



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2022

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HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. As is the tradition on Budget Day, with the consent of the House, we will begin the Budget Address. Following the presentation of the budget and some words from this side of the room, we'll begin the daily routine.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

[ORDERS OF THE DAY]

[GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]

[GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

[Res. No. 174, re Estimates - CW on Supply: Referred - notice given Mar. 24/22 - (Hon. Allan MacMaster)]

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the notice of motion given by me on March 24, 2022, and the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, I have the honour, by command, to present a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia relating to the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, which is:

“I hereby transmit Estimates of Sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending March 31, 2023, and in accordance with the Constitution Act of 1867, recommend them, together with the Budget Address of my Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and any resolutions or bills necessary or advisable to approve the Estimates and implement the budget measures to the House of Assembly.

Signed,

Arthur J. LeBlanc

Lieutenant Governor”

Mr. Speaker, at this time I wish to:

(1) table the message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia transmitting the Estimates for the consideration of this House;

(2) table the Estimate Books;

(3) table the government business plan;

(4) table the Estimate resolutions;

(5) deliver my Budget Speech; and

(6) move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, being Supply to be granted to Her Majesty, be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The Estimates are tabled.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my address, I just want to acknowledge my family: my mum, who used to work across the street at the Department of Finance and Economics, as it was known from 1957 to 1964, and my father, who when

it came to a dollar, worked hard to earn it, and he always had one, because he knew it was only necessary to spend it when it truly mattered. (Applause)

I also want to acknowledge my family at home: Lucie, who's home with five children - not easy when I'm here, although Owen and Ben are fine young men, and in truth they're more help for her at this time in our lives. I want to acknowledge my young children, Ivy and Willow and Lochlan. It's not easy for them. They don't understand when Daddy's away from home. It's not easy for Daddy to be away from them, either. (Applause)

I want to acknowledge my family in the city, across the street at the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. These are people who care about every cent. They are always there to provide analysis or a change at the last minute. In the words of the late, great Cyril Ready, who was a great friend of mine: They are always a voice of reason for every government they've ever served. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION

Today I am pleased to present the 2022-23 Provincial Budget. This budget is a compassionate budget. It is for all the people and their families who waited for a doctor, a surgery, a nursing home room, or a place to live. At its core, this budget is about solutions for the most basic needs we have today.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2022-23 comes at a pivotal time for Nova Scotia. The COVID-19 pandemic has tested the strength of our public health systems, and the resolve of our communities, our businesses, public services, and our people. We have made personal sacrifices to protect one another.

The world is different today, forever changed. Our province is facing challenges that cannot be ignored. This is why we need this compassionate budget - a budget that brings people back together and offers solutions for the priorities we all know matter most - taking care of our people, rebuilding our economy, and reimagining our province's future.

How lucky we are today to sit in this Chamber free of conflict on our shores. For the past number of weeks, we have seen the people of Ukraine stand up against tyranny, and they are fighting with their lives. They are showing a spirit that will not be broken. Our hearts go out to the people of Ukraine and our doors will remain open to those who need safe refuge. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, last August, Nova Scotians voted for change. They voted for new ideas. They wanted solutions and a new government that would take action. Pretending there are quick fixes to problems that have developed over decades is fruitless. Solving problems requires hard work. Finding real and lasting solutions starts with listening and working alongside Nova Scotians. We are listening.

This government has moved decisively since being elected seven months ago. Every minister was provided with a clear mandate in September. We could have waited until our first budget to begin taking action. We didn't wait at all. We started right away.

- We started to address critical staffing shortages in health care and long-term care, giving Continuing Care Assistants a 23 per cent raise and covering the cost of their training.
- We rolled out a new Seniors Care Grant, which helps seniors get more help in and around their homes.
- We doubled the funding for local roads, which are vitally important connections within our rural communities.
- We announced plans to expand the number of long-term care homes and private rooms across the province.
- We doubled the grant to municipalities and towns to help with the growing costs of providing municipal services like police, transit and fire protection.
- We released an action plan for homelessness and housing, and began funding projects and supports immediately.
- We introduced new environmental legislation with ambitious goals that will guide Nova Scotia toward a cleaner and healthier environment.
- We also kept our commitment to fixed election dates in our very first legislative session.

These actions, and many other investments made since September, strengthen our communities, and set the stage for Budget 2022-23.

Solutions for Healthcare, Solutions for Nova Scotians is the name of Budget 2022-23. With projected revenues of \$12.7 billion, and \$13.2 billion in planned spending, our expected deficit will stand at \$506.2 million.

As you will hear today, this budget reflects this government's laser focus on finding solutions for health care. It also offers solutions for our economy and for our future.

SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTH CARE

Today's health care system was mostly designed in the middle of the last century. Many of our hospitals were built at that time, too.

For far too long, we have been hearing about Nova Scotia's high rates of cancers and chronic disease. We have an aging population with complex needs. Thousands are waiting for a family doctor, for a specialized treatment or surgery, mental health care and long-term care.

And, as we all know, the pandemic has put enormous pressures on every part of the health care system, in every community. It was the last thing that a system - already under tremendous pressure - needed.

We have an incredible group of health care workers in this province - dedicated, well-trained professionals who want to be part of making the system better. They know that money alone won't do it. We need to be innovative and open to doing things differently.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight two people who are making advances in health care today.

Dr. Stephen Beed is an adult intensive care doctor. Dr. Beed also created a transformative device to help with a longstanding problem - turning patients who are critically ill without injuring staff. (Applause)

Dr. Karen Cross is a surgeon who specializes in advanced tissue injury and wound care. She recently relocated to Nova Scotia and is already making a big impact. Dr. Cross has developed a hand-held device that takes images of a patient's skin, so specialists can virtually provide a diagnosis and advice for treatment - no matter where in the province the patient is. It works on every colour of skin, unlike other skin health technologies. (Applause)

You don't have to go far to find talent in Nova Scotia's health care system. It's full of professionals who go the extra mile to serve their patients. But they tell us they are tired and have been losing hope. It's our job to give them hope that things can change, and to turn that hope into action.

These challenges in our health system are not ones that can continue to be ignored or solved by tinkering at the margins. They need solutions, they need more funding, and they need a government willing to act. Budget 2022-23 includes a \$5.7 billion investment in health care. That's an increase of \$413.4 million from last year. We will ensure every dollar is used to make changes and improvements that put patients first and provide the highest quality of care.

It starts with having the health care team in place, where we need them most. They truly are the foundation of our health care system. That's why we established the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment to focus on recruiting more health care workers.

Having more nurses in the system means that more nurses can do their best work, provide better care for their patients and take much-needed breaks.

Starting this year, we will add 200 more new nursing seats across the province - 28 more at Cape Breton University, 26 more at Dalhousie University, 26 more at St. Francis Xavier University, and 120 more practical nursing seats at Nova Scotia Community College.

It was notable that our Premier made a direct offer to nursing students last Fall - upon graduation, all new nurses from Nova Scotia schools will be offered a job in the province. We need them and we want them to stay here. (Applause)

We also need new and better ways to train and recruit more doctors. And we know the more health care professionals we train here, the more who will fall in love with this place and want to stay.

Budget 2022-23 is laying the foundation for mental health. Our team has been talking about the gaps in mental health care for many years and we are excited about the changes now underway.

This government made sure the Office of Addictions and Mental Health had dedicated leadership. I'd like to acknowledge the member for Cape Breton East, who is a Registered Nurse and worked in the mental health system before being elected. He brings his own experiences to the role and is working hard to find ways we can better support those who need our help. (Applause)

New addiction recovery support centres have recently opened in New Glasgow and Dartmouth, with three more centres expected to open in the next two years in Truro, Cape Breton and Halifax.

Understanding that recruiting mental health and addictions care providers is challenging, we need to consider new ways to ensure people can access services. This budget expands access to virtual care options, including community mental health and addictions outpatient clinics and services at emergency departments by hiring 22 more clinicians over the next two years.

We will add two more mental health and addictions clinical assistants in the Eastern Zone while we recruit much-needed psychiatrists. We will also fund four new psychology residents between Nova Scotia Health and the IWK Health Centre.

With \$1 million, this budget will support the Province's first mental health acute day hospital at the QEII to deliver intensive mental health treatment while allowing patients to stay closely connected to their families.

We will see further progress this year to establish universal mental health care for those without coverage or who have exhausted their private coverage. The minister and his team are committed to engaging with a broad range of stakeholders to support the development of this new approach.

This government is pleased to work in partnership with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia on many fronts. Recently, we provided \$2 million for the Mi'kmaq to lead the development of a culturally responsive mental health and addictions strategy. This strategy will guide the creation of a Mi'kmaw mental wellness system that incorporates their culture and values and improves access to care and supports.

This budget is improving access to primary and specialized care. We're investing more money this year in technology and staff to further expand virtual care services. Every person who doesn't have a doctor or nurse practitioner and is registered with the Need a Family Practice Registry will have access to virtual care.

Virtual care gives people same-day access to a family doctor or nurse practitioner online through a computer or mobile device. They can diagnose, prescribe and make referrals to other care. About 60,000 Nova Scotians have access to virtual care already. There have been 10,000 appointments since the service launched. Patients are having good experiences and saying that it's convenient and efficient.

In addition, I am delighted to share that Nova Scotia Health and Dalhousie University Medical School will work together to provide 3,500 more Nova Scotians access to the care they need by early Summer. They plan to involve family medicine residents in taking on Nova Scotians from the Need a Family Practice Registry through the Dalhousie Family Medical Clinic and other similar clinics.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is also focused on reducing surgical backlogs and wait times. There is funding to schedule more operating room hours and to open 28 more beds at the Dartmouth General Hospital for surgical recoveries. We'll pay for more cataract surgeries and expand operating room capacity at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital. These are concrete actions that will help thousands of people waiting for their surgeries.

There is more funding for the many Nova Scotians who need access to specialized care for cardiac and renal programs, for medications and medical devices, for a new obesity clinic in the Eastern Zone, and more funding for hospice care.

Mr. Speaker, this year the Province will launch a system to collect and analyze race-based data in health care. Created with a community-based working group, people will be invited to voluntarily provide their racial identifiers. Over time, the health system will have the data to better understand how communities need different health care support and how we may work at a community level to better serve people.

Two such initiatives will be supported by our budget this year. More money will be provided for preventative health and primary care services for refugees through the Newcomer Health Clinic. We will see an expansion of the Nova Scotia Brotherhood Initiative, which provides culturally appropriate health services for men of African descent. A new Project Sisterhood will also begin this year.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is investing in continuing care and the people who provide that care. Funding for more staff will support a new standard that sees at least 4.1 hours of one-on-one care for every long-term care resident. It will cost \$25 million, but who can put a price on providing quality care and dignity for residents in the place they call home?

Staff caring for clients need our support too, which is why we are investing in more workplace safety, safe handling and mobility equipment.

CCAs are a crucial part of the workforce, and we are serious about hiring 1,400 more. We're covering tuition, have a targeted immigration strategy to attract and retain new CCAs, and we have introduced new approaches like work-and-learn opportunities. We also know that the \$9,000 a year raise that we just announced for CCAs will help.

Amy Lake is one of 90 continuing care students working in long-term care facilities under the tuition support and work-and-learn program. She is studying at CBBC Career College and working at Dykeland Lodge in Windsor. She says she is grateful to have the opportunity to be in the program and work in an amazing place while doing her training. Further, she says this opportunity has given her the ability to further her education without financial concern and stress on her family.

We are also being aggressive with our plan to open 2,800 more long-term care spaces for Nova Scotians who are waiting at home and in hospital. Until they open, with \$11 million, we will extend or convert more than 190 new long-term care spaces, including Veterans Affairs spaces. This will help create more bed capacity more quickly, and support patient flow within the health system.

To help our seniors stay in their homes longer, we are providing nearly \$30 million for the Seniors Care Grant, which was launched last Fall for Nova Scotians aged 65 and older. This grant gives seniors some extra support to help pay for household services like snow removal, grocery delivery, lawn care, and small home repairs. Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that we made the Seniors Care Grant so that people do not have to pay tax on that income.

Over 40 per cent of the \$1.6 billion capital plan this year is being directed to health care. Generational investments are being made in the QEII and the Cape Breton Regional Hospital redevelopment projects. From the Yarmouth emergency department, South Shore Regional Hospital, a health centre in North Cumberland, projects at Dartmouth General

and Nova Scotia Hospital in Dartmouth, to the emergency department at the IWK Health Centre, all of these will see progress this year.

Our investments and partnerships with foundations and community groups are also funding more advanced technology, like a new MRI in Bridgewater and new robotics in Halifax. These projects and other changes throughout the system will support modern health care and they will attract new health care workers.

Continuing to fund a modern and responsive health care system requires a growing economy and a larger tax base. For that, we need an economy where everyone feels they have a chance to contribute.

SOLUTIONS FOR OUR ECONOMY

Mr. Speaker, in December, I presented a mid-year fiscal update. One of the great surprises we announced was \$1 billion in unexpected higher revenue for the province.

The track of the pandemic, and how it would impact our province and our economy, was largely unknown. Yet our economy performed better than expected through both 2020 and 2021. Our GDP contracted 2.5 per cent in 2020, the second lowest of all provinces and significantly better than the estimate of a 5.3 per cent reduction.

In 2021, Nova Scotia's economy made a significant recovery from the pandemic and by September, exports and employment were higher than pre-pandemic levels. In December, Nova Scotia's population crossed over the one million people threshold.

Mr. Speaker, we must be mindful. Not everyone had the same experience. The people who work in tourism, hospitality and some of our service industries were harder hit and challenged by changing conditions and the starts and stops of restrictions.

Now, with restrictions lifted and impressive levels of vaccination, Nova Scotians want to look forward. While we face new economic uncertainties, like the conflict in Ukraine and the potential for new COVID variants, we can still be optimistic about where we are heading.

Budget 2022-23 is making investments to strengthen our workforce and our businesses. Employers are hiring and there are opportunities for those looking to upskill and gain new employment opportunities. Carpenters, electricians, plumbers, heavy equipment operators, roofers, IT and health care professionals - these are just a few examples of occupations in high demand, well-paying career paths open right now.

Nova Scotians who may need more support connecting to the workforce can get help. There are job seeker supports through Nova Scotia Works and other programs like

wage subsidies, career counseling and financial supports for certification fees and tuition, technology requirements and training courses.

Involving more young people in the trades is critical. With new funding, we hope to raise awareness among middle school students about careers in skilled trades and double the number of students in skilled trades programming.

We will launch a new financial incentive to help attract and retain young skilled workers. The More Opportunities for Skilled Trades program aims to attract and retain young workers in industries with labour shortages. Starting in the 2022 tax year, people under the age of 30 who are employed in eligible trades will receive a refund of personal income tax paid on their first \$50,000 of earned income.

We know that Nova Scotia's population has been growing by about 10,000 each year over the past few years - but we need to step it up. We have set an ambitious long-term population growth target of two million people by the year 2060.

We are implementing broad-based and targeted recruitment solutions to attract more people - through immigration and in-migration - and to keep them here in Nova Scotia. We're expanding the immigration team and providing more support to community-based settlement organizations, which are critical to helping people when they arrive and start their lives here.

Companies that want to make forward-looking investments in their employees and their operations have a supportive partner in this government, Mr. Speaker. The Province is making the Innovation Rebate Program permanent with annual funding of \$12 million. These rebates encourage private sector investment in their own facilities, in innovative processes and in green technologies to reduce emissions and become more sustainable.

Our recent \$12 million investment in tourism is helping the sector get ready for this year's tourism season. Much of this funding is being used to boost regional tourism marketing and help more operators go digital.

Increasing air access is key to growing tourism. We recently provided nearly \$20 million for our two largest airports. The Halifax International Airport Authority will have more funding in its air access fund to attract new travel routes and new business. The Sydney Airport Authority will complete much-needed upgrades and create its own air access fund for business development.

The film sector helps to create jobs. It draws international visitors and investments to our province. With provincial funding support announced a few weeks ago, a new sound stage and content creator fund for the film sector will set the sector up for opportunity like never before. Budget 2022-23 will also support a robust Film and Television Production Incentive Fund for new projects.

These investments will have a positive impact in every community across the province and showcase local talent.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia's talented artisans and innovative entrepreneurs also benefit when Nova Scotians use their purchasing power to buy well-crafted, quality, sustainable products that are made here at home.

We will continue to encourage the buy-local movement with a new Nova Scotia Loyal program this year, which is under development now.

Our businesses are looking to a diverse range of international markets, too. In 2021, international merchandise shipments increased 18.1 per cent. We saw significant growth in exports to the United States, the European Union and Indo-Pacific markets.

These are great opportunities for our seafood producers, manufacturers, natural resources sectors and agri-food businesses - most of which drive the economies of our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, every member in this Chamber knows that the one need that cuts across all sectors and all businesses in this day-and-age is access to high-speed internet. Work to connect homes and businesses with fibre-op is happening under existing contracts. For some of the hardest-to-reach customers, that will mean we need to find satellite solutions.

Innovation drives economic growth, and this government is making decisions that will have long-term positive impacts.

The government was pleased to recently invest \$2.5 million in the Verschuren Centre for Sustainability in Energy and the Environment for a new biomanufacturing centre in Sydney. This new centre will create high-tech jobs, attract new business, and help find new solutions for business challenges.

In the Fall, the government released a plan of solutions and action for housing. We could have waited, but we chose to act immediately. We rolled out close to \$35 million to support more than 1,000 new affordable housing units, including 425 new rent supplements.

In this budget we're doing even more. With \$15 million more for affordable housing programs and \$2.7 million for new rent supplements, more Nova Scotians will be able to access housing and support to help with the rising cost of rent.

We'll do what needs to be done to make sure Nova Scotians can afford a place to call home. We will leverage every dollar we can, working with the federal and municipal

governments as partners, to identify and remove barriers so that developers and builders can get on with it.

We will also begin three projects this year to build new NSCC campuses in Dartmouth and Pictou, knowing that more housing options for these students can help alleviate some of the pressure on those communities.

We know how hard it has been for people to find housing. Employers, particularly in rural areas, are telling us that lack of housing availability is affecting their workforce and our local economies. Budget 2022-23 also introduces new tax measures for non-resident homeowners. If they are renting to Nova Scotians, they will not pay the non-resident property tax.

SOLUTIONS FOR OUR FUTURE

Nova Scotia's future is bright. We want it to be bright for everyone.

Budget 2022-23 will invest \$54.2 million more in programs that support people with disabilities.

This budget recognizes that children with disabilities are more likely to achieve their full potential when they receive services at a younger age and families are supported to care for their children at home.

That's why we are investing \$3.5 million more in the Direct Family Support for Children program, which will increase support for families that have a child with a disability living at home.

In addition, over the next two years, we will develop a range of programs and services to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities and their families.

With \$8.8 million, we are removing the cap on the Independent Living Support program. Opening this program to address the waitlist will provide more people with the supports they need to live with the maximum level of independence and autonomy.

This year, too, we will help more people move from larger residential centres to more community- and independent-living options, with the right supports in place.

We are also investing \$3.5 million to help young adults move from long-term care homes into community placements where they can live more independently with people of a similar age.

These investments will help people like the clients that L'Arche Cape Breton in Iron Mines, Inverness County, works with every day.

In addition to operating a residential home, L'Arche offers daytime programming where their in-home and community clients engage in activities together. This can help families gain respite or allow them to go to work.

I've met with the Executive Director and Community Leader Mukthar Limpao. He tells me that the demand for inclusive and meaningful opportunities is growing across the province and is pleased to hear this government is considering the needs of these community members in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we know thousands of Nova Scotians are living in poverty and want more for their children. We share their concern and want to help provide every child with the opportunity to thrive.

Planning is under way on approaches to reduce childhood poverty. With \$12.5 million in this budget, families will see an increase to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit. This will put more money in the hands of low-income families so they can meet the needs of their children.

Additional investments this year will advance our work to redesign the Foster Care program. At the heart of this work are people willing to provide safe, stable caregiving in a home setting for children in need. We owe it to them to provide adequate financial supports, such as higher daily rates.

Homelessness is another very real and complex problem. It affects people in different ways and prevents them from moving forward. That's why we need to work with community groups and others on a range of responses.

This year, nearly \$17 million will be used for new and continued supportive housing initiatives to help with people's safety and well-being, including the cost of harm reduction services. We are supporting community-based service providers that work directly with people in need, like Out of the Cold in Halifax. We are also providing more funding for emergency sheltering options and volunteer-based shelters in rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that abuses against women, children and other vulnerable people are still a part of our society is heartbreaking. Budget 2022-23 is investing \$2.1 million more this year to help prevent domestic violence.

We expect to see more grants reach community organizations and partnerships for initiatives, prototypes and pilots that better respond to people's needs, promote gender equality and address barriers facing the most vulnerable Nova Scotians.

I believe that those who protect us should, in turn, be protected by their government. Over the course of four fiscal years, the government will cover the \$80 million in liability costs to ensure firefighters - both paid and volunteer - receive presumptive cancer coverage

for 13 additional cancers and heart attack coverage through the Workers' Compensation Board. About 6,600 firefighters and their families will receive this benefit.

Keeping another promise, we are helping Nova Scotians who are paying for fertility services with a new Fertility and Surrogacy annual rebate of up to \$8,000 to offset some of the costs associated with these services.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2022-23 also invests in the care, education, and well-being of our children.

More families will be supported with the cost of early child care. Pre-primary classes will welcome new children as more families choose this option for their four-year-olds.

And this year, with \$12 million in additional funding, we are putting a new model in place for pre-school-aged children with autism spectrum disorders. Supports will be tailored to the needs of each child and their family. We expect diagnostic assessments will be done more quickly and parent-coaching programming will be expanded across the province.

This budget invests a further \$15 million to continue implementing the recommendations from the Commission on Inclusive Education.

More funding will be available to meet the growing need for settlement services, interpretation, and translation resources within the public school system to help children whose first language is not English.

The Healthy Schools Grant for all public schools will continue and we are also introducing a new Sports and Arts Tax Credit to help families offset the costs of their children's registration in sports and the arts.

This budget invests in revitalizing our communities, infrastructure, and transportation systems that support a growing economy.

Highway twinning on most of our 100-series highways is well underway, but this government hasn't forgotten about our rural roads. This year's capital plan includes a new \$30 million dollar envelope for bridge repair and renewal and we are doubling rural road maintenance budgets.

In the last few months, we invested \$57 million to expand energy efficiency programs that address energy poverty and improve efficiency for Nova Scotians and businesses. We directed \$44.9 million from Green Fund revenues to worthy projects, too.

Our programs will help reduce GHG emissions and help people convert to cleaner heating and other energy options. We're trying to green the electricity system by introducing more renewable energy sources and improving sustainable transportation infrastructure with more electric vehicle charging stations.

CONCLUSION

For the past two years, Nova Scotians have made tremendous sacrifices. They have shown the world what taking care of one another looks like. They have been resilient. This government is willing to match the determination of the people we serve.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to doing what was promised during the 2021 general election. We know it will take time and resources and it will take disciplined focus on the most important priorities first. We strive to be a compassionate government, committed to listening and to finding creative solutions that help Nova Scotians thrive.

Budget 2022-23 offers solutions for health care, solutions for Nova Scotians, and solutions to get our province moving forward. We are looking to the future with optimism. (Applause)

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'm going to make a few brief remarks, my first impressions of the budget.

First of all, I want to say congratulations to the member for Inverness, the Finance and Treasury Board Minister; also the members of Treasury Board, and the staff of Treasury Board. I know that crafting a budget is a big undertaking and I want to congratulate them all on this. Even though it is not the Finance and Treasury Board Minister's picture that graces the front cover of the budget, I know he has worked very hard.

That said, Nova Scotia is in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis. Inflation is at a 30-year high. A recent Angus Reid Institute poll indicates that over half of the country is concerned about rising prices. One in six Nova Scotians is worried about food insecurity.

There is some help in this budget, Mr. Speaker, but not much. There is some help for persons with disabilities, and I want to congratulate the Minister of Community Services on having that in this budget - the Independent Living Support program, Direct Family Support for Children program, those are important. There's an increase in the child tax benefit and there's a tax holiday for certain tradespersons under the age of 30. There's

money for fertility treatments, too, and those are all important, but for everyone else this is pretty thin gruel.

There is nothing here - well, the Premier can laugh, but we're not laughing on this side, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing here to help with the cost of living. Now perhaps it's because they fired the economic recovery council, but this budget is delivered on the backs of Nova Scotians who don't have children or whose children are grown. It's on the backs of seniors and it's on the backs of small business.

There is no sign, Mr. Speaker, in this budget of the two signature programs that they talked about all through the election campaign that were going to help the economy. The Better Pay Cheque Guarantee, it turns out it wasn't guaranteed. It's not here, there's no sign of it. The Nova Scotia Loyal program, apparently there is no loyalty there, because there's no sign of it.

The CFIB reports that 66 per cent of businesses are reporting incomes below normal. Sixty-seven point two per cent of Nova Scotia businesses took on debt during the pandemic, and for most of them, the average was \$100,000 or more. About a quarter think they might be able to repay it within two years, but almost 16 per cent are concerned they're never going to be able to repay that. There is nothing here for them in this budget.

Fifty-six per cent of the respondents to a CFIB poll indicate the Nova Scotia government is not doing enough to respond to the province's labour shortage. Sixty-five per cent of business owners believe the Nova Scotia government has a role to play in helping Nova Scotian businesses find workers.

Costs are up for housing. If you can find it, you're going to pay a lot more for it. There's nothing here to help. Costs are up for food. Costs are up for gas. There's nothing in this budget to help seniors with affordability. People wishing to buy their first home - I don't know what our children are going to do about buying a house, if they're ever going to. What's their plan supposed to be? Wait for your parents to die so they will you the house?

For families without children or for families whose children are grown, there's nothing in this budget. There's less spending on key areas: the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Department of Environment and Climate Change, the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables - cuts in those departments. They're key to our economy. They're key to our future. There is no plan to help businesses recover from the pandemic.

I am pleased to see that there's an increase in funding to the Department of Health and Wellness, but the truth of the matter is, it's less than we increased it last year. It's interesting, because we do see the public service growing, which I always thought was the opposite of what they believed in.

Since the Progressive Conservatives have taken over, health care has declined by any measure. Every measure. The Need a Family Practice Registry wait-list has increased. In February, 34 long-term care homes were closed to new residents, 17 because of lack of staffing, 17 because of COVID-19. There's been a major jump in the long-term care wait-list, over a month. On March 28, 553 health care workers were off because of COVID-19. It jumped by 141 from the week before. That's not an improvement in health care.

We know, based on the news that came out last week, that 133 Nova Scotians died in the Omicron wave. That's more than every other wave of COVID-19 put together. Just as we were coming into the House, IUOE reported yet another Code Critical, this time in the Western Region.

I will remind my honourable colleagues on the other side of the House that Nova Scotians during the election did not hear terms like "this will take time" or "there are no quick fixes" during the campaign. What we heard over and over again is that . . . (Interruption)

THE CHAIR: Order, please. The honourable member for Bedford Basin has the floor.

KELLY REGAN: We heard over and over that they knew how they were going to fix things, and then they got in here and they didn't know what they were going to do. They went on tour and asked people what to do. There are no quick fixes, they have no plan, there is no massive spending increase, because it's not more than we increased it last year.

I'll have more to say about the budget. I know you're disappointed. I'm just getting started, but I'll have more to say on this tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I move to adjourn the debate on the Budget Address and look forward to resuming my comments at a future date. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn the debate on the Budget Address.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The time is now 1:56 p.m. We'll begin the Daily Routine and Question Period will begin at 2:56 p.m.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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'm directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 96 - Dismantling Racism and Hate Act.

Bill No. 99 - Quality-improvement Information Protection Act.

Bill No. 101 - Marine Renewable-energy Act.

Bill No. 102 - Wildlife Act.

Bill No. 104 - Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act.

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each 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 Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: I wish to table a document which I ought to have tabled at this part of the agenda on our last day of meeting, and inadvertently tabled it in the wrong part of the agenda. The article's entitled "Premier Houston commits to not fight disabled rights ruling" and I wish to table it now.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: In consideration of a member's statement which I shall make later today, I wish to table a document entitled Premier Says His Government Will Not Fight this Ruling: We've Heard the Message Loud and Clear.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 182

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

Whereas social workers are the heart of social services in this province within communities and government, and work tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of Nova Scotians; and

Whereas building strong families and a stronger Nova Scotia starts with how we protect our most vulnerable, and social workers support people and families to thrive; and

Whereas March is National Social Work Month with a theme of “In Critical Demand,” and a time to reflect on the important work social workers do every day and especially during the pandemic to help Nova Scotians who need it most;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing National Social Work Month 2022 and thanking the incredible social workers who work so hard throughout our communities.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

RESOLUTION NO. 183

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

Whereas our ocean vistas, coastlines, and beaches are among our province’s most beautiful and valuable assets supporting our economy and contributing to our high quality of life; and

[2:00 p.m.]

Whereas litter on our beaches and shorelines, and marine debris that washes ashore is a problem in many areas of Nova Scotia, and can harm marine life, damage habitats and ecosystems, and impact the beauty of these special places; and

Whereas the Scotian Shores cleanup group, led by its founder Angela Riley, has been cleaning the shorelines of Nova Scotia for two years, removing over 100,000 lbs. of debris;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join me in thanking Angela Riley for her community service and for her leadership in helping to keep our province's beaches and coastline clean, healthy, and pristine.

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

PROUDFOOT, BEN: ACADEMY AWARD WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, Sunday night, Halifax director Ben Proudfoot won the Academy Award in the Best Short Subject Documentary category for his film *The Queen of Basketball*.

His 22-minute film centres on the story of Lucy Harris. She won three national championships, she's an Olympic medalist, the only woman to be drafted by the NBA, and the first Black woman inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. To watch this documentary is to love Lucy, there's no question about that.

Ben Proudfoot was co-director with Kris Bowers of the short documentary film *A Concerto is a Conversation*, which was an Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary (Short Subject) in 2021. The remarkable success of Ben Proudfoot and other Nova Scotian filmmakers on the world stage shows the quality and depth of the talent we foster in our small but mighty province. All Nova Scotians are proud to watch this incredible success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Ben Proudfoot on his extraordinary achievement and wish him and all Nova Scotia filmmakers continued success in the future. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

PERKS, CHRIS: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a moment of silence after I read my member statement.

This past week, Nova Scotians were made aware of a tragic workplace accident. Chris Perks of Leiblin Park passed away doing what he loved: Being a lineman. This one hits home hard. Chris was an amazing Tae Kwon Do instructor to many in our community, including my children.

Chris was a mountain of a man, but his heart was even bigger. We often speak positively of those who've passed, but truly no one has ever said a bad word about Chris. His love for Katie was unconditional. Their love was an example for all, and they always lit up a room. My heart goes out to Chris's dad and his family. To Katie: We are always here for you.

Mr. Speaker, Chris was an angel on Earth. I truly believe he's an angel in heaven looking down over all of us. Rest in peace, my friend.

THE SPEAKER: We'll observe a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DISABLED COM.: RIGHTS UPHELD - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I invite the House to reflect on the historic occasion of October 6, 2021, when Nova Scotia's top court upheld the right of our disabled community to decide where and how they lived in their community. I'd like to share the following tweet, which I have previously tabled, made on October 7th by Michael Gorman,

who was covering the story for the CBC and who wrote: the Premier “. . . says his govt will not fight this ruling. ‘We’ve heard the message loud and clear’”.

I ask the House to join me in acknowledging the significance of the Premier’s October 7th commitment to the wide community affected by the October 6, 2021, Court of Appeal decision.

SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

E. PASSAGE COW BAY LIONS CLUB: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Lions Club that celebrated their 50th club anniversary at their March 12, 2022, Charter Night. The Lions Club is the largest service club in the world and I am proud of the Lions Club members current and past.

When I look back at our previous King Lions, I am delighted that we have so many of them active members of our club. We do many fundraisers. Our Tuesday night bingo is a community hit. We also host breakfasts, yard sales, and hall rentals, and we do a Carnival Road Toll. At our Charter Night, our club chose our first responders to receive the community Member of the Year Award, recognizing them for their significant contributions.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking all Lions Club members for their dedication to their community.

SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

LITTLEST PET BAKERY: CONTINUED SUCCESS - RECOG.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome the Bishop family and their online business, The Littlest Pet Bakery, to our community of Cole Harbour. Their journey started seven years ago in Winnipeg with the idea from their then-four-year-old little girl looking to bake and sell pet treats from her bike.

That was then, and now they are a thriving online home business with them settling in Cole Harbour. The bakery is now mother-and daughter-run since the sudden loss of their beloved husband, father and chef. Jennifer and her daughter Jamasia had to make a tough decision to close or keep going after the devastating loss of Isaac. Thankfully, they chose to forge ahead and they are excited for the next stage of their journey.

The Littlest Pet Bakery crafts their popular pet cakes all by hand and from only top-quality ingredients which are grain-free and “free from everything else,” they say, because

they want to ensure no dog is left out of the party. I ask the members of this House to join me in welcoming and wishing The Littlest Pet Bakery much continued success.

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

ENERGY POV. IN C.B.: ACTION REQUIRED - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, nowhere in our province does the rising cost of living hit harder than in Cape Breton, where one in three children live in poverty. At a time when people in our region are already struggling to keep their lights on, Nova Scotia Power's application to increase rates by nearly 10 per cent is nothing less than a slap in the face.

Every day my office hears from constituents who cannot afford their rent, mortgage, groceries, and home heating bills. Despite the generosity of community organizations, there just isn't enough relief to even scratch the surface of the need. Cape Bretoners are not looking for band-aids. We need housing strategies focused on affordability and efficiency, a power utility that works for people, and a living wage for all working Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

UPADHYAY, SAMIR: COM. SERV. - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Samir Upadhyay, who emigrated to Canada in 2010 from India as an international student. His accomplishments since arriving are incredible. He currently works as the YREACH Co-ordinator on the South Shore, providing information, orientation and settlement support to immigrants and temporary foreign workers. He's also the owner of two Ultramar gas stations and a convenience store. Prior to this, he was a school bus driver and a part-time Town of Bridgewater transit driver.

Samir gives back to his community in a big way. He's a volunteer firefighter with the Hebbville Fire Department and vice president of South Shore Multicultural Association. Anne Fownes, the association's executive director, says they are so very fortunate to have Samir. As a board member, he brings his passion for promoting cultural diversity and for welcoming newcomers to everything he does.

Always willing to lend a hand, collaborate on projects, and be involved in a multitude of community-minded endeavours, Samir is a true leader. Congratulations Samir Upadhyay, a newcomer to Canada who makes our community a better place to live.

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

SAJ HOUSE: NEW LOCATION - BEST WISHES

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say goodbye to a beloved Fairview institution, Saj House.

For 20 years the Saj House team, led by original owner the late Saad Issa welcomed customers to their Fairview home for some of the best Lebanese food around. They specialized in Mana'eesh, which is a traditional flatbread but also had delicious fatayers, shawarmas, salads, baklawa and much more. It was a place I frequently stopped by to get a delicious meal when it was just up the hill from my constituency office.

On January 24th, Saj House closed down their Fairview location and are on the move to Bedford West. I'd like to personally invite the member for Bedford South to join me for a Lebanese feast when their new location opens up. It will be a great addition to his area.

I ask all members of this House to wish new owner Bassel Al Jamil and the Saj House staff all the best at their new location.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

COST OF HOUSING: ACTION NEEDED - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the serious increases in the cost of housing for Nova Scotians over the last year. I hear from people in my community and from all across Nova Scotia every day about the struggles they face looking for an affordable place to live.

Too many people are either spending way too much for shelter, meaning they can't afford their grocery or power bills any more or they have to move. They have very few options when they need a new home. This year the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Halifax is up \$250, compared to last year and the average price to purchase a home is up over \$100,000.

People are struggling. The increase in the cost of housing is pushing more and more people past the breaking point and something must be done. As was said, our basic needs must be met and who can put a price tag on the quality of living? We need to do what needs to be done, collectively, with all of us in mind. We have to do better for all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

PHARMACIES IN GUYS.-TRACADIE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the three pharmacies in the constituency of Guysborough-Tracadie: Guysborough PharmaChoice, Canso PharmaChoice, and Shoppers Drug Mart, Sherbrooke.

March is Pharmacy Awareness Month and over the last two years these pharmacies, their pharmacists and staff have gone above and beyond during these very uncommon times. Rural pharmacists have pivoted in a way that has kept this vital aspect of health care available in our communities. Whether it's administering vaccines, renewing much-needed prescriptions, offering advice and often assisting in triaging patients who come to their counter, pharmacists have been invaluable to our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House join me in recognizing the Guysborough, Canso and Sherbrooke pharmacies for their continued commitment to excellent service to their patients and customers in Guysborough-Tracadie.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

CAN. MEN'S SOCCER TEAM: WORLD CUP QUALIFIC. - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Canada's Men's Soccer Team for qualifying for the World Cup. While hockey will always be Canada's game, football belongs to the world. It's an amazing achievement to see our country represent in the biggest sports event on the planet.

Mr. Speaker, it's an exciting time to be a soccer fan in Nova Scotia. I can only begin to imagine how much this team of diverse and talented Canadians would inspire the players of tomorrow. I wish them luck in Qatar and I will be even happier to watch them when in 2026 Canada will be the host country.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this House to acknowledge the success of our national team.

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

MOIS DE LA FRANCOPHONIE: RAISING AWARENESS - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Monsieur, le Président, aujourd'hui je voudrais reconnaître le Mois de la Francophonie qui a lieu chaque mars. On se lève à cette occasion chaque mars en raison de se sensibiliser d'une langue et une culture qui ne tiennent pas seulement une place importante au Canada mais qui unissent tous les coins du monde d'une façon linguistique et culturelle.

La Nouvelle-Écosse a une population francophone vivante et diverse qui existe depuis plus de 400 ans. Monsieur le Président, j'invite tous les membres de l'Assemblée à me rejoindre en célébrant le Mois de la Francophonie.

[2:15 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize le Mois de la Francophonie, which takes place every March. We celebrate this occasion to raise awareness around French language and culture. This not only holds an important place in Canadian society but unites all corners of the world linguistically and culturally.

Nova Scotia has a vibrant and diverse francophone population with a history dating back more than 400 years. I invite other members to join me in celebrating this year's Mois de la Francophonie.

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

EVANS, WILLA: HOCKEY VOLUN. EFFORTS - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: I rise today to recognize a remarkable 17-year-old Truro athlete and community mentor, Willa Evans. Willa was recently named a Hockey Canada Champion in recognition of her outstanding work as a junior coach community mentor.

She represents diversity in hockey, and her talents reflect her many years of hard work and dedication. Willa is passionate about sharing her love of hockey and giving back to her community. In addition to being the captain of Fundy Highland's U18 AA hockey program, she also volunteers with Hockey Nova Scotia's Black Youth Ice Hockey Program and contributes to the Hockey Canada Foundation's Dreams Come True initiative.

I would like to ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating the efforts of this talented and selfless young woman.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

RIDING ASSOC. MEMBERS: IMPORTANCE - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: All members know how important having a strong local riding association is, so I wanted to recognize some members of mine who have stepped forward. With a new riding, I was in an interesting position after the election of having to build things from scratch.

I want to recognize Kaitlynn Creighan, Chandler White, Charles Nwachukwu, Derek Bellmore, Aileen Nauss, Muhammad El Habibi, Judy Foran, Foxx Liu, Joanne

Bouchard, Melissa Penneycad, Kevin Cosgrove, and, last but not least, Gavin Kassouf. He's 15 and is our wonderful youth representative. I'm stealing restaurant association members - I apologize.

All 55 of us know how important these people are. They serve our communities, really make our jobs easier, and do a great job. I just wanted to recognize all the members in Bedford South.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ARCHDIOCESE OF HFX.-YAR.: EMERG. SHELTERS PROJ. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: I have risen many times in this House about Nova Scotia's affordable housing crisis. This Winter, people and organizations across the province stepped up to provide emergency shelter and supports for those living without this basic human right. One of these groups is the outreach team at St. Anthony's Church, which is part of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish on Farrell Street in Dartmouth North.

The Emergency Shelters Project is a province-wide initiative by the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth, consisting of 20 emergency shelters - small, heated structures with beds and power. They were built by the Burnside business Well Engineered Inc., which donated its time to the project. Three of the shelters are located at St. Anthony's. The outreach team at Our Lady of Guadalupe assists the residents, and there is a roster of community members who provide hot lunches to the residents.

I ask all members of this House of Assembly to congratulate and thank those responsible for providing emergency shelters across the province and for supporting the unhoused neighbours who are residing in them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

CHRISTMAS ANGELS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I rise today to commend the outstanding efforts of the Christmas Angels board of directors, local partners, and team of volunteers.

Since 1977, the Christmas Angels have been supporting the local families and children of Hants County by confidentially assisting those in need so they can meet the demands of holiday traditions. They help with everything from gift-giving to putting a turkey dinner on the table.

This year was no different, and they managed to raise over \$70,000, which is an outstanding accomplishment. It is truly magical how the community pulls together for this annual event.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the Christmas Angels organization deserves recognition for continuing to be a source of hope and light to so many families year after year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

C.B. FARMERS EXHIB.: COM. RALLIED - SUPPORT

FRED TILLEY: On Sunday, I had the opportunity to attend a community meeting with regard to the Cape Breton Farmers Exhibition grounds in North Sydney. It's amazing to watch Cape Bretoners come together in a time of crisis and need.

At this meeting, there was a significant number of people there, which was great to see, and everyone spoke about their times as youth at the exhibition. It's been there over 100 years. As the representative for Northside-Westmount, I couldn't be prouder of the way this community has rallied together. The horse community, the horsemen, the Exhibition Society have come together. They're trying to purchase this property so that it can be maintained in an agricultural standpoint going forward. Unfortunately, it's up for sale by the federation. I want to thank that group for coming together. I support them 100 per cent.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

TAMPON TUESDAY: COST OF HEALTH NECS. - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Tampon Tuesday. More than half of the population - not quite half of this Chamber - menstruates approximately once a month for approximately 40 years. We pay an exorbitant amount for basic health necessities that allow us to meet our basic hygiene needs. For those who live on the edge of poverty, which is an increasing number of Nova Scotians, no access to menstrual products can mean missing school, sports, and other activities and opportunities.

On my fifth year of recognizing this day, I ask my colleagues to join me in banding together to pass one of the many pieces of legislation put forward by different parties in this House to make period poverty a thing of the past. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

MANNETTE, AUSTIN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great sadness to express my deepest condolences to the family of Austin Mannette of West Chezzetcook. He passed away suddenly at home on March 10th.

Austin was known to many along the Eastern Shore as the owner of Mannedette's Nursery, a family-operated garden centre that is an institution on the shore and has been for over 80 years.

Mr. Speaker, this statement is especially poignant to me as I considered Austin a friend and mentor. A long-time member of the Eastern Shore PC Association, Austin worked tirelessly on my campaign, organizing, preparing, and installing signs, and was a staunch supporter. His caring and helpful nature was evident in the quality plants and flowers that he nurtured. Austin was never afraid to offer his opinion, and I thoroughly enjoyed and will truly miss our healthy political conversations. He was a true gentleman. I would not be here today if not for his encouragement to seek the nomination.

I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing Austin's generosity of spirit and to express sincere sympathies to his friends and loved ones. (Applause)

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

AUBURN DRIVE HS EAGLES: GREAT SEASON - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, the high school football season might seem like a distant memory for most of us because it's Spring, but for the Auburn Drive High School Eagles football team, the 2020-21 season will be etched in their memories for a very long time. On November 14th, the Auburn Eagles capped off their season with a provincial championship win against the Bayview Flames.

It was the first time in the team's history to ever play in a provincial football final. Auburn has had a successful football program for close to a decade but had never been able to make a serious run at a provincial banner until this past year, when the team began to show themselves as a major player in the high school football league. But as Coach Dion Thomas Hodges knew all too well, all provincial title hopes ran through the Citadel Phoenix, their long-standing rival and the winner of 11 of the past 12 titles. The Auburn Eagles' season's mantra was "Let's be legendary."

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Auburn Drive Eagles football team for 2020-21 for their legendary season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

LEVACK, VICTORIA: HOUSING ADV. - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak in recognition today of Victoria Levack for her work in housing advocacy in Nova Scotia. For many years, Vicky Levack has been advocating for appropriate housing for members of the disability community. She is a member of the Disability Rights Coalition and continually fights

against the inappropriate placement of people with disabilities in nursing homes. She currently fights against the Nova Scotia government's reversal of its commitment not to appeal the Court of Appeal decision that individuals with disabilities face systemic discrimination in housing in Nova Scotia.

Vicky's fight for appropriate housing is also not confined to her own community. As a spokesperson for PADS - Permanent, Accessible, Dignified, and Safer - Vicky has been speaking up for her unhoused neighbours regularly, bringing attention to the issues of homelessness in this city. She can often be found volunteering at People's Park in Halifax Chebucto and taking part in protests across the city.

I ask the House to join me in grateful recognition of the strong advocacy and voice of Vicky Levack.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

MURRAY, MABEL: 93rd BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform this House of Mabel Murray's 93rd birthday on March 17th, St. Patrick's Day. Mabel is a wonderful lady who was born and still resides in Tatamagouche. If you would ask any of her fellow residents what the trait was that they most admired in Mabel, they would say that she was never one to shy away from hard work.

I ask that the members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Mabel a healthy future and a very happy birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

MILLER, CHRIS - BLUE MTN.-BIRCH COVE LAKES: DED. - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to recognize Chris Miller, a constituent of mine and an inspiration behind Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area. Around 20 years ago, Chris Miller was a student who had big dreams. After growing up with his parents regularly taking him to Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, Chris gained a first-hand appreciation of all this area has to offer.

Now working as Executive Director for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Nova Scotia Chapter, Chris works with multiple people, including outsider organizations and three levels of government that share the same dream. It has been a pleasure to get to know Chris. He was the first one to come to my office to educate me on the value of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes. I thank him for that and will always work alongside and help with that effort.

I would ask that the House join me in recognizing Chris Miller for his hard work and dedication to Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes.

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

UNIV. SAINTE-ANNE STRIKE: RES. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with the professors and librarians at the Université Sainte Anne who walked onto the picket line earlier this month after negotiations broke down with the administration.

I am optimistic and happy to hear that talks between the striking professors, librarians and the administration have resumed, and agreements have been reached on half of the issues. The workers are looking for improvements to transparency, equity, including more manageable workloads within the college sector - which, by the way, is a majority of women or all women - and a more democratic style of management as well, Mr. Speaker.

We know that when working conditions improve and people feel valued, it creates a more healthy and productive working and learning environment. Thank you, and I wish them all well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

GRANT, ALEX: MBR. OF OLYMPIC MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM - CONGRATS.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Antigonish's Alex Grant, who was a member of Canada's Olympic Men's Hockey team who recently competed in the Beijing Olympics.

Alex played Junior Hockey with the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League's Saint John Sea Dogs before being drafted in the fourth round of the NHL in 2007 by the Pittsburgh Penguins. He also played in Anaheim, Arizona, and Ottawa. In 2018, he signed with the Finnish team Jokerit in the Kontinental Hockey League.

Alex scored on his first shot on net for Team Canada, a repeat of his first shot on net as an NHL player. Congratulations to Alex and Team Canada for representing our country in the 2022 Olympics.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SPARKS, CORRINE - JUDGE: RETIREMENT - TRIBUTE

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I rise in the House today to recognize Judge Corrine Sparks. Family Court Judge Corrine Sparks is the first African Nova Scotian appointed to

the Nova Scotia Judiciary. After more than 34 years and three decades on the bench, she retired December 31, 2021.

Judge Sparks was born and raised in a small African Nova Scotian community, Lake Loon-Cherry Brook, where she completed her law degree at Dalhousie University. She is a trailblazer and alumna of the Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq Initiative, leading the way for how community advocacy and law can create opportunity and change.

For her work and meaningful contributions to the community, there is an award in her honour given to a third-year law student who exemplifies community and commitment to the profession. I am honoured to say that I was one of the recipients of this award in 2017. Judge Sparks continues to inspire and be a role model to me in many ways.

Judge Corrine Sparks will continue to break many barriers as she remains and starts her new role in 2022 to adjudicate disputes in the ownership of land titles in the historical Land Titles Initiative.

[2:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

TJONGARERO, ALEXIA: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to posthumously recognize Alexia Tjongarero, who suddenly passed away in February 2022.

A long-time resident of Halifax Needham, and a former resident of Mulgrave Park, Alexia made a memorable impact on the community when she worked for Mulgrave Park Healthy Kidz and Phoenix Youth.

Alexia truly valued youth in the community and taught them lifelong lessons on hard work, community work, and life planning. The impacts she made on the community are unmatched. She will be truly missed for her authenticity and her passion and love for community and human existence.

Her work here is done now, but her impact on the people she touched will live on forever. One of the youths she influenced said that while others were making fun of us for going to Healthy Kidz, we were getting a free master's class.

I hope Beverley and Destiny, her daughters, understand that their mum's passion made her an icon in the community and her legacy will surely live on. Rest in power, my friend.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CHIG. ISTHMUS: FLOOD PROT. NEED - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to discuss the earthen dikes, originally constructed in the 1600s by the Acadian people. They have protected the Chignecto Isthmus and the national trade corridor in Cumberland County for over 400 years.

They are currently being threatened by the combined effects of rising sea levels and the increase in severe weather events, both a result of climate change. Without the current protection of existing earthen dikes, much of the isthmus would be inundated by today's sea levels, resulting in significant negative and socio-economic impacts locally, regionally, and nationally.

Threatened flooding, similar to what we witnessed in British Columbia in December 2021, will devastate the economy of Nova Scotia. Currently \$35 billion worth of trade crosses Cumberland's Chignecto Isthmus every year via the Trans Canada Highway and CN Rail.

On this Budget Day, I would like to state on behalf of the people of Cumberland North and all Nova Scotians, the estimated capital cost to protect the Chignecto Isthmus of \$200 to \$300 million compared to the annual corridor economic activity of \$35 billion per year shows a significant imbalance between benefits and costs and I would state unequivocally that this must become a priority for the Government of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

VEINOT, JUSTIN & ROSE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a tremendous volunteer power couple in my constituency who have given many years of service to the Kingston/Greenwood minor sports community, Justin and Rose Veinot.

Justin has been coaching in the Greenwood Minor Basketball program and Pine Ridge Middle School for seven years, and that's where I had the privilege of coaching with him. He has also coached hockey in the Western Valley Minor Hockey Association and soccer for the Kingston/Greenwood Soccer Club.

He has been a mentor to many youth in his community and has worked on many initiatives between 14 Wing Greenwood, where he served as a member of the Armed Forces for 12 years, and the broader communities of Kings West. At 6'8", he truly is a larger-than-life volunteer in our community.

His wife Rose is a large part of all the teams Justin coaches with fundraising, managing, and overall just being in charge. They have been great role models for the Kingston/Greenwood area.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing the volunteer work this dynamic couple offers the people of Kings West.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

WILSON, JEAN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

RONNIE LEBLANC: Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais profiter de cette occasion pour rendre hommage à professeur Jean Wilson.

Jean Wilson est devenu professeur à l'Université Sainte-Anne en juillet 1990 - un professeur qui a investi tout son corps et son âme dans son enseignement tout en nouant des rapports amicaux avec les étudiants, ses collègues, et la communauté acadienne de Clare.

Père de quatre et grand-père de trois, Jean Wilson était une source d'inspiration offrant des conseils, des avisés, et faisait preuve d'une grande bienveillance. Avec son sens d'humeur, Jean Wilson faisait en sorte d'apporter un sourire à tout le monde dans son entourage.

Monsieur, le Président, je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour adresser nos sincères condoléances à la famille, amis, et communauté universitaire de Jean Wilson.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Professor Jean Wilson, who passed away suddenly on March 11, 2022.

Jean Wilson became a professor at Université Sainte-Anne in July 1990 - a professor who put his whole body and soul into his teaching while building friendships with students, colleagues, and the Acadian community of Clare.

A father of four and a grandfather of three, Jean Wilson was inspirational, wise, and caring. With his sense of humour, Jean Wilson made sure to bring a smile to everyone around him.

I ask all members to join me in extending our sincere condolences to the family, friends, and university community of Jean Wilson.

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

CHORNEY, DRs. JILL & DANIEL: SUPP. FOR UKRAINIANS - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise today to recognize Halifax Citadel-Sable Island residents, Drs. Jill and Daniel Chorney, and their friends, family, and community for their efforts to support Ukrainians affected by the war.

Daniel Chorney's grandparents came to Canada from Ukraine after the Second World War, arriving at Pier 21. Making pierogies with his grandmother is a childhood memory and selling homemade pierogies is a common fundraiser in Ukrainian communities. The Chorneys started Pierogies for Peace to raise money for the Canadian Red Cross.

If you have ever made pierogies, you know it is not a light undertaking, requiring hours of peeling and mashing potatoes and rolling and folding dough. That's why it is incredible that the Chorneys and their team of volunteers have made thousands of pierogies, with total funds raised today of more than \$12,000.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to recognise the efforts of Drs. Chorney and their team, as well as so many other Nova Scotians, to help those affected by the war in Ukraine.

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

VOLUNS.: RECIPS. OF FALL RIVER LIONS CLUB SERV. AWDS. - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN WONG: The Lions' motto is "We Serve," and their mission is to empower volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace, and promote international understanding through Lions Clubs.

Last month, Fall River's King Lion, Kirk Stephen, was honoured to present the following Service Awards: PDG John Boudreau, 55 years service; Lion Bill Horne, with whom you may be familiar, 30 years service; Lion John Bona, 30 years service; and Lion Tim Holt, 10 years service

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating these hard-working volunteers, and if you happen to be near Fall River on a Thursday Night, stop at the local Lions Hall for some of the best wings around.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PHIBBS, CANDICE: FUNDRAISER FOR UKRAINE ORG. - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: On March 20, Yarmouth resident Candice Phibbs organized a Perogy Fundraiser for Ukraine at the Yarmouth Knights of Columbus. The

event sold out shortly after it was announced. Thousands of pierogies and over 1,700 chrusickis were sold, raising \$7,213.

In addition to providing their hall as a venue for the event, the Yarmouth Knights of Columbus also made a donation of \$2,000, bringing the total to more than \$9,000 being donated to the Red Cross Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Candice Phibbs, whose maternal grandparents immigrated to Canada from Ukraine and used her beloved grandmother's pierogi recipe, for her care and compassion in organizing this special event, her team of volunteers for helping make thousands of pierogies, the Yarmouth Knights of Columbus for their generosity, and our community, who helped make this important fundraiser a sellout. I'm so proud of our amazing community for once again coming together, this time to help the people of Ukraine during this illegal and horrific war.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SKY'S PET GROOMING: RECIP. OF HFX. COM. AWD. - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: As a dog mom of two, I am pleased to recognize Sky's Pet Grooming, which recently won the 2021 Platinum Award for Pet Grooming from the Halifax Community Awards.

The new-to-Dartmouth North independent pet grooming business is co-owned by couple Holly and Rainie. Rainie started the business, named after their late Sheltie dog Skyler, in their home in Dartmouth. In addition to being co-owner, Holly works at the Dartmouth Veterinary Clinic on Tacoma Drive.

Sky's also recently marked what would have been beloved Golden Girl Betty White's 100th birthday with a Bath and Blowout fundraiser. All proceeds went to the SPCA to help buy food and beds after it was robbed last year. Both Sandy, who works in my office, and I recently took our dogs - Sandy's dog, Benjie, mine, Gregory Jack, to Sky's, and we were thrilled with the experience. We now have a couple of very handsome and happy office dogs.

Congratulations to the whole crew at Sky's on their new location and award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

BRUCE, LAWRENCE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

NOLAN YOUNG: I rise today to recognize Lawrence Bruce, the epitome of community volunteerism, who is still volunteering daily at age 80. Lawrence is the father of six children. He has 12 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren.

I want to take a moment to list some of the organizations Lawrence has been involved with over the years. He is an original founding member of the Shelburne County Cultural Awareness Society, now the Black Loyalist Heritage Society. He volunteered with Missions to Seafarers, the Shelburne Volunteer Fire Department, and is still a member of Christ Anglican Church, where he organizes and delivers Christmas hampers, regular men's breakfasts, and Shrove Tuesday pancake suppers.

Mr. Speaker, Lawrence saw a need in our community and started Grampy's Store, which provides furniture, kitchen wares, books and more, free to anyone in need. In his spare time, he remains a devoted family man, an avid hunter, and gardener.

I respectfully ask that all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly join me in thanking Lawrence for his commitment to the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

HAFTING, SAUL: GUINNESS WORLD RECORD - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to recognize Annapolis Royal teenager Saul Hafting on setting the Guinness World Record for the most Rubik's Cubes solved while hopping on a pogo stick.

Saul performed this feat last October at the Annapolis West Education Centre and Guinness World Records confirmed last month that he officially solved an amazing 211 cubes, shattering the previous record of 65 set back in 2018. Setting this record required a significant amount of hard work, dedication, and natural talent, and Saul can be very proud of his achievement.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Saul Hafting on this impressive achievement.

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

FARMER, GORDIE: ADVOCACY FOR YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH - THANKS

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, today I want to rise to recognize Gordie Farmer. For several years now, Gordie has been committed to improving mental health supports for youth in our community. The strategy is quite simple, but it is very labour-intensive - and if you know Gordie, you know that it suits him just fine.

Since beginning his #Bottles4Kids movement, Gordie has raised in the vicinity of \$40,000 to support Access 808 initiatives. Mr. Speaker, these include individual counselling, group programs, food, showers, life skills workshops, emergency clothing, and laundry facilities - just about anything that a youth from 16 to 24 might require.

Gordie and his small team spend countless hours each year campaigning and collecting recyclable bottles throughout the community. Thank you, Gordie, for being such a strong advocate for youth mental health and for showing us that where there's a will there's a way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

EDWARDS, WINNIFRED: 95TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish a belated happy 95th birthday to a special constituent, Winnifred K. Edwards.

Win, who is affectionately known as Queen Ra to her family, celebrated her 95th birthday on February 17th. She is a Silver Cross Mother and has been a fixture at our Remembrance Day services until just recently.

I was happy to pop by and deliver a certificate and flowers to Win. She was having a heck of a time that day and I wish her many happy returns of the day.

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

CHESTER BASIN VOL. FIRE DEPT.: COVID RELIEF EFFORTS - THANKS

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Chester Basin Volunteer Fire Department.

The Chester Basin Volunteer Fire Department offered their space and volunteered time and energy not only to fight fires but also to provide COVID-19 relief to residents of Chester Basin and the surrounding area. Weekly from December through March, they administered rapid tests and distributed take-home tests. In addition to this, they collected food and toys for children in the community.

I would like to ask the members of this House to join me in thanking the Chester Basin Volunteer Fire Department for their contributions to our province's COVID-19 relief efforts.

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

GODDAUGHTER, SOPHIE - BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish a special young lady a happy 13th birthday. Halifax Armdale resident Sophie Kabalen is fun, she's smart, she's sassy. She is a very intelligent student, a considerate friend, sometimes an amicable sister,

a great daughter and, most important, the best goddaughter a person could ask for - my goddaughter.

On the other end of the spectrum from the member for Bedford Basin, we have a little girl who is going into her teens today, so I wish her the best and I especially wish my friends Anne and David Kabalen the best as they start to deal with their first female teenager.

[2:45 p.m.]

HEALTH PROS.: RECIPS. OF COM. OF CARE AWD. - CONGRATS.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, in December 2021 the Cape Breton South Recruiting for Health organization announced the winners of the first Community of Care Award. These awards are given to various members of the health care teams in the Strait-Richmond area.

This year's recipients include Richelle Sparks, nurse practitioner; Glenda Kipp, Tara MacInnis, and Melanie Power, who are all licensed practical nurses; Celeste Gotell, health promotions specialist; Michelle Carter, continuing care assistant; Georgette Burke, a volunteer with palliative care; Michael Hatt, pharmacist; and Dr. Lawrence MacNeil and Dr. Scott McNeil, who are physicians on Isle Madame. A gala dinner and awards ceremony is being held on April 7th at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre to celebrate their achievements.

On behalf of the residents of Richmond County, I want to express our appreciation for these health care workers and all other health care workers who make our communities better.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

ARTISTS FOR UKRAINE: FUNDRAISING EFFORTS - RECOG.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to a group of Lunenburg-based visual artists for their swift call to action in support of the people of Ukraine.

Known simply as Artists for Ukraine, this talented group recently joined together, united by their desire to do something constructive for those who have been tragically impacted by the ongoing conflict. They organized an art sale with all proceeds donated to the Canadian Red Cross. Contributing artists were asked to donate pieces to the sale featuring sunflowers, the official flower of Ukraine and the universal symbol of hope, support and sometimes protest, making this collection an incredibly moving tribute with bright yellow sunflowers on bold blue canvasses.

It is a true honour to have this opportunity to bring recognition to this group and thank them for their actions to support the people of Ukraine.

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

ADAMS, PAUL JR.: AHMIN POSTER SELECTION - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize photographer Paul Adams Jr. of Cole Harbour. Mr. Adams designed this year's poster for African Heritage Month. His entry, entitled "Through Our Eyes," was selected by the African Heritage Month Information Network, marking this the 11th consecutive year that Paul's creative artistry was chosen as their official advertisement.

Paul's a graduate of NSCC and works alongside his father, Paul Adams Sr., in their photography studio on Cole Harbour Road. To quote Paul: Our business has been blessed by the support of the community of Cole Harbour.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking and congratulating Paul Adams Jr. for his contribution to this year's African Heritage Month.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

**EDWARDS WADDEN, DENA: MUC. OVAR. CANCER FUNDRAISER
SUCCESS - RECOG.**

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Dena Edwards Wadden on her courageous battle with cancer and success with the Mucinous Ovarian Cancer Fundraiser.

In September, Dena had to undergo surgery for removal of a large ovarian cyst, which she found out weeks later was what anyone would dread to hear: that she had cancer. Since then, Dena has found support in the Mucinous Ovarian Cancer Coalition. This group awards a \$50,000 grant each year to researchers who conduct trials to better understand and find treatments. Dena's goal was to raise \$30,000 before World Ovarian Cancer Day on May 8th and she has currently raised over \$38,000.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Dena - also a family nurse practitioner in Cape Breton - in her successful battle and for raising awareness for such an important cause. I wish Dena and her family nothing but health and happiness in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HUBBARD, SHIRLEY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Yarmouth's Shirley Hubbard. Shirley has been one of our community's most engaged and dedicated volunteers over the course of the last two decades and before that.

In 2004 she founded - and is still the chair of - the Yarmouth County Hospice Society. Through the hard work and vision of Shirley and her dedicated group of volunteers, the Hospice Society has been successful in many crucial initiatives, such as securing pain pumps, furnishing a family room at Yarmouth Regional Hospital, assisting the VON and acquiring palliative care beds on 4 North at Yarmouth Regional Hospital.

The work of Shirley Hubbard and the Yarmouth Hospice Society has become the model that our government has adopted to create palliative care spaces throughout the province. Shirley is also a tireless organizer and fundraiser for other volunteer groups within our community and was the recipient of the Peace Medal from the YMCA of Yarmouth.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Yarmouth's Shirley Hubbard for the many years of hard work and compassion that she has so generously dedicated to our community. She has helped make a difference in the lives of so many.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

EAMON, LAURA - RECIPIENT: SOBEY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BUS. STUDIES - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Laura Eamon of Lower Sackville.

Laura, a student at Saint Mary's University since 2017, was recently presented with the Frank H. Sobey award for Excellence in Business Studies. This award began in 1989 to support the development of future business leaders and business programs.

Deans of business at each university in Atlantic Canada nominate students based on their entrepreneurship, support of the communities in which they live and work, and their employment experience. Receiving this award is even more meaningful to Laura as she helps raise her family, and this year will mark her ninth year of sobriety.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Laura Eamon for being one of the nine recipients of this prestigious award and wish her the very best as she continues her sobriety journey.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

DOUCET, LESTER & MELANSON, JUDY: INNOVATIVE SPIRIT - RECOG.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, several years ago, Lester Doucet decided that he wanted to build a walipini where he and Judy Melanson could grow their food and vegetables during the winter. Not dissuaded by the fact that they found no one with a walipini in the Maritimes, they built one on their property using the information they found through Google.

People have heard about this new winter greenhouse, stopped by to see it, and asked questions. Since then, the couple have made presentations on the ins and outs of the construction and care of a walipini. With their advice, a woman built her own walipini in Weymouth.

I ask that all members join me in recognizing the innovative spirit of Lester Doucet and Judy Melanson in finding a novel way to grow their produce year-round and their generosity in sharing this knowledge with their neighbours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

WILL IT TO YOU AUCTION: FUNDRAISING FOR CHARITIES - RECOG.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the great work of Will It To You Charity auction, a Facebook group that raises money for local charities in Pictou County.

The group was initiated by Ebony Moser, who resides near the community of River John. As of October 31, 2021, the group raised a total of over \$109,000 from its members bidding on items. The money raised was given to local schools, families in need, families with sick loved ones, and a local women's shelter.

Over the Christmas holidays, \$8,000 was raised for children's items for Christmas. The group has also initiated a Toonie Tuesday program amongst its members with funds being directed to other local charity groups.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud all the hard work, compassion, and empathy demonstrated by the Will It To You Charity auction group, and I am grateful to them for making life a little bit easier for those in need in our local community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

COLE HBR. HER. FARM MUSEUM: 2022 OPENING - RECOG.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the opening of the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum for their 2022 season.

The pandemic was not exactly easy for the farm, animals, staff, or volunteers. Thankfully, their online shop kept them busy all winter and made it easy for all their customers, new and old, to continue to shop the gift shop and purchase food items for pickup from the very busy kitchen. Staff are forever saying that the farm kitchen never rests for long.

For the staff and the many volunteers, May 15, 2022 can't come too fast. They are happy to get back to the swing of things now that restrictions have eased. They hope they have lots of visitors and lots of enjoyment with the animals.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the members to wish the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum a prosperous 2022.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

LANGILLE, KENNY: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the old saying "If you want something done, give it to a busy person" could have been written to describe our Pictou Centre friend Kenny Langille.

Kenny lives in our constituency and has been a friend of ours for many years. He also owns and has operated his own upholstery business, The Mattress Shop, for many years. As well, he has served for many years as a town councillor in the Town of New Glasgow and has been at the helm of such important events as the Festival of the Tartans, and presently sits as the Chair of the Pictou County Sports Heritage Hall of Fame Society.

Kenny's years of community service have made him a household name in our town. To say he is well thought of is an understatement. Kenny and his wife Gayle are lifelong members of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in New Glasgow, and Kenny has held almost every role in the church with the exception of minister. Kenny Langille served our country as a member of the Black Watch, and this is a testament to the kind of person he is and has always been.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kenny Langille for all the years of public service. I hope he knows just how much he is appreciated. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

A&J BENT FARMS: MILK QUALITY AWARD - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, the agriculture sector contributes so much to the vibrancy and economic success of my constituency of Annapolis. I'm always pleased to have the opportunity to celebrate our amazing farmers.

Today I recognize and celebrate A & J Bent Farms Ltd. in Clarence for being named a regional winner of the Agropur Club of Excellence Milk Quality Award for 2021. Agropur is a co-operative owned by over 2,900 dairy farmers from Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

[ORDERS OF THE DAY]

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is 2:56. We'll go until 3:46.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: COVID RESTRICTIONS AT LEG. - EXPLAIN

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, just one week after lifting nearly all restrictions in the province, we have in the Legislature - while this decision was made independently of the Premier and his government, what was not was the decision to hold budget lock-up activities virtually today for Opposition.

This decision was made on March 23rd, one day after we returned to the Legislature and two days after nearly all Public Health restrictions were removed from Nova Scotians. I'll table that. My question for the Premier: If Nova Scotians are expected to live with COVID-19, why isn't he?

THE PREMIER: I disagree with the premise of the question, of course. Like all Nova Scotians, I put my trust in Public Health. Dr. Strang and his team at Public Health have led this province tremendously for the last two years. They've certainly earned my respect and the respect of Nova Scotians. The directives that they put forward are the directives that I respect very much.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, while Public Health continues to recommend not gathering in groups and wearing masks, yesterday the Premier denounced the decision from the Speaker's Office to close this Legislature to the public, saying "Our government does not agree with the decision the Speaker's Office made on their own." I'll table that.

Can the Premier elucidate on why he is now offside with not only Public Health, but the Speaker's Office?

THE PREMIER: Again, I disagree. I don't see how I'm offside with Public Health. I support Public Health very much. Lots of places can make their own decisions. There are businesses in this province right now - pharmacies are one I think of - all kinds of places that continue to wear masking. That's their decision.

Mr. Speaker, you make decisions about this House. We respect those decisions, but at the same time, I respect and follow the guidance of Public Health. That's the guidance that I follow and that I recommend Nova Scotians follow as well.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, upon learning about a confirmed COVID case in this House, an exposure notice went out to those who were present in the Chamber to get tested. Meanwhile, thousands of children go to school every day, but this government no longer extends the same courtesy of COVID exposure notices to families and staff; in fact, they discourage them.

My question for the Premier, again: Why the double standard for our children?

THE PREMIER: Oh, no, quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The simple fact of the Omicron variant and that all Nova Scotians should know, all Canadians - in fact it's a worldwide thing - there is COVID around us. With two years of a pandemic, Nova Scotians have learned how to protect themselves. They've been vaccinated. They know the public health steps to follow and they should do that. We should all assume that there's COVID around.

The Province did away with exposure notices quite some time ago for the simple reason that all Nova Scotians should always assume that there's COVID present. They should exercise the judgment they have learned over the last two years. That's the Public Health advice, Mr. Speaker. That's also my advice.

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

PREM.: COST OF LIVING INCREASES - ADDRESS

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the people of Nova Scotia face increases in the cost of living more dramatic than have been seen in the lifetimes of anybody under 30. In this situation, we have seen province after province respond in a variety of ways - from \$500 per citizen in Quebec to the gas rebates in B.C., to the indexing of income assistance to the cost of living in. Yet the budget that is before us today provides no adequate response to the cost of living whatsoever.

I want to ask the Premier: With the necessities of life moving daily out of reach for thousands of people, why in the world does this budget not follow the lead of other provinces and provide any adequate relief to people about the cost of living?

THE PREMIER: I'm incredibly proud of the work that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has done, and the team have done. We tabled a budget today - \$13 billion of investments in support of Nova Scotians. That's something all Nova Scotians should be proud of. We understand the pressures that Nova Scotians are under, and we are responding just as quickly as we can.

[3:00 p.m.]

GARY BURRILL: It is regretful that the Premier of the province will not answer a simple question about the cost of living on the budget. Rule 1 for managing a crisis is don't make things worse, yet here we are with a budget that makes no provision for extending paid sick leave. This means that paid sick leave in Nova Scotia is going to end the day after tomorrow with a negative impact on the incomes of over 100,000 people in this province.

What rationale can the Premier possibly bring forward for bringing in a budget in a pandemic, in the midst of unprecedented increases in the cost of living, that discontinues paid sick leave for the people of our province?

THE PREMIER: The honourable member knows that this government, in advance of the budget, put forward \$13 million of supports to support those Nova Scotians with the cost of living. I appreciate that the budget was just tabled today, but I think that when the honourable member has a chance to really dissect the incredible number of initiatives that are in it, he himself will be impressed at how much support we're offering Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: Since the budget was just tabled today, I'm going to ask that people be careful with the questions they ask relating to the budget at this time.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: The Premier speaks about what I have and have not dissected. One thing I have dissected is that in Nova Scotia, we provide people who receive income assistance the lowest levels, or second-lowest levels, of income assistance of everyone in our whole country. A single person with disabilities receives an income in Nova Scotia of \$11,100 a year, and a single person without disabilities receives \$7,900 a year. I want to ask the Premier: Why, in the midst of this cost-of-living crisis, has the government failed in this budget to address this scandal?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: First of all, we just invested \$54 million to those with disabilities. Secondly, a friendly reminder - because I'm sure everyone in this Chamber has read my mandate letter - this is the first Premier ever who has mandated a minister to fight poverty. I am extremely proud to take on that challenge. It's not easy. Everyone in here and every past government that ever sat in here bears the shame of knowing they did not do better - but we will do better.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DHW: RECRUITMENT - UPDATE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Hatchet Lake Medical Centre serves many people in my area and beyond. Two doctors were slated to join the clinic in January and February, respectively, to ease the tremendous strain on the community since three doctors have left the practice.

Last month, I sent a letter to the minister asking for urgent action to help thousands of residents who rely on this medical centre. I'll table that. The minister responded to my letter and said the department is looking to find immediate alternatives such as short-term locums to fill the gap before two doctors come in the next year. Can the Minister of Health and Wellness give an update on the Hatchet Lake Medical Centre?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Recently, the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment has certainly been active. I do remember the letter that you sent. We continue to look. There are a number of vacancies in the province.

Dr. Kevin Orrell and his team just came back from a successful recruitment trip over in Britain in the last several days, so we know this is going to take some time. What we have done in the meantime is try to increase access for people when they don't have a family practice person.

We will continue to work. I am happy to speak to the member afterwards and see what sort of resources are in your community to see if we can create some innovative ideas.

IAIN RANKIN: In the letter from the minister, which I will table, she referenced that one of the doctors who is expected at the clinic is taking longer than anticipated because of the immigration process. Mr. Speaker, we know that we are in need of doctors in this province and that welcoming immigrants to our province can help diversify our economy and fill these gaps.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What is her department doing to ensure that immigrants can come to our province and practise medicine as quickly and as efficiently as possible?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I thank the honourable member for his question. It gives us an opportunity to talk about some of the work that has been happening.

Immigration is going to be a key part of our success to approaching the staffing crisis in this province. We are working with the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. We are working with our federal counterparts. We are looking at streamlining

the credentialing process in order to make sure that we bring a number of people into this province. We can't wait.

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

DHW: UNATTACHED PATIENTS - PLANS

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, my office has been working with a constituent who does not have a family doctor and is on medical disability. Part of the requirements for both private and federal disability payments is the completion of medical paperwork by a physician. Walk-in clinics and virtual care providers cannot complete this paperwork, leaving my constituent and others like them at risk of losing their benefits.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: As the Need a Family Practice list skyrockets, what is the government's plan to ensure that unattached patients who require a physician do not lose these benefits?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with virtual care to create access. If there is a particular person who has paperwork that needs to be filled out, we are more than happy to try to connect them either through 811 or you can let us know. We do not want to see people lose benefits in any way, so please feel welcome to reach out to me and we will do whatever we can to support your constituent.

PATRICIA ARAB: I appreciate that answer, Mr. Speaker. I do know that the minister is more than willing to help with individual casework, but my question is really something more concrete than that. What is the plan, or what is the department prepared to do so that those who do not necessarily contact their MLA - those who fall through the cracks or get lost or are unsure how to proceed - don't lose these benefits?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly it was my understanding that some of those services were available through virtual health. What I can do is take your question back to the team and we can get back to you with an answer.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DPW: NEW SCH. CONSTR. - TIMELINE

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, schools in my riding are bursting at the seams. In 2018, a new school was promised between Fairview and Clayton Park. In January 2020, I received information that the best locations for the new school were identified by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal.

My question is to the Minister of Public Works or the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. I believe the decision is between the two departments at

the moment. With the incredible influx of people moving to my riding in the Clayton Park and Bedford areas, what is the update on the location of the new school?

HON. KIM MASLAND: I thank the honourable member for the question. As she would be aware, the Department of Public Works simply looks for potential sites. We look at engineering, soil, all types of things like that. Then those proposed sites go back to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

I can tell you that it has been on a minister's desk for a lot longer than it has been on mine, but I have a large pile left on my desk of leftovers to deal with. I am slowly getting through those, but we are looking at a number of sites and scenarios for Clayton Park pre-Primary to Grade 8, but no final decision has been made yet.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I met with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development back in October. She confirmed to me that the plans for the new school in Clayton Park West are going ahead. However, we have not seen nor heard anything since. It's been over five months. I have 20 apartment buildings in Rockingham South that are filling, and a school that was built for 300 now has 600 students, and the apartments are not filled.

I also just received information that we're going to get another 10 apartment buildings around the Sobeys area. Where are those kids going to go? Please help me understand. When will I expect an announcement or shovels in the ground?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Thank you to the member for the question. I can't speak to why this didn't progress in the years prior to us taking office. As my colleague just mentioned, we have a number of piles on our desks that we're going through, but I can assure the member opposite that a decision is forthcoming.

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

OMHA: MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS - RESPONSE

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Too many Nova Scotians are in mental health crisis and can't find care in their communities or are met by police, who've explained again and again that they don't have the skills to support. Instead of investing in mental health crisis support across the province, the government is going to make a handful of new practitioners available virtually.

Does the Premier think that providing a few iPads in emergency rooms is an adequate response to people in mental health crisis?

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It's a good opportunity to speak about the acute day hospital that was just opened, the Recovery

Support Centre. I wouldn't call 22 clinicians a small number by any stretch, based on what's been happening in the province in the last decade.

LISA LACHANCE: People across Nova Scotia were eagerly awaiting news of the \$100 million election promise to provide universal access to mental health care in Nova Scotia. This budget includes a tiny fraction of that, with a half a million dollar line item to conduct a study.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Again, I'm just going to ask that the budget not be referenced as this conversation is going on. (Interruption) It can be referenced, but it's showing that the amount is significantly lower. Compared to what? (Interruption) That's my ruling on it. (Interruption)

The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, we don't need to study the issue any more. People need access to same-day, next-day, in-person, community-based mental health care across the province now. Why has the Premier abandoned his promise to provide universal mental health care?

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you, the promise isn't abandoned. I'm going to do it once and I'm going to do it right. This is an aggressive mandate item, one of the most historical things in the province's history, and there's much more to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DPW: CONSTRUCTION BLASTING - ASSIST

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, residents of Bedford are excited to see action on the oft-promised Sackville-Bedford-Burnside connector. Once we had a Liberal government in Ottawa, we actually had some federal funding that came forward for a badly needed project to reduce truck traffic.

A concern has arisen in recent months. Residents in several neighbourhoods have found their peaceful existence interrupted by frequent blasting. Some are worried that the work will leave their homes with cracked foundations. The blasting, in fact, is slated to continue for the rest of the year. My question is for the Minister of Public Works: What comfort can she offer them that blasting will not damage their homes?

HON. KIM MASLAND: Blasting operations are happening, and as the member has stated, they will continue until the end of 2022. What I will say is that blasting is always done within compliance of regulations. The noise and the vibrations are all being monitored by a third-party consultant to ensure compliance.

I know it is extremely inconvenient for people, but we also know that we need that road built to alleviate the traffic and the pressure. Sadly, Nova Scotia has lots of rock, and in order for me to lay the asphalt, I need to get rid of the rock.

[3:15 p.m.]

KELLY REGAN: Now, this project wasn't required to register with HRM's blasting process, but they did, so there is a process for people who live within the blast zone if there's any damage. I just had an email this past week, though, from another constituent who actually had backsplash tile falling off their kitchen.

My question for the minister is: For those homeowners who actually live outside what the HRM considers to be the blast zone, and see damage or cracks as a result, what is the process for them to try and get this rectified?

KIM MASLAND: Thank you again to the member opposite. Please pass along that we are very sorry for the inconvenience of that blasting.

I will say is that if you have anyone reach out to your constituency who is concerned or they are experiencing damage, that they should reach out to our operations call centre. That number is: 1-844-696-7737.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

MAH - NEW HOUSING UNITS: INFRASTRUCTURE - CLARIFY

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week, the minister, through his housing task force, announced about 22,000 units across HRM; 9,800 of them are in my riding alone.

I think we all agree that more housing supply is needed, there's no doubt about that, but these new communities, representing at least 20,000 people or more, need the appropriate infrastructure in place and planned ahead of time.

My question to the minister is: Can the minister clarify if these new planning areas will have appropriate roads, transit, schools, environmental protections, and other critical infrastructure planned and in place before ground is broken?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Yes, through the Executive Panel on Housing, we did announce that there would be nine special planning areas which will encompass a potential of 22,600 units. They are badly needed. As all members of this House know, we are in an absolute housing crisis in the province.

In terms of how the special planning areas will work, all required environmental studies, all required permitting will still have to be done for these units to be built, and yes, all of the infrastructure considerations that will have to take place will take place.

BRAEDON CLARK: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. As he can imagine, I've been receiving many questions in my office over the last few days. People want to know if we're going to have 10,000 new units in our area, can we have a say? What's it going to look like?

My question to the minister is: What opportunities will there be, if any, for any public consultation or engagement in these special planning areas?

JOHN LOHR: The requirements in the HRM Charter for public consultation will still take place. This is, in reality, a partnership between the Province and HRM. The HRM planning staff will be working throughout that process. As the minister with the special planning authorities, I will be relying on the Executive Council to provide input to me.

Again, the process will still largely take place that is required.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

AGRIC. - C.B. FARMERS EXHIB.: FACILITY SALE - CONFIRM

FRED TILLEY: The Cape Breton Farmers Exhibition has been an icon in the Cape Breton community for over 100 years. As a child, some of my best memories have been at the Ex, and as an adult, watching my daughter participate in horse shows and the other children and adults participate in horse shows over the years has really brought a lot of joy to Cape Breton. In addition, local harness racing organizations have been providing entertainment for many years. All of this is in jeopardy as the local board from the Federation of Agriculture has rejected proposals from two non-profits to take over the facility and has listed the property for sale.

My question to the Minister of Agriculture is: Can the minister confirm that the Federation of Agriculture is legally able to sell this property, which was originally donated for the purpose of agriculture?

HON. GREG MORROW: This was brought to my attention last Thursday, and I immediately asked staff in my department to look into a number of questions - one of those being the legality of the sale. To my knowledge, at this point, there's nothing preventing a sale, but that would be up to the current owners, as it would be a private sale. I am hopeful that discussions can continue with those interested groups and that there's a positive outcome for the entire region.

FRED TILLEY: We all have hope that something can happen there. Given the importance of this facility to the people of Nova Scotia and the hole that it will leave in the community post-pandemic, is the minister or his department willing to intervene and attempt to broker a deal between the Federation and the community?

GREG MORROW: When I heard about this on Thursday, I immediately reached out to Jennifer MacNeil with the Cape Breton Western Riders' Association to have a discussion with her. I reached out to my friend and partner with the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, Tim Marsh. Those conversations are under way. The staff is involved with the federation and with the interested groups.

I know that the member opposite came to me on Friday to let me know about the AGM, which was happening on Sunday, and I was very pleased and encouraged to hear that that Cape Breton spirit is still alive. I believe that will help us reach a positive resolution with the groups that are interested in this facility to move it forward as an agricultural facility.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH - AFFORDABLE HOUSING: ACTUAL NUMBERS - CONFIRM

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Premier. Everyone in this Chamber seems to agree that we are in a housing crisis. Wages are too low, the rent is too high, and it's harder and harder to save up a down payment to buy a home. Will the Premier confirm numbers for non-market and truly affordable homes that we can expect to see in the next year?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Our government has been remarkably responsive to the housing crisis. We have done work on a number of fronts, as the member knows, like the Quick Start program. We do have other programs. There is a program that is available for down payments to help first time-buyers. It isn't that well accessed. It should be more accessed, and I'm interested in seeing that.

We're working on multiple fronts to address home ownership and affordability of homes. Just yesterday, as the member knows, we made a significant announcement for 373 new affordable units in the Mount Hope area - the most significant announcement in a long time in the province. There are many things that we're doing. We'll continue to do more.

I want to say to the member that we recognize that there is a housing crisis. We're deeply concerned about affordability on every level. That is a very big priority for our government.

SUZY HANSEN: Yesterday in a press conference, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said that he didn't know how many families were in need of affordable

homes, and that he didn't think anyone knew what that number was. Well, Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada knows that number. In 2016, there were almost 50,000 families in Nova Scotia in core housing need. That number is certainly higher today

So, Mr. Speaker, does the Premier really think that - I didn't really get a number - new affordable homes this year are adequate?

JOHN LOHR: I think what the question was yesterday, and I think I heard the question today - my answer yesterday was in response to one of the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Commission, that there be a survey across the province in terms of housing needs. The Affordable Housing Commission recommendation was that we do this because there was a shortage of data.

In terms of the number of people on the wait-list for public housing, we know exactly what that number is. There's numbers that we have and know precisely. We're very concerned. Again, I will repeat that we're very concerned about affordable housing across the province. We're working very hard to address that issue, and we will continue to do more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

EECD - REGULATED CHILD CARE: NEW ORG. - UPDATE

RONNIE LEBLANC: In the new federal-provincial child care agreement, it states that the provincial government will create a new organization to manage the operations of all regulated child care in the province, with more details to be expected in the Spring of 2022. I can table that. Can the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development give the House an update on where the department is with the development of this new centralized organization?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: We are incredibly proud of the work we're doing on the early child care file and advancing affordable, accessible, inclusive, and quality child care in Nova Scotia. We've recently committed to standing up an engagement table to work with the communities, to work with our ECEs, our operators, and interested parties to inform the work that we're doing. The creation of that table is underway, and we look forward to the work that we're going to continue to do to bring the transformation to child care in Nova Scotia.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, in February, the Centre d'appui à la petite enfance de la Nouvelle-Écosse submitted a proposal to the department upon meeting the Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie proposing the creation of a Francophone-centralized organization in addition to the original one committed to by the department.

Early childhood services managed by and for Acadians and Francophones are essential to the development of early childhood in a minority setting. This French-language management of Acadian and Francophone centres and other services is also essential to maintain, optimize, and continue to increase the numbers of students at this CSAP schools.

Has the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development met with the CAPENÉ since they submitted their proposal? Does the minister intend on implementing that proposal?

BECKY DRUHAN: Inclusivity is one of the key tenets of the child care agreement and one of the key foundational principles that is embedded in the work that we're doing to build the child care system in Nova Scotia.

One of the elements of the work that our engagement table is going to be doing is to look at the options that are available to us to build a centralized system, and also to support and ensure that we have representation within child care, so that children see their faces and their language reflected in the care that's provided. It would be premature now at this time - because the engagement table is not stood up yet - to commit to what path we're taking, but we look forward to that work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SLTC - SENIORS CARE GRANT: LIMITED ACCESS - ADDRESS

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, when we take action to try to help vulnerable groups in our society, we must think through what that action looks like to them and how it translates to their life experience. When we're not personally impacted by a policy, we have the responsibility to go talk to the people who would be.

Some of the most vulnerable seniors in our province are not eligible for the government's new Seniors Care Grant. Many seniors whom I've spoken to are left out because they do not have their name on their deed or lease agreement. In some of the communities that I represent, including one of the several historic land title communities, clear title to the land is something that residents have not been able to provide for centuries, let alone to obtain this grant they should be eligible for.

While the intent behind the program is admirable, my question is for the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care: Did the honourable minister consider that by limiting the grant to those who own their home or have their name on a lease, they would be excluding those who need the grant most?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: This is the first year for the grant program, and so we moved very quickly to establish it within the first three months. We're always open to

looking at new ways to provide these funds, and so I would be happy to speak with the member about this at a future date.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I want to thank the minister for that opportunity and for the acknowledgement that there may be some gaps in this new Seniors Care Grant, and we'll be willing to work with her on this if we could be able to meet to discuss and see some of those recommendations. I thank the minister on the commitment for that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

DHW - YAR. REG. HOSP.: HR CHALLENGES - ADDRESS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, at our constituency office in Yarmouth, we're hearing concerning reports from patients at our emergency department at Yarmouth Regional, patients who are experiencing a decrease in human resource capacity at our emergency centre. We are further hearing that this is a result of this government's move to recruit nurses into our long-term care facility from our emergency department.

[3:30 p.m.]

While we certainly need nurses in our long-term care facilities, does the Premier not see a risk in recruiting these precious folks from our emergency rooms, where people are accessing health care at their moments of most dire need?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, health human resources is a priority of this government. We need 1,300 nurses in this province today, so it's not going to be fixed overnight. We are working very diligently to create access and flow. We are trying to move people who are in hospital into long-term care facilities.

We are also trying to protect those vital resources, so we are looking at a number of different options. Certainly, in the last six weeks our health care workers have gone above and beyond to manage what's been in front of them. We'll continue to work with the zone leadership to make sure that we can protect those essential services and will continue to recruit to those vacant positions.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We certainly need to continue with the efforts of recruitment of new nurses into our system, but there is a risk of recruiting nurses from something as critical as our emergency departments into long-term care, where people are accessing health in their moment of greatest desperation, whether it's a heart attack, a car accident, or an acute health event.

Can the minister please table the full-time positions that have changed at the Yarmouth Regional Hospital emergency department to make sure we can inform the people

of Yarmouth that their health care services will be there for them in their moment of greatest need?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I had not heard that there were emergency nurses being taken to staff long-term care, so I can't really say whether or not that is happening. I'd be happy to go back to the department and find out what the staffing issues are.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ECC: CLIMATE PLAN - UPDATE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. We are in a climate crisis, a climate emergency. One of the commitments from this government was a climate plan. To date, we haven't seen a plan nor heard about how it would be funded. We need massive investments to meet the climate crisis, but instead we see an \$8.2 million drop in spending at the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Can this Premier explain how he expects to create a climate plan that will confront the climate crisis without new investments in environment and climate change?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: In reference to that, there have been some changes with respect to human resources at the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

We've moved our conservation officers - 59 of them - back to the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables. That department is better aligned with the mandate of our conservation officers. I want to thank our conservation officers for the outstanding work that they do for Nova Scotia.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I look forward to getting into this further and much more in depth in the Estimates process, Mr. Speaker, because I have a lot of responses to that question. But thank you for the explanation of that particular budget line.

We're also in a biodiversity crisis, with the world set to lose over one million species in the coming decades. We need to be ramping up programs and protections for endangered species and their habitat, but today it would seem as though biodiversity has fallen off the radar entirely.

Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier expect to confront the biodiversity crisis without acknowledging that it exists?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Let me be crystal clear: Climate change, adaptation, and mitigation is a top priority for this government. That's why we passed the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. That's why one of the goals in the Act is to bring forward a climate change plan this year, in 2022. This Spring, it is our intention to

bring this forward. We believe this is going to be the road map to guide Nova Scotia to a cleaner and greener future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

ED: LACK OF RURAL CELL SERV. - ADDRESS

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, there are several communities in my constituency of Annapolis without both cell service and internet. After meeting with Develop Nova Scotia, I understand that internet will be made available throughout this year into 2023 and that they will be presenting their findings and recommendations for rural cell service to the Department of Economic Development. My question to the Minister of Economic Development: Is she aware that several communities in Annapolis are without cell service? If so, what is the current timeline for bringing cell service to Young's Cove, Delaps Cove, and Parkers Cove?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: We recognize that cell service gaps can be found throughout rural Nova Scotia. Undoubtedly, there is probably not a rural MLA who is not aware of gaps in our communities. Through the Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative, the extension of backbone networks, like fibre, into communities impacts in a positive way the business case for the service providers and we are committed to working with providers to address those gaps.

CARMAN KERR: The cell project in Annapolis is much smaller than other projects being considered in the province. The fibre network is finally being installed, the same network that will connect cell towers throughout the province. As the minister can appreciate, this cell service project is critical for EMO service; for our fishermen, who generate, I think, \$7 million in the local economy each season they risk their lives; for our tourism professionals, who need to be available day and night; and for families, seniors and business people, who work, live and play from home.

Will the Minister of Economic Development commit to ensure that communities in Annapolis will receive cell phone service by year-end, that they need to keep their neighbourhoods safe, and as economic drivers for our local communities?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Because of the nature of gaps, these can be a mere couple of kilometres. Clearly constituent MLAs are a great source of information to help identify the specificity of these gaps. I'll be very happy to speak with you about those communities of which you speak, but this absolutely remains a barrier to economic and social development and a safety concern that we are committed to address.

THE SPEAKER: I think everyone was waiting patiently to see what the minister was going to say to that question, especially the rural members. (Laughter) Also, I am going

to ask that members not speak directly to the person asking the question. Please go through the Speaker.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

DFA: MARINE REFUGE PROPOSAL - UPDATE

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been working with local fishermen and fisherwomen, along with the provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, on a proposed Eastern Canada marine refuge. This proposed marine refuge will eliminate lucrative traditional fishing grounds for many local fishermen. The local fisher associations put forward a very reasonable compromise to the provincial and federal governments. Can the minister let the House know here, today, where we stand with the marine refuge proposal?

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Halifax Atlantic and also acknowledge that this is the first Question Period question I've had.

Federal marine conservation areas are something that the federal government has looked at and is going to look at 25 per cent protected areas in 2025 and 2030. We are working with many organizations to look at what's possible and what's not possible relative to our harvesters.

The fishery is very important to Nova Scotia more conservation is wonderful. However, it does take away from the livelihood of all fishers here in Nova Scotia, which is a key revenue generator and economic stimulus for Nova Scotia and we support that.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The truth is that local fisher associations have been working for months and months with the provincial Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. It now appears like the fishers' hard work and recommendations are going to be ignored. Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing to assure that the fishers' voices are being heard and that the suggestions they worked on day and night are being implemented?

STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member, we are actively working and engaging, as suggested, with local fishers, and there are many throughout the province and also within the Maritimes. Everybody's working to understand what the situation is and to advocate for our fisheries here in Nova Scotia.

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

EECD: ENROLMENT CHALLENGES - ADDRESS

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. On Friday, we saw approvals for thousands

of new units in the HRM, one that I think we can all agree is a welcome addition. My community in Hammonds Plains-Lucasville has been subject to decades, even generations, of enrolment challenges in our school system. There are approvals in Indigo Shores in Bedford South. There will be impacts on the Millwood, CP Allen, and Broad Street families of schools. My question to the minister is: How is her department, and/or the HRCE, specifically involved in the decision to approve those units?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: As we do incredibly important work to improve access to housing and as we do work to improve and increase immigration, there are obviously going to be needs around infrastructure and education that we need to support as well. From a local perspective, we monitor projected growth through operations staff in the region. The region works with municipalities to update their understanding of planning, and we have a long-term planning process. I can also say that our government is working together on these plans and our department sits at cross-departmental tables to ensure that there is an understanding of the broader needs as we move forward with the plan.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, to the minister, I'm certainly aware of the relationship and the ongoing dialogue that exists with different stakeholders with respect to planning. My concern is that there's no specific framework that one could look to, to determine how this planning process comes together. Given that there is some agreement I'm hearing from the minister that there is a long-term planning framework, I'm wondering if the minister could commit - for the review of the House - to table a document or table that plan that exists to outline the role that the HRCE, the HRM, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development play in ensuring that enrolment challenges are diffused.

BECKY DRUHAN: Differing developments will have differing impacts on the infrastructure needs. Seniors' developments, for example, won't have a big impact on our projections for schools. Data and timelines are continuously considered, and they inform the planning for schools. I would be happy to sit down with the member opposite to review the considerations that go into that.

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

DCS: DISABILITY COM. SUPPORTS - ADDRESS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The *Roadmap for Transforming the Nova Scotia Services to Persons with Disabilities* calls on this government to phase out institutional facilities and replace them with small options homes by 2023. During the election, the Premier said his goal was to ensure that everyone would have the supports needed to live in the community as their first mandate. I'll table that. Mr. Speaker, with wait-lists at more than 1,500, is the Premier satisfied that this is enough in order to meet the commitment of reaching the target set by the road map?

[3:45 p.m.]

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for this very important question. We all know, here in the Chamber, that our goal is to ensure that individuals move into small options homes across this province. It is a big task. It's an expensive one, but it needs to be done. We all wish it could happen sooner.

There have been a lot of construction issues, of course, with the pandemic, but we're really pleased that we're seeing great results with the initiative that happened around Harbourside in Yarmouth. We'll continue that work and we'll work as fast as we can. We realize that that's what these individuals deserve. (Applause)

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that, because on October 7, 2021, the Premier told reporters, "I just don't think anybody should have to take their government to court to get their government to do the right thing." I'll table that.

In December, the government announced that it would appeal the court decision that found that there was systemic discrimination against people with disabilities seeking improved services and housing in the community. Will the Premier agree that the best way to show his commitment is to implement the road map and stop fighting people with disabilities in court?

KARLA MACFARLANE: I know this is frustrating, but the only thing I can say to individuals is that if we work collectively together and are proactive, the sooner we will be able to ensure that individuals who are living in these facilities, which we all disagree with . . .

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: 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. 106.

Bill No. 106 - Condominium Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 106, an Act to Amend Chapter 85 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Condominium Act, be read a second time.

The rules that condominium owners and corporations need to follow should be current and reflective of their day-to-day work. The amendments I have introduced will modernize our legislation for condominiums, enhance consumer protection, and create transparency while improving governance and management of condominium corporations.

Our condominium stakeholders, such as developers, condominium boards, lawyers, property management professionals, and owners, have told us that modernizing areas of this Act will reduce red tape and allow for a more seamless transition between boards. We have listened to these important stakeholders and are acting.

With these amendments, developers will be unable to purchase additional units on behalf of the corporation until the first elected board is in place. This will ensure that the board has control over important decisions and that these decisions are made fairly and to reflect the priorities . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. There's a lot of chatter happening on this side of the House. I'm going to ask that you respect the speaker.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

COLTON LEBLANC: These amendments will ensure that the board has control over important decisions and that these decisions are made fairly and to reflect the priorities of unit owners.

This legislation will also require condominium corporations to conduct more frequent reserve fund assessments, from every 10 years to every five years. This will ensure adequate funds are available for capital repairs when needed and allow them to plan more effectively for the future.

The changes ensure that management responsibilities seamlessly transition from the developer to a newly elected condominium board and require clear guidelines for both parties. To ensure this smooth transition, administrative amendments help clarify the percentage of support required to make decisions and modernize voting practices by allowing emailed ballots.

Lastly, Nova Scotians will have a more transparent condo industry in this province. Individual condo owners will be required to disclose to their condominium board when they rent their unit out, and bare land condominiums will be required to be clearly advertised as condos.

I'd like to thank our stakeholders for participating in the consultations that helped shape these needed updates to this legislation. Their input has helped us develop legislation that reflects the current industry and addresses needs and concerns. With their help, we are making impactful changes that make managing and governing condominiums a reflection of how the current industry operates and strengthen consumer protection by creating more transparency for current and prospective condo owners.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to feedback and comments from the members opposite.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I'm happy to see that Bill No. 106, the Condominium Act, starts the process of modernizing this legislation, modernizing the rules around condominiums, adding governance, reducing red tape. I feel that these are all the right steps. I question if enough is done within this piece of legislation, and I look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I too look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for - here we go - Chester-St. Margaret's. Yes, I should know that.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Yes, you know that. First, I'd like to congratulate you on 103 days, I think. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

I am rising to speak about Bill No. 106. Amendments to the Condominium Act will reflect the growth in the industry trends and challenges since first introduced in 1971. Clearly much has changed in the condo market since the original bill was introduced 51 years ago.

For example, in the mid-1980s, 50 condominium corporations existed in Nova Scotia; today there are over 400, and we hope the number continues to grow. New classes of condos have emerged, including commercial and bare-land developments that did not exist when the Act was originally written. With all these changes over the years, it's clear

that amendments were needed to reflect the changing needs of the condo industry and the residents who own the units.

These amendments will modernize the Act and ensure that the rules condo owners and corporations need to follow will be current and relevant to their day-to-day work. We heard from unit owners, developers, lawyers, property managers, and many more industry stakeholders. Extensive consultation, with the amendments here today responding to much of their feedback. The Act will also enhance consumer protection by improving and creating more transparency for current and prospective condo owners.

Owning a condo unit can be complicated. The changes will improve governance by ensuring a smooth transition between the developer's board and the first board elected by the condo corp. Understanding the voting process is essential to good governance of the condo boards, and this amendment not only helps to clarify voting procedures but allows for modern voting methods such as accepting ballots by email. Condo corporations come in all shapes and sizes, and this amendment will take into account the needs of smaller condo corporations and allow for unaudited reports if signed by two members of the board of directors.

When it comes to transparency, the amendments address information disclosure of voting percentages, marketing materials, and rental agreements. Ultimately, the goal of this legislation is to modernize the Condom Act - the Condo Act - so that it works better for the Nova Scotians who live and work within the condo - Mr. Speaker, stop laughing - condo industry every day. That was a slip-up. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: As always, I appreciate the feedback from the members opposite, although a little bit shorter this time than the last amendments, but myself, I, too, look forward to the feedback during Law Amendments Committee.

This Act was originally introduced in 1971, and then, as my colleague has mentioned, last amended in 2011. Between 2013 and 2016, a review of the Condo Act was done by a bunch of different folks including lawyers, developers, and unit owners, and government officials. After that, we put together a discussion paper. Back in 2019, that discussion paper was circulated for a period of six weeks. Nova Scotians were able to provide feedback, and there were almost 800 responses over that six-week period.

Of course, we're always looking to modernize legislation. We did so last Fall through other pieces of legislation, and I'm very committed to doing that within my department.

With that, I move to close debate on Bill No. 106.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 106.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 107.

Bill No. 107 - the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 107, An Act to Repeal Chapter 17 of the Acts of 2003, the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act, now be read a second time.

I believe all members of the Legislature would agree that measures should be taken to remove redundant legislation from the books. That's basically what this is. The steps we are taking will simply repeal the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act, which is no longer needed. The Act was established in 2003 to authorize a volunteer board to administer the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act. This fund at the time supported abstinence-based addictions services in the former Annapolis Valley Health District.

In 2006, the Crosbie House Society was incorporated as a private, not-for-profit addiction treatment centre. Amendments were made to the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act in 2008 to direct all remaining funds in the trust to Crosbie House's abstinence-based recovery programs. The Act was further amended in 2012 to turn all remaining funds in the trust over to the board of directors of the Crosbie House Society, thereby ending the work of the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund board of directors. Funds in the trust have been fully exhausted, and the volunteer board is no longer active, making the legislation redundant.

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

The honourable Minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 107.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 107.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for today. I move the House do now rise to meet again on Wednesday, March 30th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Tomorrow, Wednesday, is Opposition Day, so I will ask the Opposition House Leader to call the business of the day. I would also like to note that after the Official Opposition's agenda is completed for the day, we will go directly into the debate on budget Estimates.

THE SPEAKER: We will take a break of just a couple of minutes.

[3:59 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:03 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, my apologies to everyone. Thank you for bearing with me - I am learning slowly.

We are still going to conclude business for today. We know what the hours are for tomorrow but tomorrow is Opposition Day, so I will ask the Opposition House Leader to call the business. Once Opposition Business is done for the day, we will move into Government Business, which will be the response to the Budget Address, and then into Estimates.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Acting House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we will be calling Bill No. 97, the Social Safety Net Security Act; and Bill No. 100, the Municipal Government Act.

THE SPEAKER: There is one question as to whether late debate is on. (Interruption) Okay, so there will be late debate and that will be after the end of the daily routine.

The motion is that the House do now adjourn, to meet again tomorrow from the hours of 1:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 4:05 p.m.]