to be honest with you.

The road from there to where I stand now seemed impossible. So I really want to tell anybody who is in that situation today to believe in yourself. Stay focused and when you come up against a roadblock, dig a tunnel or build a bridge to get over it. The only thing stopping you from reaching your dreams is the roadblock that you decide you can't get over. (Applause)

So let me tell you about some of the people who helped me get over the roadblocks. First off, I'm sure all members in the House will agree that the team that we have at our caucus offices are just so important and amazing. Most I don't even know by face yet, but

nonetheless, the work they do for us in the background for all Parties is absolutely amazing and has to be appreciated and thanked.

[5:45 p.m.]

At home in Glace Bay-Dominion, though: Preston Ogley; Joseph Jewells; Brycen and Jeremy - Brycen was my right-hand man, he was with me non-stop - and their parents, Cheryl and David Driscoll; Andrew MacLeod and his sister Theresa MacLeod; Viola Baker; Ed Kelly; Wendy Persaud; Linda Chislett; Clifton Macaskill - who we met on the campaign trail and that was it, he came out with us and has been with us every day since.

Brenda Mackie-McNeil and her husband Murray McNeil; my brother Alex White, who came in from Alberta and after spending two weeks in a trailer in the yard was quick to jump into action with us. My sister Lillian White; my niece Gail Ann; Andrew Battiste; Chris Kaiser; Sandy Burke; Derek Roach; Olivia Carabin; Gabrielle MacDonald; Johnny Hart; Winnie Hart; Megan Walsh; Emily and Mama Deb MacIsaac. Mama Deb is how we all know her; if I call her anything else, nobody will know who I'm talking about at home. Also my brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Barry and Ann Coffin. You've all heard me talk about him before, so I'm not going to go there.

Todd and Sue McDougall. Todd was my campaign manager in 2017, which I lost, but he couldn't do it this election because he was the district vice-president for the Party, so he never had a chance to finish it up. Todd never stopped working for me from 2017; how do you repay that kind of dedication? All he ever asked for was a true friendship. Sue is the kind of person that thinks of everybody else first. She's honest and dedicated, a true friend. That's just the kind of person she is. She's an amazing cook, and a sweeter person you'd truly be hard-pressed to find.

Heidi and Willy Curry. Willy was my campaign manager. I've got to tell you, if you say you have a social media guru, he must've been trained by Willy. He has to be. Willy is an "everybody's big brother" kind of guy. I think that's because he's a veteran who served overseas in some hot spots. He's a big guy, but he's everybody's big brother, that's the kind of guy he is. Trust me, if you have Willy as your friend, you have a friend for life. If you don't, you did something wrong and you'd better get on his good side.

Willy's wife, Heidi, is the one who says, "Alright, Willy, that's enough." She's the one who can reel him in. She spent most of her life working with children. The patience she has, she really is the salt of the earth. Now, Heidi is my constituency assistant, so if you call our office, you know you'll be greeted with a friendly and professional voice. Let's face it, Heidi's job now is, "All right, Johnny, that's enough." If she can handle him, she can handle me.

Seriously these two couples, Todd and Sue and Heidi and Willy, are the kind of friends that you have for life. They're the family that is not blood, but chosen.

Now we're going to go way back in time. Back to the mid-'80s when a long-haired punk - that's me, long hair, believe it or not - pedalled his bike down to Churchill Centre. This is the equivalent of crossing the tracks, that's what this is. I left New Aberdeen and went to Churchill Centre and from the first day I laid my eyes on Junie Snow, I said, "Oh my God, I'm going to marry that girl."

When we did get married in 1992 the paper said, "Snow-White Weds," so I guess this is a fairy tale. In September, we celebrated our 29th anniversary. (Applause) She still didn't get a medal; it's coming, I guess. To this day, every time I look at my junior high sweetheart, I still say, oh my god. Junie is an amazing, strong, beautiful woman. She's just like her grandmother Josie. Just look at me standing here in the Legislature. The old saying that behind every great man, supposedly - I don't consider myself a great man - there's a stronger woman standing behind him, for sure. (Applause)

A word of caution: The next few minutes are not about my success. They're strictly to give you an idea of the reason I've been successful. As I pointed out already, my life did not lead here to this House. This is not where I'm supposed to be. There were some interventions.

In my lifetime, I've taken a few crazy dreams. For example, one day I said, "I think I'd like to start a landscaping company." Junie went to work every single day hairdressing to pay the bills while I built that company literally from the ground up. We built the business into something successful, and it was always known as Johnny's business, whatever, but it was our business and it was successful because of the work Junie did in the background.

Then I said one day, I think I'd like to join the Glace Bay Fire Department - one of the busiest fire departments east of Montreal. Even though Junie lost her little brother Wally in a house fire when she was a kid, she looked at me and said, "If I could do it as good as I know you will, I would join, too." So 20 years of running into fires, jumping over cliffs in the middle of the night, countless hours training, suppers left on the table, burnt barbeques - absolutely - and missed birthday parties were a regular part of our family. Junie has never complained about the toll that volunteering has taken on our lives.

Just a note here: we all owe a debt of gratitude to the first responders who continue to answer the calls day after day in each of our communities. (Applause)

I know in my constituency, you have Murray McNeil, chief of the Dominion Volunteer Fire Department, and John Chant, who is chief of Glace Bay. Both gentlemen are personal friends of mine, I'm proud to say. Just to give you an example, in Glace Bay - I still get the text messages; I'm still a member - we've had 20 alarms in the time that we've sat in this House and 11 of those were structure fires. They're volunteers answering the call. That's a big debt to pay. In my opinion, these two guys lead two of the most professionally-run volunteer fire departments around. They have extremely committed

members who love their communities. I know that's common all across Nova Scotia and across this country.

Then one day I said, I think I'd like to become a teacher. Two degrees, equivalency of five years of university, and I did it in two years. I did it in two years because we had a family, we had a little girl to look after, we had a career, had to pay mortgages, and I had a volunteer fire department to be part of. Junie carried the load at home the entire time and never once questioned the time or financial commitment or my ability to complete it.

I've been anything but a model student. I wasn't going to say this, but I'm a high school dropout, and now today I hold a Master's in education. (Applause)

I'll tell you how strong Junie is. After I finished my work practicum at home in Glace Bay, we had Kennedy. Kennedy was one week old and I had to go back to New Brunswick to finish one course to finish my degree. I crammed it in two years, seriously. She insisted I go do it, so her sister Anne came up and helped her with Kennedy while I was gone. One-week-old baby and I'm in New Brunswick, sitting in class. I couldn't believe it.

We were doing good. We were building and going crazy and doing our thing. Up to this point in my life, everything I did was by my own degree, was my stubbornness to do it, to get what I wanted in life.

On July 5, 2005, we started building a house, and that was good. I started the house left-handed. On July 28th, we were in a bike accident where we were hit by a guy who was drinking and driving.

If I'm tired I can't talk about this, so I'll try to get through it. If I start crying, I've just gotta get over it.

I watched Junie die on the side of the road that day. She didn't, thankfully, but I believed it. Since it was true to me, my reactions were real. After what seemed like hours, but probably ten minutes, she finally came around, took a deep breath and gasped, and the guy who hit us left. She was catapulted into the air, over the bike and the car, and landed in the ditch behind us. I was dragged 100 feet down the road with him. I woke up thinking I have to get away from this wreckage and rolled away, but I was being dragged with the bike.

The paramedics who happened to be driving by stopped and helped us. I helped put Junie in the truck. She didn't even know I was in the accident until we got halfway to the hospital and she realized I was in the accident. Visibly, I couldn't see much about me. My teeth went through my lip, but you couldn't see through my moustache.

I bring this up because it's another testament to Junie's strength. The girl is absolutely amazing. She ended up - she couldn't stand to go to the bathroom, she couldn't do anything. She needed two people around her constantly. But even through that she controlled my anger - and it was pure anger. I won't go that dark with it for you to save you from that but anyway, regardless, I had a very hard time. I ended up being diagnosed with PTSD, causing depression and I was quite the mess for quite a while and it was Junie who got us through it, probably seven to 10 years, I'm sure. Anyway, Junie is amazing. (Applause)

Eventually I wanted to get back to taking courses and I was fearful of standing in a class from having the drunk driving incident come up and me acting like I am now, so I took out a diploma in Education Counselling, which is online, and Junie jumped into action, carrying the house again. That's what she does and that's what she did that day, that entire two years.

When I took on a Master's in counselling, which meant travelling back and forth to Truro every second Saturday, for three years, and spending two years in Kentville - two Summers - Junie jumped into action, making sure she looked after the family and looked after my Dad and my Mum at the time and everything else that's going on at home and making sure she got the kids and her up to see me in the Summer when I was in Acadia. So how do you thank for that? I don't know.

Finally, one day I decided I think I want to run for MLA. You guessed it, Junie jumped into action again. She not only supported me, but she pushed me forward, literally - I think her two handprints are still on my back. She even took her own vacation times during the writ so she could make sure she was out knocking on doors with me. It was important to have her beside me.

Now, as you know, Junie's sister passed away on September 28th. That was a tragedy, that was her only living sibling. She barely had time to grieve that and she's dealing with another family incident, with her family, that I have been asked to keep kind of quiet, but Junie is home looking after another one of her family members right now, after being up here for 10 days and went through major surgery, 12 hours surgery, major surgery. Junie is home looking after her now. Now you folks know why, when I look at Junie White, I say oh my God, to this day.

So all that history is beautiful, I think it is, but our biggest accomplishment by far is our two daughters, Robyn and Kennedy. Kennedy is home looking at me, watching us now, thinking no way I would do that - she won't get up in public. Robyn is looking the same, come on Dad, straighten yourself out, I can do better than that. That's the difference in the two kids, it's pretty funny.

So our youngest daughter, Kennedy, is in her third year of an honours program, psychology, at CBU. Her dedication is truly admirable. She is home now doing a full-time

study, working part time, making sure that she visits my Dad at the nursing home every single day and acting as a caregiver - and she is looking after our dog, Pepper, now that Junie is so busy looking after her family. I'm sure I'm biased but Kennedy truly is amazing. She is a small girl, but she's got a big personality and a big attitude. I don't know where she gets the smallness from, though. I'm so big, I don't know where that comes from.

Robyn is our oldest daughter and is pretty amazing, too. She attended CBU but Robyn only did it for one year, before getting accepted at the Dalhousie pharmacy program. That was an accomplishment in itself. It doesn't happen, so one year of science and she got in and she went right through the four years and now she is a pharmacist. So, getting accepted after one year at university is truly a great accomplishment. I know that the university celebrated because it doesn't happen very often.

[6:00 p.m.]

She is extremely dedicated to her profession, as is her boyfriend Riley LeBlanc. Riley is an engineer. These two kids are going places and they are both pretty amazing. By the way, Riley turns 27 today - Happy Birthday, buddy. (Applause) So I am a fortunate man to be surrounded by three beautiful, strong and brilliant women and I can't imagine feeling prouder, except one day down the road when Robyn makes Riley the son I never had.

As fortunate as I am with my family and everything and the wonderful support I had, I was lucky enough to meet a lifelong mentor I didn't know at the time when I joined the New Aberdeen Police Boys Club. Elwin LaRue and his wife Carmie have helped countless numbers of kids in New Aberdeen but I don't know if any of those relationships were as strong as Elwin and me. It was Elwin who first set the stage for me to feel an immense sense of empowerment that comes from helping somebody.

Today, my family and a large number of volunteers have a registered charity known as the Christmas Crew Society. I won't name them because literally it has been hundreds of volunteers over the years. We deliver 300 grocery orders every single year since 2001, I think it is, to families that are underserved, and the last three years we were able to adopt 100 kids each year for toys - we give them 10 toys each, we wrap every single one of them. It's a true community accomplishment. It was my wife and my tradition to do one, and now we do so many more.

It matters to people; it matters that people know that people care and people think about them. It has a big impact. You can see I'm an emotional person, so I've cried on many doorsteps. It doesn't matter anymore.

Todd and I facilitate a youth mentorship program known as Future Ready Youth Society. Kids come up with interventions that they want to achieve, things that they see as issues, and we help them design those interventions. It all started with Elwin and a kid with

a jacket. I was 13 years old, and Elwin used to pick me up at home Saturday morning and we'd go downtown, pick up hockey sticks or doing whatever. I really think his idea was to get me away from the crowd I was hanging with at the time. In fact, of the five friends - I count myself at the time - I'm the only one still alive. The rest of them died from drug wars and IV drug use. Elwin was well ahead of his time.

We picked up some jackets one day and there was a kid in the club who came over. Those were days when you knew who lived in a house and who owned it before and who is your father kind of thing. It actually meant something - it was true. Elwin had the tags off the jacket and said, here Johnny, go out and put this in front of this kid when he's leaving now. Just leave it in a Sobeys bag, put it there and say here, your nephew grew out of it. That's what I did. It was a new jacket. The kid grabbed it at the door and said thanks, and off he went.

It set the stage for me. It showed me that you can have an impact and you can help people and you can never miss that opportunity. By suddenly seeing by this simple experience, I have now dedicated my life to creating the stage for others. Elwin's lesson lives on through hundreds of kids that I've worked with in my lifetime.

In closing, I just want to sum up a few things that I've learned along the way. Isn't life just absolutely amazing? It truly is. It is unpredictable, but that unpredictability can sometimes provide us with hope. It is painful at times. It is painful at times, but even that grief comes from the love of something. The moments of impact can be difficult, and sometimes we need determination just to exist. Always remember that this builds resiliency.

Enjoy the moment. Nothing is permanent, and sometimes that is a good thing. Amen to that. No one can do it alone, so be willing to help others along the way. It will come back to you. Have faith in yourself. You'll be surprised who will be there when you need them. Always remember we are not helpless to our current situation.

I'll leave you with two questions that I consider quite often. What is your legacy that you want to leave behind? What actions are you taking today to make that legacy a reality? The Rolling Stones, eh? When life really gets tough to deal with, sometimes you have to remember the words of the great Jimmy Buffet - "Breathe in, breathe out, and move on." Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

KENT SMITH: Following the member for Glace Bay-Dominion is something I hope I don't do very often in this House. Congratulations, honourable member.

I rise in this House today with an abundance of pride, a wealth of excitement, and a healthy amount of nerves. My anxiety stems largely from the thought of standing here

for 60 minutes of addressing everyone because I typically require a two-hour minimum for most speaking engagements. In reverence to the House, I will abide by the rules.

Truthfully, Mr. Speaker, the thought of this address with the cameras rolling, in this historic building, surrounded by the most influential people in our province, is a little daunting. As I'm sure my friends and colleagues will agree, we all, whilst completing our maiden speeches, wish to convey and express the proper emotions attached to the honour bestowed upon us by our constituents.

More so when the trust your supporters put in you also lands you to the right side of the honourable Speaker, seated shoulder-to-shoulder with the team responsible for leading our great province, the already imposing sensation of accountability is enhanced, even for those of us seated three rows behind the Premier. You're allowed to laugh. (Laughter)

As noted, the Address in Reply has a 60-minute allotted time. I will not be taking all of it, but most of it. In the hopes of making it easy to follow, I will be breaking it down into sections, in what my uncle and author, Peter Cleveland, describes as manageable bites.

Part 1 begins with congratulations. As others before me have acknowledged, I wish to begin by extending my sincere congratulations to everyone seated here today. Few Nova Scotians possess the determination, drive, and stick-to-itiveness to put their names on a ballot. Far fewer see their names rise to the top on election day. Through you, Mr. Speaker, please inform all members of this House that I am proud of them and I expect a lot from each of them.

We're all here for a reason. I trust the opportunities that we have to represent those who need it most, and the chance to be true catalysts of change are held in the highest regard by all who have earned their seat here. Regardless of which side of the House a member sits on, we all have an extremely important role to play. As a group, we're going to change laws. As a group, we're going to change the future of this province. As a group, we will make Nova Scotia better. As a group, we will walk the walk. (Applause)

In addition to the 54 members on the floor, I wish to also extend a heartfelt congratulations to the honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes for winning a second election on September 24th, to the Speaker's Chair. The role of the Speaker is typically overshadowed by the goings-on of the Assembly, but we could simply not fulfill our respective obligations to our constituents without your unbiased poise and sound decision making. Congratulations and thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

Part 2: writing history. Mr. Speaker, it may not be known by all of my friends and colleagues that this is the first time in over a decade that a representative from the Eastern Shore has taken the floor to offer an Address in Reply. The previous member sat in the Speaker's Chair from the time of his election in 2013, so the last time a member for the

Eastern Shore stood here was in 2009, when the late Sidney Prest stood and offered remarks. I am proud to now provide the constituents of the Eastern Shore with a proper voice in this Chamber and a proper voice within the Progressive Conservative caucus.

The constituency of Eastern Shore has a long and storied past. Although the name has remained the same since 1993, the recent boundary review caused the geography of the constituency to expand. Expanding several hundred kilometres along our beautiful coastline from Ross Road on the west to the former Halifax County line in Ecum Secum on the east, the Eastern Shore constituency includes the core communities of Lawrencetown, Porters Lake, my current hometown of Musquodoboit Harbour, and the town I grew up in, Sheet Harbour.

The constituency has had such historic and influential representatives as the late Duncan MacMillan, the Honourable Keith Colwell, and my personal favourite, the honourable Senator Thomas Johnson McInnis, who sat here from 1978 through 1993. It's an honour to now have my name listed alongside those community leaders who helped shape the past of the Eastern Shore. I'm eager to be a big part of the future.

It's also worthy to note and compliment the voters of the Eastern Shore for their ability to pick a winner. Some of my friends and colleagues here today would have learned it from election coverage on the 17th of August, that voters on the Eastern Shore have an uncanny and unparalleled ability to elect a representative who sits on the government side of the House. They have done so in every election since the early 1970s, and I'm extremely optimistic that that trend continues on July 15, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, like most areas in our province, the Eastern Shore is spectacular and filled with the utmost beauty, both in the geography of its meandering, picturesque coastline, as well as the quality of individuals who call the shore their home. As I personally experienced in the weeks and months leading up to August 17th, the unbelievable scenery and views are only overshadowed by the welcoming spirit of most residents.

I'm sure most of my friends and colleagues here who have spent time on the Eastern Shore will know that the noteworthy tourism and fisheries industries are mainstays and the largest drivers of our local economy. Companies like Bakers Point Fisheries, a leading seafood exporter for our province, directly and indirectly employ hundreds of families on the Eastern Shore. The Eastern Shore's natural resources, including some of the best beaches our province has to offer - Taylors Head, Clam Harbour, Martinique, Lawrencetown - as well as our vast hiking and walking trail systems in Seaforth, Gaetz Brook and Spry Bay are ongoing destinations for day-trippers and out-of-province vacationers. I encourage all members of this House to plan a trip to the shore, where they and their families can spend some quality time enjoying these and other destinations.

I know, Mr. Speaker. You're probably wondering what other destinations are you talking about, Mr. Member? Well, I'm happy to tell you about destinations such as our

historic museums and heritage site, including the MacPhee House in Sheet Harbour, Memory Lane 1940s Heritage Village in Lake Charlotte, and the Musquodoboit Harbour Railway Museum. Sadly, the Fisherman's Life Museum in Oyster Pond has not been open to the public for two years, but to the Minister of Tourism, it's on my to-do list, and I will be in touch to address it.

When speaking of natural resources and destinations, I would be remiss if I did not mention Owls Head. No doubt my friends and colleagues on both sides of the aisle had conversations on doorsteps last Summer about how poorly this file was managed by the previous government. I certainly did, and I took the time to knock on every single door in Little Harbour. I had conversations with residents regarding the actions of the former Liberal government. We still don't know what the future holds for Owls Head, but whatever the outcome, Nova Scotians can rest assured that one way or another, they will be involved in the conversation.

Not to be forgotten are two other fantastic destinations and attractions. There's the now-famous Hope for Wildlife, which this Summer I toured and was happy to be the third wheel when the honourable then-Leader of the Opposition brought his wife there for their anniversary. The three of us had a fantastic afternoon. Finally, the ongoing work to identify, explore, and promote the 100 Wild Islands as a destination should be commended. My family and I recently took advantage of one of the tours offered at Murphy's Camping on the Ocean to personally visit several of the islands, and I highly recommend that other members do the same.

Now I do not wish to depict my riding as only filled with fisherpeople and beachgoers. We are far more than that. We also have a vibrant manufacturing section, highlighted by MacKenzie Atlantic and MacKenzie Healthcare Technologies, an innovative company bringing new products to market to ease the physical burden on health care providers and offering renewed independence to those with mobility challenges.

There is also a budding brewery scene on the shore, including Harbour Brewing, in Musquodoboit Harbour, and Sober Island Brewing, in Sheet Harbour. I apologize: Due to the rules on props, I wasn't allowed to bring any into the Chamber. However, there's a sampler's pack in the member's lounge for everyone to enjoy later.

To conclude this section on specifics of my riding, I must take a moment to discuss some of the major issues that were relevant and highlighted to me throughout the campaign period. The riding is very unique in the western end, in that it is very suburban - Lawrencetown is only minutes away from Cole Harbour - but the rest of the riding is what you would consider to be a rural riding. The issues that I heard were different up and down the shore, and of the 4,000 doors that I knocked on, here are some of the concerns that I heard, community by community.

I hope the members know that I was joking about the stuff in the member's lounge.

[6:15 p.m.]

Without question, health care and housing were concerns No. 1 and No. 1A on the issues book. In Sheet Harbour and the surrounding communities, the ongoing ER closures at Eastern Shore Memorial Hospital were the top concern. In the 12 months from September 2020 to August 2021, that ER was closed 47 per cent of the time. I did not misspeak - 47 per cent of the time, the ER in Sheet Harbour was closed. That's not okay, and I cannot stand here and properly convey the fear and anxiety that those residents had in their eyes and in their voices when I talked to them. Housing supply and availability of rental units is also a major worry to the people in Sheet Harbour.

In Musquodoboit Harbour and surrounding communities, there's also concern about ER closures. Twin Oaks closes not nearly as frequently as Eastern Shore Memorial, but it still does. I know that my friends and colleagues here will agree that any closure is too many.

Lack of supply and availability of housing was once again a recurring theme in the Musquodoboit Harbour area, and infrastructure - specifically, enough physical space for tourists to park and enjoy the natural resources in that community was a hot topic.

In the Porters Lake area there was some discussion of ER closures but greater concern about housing and greater concern about the ongoing Code Criticals that are taking place throughout the province.

The uniqueness of Lawrencetown is that most of the concerns that people brought to my attention there had to do with municipal issues. I am quite fortunate to have a decent relationship with the HRM councillor for the area and I've already raised several of those concerns to him.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes the section on my riding history, but by no means is it an exhaustive list. I'm optimistic that my friends and colleagues here now have a better understanding about the Eastern Shore and are eager to explore it for themselves.

Part 3: the campaign team. Like everyone else here today, I did not earn this seat through my efforts alone. Each and every one of us said our campaign journey was surrounded by friends, family members, devoted volunteers working collaboratively to help us achieve our success.

Unlike the tireless efforts of my team, who each had multiple assignments in anticipation of and throughout the writ period, I was continually reminded that I had but one job: knock on doors. I took this message to heart. I knew that if I had any chance of arriving in my desired destination, I had to meet as many Eastern Shore residents as possible. I'm thankful for the continued reminders and words of encouragement from my team.

I've heard everyone else - I think almost every single person who talks about their campaign team uses the expression "small but mighty," so I am no different than everyone else - a small but mighty campaign team on the Eastern Shore. I will attempt to name some names, so wish me luck here.

Ms. Michelle Madley, campaign manager. Michelle kept me motivated and focused for the duration. When I was depressed, she uplifted me. When I needed to vent, she offered me a safe place to freely express my concerns. When I needed to rest, she assured me that it was okay to do so. I am very grateful for her efforts, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bobby Boutilier, official agent. Bobby is one of my oldest and dearest friends and most likely the smartest person I know. Hailing from Mushaboom, graduating from McGill University - it's not a sentence you hear very often - with a commerce degree and subsequently winning the UFE exam for the Atlantic region. Bobby's efforts in keeping campaign finances in check were invaluable. I'm very thankful for Bobby taking on the role of official agent, all the while maintaining his full-time job, fulfilling his family obligations to his lovely wife Laura, and being an attentive and awesome father to Juliette.

Mr. Speaker, on top of all this, he and Laura are imminently expecting twins and are quite pleased that we are honouring the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

Mr. Andrew Young, all areas assigned. This is my first provincial election campaign. I can only imagine that every campaign has an individual like Andrew, one who picks up the slack wherever it is needed. I was extremely lucky to have Andrew on the team. He touched every aspect of the campaign, from early planning meetings to scrutineering on the last day. Lucky to have him, and even luckier to have him as a friend right now.

Mr. Donnie Mannelle, lead sign maker. Mr. Speaker, I truly wish that everyone here had a Donnie on their side. At 92 years old, Donnie was an inspiration for everyone. He nearly singlehandedly assembled 500 signs. I have no idea how I became so lucky to get Donnie on my team. If he decides to retire between now and 2025, I'm certainly going to be needing some help.

Mr. Austin Mannelle, assistant to the lead sign maker. Austin's dedication to the Party and our team was admirable, to say the least. Austin overcame some serious health issues several years ago but still put forth every effort to make sure all my signs were not only erected but also broken down and stored properly. He selflessly gave himself to ensure our team's signs were present at every corner of the constituency.

Mr. Jeffrey Thornhill, head of common sense. Those of you who follow the history of politics in this province will recognize the Thornhill family name as one of significance. Jeff is the son of the honourable Roland Thornhill, who represented Dartmouth South in

this House from 1974 to 1993. Jeff, who also did a considerable amount of sign work, also brought me an incredible amount of perspective. His experience, his insights, and the lessons he taught me are ones I will carry forever, and I feel exceptionally lucky to have known him.

Ms. Kelly Corkery, social media. Mr. Speaker, I'm very much a person who prefers to defer to experts whenever possible. In that vein, I'm not only not very good at social media, I'm actually quite allergic to it. I'm very, very fortunate to have a friend who excels at it, and wordsmithing is her thing. Through her wordsmithing, I was able to create an impactful online presence for our team. A huge thank you to Kelly for helping me tell my story.

Ms. Colleen Cole, canvassing. There are very few people who I trusted to canvass on my behalf, but I'm very fortunate to have had Ms. Colleen Cole as one of them. Colleen - an exceptionally busy business owner, mother, and grandmother - always made time to help, even though our friendship was very new. I'm so glad to have met her and so thankful for her help.

Mr. Mark Bayers, canvassing. Again, Mr. Speaker, for a rookie, it was challenging to let people knock on doors on your behalf. After door-knocking with Mark for 30 minutes, it was clear he didn't need any guidance from me, and perhaps the reverse was true. Mark is another very busy individual, but he still made time to help whenever he could. I'm very grateful for his efforts.

Four more thank-yous. Ms. Paula Milsom, outreach. If every campaign doesn't have a Paula, then every campaign is doing it wrong. Paula is very well-known in the Musquodoboit Harbour community, and she used all her connections to help our team be successful. She claims to be responsible for over 50 lawn sign placements, and while I'm thankful for that, I believe the team at campaign headquarters was far more appreciative of her ongoing baking efforts, especially her butter tarts.

The honourable Senator Thomas McInnis and Mrs. Brenda McInnis, outreach. I'm very lucky to have known the good senator and Mrs. McInnis for my entire life. My father, whom I will speak about in a subsequent section, and the honourable senator were lifelong friends. Tom and Brenda were invaluable contributors to the team. The senator in particular was an exceptional resource for me to draw upon.

Miss Paula Henderson, motivation. Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the motivational talks I received from Miss Henderson. I would also like to make it known that I learned a valuable lesson about motivation. The lesson is this: not all motivation needs to be positive to be effective. My honourable colleagues on this side of the House all know Miss Henderson well, and none of them will be surprised to know that during a pre-election visit to my campaign headquarters, Miss Henderson - in only a way Miss Henderson can - told me not once, not twice, but a total of ten times that "this is the

worst G-O-D-D campaign I have ever seen.” I honestly took that as a challenge-accepted moment and spent the next the next five days feverishly working my tail off out of spite to prove her wrong.

Dr. Lisa Bonang, everything. Whatever eloquence I attempt to convey in expressing my gratitude for Dr. Bonang will certainly fall short of the mark. Simply put, there is a zero per cent chance that I would be standing here talking if it were not for the efforts, the time, the energy, the sweat, tears, advice, patience, and dedication that Dr. Bonang put into our campaign and our team. Mr. Speaker, Lisa deserves every ounce of thanks and love that I have to offer, and then some.

There were countless other members of my team who all played a role in helping me earn the right to represent the people of the Eastern Shore. I wish for the House and the members here to join me in extending a sincere thanks to them. I’m very hopeful that my small but robust team grows to a large and vibrant team in 2025.

Part Four: family. I don’t have to tell anyone here how important it is to have your family behind you during this crazy process. Of course, it starts at home. For those of us who have spouses or partners, their involvement and encouragement are vital. I have to make sure to gush and go on and on about my amazing partner Kelly - she is fantastic, she is wonderful, she is caring, she is supportive - and I have to go on and on, not only because it’s true but because I completely forgot to thank her on election night. I went on and on about everyone on the team and how happy I was and how fortunate I was and said absolutely nothing about my partner.

Kelly is a very private person, so she wasn’t so upset, but I certainly was embarrassed that I didn’t give her the credit that she deserved. I hope that I can take this opportunity to properly convey how much I love her and how much it means to me, especially when everyone hears the next part of the story, that earlier, after being together for over four years, Kelly decided to sell her house and we would turn our two households into one.

Her house closed on July 16th, she moved in on July 16th, and then the writ dropped on the 17th, so we haven’t really seen each other very much in the last few months. I will say, in the months since our two homes became one, Kelly, who has an extremely successful and busy career on her own right, has been carrying the lion’s share of the household responsibility. I would not be able to be here without her. (Applause)

Now I can go home and say, everyone clapped honey, it was great, it was beautiful.

Between Kelly and I we have three children. She has 10-year-old Bailey and six-year-old Beckett, and I have nine-year-old Maia. All three have been great with this transition. I’m proud to say that Bailey and Maia are helping out around the house more

and more as my ability to help is less and less. Although the kids don't fully understand what our jobs are, they're asking a lot of questions and I'm happy with their interest.

Truthfully, I'm really not looking forward to the things at home I'm going to miss over the next few years. I'm sure my friends and colleagues here certainly share that feeling. I remain optimistic that the work that we're doing here is worth it to make the future of our province better.

Part Five: campaign anecdotes. I'm going to condense the campaign anecdotes because I wrote these three weeks ago when I was preparing the Address in Reply, and when I wrote them, they seemed really funny and relevant. I've read them over several times and they're not as funny as I thought they were, they're not as relevant as I thought they were, so I'll paraphrase them. There are four little campaign anecdotes.

Number one is commiseration. Again, not very funny, not very entertaining, but the punchline is my car doesn't have A/C. It was very hot this summer campaigning.

Story number two, too close. This one actually was a little bit funny. I'll elaborate a little bit more on it when I say that early on in the campaign I was as eager as you could possibly imagine. I had my clipboard, my cellphone, everything ready to go. People at the doorsteps were very welcoming. They wanted to talk politics, a lot of them. I thought that was great, or because of COVID-19 they hadn't seen anyone in months, and they were just happy to see someone.

This one particular driveway that I drove down is memorable in that it was lined with derelict vehicles, outbuilding after outbuilding, and I cautiously drove down. I didn't see a "No Trespassing" sign, so I wasn't doing anything illegal, but I got up to the front of the mobile home and I took one step out of the car, and from inside the house I heard, that's far enough, bud. I quickly turned around and waved. I still didn't see anyone, didn't know if anyone was there or not, but I took the advice and that was far enough, and I turned around and left.

Story number three, you never know who you're going to meet. Again, I'll paraphrase when I say that I knocked on a door in Porters Lake and the lady who answered turned out to be my father's first cousin. I had never met her. I didn't know she existed, but she gave me a hug and wished me luck and I think she voted for me.

Story number four, and this is directly for the Minister of Economic Development, not necessarily an anecdote, it was just an observation. In the 4,000 doors that I was able to knock on, the dwellings ranged from ones that were very, very high-end and very expensive to ones that people were doing the best they could, but one thing was clear and one business idea was very, very clear. Almost every one of those houses did not have a functioning doorbell so I think that a great economic development on the Eastern Shore - door-to-door doorbell salesmen.

I am sure everyone here has similar stories like that. Not as good as a turkey attacking you, but similar stories that I would love to hear over the next four years.

Part Six - the true Address in Reply (pause for dramatic effect). Mr. Speaker, this is where I pivot and turn my maiden speech into a true Address in Reply to our Throne Speech and explain with real-world experience how my personal life, my professional career, and my volunteer efforts can and will be used to support our government's initiatives. In this section I will explain how my experience to date provide me with unique insights in helping our team succeed in defending our Speech from the Throne.

As mentioned earlier, I was born and raised in Sheet Harbour, well, Watt Section, a suburb of Sheet Harbour, to Brian and Beverley Smith. I have two older sisters Kelly and Kimberley - Kelly, Kimmie, and Kent. Yes, my parents were those parents. My mother was a career educator and actually had two distinct careers in the field. For the first half she taught in the classroom. She taught English primarily to high school students. She took a sabbatical in 1988 and got her Masters in Education, came back to Duncan MacMillan and was the guidance counsellor at the school until her retirement in 2003.

It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that having your mother in your high school has both pros and cons. As a pro, she always had a giant bag of peppermints in her desk drawer, and I was known to steal them from time to time. As a con, under mom's watchful eye and close network of teacher friends, the shenanigans that you'd like to get away with in high school, I was not able to do so. As a pro, when I did not have lunch money, I could easily skip the cafeteria line, get to the front and say, just put this on Mrs. Smith's tab please, and that worked.

As guidance counsellor and a con, she controlled where my transcripts went upon completing high school in Grade 12 and my best friend of the day was Robbie Mosher, he's still my best friend, was going to St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish and my mum guidance counsellor refused to send my application there because she deemed it to be a party school.

My father, Brian Smith, was a serial entrepreneur. He began working for himself delivering bulk furnace oil in the late 1960s, eventually moved into the ready-mix concrete, trucking, excavation, snow-plowing, et cetera, et cetera. I distinctly remember one of the area members, pardon me, area managers for the local DOT at one time calling him the anything-for-a-buck company. I will talk a little bit more about my father in a subsequent section.

I graduated from Duncan MacMillan High School in 1997 and then attended McGill University in Montreal. I received a Commerce degree with concentration in Entrepreneurship, Human Resource Management, and Organizational Behaviour. I will offer a quick aside from my time in Montreal, specifically the first year that I moved there.

Quite literally, Mr. Speaker, I woke up one morning in downtown Watt Section and I went to bed that night in downtown Montreal.

It may surprise some members here to learn that the cultural diversity you find in Sheet Harbour is a little different than the cultural diversity you find in Montreal. I have told this story before and the essence of it is this - I truly, truly did not know what I did not know. I love where I'm from, don't get me wrong. Sheet Harbour is known for many things, but diversity is not one of them - 99 per cent Christian, 99 per cent Caucasian and that's what I grew up in.

In my first year of university, I moved into a house with 15 other people, only two of whom had a similar background to mine. People hailed from Egypt, Norway, China, Jordan, Iran, France, the U.S., the Bahamas, and Kenya. Talk about an eye-opening experience for this little guy from Sheet Harbour. Not only did I learn about other religions other than Christianity, but I learned that there were religions other than Christianity.

I consider that year of my life the most influential and transformative experience to date, and it is safe to say that without being exposed to the religions and heritage and traditions that I was, I would not be the person that I am today.

In 2003, I moved back to Nova Scotia to begin working with my father in the family business, Eastern Shore Cartage - ESC as it is known. A very diverse company, as I already mentioned. Divisions of the company are in ready-mix concrete, residential curbside garbage, recycling, enviro-depot, trucking, excavation, dump truck services, snow and ice maintenance - we did it all.

Over the years, I moved up the ranks within the company. Simultaneously, I actively streamlined our services and focused on the things that had the most impact to the bottom line.

By 2011, ESC centered on residential curbside garbage collection for both the HRM, as the honourable members for Sackville-Cobequid, Sackville-Uniacke, and Cole Harbour-Dartmouth may remember from their previous careers. We worked for HRM as well as had the contract for curbside collection with the District of the Municipality of St. Mary's. We collected curbside waste from over 10,000 homes, operated the local enviro-depot, and provided snow and ice maintenance to most businesses and institutions in the Sheet Harbour area.

Mr. Speaker, anyone here who is involved with a family business knows it is exceptionally taxing on relationships. I just discussed this a couple of weeks ago with the honourable member for Kings North. Family time changes when business is in the mix. Family dinners become business meetings and it's hard to have normal conversations that don't relate back to the business one way or the other. Without a clear set of boundaries, it can and will become a burden. Just ask the Rogers family.

That was my experience and the only solution I saw in 2011, in dealing with my father and the family business, was that I had to buy him out or I had to leave. It took almost 12 months, the entirety of 2011. With my mother's help, I ultimately bought the company from my father. From 2012 to 2015, I owned and managed Eastern Shore Cartage. For nearly four years, my life was devoted to my company. I lived and breathed garbage.

It was during that time that I realized I had taken Eastern Shore Cartage as far as I possibly could. I had 25 employees and 50 very expensive pieces of equipment. If I wanted to expand, it was going to require significant capital investment and significant risk and I wasn't prepared to do that. I was lucky. Simultaneously, within the garbage industry there was a bit of a war. Larger companies were buying smaller companies left, right, and centre. I took advantage of that and decided to offer my company up for sale. The municipal group of companies under the REgroup banner carried on and ultimately acquired Eastern Shore Cartage in September of 2015.

That part of my life was bittersweet. I had taken this company from not a great financial position in 2003, to a place where it was worth a decent sum of money in 2015. Now I handed it off to someone else. The lessons that I learned as a small business owner with 25 employees and dealing with all the things that go with running a small business will stay with me forever.

Mr. Speaker, in the six years since selling my company, a lot has happened. I'll ask the honourable members to be patient because there will be a test at the end. Immediately after the sale, I was fortunate to be able to take some time to reflect on my future and choose to undertake my own direction.

In 2016, I co-founded a new company with a friend and local lawyer, Michael Brine. Our mission was to strategically acquire real estate and create new housing options on the Eastern Shore. We were both relatively inexperienced home builders, and our company was not immediately efficient. We barely completed our first home in 15 months. Near the end of that project and without any other project on the horizon, I unexpectedly received the job offer of a lifetime. A good friend and local vice-principal sent me a message and asked me the following: Would I be interested in teaching core French and physical education at Gaetz Brook Junior High?

I couldn't say yes fast enough. I spent January to June of 2018 teaching in the public school system with no formal teaching experience, no education degree, hardly any training, in a union environment for the very first time in my life, and in the midst of government's decision to remove the administrators from the union. It was grand.

I ask the honourable members of this House to ruminate on those circumstances for a moment, and then add on the reality of a 24 x 24 classroom with 29 15-year-old kids in core French, the last six years of their junior high career, and think about the fun that I must

have had. I'm sure some of our educators who sit in this House will agree it was an amazingly memorable experience, and I cherish it.

In the Fall of 2018, I truly hoped to be rehired at Gaetz Brook Junior High, but it wasn't in the cards. My real estate company was still a few months away from starting our next project when another amazing opportunity fell in my lap. The principal of my daughter's school, École des Beaux-Marais in Porters Lake, called and asked if I would be interested in working as an aide-enseignant - a teacher's aide. From September to December of 2018, I got to work in my daughter's school. I spent the first month working with the Grade 5s - had a wonderful time - and then my role switched to working with the four-year-olds in the Grandir en français program.

It was extremely memorable to be a part of the early childhood development program, and I don't think I've ever had more laughs or more fun or more hugs working than I did at that job. The best was this sweet little boy who, every time he addressed me - every single time he came up to me - he called me Uncle Kent. It was great. The added bonus, obviously, was getting to know my daughter's teachers and the staff at the school and be able to see my daughter interact with her friends and classmates.

By the onset of 2019, my real estate company was not only poised to begin a new project, but my business partner and I settled on an operating name, a name I'm sure my Progressive Conservative colleagues will appreciate, Senior Solutions Development Group Ltd. Since 2019, Senior Solutions has evolved. Our new home construction now takes a back seat to our largest project to date, the renovation of a former elementary school in Oyster Pond into 16 units of senior citizen affordable housing. It is midway through construction and will be ready for tenants in early 2022. I could not be prouder to be offering even a small solution to the housing crisis on the Eastern Shore.

Mr. Speaker, that is a brief overview of my working career, and in terms of my volunteer efforts, I won't provide a laundry list of examples. I will focus on the most recent and most important one that I've done, which is being a part of the Musquodoboit Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce and Civic Affairs. Through the Chamber, I'm very proud to have played a role in creating the Musquodoboit Harbour Community Development Plan, which if I wave around as a prop, I hope you'll say the words so it gets registered in Hansard and then I can table it. The Musquodoboit Harbour Community Development Plan is a road map for that community, and hopefully it gets considered by HRM council in the next month.

The honourable member for Yarmouth and former Education and Early Childhood Minister will attest that through my work with the Chamber, I learned how to be a good advocate for my community, and he last week called me the most prolific letter writer that he's ever experienced, and I've often called him my pen pal.

I say all these things and share all these events to tell my story and to explain the perspective and insights I bring to this House, and how my skills and experiences will be an asset to my team. I live the life of a small business owner, dealing with financial responsibilities, customer service, labour laws, leadership. I've experienced our education system from multiple angles. I was directly involved in environmental stewardship, diverting organics and recyclables away from the landfill, educating residents on how to properly sort their waste. I worked on rural economic development and community advocacy in my role with the Chamber, and in the midst of the worst housing crisis we've seen in this province, I'm creating 16 units of senior citizen affordable housing. I've experienced the nuances of working with HRM. I've worked with Housing Nova Scotia and am familiar with their programs.

I intend to be a very active member of my team, and, of course, my main priority is to represent my constituents, but I have to say, through you to the honourable members of our Executive Council, to the Ministers of Fisheries, Environment, Communities, Cultures, Tourism, Heritage - you're not sitting in the right seat - Health, Housing, Community Service, Finance, Public Works, Seniors and Long-Term Care, Natural Resources, Justice, Education, Agriculture, Labour, Public Service, Mental Health, Economic Development, and Advanced Education, I want every member of our Cabinet to know that I am at your disposal and I'm here to help you and our team succeed in any way that I can. I do not have the same responsibilities that you do, but we have the same goals. Your victories are our victories and victories for all Nova Scotians, and I'm here to support you. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, that is not an exhaustive list, an exclusive list, to Cabinet. Through you to my honourable colleagues from Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, Richmond, Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley, Kings West, Hants East, Hants West, Glace Bay-Dominion, Chester-St. Margaret's, Colchester North, and Shelburne: we are in this together. Anything I can do to help you serve your constituents better, I will.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the honourable members opposite, I want each of you to know that I am not here for you. Of course, I say that in jest, and I hope that the small amount of levity that I try to impart here does not take away from the gravity of what we're experiencing here in this province.

I use the levity for two reasons. Number one, it's part of my personality and, number two, if I'm going to make you sit here and listen for 40-some minutes, there had better be a joke here or there.

In all seriousness, I am here to support the members opposite, as much as I am my colleagues on this side. The Liberal, NDP, and Independent caucuses represent 24 ridings and over 250,000 Nova Scotians, and those Nova Scotians deserve the right to have a voice in this House as well.

I also have a few brief words for the three party leaders. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, in his Address in Reply stated, we take our role very seriously in holding the government to account. I will table that. I wish to advise the honourable Leader to not worry. He has support. We have 30 people on this side of the aisle who are going to do the same exact thing.

Mr. Speaker, to the honourable Leader of the NDP, who treated all the members of this House to his one-person theatrical performance with his Address in Reply, I simply cannot let his misrepresentation of the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee go unchecked. The Better Pay Cheque Guarantee is a revolutionary initiative to get money into the hands of those who need it most while simultaneously stimulating the local economy. It is not a hare-brained scheme.

As a former small business owner with 25 employees and someone who, on average, paid about \$40,000 a year in provincial corporate tax, I would have jumped at the opportunity to get half of it back and give it to the lowest 80 per cent of my workforce. My employees work their tails off picking up garbage and sorting recyclables and to put more money in their hands without it impacting my bottom line would have been amazing.

For added clarity, this is not trickle-down economics. That theory involves cutting taxes for the rich, in hopes that owners use the tax savings to create more and better jobs. The Better Pay Cheque Guarantee does not reduce the tax burden. It offers a choice, an easy choice: give money to the government or give it to your lowest-earning employees.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, to our honourable Premier: First of all, thank you. Thank you for agreeing to put your name on the ballot next to mine. I am incredibly proud to be a part of this team and through you, Mr. Speaker, I want the Premier to know he has my full support and confidence in leading our province through this post-COVID-19 world and beyond.

Part number seven: we're at the end. The old man. No, Mr. Speaker, I'm not referring to the honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. I am speaking of course about my late father, Brian Verge Smith, who passed away on August 7, 2019, after lengthy battles with both cancer and heart failure. It is no secret to anyone in my family that my father and I had a very strained relationship. As I referenced earlier, we worked together for a long period of time and that made it hard for me to call him Dad, so much so that for much of my adult life and our working time together I simply called him Brian.

He and I had some epic tête-à-têtes as we each struggled to lead the business. I used to joke with the team at Eastern Shore Cartage that Brian and I each had a final say, but his just came after mine. The arguments actually got so bad one summer during the onset and the hype of reality television that team members at Eastern Shore Cartage talked about pitching in their own money, hiring a film crew, following us around, and documenting all

of our disagreements and selling the rights to the History Channel - *Garbage Wars* they called it.

This last and brief, quick story will sum things up on how Brian and I interacted. It was very near the closing date for the sale of Eastern Shore Cartage to the Municipal Group of Companies, September 2015. Brian and I were seated at our lawyer's board room office not far from here, just down on Hollis Street. We signed in a million different places and I was ecstatic. This day for me was the culmination of 14 years of my life, 14 years of planning coming to fruition. I think at that point in my life the only thing that was more impactful would have been the birth of my little girl.

The ink dried on our signatures, and I stood up, reached out my hand, and looked at him and said, congratulations. He stood up and said, for what? At this point in time, I still owed him a little bit of money to clear up the sale, and I said, for turning your life's work into a decent chunk of change. He looked at me and he said, you're going to regret this. I simply just shook my head. We just didn't understand each other. We had different outlooks for the company. On one of the happiest days of my life, that was the message that I got from him.

He was a very, very political person and he was very, very well-known on the Eastern Shore and dozens, and dozens of people along the campaign trail told me how proud he would have been of me for putting my name forward and ultimately becoming successful. Mr. Speaker, I am consciously choosing to end my Address in Reply by talking about my old man in the hopes that it brings me some semblance of closure and that if he is watching down on this, he knows that I love him, and I know that he loved me, too. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Before I recognize the honourable Government House Leader, I just want to say that earlier today there was a petition put forward by the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier. That has been reviewed, and the petition has been tabled.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Wednesday, November 3rd, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Government Business will include the Committee of the Whole House on Bills on Bill Nos. 61, 62, 63, 64, 43, and 57; and Address in Reply.

Since it is Opposition Day tomorrow, I will turn it over to the NDP House Leader to discuss their business for the day.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I am not replacing Claudia; I am the Deputy House Leader. Claudia will be back tomorrow . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm sorry - the member for Dartmouth South.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

KENDRA COOMBES: Apologies. After the daily routine and Question Period, Opposition Business will include Bill No. 19, the Owls Head Act, and Bill No. 26, the Emergency "911" Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do rise to meet again on Wednesday, November 3rd, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried. We stand adjourned until tomorrow, November 3rd, at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 6:54 p.m.]

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

Given on October 28, 2021

(Pursuant to Rule 30)

QUESTION NO. 1

By: Lisa Lachance

To: Hon. Michelle Thompson (Minister of Health and Wellness)

1. What kind of training do regular GPs get with respect to menopause?
2. How many specialists in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Nova Scotia are trained in perimenopause and menopause?
3. What are the wait-lists/wait times for these specialists?
4. What work is being done at DHW and NSH to ensure that doctors are familiar with the most current research and training on menopause and hormone treatment?