



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2022

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HALIFAX, FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in consideration of a member's statement I'm going to read later, I would like to table an article from The Chronicle Herald entitled "DULCIE MCCALLUM: Do what's right, just and legal for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia".

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 187

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

Whereas sexual violence and sexual assault have serious health, social, and public safety implications that affect many Nova Scotians and people all over the world - particularly women, girls, and gender diverse individuals; and

Whereas Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April is an opportunity to raise awareness and continue conversations about rape culture, misogyny, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and other important issues around sexual violence that need to be addressed; and

Whereas educating yourself and talking about sexual violence isn't easy, but we must have these conversations, and applications are now available for Sexual Violence Prevention Innovation grants to support creative projects and new ideas to prevent sexual violence;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in encouraging Nova Scotians to learn more at breakthesilencens.ca and supporting the work being done in our communities to help raise awareness and prevent sexual violence.

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 Education and Early Childhood Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 188

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

Whereas we are on a five-year journey through the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-wide agreement to transform the delivery of child care in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas our vision is child care that cares for everyone: families, children, operators, and of course our early childhood educators, who do incredible work developing our youngest learners; and

Whereas we are advancing our work to make child care more affordable by reducing child care fees in licensed, funded centres by 25 per cent, effective immediately on April 1st;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join me in recognizing the importance of reducing child care fees for families and advancing our commitment to affordable and accessible child care and early learning that is of high quality and inclusive.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 123 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 260 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Liquor Control Act. (Hon. Colton LeBlanc)

Bill No. 124 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 379 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Public Trustee Act. (Hon. Brad Johns)

Bill No. 125 - Entitled an Act to Protect Nova Scotia Ratepayers from a Dramatic Increase in Profits for Nova Scotia Power. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

**Bill No. 126 - Entitled an Act Respecting a Nova Scotia Wine Authority.
(Hon. Greg Morrow)**

**Bill No. 127 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes,
1989, the Motor Vehicle Act, Respecting the Fixing of Speed Limits by Traffic
Authorities of Municipalities. (Kendra Coombes)**

**Bill No. 128 - Entitled an Act to Increase Energy Efficiency in Nova Scotia.
(Claudia Chender)**

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

COMSTOCK, M./HIRTLE, D.: QUEEN'S COUNSEL DESIGNS. - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to lawyers Melanie Comstock and David Hirtle, proud Lunenburgers who have recently been awarded the prestigious Queen's Counsel designation for their outstanding contributions to the legal community. Nominees for Queen's Counsel must demonstrate professional integrity, good character, and outstanding contributions to the practice of law through recognition by other members of the profession as an exceptional barrister or solicitor.

While both individuals are just a tad younger than myself, I did grow up with both Melanie and David who, I would note, grew up less than a block apart from each other. It may be necessary to return to the House to celebrate the renaming of that section of New Town Lunenburg as Street Legal.

Congratulations, Melanie and David, on receiving this richly deserved designation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

BEG. OF RAMADAN: MUSLIM HOLY MO. - BEST WISHES

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Today I rise to acknowledge the beginning of Ramadan. Ramadan is the Holy Month that commemorates the first revelation to Muhammad. It is a time for Muslims to reflect, pray, and grow spiritually as a community. It is also a time when Muslims around the world fast during the day for the entire month of Ramadan.

Fasting allows Muslims to devote themselves to their faith, get closer to their spiritual beliefs, and practice patience and kindness.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the House to join me in wishing all Muslims in Nova Scotia a blessed Ramadan Mubarak.

[9:15 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DISABLED RTS. RULING: PREMIER'S PLEDGE - COMMIT

GARY BURRILL: I wish to mark October 6, 2021, the day when our province's top courts sent a powerful message to the Province about its systemic discrimination against people with disabilities. In the following letter written by Dulcie McCallum and published by the *Chronicle Herald* entitled "DULCIE MCCALLUM: Do what's right, just and legal for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia", which I have tabled, McCallum writes:

"On Thursday, Premier Tim Houston is reported to have committed to not fight the disabled rights ruling, saying, 'So we received the message loud and clear; we will work with the community to make sure these supports are in place.' Unfortunately," she writes, "the community has been duped before, as history attests."

I believe the Premier is a person of his word. I call on him, in McCallum's words, "to show the political leadership that has been lacking for decades and follow through on your commitment."

I ask this House to mark the significance of Dulcie McCallum's conclusion that the Premier is a person of his word.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

TEAM SAMSON: CURLING CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, last November, four inspirational ladies - three from Bridgewater and one from Lunenburg - played an exciting game of curling to win gold in the Women's 65+ Division of the 2021 Nova Scotia 55+ Games held in Yarmouth and Acadian Shores.

Eileen Samson, Allison Weagle, Maureen Mossman, and Peggy Lewis, ages 72 to 76, are all strong curlers. They love the sport so much. Eileen the skip said, "We meet such nice people and make great friends. It's a sport that you can enjoy your whole life and none of us are even thinking of giving it up yet." The ladies all play several times a

week in their respective home rinks in Bridgewater and Lunenburg curling clubs and they've even taken up stick curling for some extra fun.

I would ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Team Samson on their championship win and to thank them for being wonderful role models for active healthy living.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

CDN. PROG. CLUB NOVA: COM. SERV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Canadian Progress Club NOVA on a number of initiatives this club has undertaken.

The club was formed back in 2018 to serve the communities of Bedford, Sackville, Hammonds Plains, and area. These women have come together to support a number of worthwhile causes, including WAY (We Are Young), a local charity that turns the unrealized dreams of seniors into reality.

They also teamed up with Help from the Heart to fill backpacks for children heading back to school and to provide hygiene products to help people who may be struggling to buy them. They've also helped the Whitehills Long Term Care Centre, the Building Futures Employment Society, and the Souls Harbour Rescue Mission in recent years.

I'd like to congratulate the Canadian Progress Club Nova on all their good works throughout Bedford and area. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY: REDUCING STIGMA - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize World Autism Awareness Day, which is tomorrow, April 2, 2022.

Through the pandemic, those with autism who attended school were especially affected as their education was disrupted with school closures and many of the supports relied on were lost. This resulted in an increase in certain behaviours that are seen in those with autism, especially under stress. In addition to the effects of school closures, many also say decreases or complete stops to their mental health care happened at this time.

The theme this year is Inclusion in the Workplace and in Education. By building more awareness about what autism is, we can reduce stigma and recognize the important

contributions that those with autism can make when they are provided with the tools to reach their full potential.

I also applaud the folks with Autism Nova Scotia for their continued promotion of awareness and acceptance of autism, especially their work with children on the 8 Things Kids Should Know About Autism project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

ST. MARY'S COM. & REC. DEPT.: CREATION OF RAINBOW CLUB - RECOG.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Rainbow Club in Sherbrooke. This newly established program for LGBTQ+ youth and their allies was created by the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's Community Development & Recreation Department.

This community-based after-school program will provide a safe space to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community and will allow these youth to share their own journeys with their peers. The group will be youth-led, allowing programming to follow the direction of the interests and ideas of those who are participating.

The Rainbow Club had their first open house in early March and is still in its early days of development. They hope to continue to grow and to be a model for future groups in rural areas.

I ask the House to join me in recognizing the St. Mary's Community & Recreation Department for their efforts in creating the Rainbow Club, which many youth in our rural communities need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

PAUL, CHIEF TERRY: LEADERSHIP - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week in the paper I noticed again another investment by Membertou to help support our health care redevelopment project and a lot of the economic activity that's happening in the area.

Every session, I like to get on my feet and congratulate and recognize Chief Terry Paul and council in Membertou for the leadership that they've provided in the community in some of our most difficult times. Chief Paul has been around for 40 years in his capacity as leader in Membertou and in the community, and he's been a great friend over the years to me as someone who was starting out in politics seven years ago.

I rise in my place to recognize Chief Paul, the Membertou council, and the Membertou community for their leadership, not only in the community of Membertou, but the entire island.

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

POWERFUL.CREATIVE: 2 YRS IN BUS. - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize Robyn Martelly, Whitney Green, and Michael Vickers, the founders of Powerful.Creative, located in Whitney Pier. Their business was not only inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement happening worldwide, but their own experiences of racism.

Powerful.Creative makes clothing and other items such as mugs that focus on empowering, socially conscious, and community-oriented designs. Each item brings awareness, promotes discussion, and celebrates what gives us power.

Powerful.Creative gives 15 per cent of their profits back to the organizations doing the real work. I have a number of these items, and I love them all. I want to wish congratulations to Powerful.Creative for two years in business and two years giving back to the community. #UniteLikeThePier.

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

MALONEY, MIA: RECIP. OF YOUTH ACE AWD. - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: I rise today to congratulate the recipient of the Fundy Female Leadership Network Youth ACE Award: 15-year-old Mia Maloney of Millbrook.

Mia demonstrates leadership through example every day through her commitment to continuing her own development and dedication to her sport, making her a role model for young Indigenous girls in our community. She embodies perseverance and continues to break barriers to move her volleyball career forward, to perform better, and to be her best self.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating such an inspirational young woman.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

EXPRESS BASKETBALL CLUB: IMPACT - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I rise today to recognize the tremendous impact the Express Basketball Club has made on the constituency of Halifax Atlantic. Express Basketball has been part of the Spryfield and surrounding communities since 1999, offering our youth an opportunity to learn the game of basketball, be part of a team, and participate in a club with low registration costs.

Welcoming young athletes of all skills, Express Basketball coaches and volunteers focus on player development, both in skill and attitude. The club is committed to providing kids of the communities of Spryfield and the surrounding areas an environment that supports both their athletic and personal growth.

Nova Scotia has a rich history when it comes to basketball, and it's organizations like Express that ensure the tradition continues by spreading the love of the game, the positive impact on the lives of countless young people. Express Basketball only adds to the strength of our local community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MERRITT AWDS.: NOMINEES - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: March 27th was World Theatre Day, and the theme this year was Theatre and a Culture of Peace, a very timely theme, both around the world and right here in Nova Scotia. To celebrate the day, Theatre Nova Scotia released the nominees for the 2022 Robert Merritt Awards.

I would like to especially shout out some nominees who live in Dartmouth North: Hilary Adams was nominated for outstanding performance in a lead role for her performance of Melita Linton in *Schoolhouse*, produced by Two Planks and a Passion Theatre; Ryan Rogerson was nominated for outstanding performance in a supporting role for his performance of Russell Yellowlees in the same play; and Jessica Lewis was nominated for outstanding lighting design of *Fat Juliet*, produced by Shakespeare by the Sea and Eastern Front Theatre.

While these three received nominations for their work, there are many more theatre artists who live in Dartmouth North who made some excellent work last year against some pretty tough odds brought on by COVID-19.

I want to congratulate them and everyone who made theatre in Nova Scotia last year, making our province a better place to live.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

GREENO, JUSTIN: LITTER PICKUP - THANKS

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I rise today to bring recognition to Justin Greeno. Not only is he a positive role model, but a local environmental champion. When Justin was laid off due to the pandemic, he decided to start picking up litter on daily walks, and he shared the results on his social media blog *The World is NOT Your Trash Can*.

Last November, the Mobius Awards and Divert NS recognized 21 environmental champions from across the province who, despite a global pandemic, never gave up on their environmental actions and even took on new waste-reducing initiatives and habits. Justin was one of the individuals recognized.

To date, he has collected over 135 bags of litter and plans to continue sharing his journey to clean up his community. His hard work does not go unseen and is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Justin not only for his kindness and dedication but for keeping our community clean.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

RAMADAN START: SUPP. FOR MUSLIMS - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today and recognize the constituents of Halifax Armdale, Nova Scotians, Canadians, as well as the Muslim world, to celebrate the month of Ramadan. The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This month is the month of the spiritual, compassion, and discipline.

I will ask members of this House, and I am sure I can say this openly, in every constituency of this province there are residents of the Muslim community. I encourage members of this House to reach out. This is the best time for the Muslim community to show your support, empathy, and compassion. These members of our community are the future of this province.

We as a province have indicated to welcome newcomers and this is one of the best ways you can reach.

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

WILDHOOD: AWD. NOMS. - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the 2021 Nova Scotian film production *Wildhood*. Directed by Bretten Hannam, the film integrates the

best of Mi'kmaw culture and people by creating a story about a journey of self-discovery of love, sexuality, cultural identity, and language from the perspective of a Mi'kmaw young man.

It includes debut performances of community members such as Elder Becky Julian from Sipekne'katik, John Sylliboy from Millbrook, and Desna Thomas from Eskasoni. Bretten worked closely with the Wabanaki Two Spirit Alliance and language/knowledge keepers to ensure the best representation of an evolving cultural identity among Mi'kmaw people.

Hannam hopes that Nova Scotia will continue to provide resources to create cultural films made in Nova Scotia about the Mi'kmaw and films about 2SLBGTQ+ people. The film premiered at the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival and has been nominated for six Canadian Screen Awards.

I encourage all members to seek out this film and to extend our gratitude and congratulations to everyone involved.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

TALJAARD, ANTHEA: EASTERN SHORE'S GALLERY - CONGRATS.

KENT SMITH: I rise today to congratulate Anthea Taljaard, owner of the Eastern Shore's Gallery, on her new business, located in the historical Saint Barnabas Anglican Church in East Chezzetcook.

The Eastern Shore's Gallery consists of art from over 30 local artists as well as international artists, a small flower and herb shop, an art class studio, and a small South African-themed restaurant.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating Anthea for supporting local talent and highlighting the natural beauty and hospitality of our Eastern Shore.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

RAMADAN - MUSLIM CELEB. - BEST WISHES

BRAEDON CLARK: This weekend marks the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, one of the five pillars of Islam. Ramadan lasts from one sighting of the crescent moon to the next and is one of the holiest times in the Islamic calendar. All over the world, Muslims will engage in a month of fasting, prayer, and reflection.

My riding in Bedford South includes one of the largest Muslim communities in Nova Scotia, and I have always been amazed by its warmth, hospitality, and good cheer. I would also like to recognize my friend, colleague, and seatmate, the member for Halifax Armdale, who will be the first member in the history of this Chamber observing Ramadan over the next month.

I would ask all members of the House to join me in wishing everyone a happy, joyous, and peaceful month of Ramadan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

Q104 TOY DRIVE: HELP FOR FAMILIES - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: In December of each year, the Halifax Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 268 spreads holiday cheer by hosting the Q104 Toy Drive at the Highfield Park Fire Station. This past year was the event's ninth anniversary and the most successful yet.

One of my favourite holiday events to attend, the Toy Drive gathers gifts for children which are then distributed by Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank. Led by firefighters Joe Triff and Jack McDonald, this year the donated toys filled not one but two whole units at Metro Self Storage. The IAFF and Q104 also raised \$39,726 for Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank, which was a full \$10,000 over their 2020 total.

Firefighters are true heroes in our community, putting themselves in danger to protect others every day, and this toy drive is an extension of their heroism and the impact it has on families is immeasurable.

I ask that the House join me in thanking the IAFF and Q104 for working to ensure that no child goes without at Christmas time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

EAT LOCAL CUMB.: SEEDY SATURDAY - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to give honour to Eat Local Cumberland, which is a Cumberland County organization promoting local food and the important mandate of increasing local food supply. Tomorrow they are hosting Seedy Saturday, which is an annual event. It is going to be held at the Community Credit Union: Business Innovation Centre from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It will be a great opportunity for us gardeners to get our seeds and to start planning.

I encourage all Nova Scotians to plant a garden this Spring and Summer, and increase local food production.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

[9:30 a.m.]

MOFFATT, LIAM: SNOWBOARDING ACCOMPLS. - CONGRATS.

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Liam Moffatt for ably representing Canada, Nova Scotia, and Colchester North in the recent Beijing Olympics. Mr. Moffatt grew up on Folly Lake and began snowboarding at Ski Wentworth at the age of seven. He immediately displayed his aptitude for speed in various local races in alpine and snowboard cross.

As a teen, Liam went to Sugarloaf, Maine, to attend school and to compete in the North American racing tour. In 2015, Liam joined the Canadian National NextGen team and competed in three Junior World Championships. In 2016, he started racing World Cups. In 2018, Liam won the overall North American championship. After an eighth-place finish in 2021 World Championships in Sweden, Liam earned full status as a member of the Canadian Snowboard Cross Team. This year, Liam competed for Canada in the Olympic Games in Beijing. He earned a 19th and a 9th in mixed team events. He is currently ranked No. 17 in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Liam Moffatt on his snowboarding accomplishments and wish him well in his future races.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

JACKMAN, CAROL ANN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to celebrate the life of Carol Ann Jackman. Carol was an amazing volunteer for the Liberal Party in the former constituency of Cape Breton North and Northside-Westmount. Carol passed away on October 16, 2021. She loved politics, both provincial and federal, and worked diligently on many elections and other functions.

Carol was a former member of the board of directors for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia. She was a dedicated volunteer to the North Sydney Bar 90 Days for many years. Anybody who is from the Northside area would always enjoy a great time at the Bar 90 Days.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Carol for all of her volunteerism and ask the House to celebrate her life.

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

NEW WAT. LIONS CLUB: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize the New Waterford Lions Club. First, I want to thank and recognize the Minister for Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage and African Nova Scotian Affairs and his staff for their support of the club.

The Lions Club is a staple in the community. The members give back generously by providing financial assistance for individuals travelling for medical appointments, providing eyeglasses, and so much more.

The Lions Club is used as an exercise space for individuals with disabilities, and recreational activities for seniors and youth. It is also the last gathering spot for African Nova Scotians in this community. It hosts many events during African Nova Scotian Heritage Month, and they are quite proud of it, Mr. Speaker.

The Lions Club members work hard to keep the club thriving and soon they will have a new roof.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

SMITH, ANDREA: TEACHING OF MUSIC AT FOUR STUDIOS - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: I rise today to congratulate Andrea Smith of Lower Sackville. Andrea Smith, owner of Andrea's Music Studio, first began teaching piano lessons as a teenager. After earning her degree in early childhood education from the Nova Scotia Teachers College, she opened her first of four music studios here in the HRM.

Andrea believes that music is therapeutic. She finds it very rewarding to be able to share with others how playing an instrument or singing just washes the day away and resets you. She has found this to be very beneficial at many times, as I'm sure many members of this House would agree.

I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Andrea Smith for continuing to teach her students that music truly is a great coping mechanism.

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

MASON, KIRSTI: NAMED HEAD RINGETTE COACH - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: I'm honoured to stand today and recognize a Cole Harbour athlete, Kirsti Mason, on being selected as a ringette head coach for Team Nova Scotia for the 2023 Canada Winter Games.

Kirsti grew up in Cole Harbour and represented Nova Scotia in ringette in both the 2011 and 2015 Canada Games. A graduate of Dalhousie University with a Bachelor of Environmental Engineering, Kirsti has always been a competitive athlete who eventually transitioned to coaching. As a community coach, Kirsti is committed to supporting and recruiting coaches and encouraging female athletes to be involved in sports as both athletes and coaches.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking Kirsti Mason for her commitment to the sport of ringette. We wish her all the best in the 2023 Canada Games.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Halifax Needham.

BIKE AGAIN: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise to recognize Bike Again. With a goal of getting more people on bikes, Bike Again promotes cycling and increased bike literacy, and builds a stronger cycling community. This organization provides a space to bring in bikes no longer being used and acts as a resource for cyclists in HRM, through tools, shared knowledge, and programs.

This volunteer-run program also encourages bringing in bikes to be fixed rather than putting them out on the curb or selling them. Additionally, their Shifting Gears program offers a non-intimidating space for femme, trans and non-binary-identifying folks only. This provides a space to explore bike mechanics, learn from others in the community, and access tools and supplies. Bike Again has put in over 10,000 volunteer hours to date, and continues to make a difference in Halifax Needham.

I'd like all members to recognize Bike Again as an organization that's doing great work for all of us here in Halifax Needham.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

JARDINE, JACKIE: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jackie Jardine on her retirement as editor of *The Pictou Advocate*. After 25 years in the business, 11 of those as editor, Jackie is looking forward to spending more time with her family.

She originally joined the *Advocate* in 1988 as a reporter, but left a year later to pursue another job. She later returned in 2010 as editor and held that position until her retirement last November. Jackie has written countless stories during her career. She says that the ones that meant the most to her were those where she could make a personal connection.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Jackie on a successful journalism career. I wish her all the very best as she begins a new chapter.

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

OLIVER HARRIS, JANELLE: ACAD. ACCOMPLS. - CONGRATS.

BEN JESSOME: Today I'd like to recognize Janelle Oliver Harris of Lucasville. Janelle attended Millwood High School and was the Class 2021 valedictorian, the first student from the community of Lucasville to receive this distinguished honour.

Janelle is currently a first-year student at the notably prestigious Acadia University, where she received a scholarship of \$20,000 over four years to help further her education. Janelle is doing a political science undergrad degree, with a graduation date of 2025. She then plans to pursue a degree in law and to become a lawyer. Janelle's ultimate goal, worth noting, is to become Canada's first Black prime minister.

I would ask the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Janelle Oliver Harris on her accomplishments to date and wish her well in her future endeavours.

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

SIMPLY GOOD FORM: DIV. EFFORTS - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, at a time when equity and diversity are crucial for ensuring the success of our province, we need folks to help us talk about how we can improve things. That's why I rise today to congratulate Halifax-based consulting firm Simply Good Form.

Simply Good Form is a local leader in diversity and inclusion for professional settings. Cynthia Sweeney and her team work day and night to make sure community partners of all kinds receive a comprehensive and multi-faceted education in equity and diversity. In 2021, she also teamed up with BriAnna Simons to author *The Pink Balloon* as a resource for teachers and families when talking about transgender children.

I ask that my fellow members join me in recognizing the efforts of Cynthia Sweeney and Simply Good Form in making Nova Scotia a safer and more inclusive province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

FRASER, TODD: RECIP. OF ANALOGUE FILM GRANT - CONGRATS.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate a young filmmaker from my constituency who last February received an Analogue Film Grant from the Atlantic Film Co-op for his project titled *The Boxer from Deepdale*. The filmmaker is Todd Fraser. He's doing background work on the subject right now, and should all go well, the documentary will begin shooting this Summer.

This won't be Fraser's first film, as the Inverness County Centre for the Arts already screened his *Bha Iad La'n Sgeulachand*, which translates to *They Were Full of Tales*. That film highlighted the life of his grandfather, Willie Francis Fraser - who, I should note, was a great step dancer well into his 90s.

I ask the members of this House to join me in congratulating Todd for receiving the Analogue Film Grant and wish him much success with his film.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAMADAN: MUSLIM CELEB. - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the beginning of Ramadan for the Muslim constituents of Clayton Park West and beyond. I was speaking to my colleague for Halifax Armdale this morning, as I assumed Ramadan starts with the sighting of the hilal, or the new moon. He educated me that it would take three. I thought maybe it was in Saudi Arabia or Mecca, but he said anywhere in the world. Anywhere in the world right now is dark, so if it's tonight, we would hear about it very soon.

Fasting for Ramadan prohibits Muslims from eating and teaches them self-discipline and control. Honestly, if we can think about this, coming to work in the Legislature for morning and you don't eat until 8:00 p.m., it is quite difficult. Eating is one thing, but to go without water for that long and go to work and do things takes a lot of discipline. We will watch our colleague, I'm sure, doing that, and be very mindful of what he's doing.

As a Christian from a small minority - a Christian growing up in Iraq... (Interruption) Just quickly - I looked forward to Ramadan. Ramadan was a celebration and the best programming, being invited by my neighbours and eating.

THE SPEAKER: It appears that we'll be skipping the Liberal Party on the next one, because that was two members' statements in one. (Laughter)

The honourable member for Queens.

LAWRENCE, BRENDA: RECIP. OF 45-YR. SERV. AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize Brenda Lawrence and to congratulate her on recently being awarded a 45-year service award from Nova Scotia Health.

Brenda is a ward clerk in the emergency department of Queens General Hospital and has been on staff for the last 45 years. The trustees of the Queens General Hospital Foundation and her co-workers recognize her dedication and commitment, and the significant and invaluable impact she has on the ER, supporting it to run efficiently and effectively. Her care, empathy, and efficiency throughout her impressive career do indeed merit this impressive award.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Brenda on this significant accomplishment and in thanking her for her years of service to the people of Queens County.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SPICE HUB INDIAN KITCHEN: OPENING - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the Spice Hub Indian Kitchen, which opened on November 5, 2020, and is located at 1015 Main Street. This restaurant serves homestyle Indian food prepared by Dinu Mathew, who has been cooking for over 11 years.

Mathew moved here to Halifax in 2012, and when he moved, he noticed there was a lack of Indian restaurants in Dartmouth. That's why he wanted to be among the first to open one. Originally from southern India, Mathew and his partners also noticed a lack of southern Indian food available in the area. Spice Hub Indian Kitchen also sells Indian food staples like samosas and an Indian-Canadian dish that becomes a fan favourite once you try it - also butter chicken poutine.

To reel in Nova Scotians who may be unfamiliar with Indian cuisine, Spice Hub Indian Kitchen is also sharing educational posts on social media about the dishes and desserts. Mathew says, "We want to give [people] a little bit of an idea of what's going on."

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

BRENNAN, TONYA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

JOHN WHITE: Today I would like to recognize a strong, independent young woman in Glace Bay, Tonya Brennan.

Tonya is a full-time mother to her son Cale, a full-time employee at Sobeys, and a lifelong mentor to many youth in our community. When Tonya isn't juggling home and work, you will find her on the court volunteering with the girls' basketball team at Glace Bay High School.

For the past 14 years, Tonya has been an inspiration to countless young women, and I've witnessed this first-hand with my own daughter. In addition, Tonya has dedicated the past six years as a leader of the Dominion Girl Guide Trex unit.

Tonya loves a challenge. She manages a bakery, she runs a family, she is raising a beautiful two-year-old son, and yet she continues to inspire countless young women in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

MUN. OF CLARE: 1ST ANN. SURF & SWIM - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: On February 12th, the Municipality of Clare and the Good Wave Project organized the First Annual Surf & Swim, a fundraiser for the Clare Food Bank. On this relatively warm and sunny day, the participants - many dressed in costumes - arrived with their family ready for some fun in the water.

It was still February and, as quickly as it started, the swimmers were out of the water, most running towards a warm car. The surfers, who went in after the swimmers, were in wet suits and did stay in the water longer. The participants left the beach that day knowing they raised more than \$4,600 for the food bank and wanting to return next year.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating the organizers and the participants of the First Annual Surf & Swim for this unique and successful fundraiser.

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

GREAT BIG CRUNCH: PROM. OF HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD - RECOG.

LARRY HARRISON: On March 10th, over 500 students from Hilden Elementary, Upper Stewiacke Elementary, Brookfield Elementary, and Cobequid Consolidated Elementary joined the South Colchester Community Health Board and youth engagement coordinators with UpLift Nova Scotia to make a Great Big Crunch in support of a healthy school food program for all students.

The Great Big Crunch is an annual Canada-wide movement and moment of anti-silence in which students, teachers, and others crunch into apples to make noise for healthy school food. I think this is a tremendous movement, and I commend all those organizers for involving our students in this important initiative. I would also like to

acknowledge Stirling Farm Market in Truro and the Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education for showing their support by providing the apples.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ATKINS, JOSH: RECOV. FROM INJ. - BEST WISHES

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Yarmouth's Josh Atkins is currently in hospital here in Halifax after suffering a serious head injury in early March.

If you or your kids play sports in Yarmouth, then you know and love Josh. His energy, sense of humour, and his smile are infectious and have touched the lives of many in our community and beyond. To say that Josh is beloved in our community is an understatement. This was evident when his GoFundMe page raised over \$35,000 within 48 hours, and also when his friends organized a fundraiser hockey game that filled Mariner Centre and raised over \$24,000 in one evening.

Josh Atkins is a much-loved and respected friend, coach, teammate to countless people in our community. He's a beloved son, brother, nephew, and cousin. He's a loving fiancé to Krista, and an endlessly proud dad to his young sons Bradley and Liam.

We all need Josh back in Yarmouth at home with this family, on the softball field, and in the rink. I ask this House to join me in wishing Josh and his family all the strength they will need as Josh continues to fight for his life.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

NUNN, DR. DAVID: RECIPIENT OF PHYS. OF YR. AWARD - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I rise today to congratulate Dr. David Nunn for receiving the 2021 Community Family Physician of the Year Award.

Dr. Nunn has received this award in recognition of his contributions as a family physician, educator, and leader in the field of medicine. He has practised in Kentville for more than three decades. During his career, Dr. Nunn has been an integral member of his local medical community as a champion for the Department of Family Medicine at the Annapolis Valley site, and its director of continuing professional development. Dr. Nunn has also provided emergency medical care at the Valley Regional Hospital throughout his entire career.

It is an honour to have this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Nunn on receiving the prestigious 2021 Community Family Physician of the Year Award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

MCNUTT, CST. WILLIAM: COM. SERV. - THANKS

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I have a feel-good story for you today. A misdirected 911 call led police officers to an elderly couple's home on February 7th. The police quickly determined there was problem with the phone lines after the intense ice storm and hence no emergency. Constable William McNutt didn't just walk away from the elderly couple when it was established that they were safe: He proceeded to get in touch with their family to let them know their loved ones were safe and sound. The service provider was contacted, and the situation was explained so service could be restored quickly. Next, Constable McNutt grabbed a shovel and did his best to clear the walkway, returning the next day with salt he personally purchased to make sure the walkway was safe for the couple to use.

I would like to personally thank Constable William McNutt for his compassion and sense of duty to others. I am proud to say this is just one example of the service the RCMP in our area gives to the constituents of East Hants.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West. A little shorter this time, please.

MBR. STATEMENTS: EXPAND LENGTH - CONSIDER

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I'm actually finishing what I started. (Laughter)

I wanted to, first of all, say Ramadan Mubarak to all the Muslims in my constituency and Nova Scotia and around the world. I have many friends around the world and hopefully they will cite it before us here.

I also wanted to ask all the new MLAs or MLAs to come for whom English was not their first language - we will never be able to do it in 60-seconds. Please give us a chance. I've lived here for 40 years and I speak five languages - I will never have the speed of the people who went to school from the age of five. I ask you to give us at least 90 seconds and more. (Laughter) Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HARPER, LUCILLE: APPT. TO ORDER OF CANADA - CONGRATS.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Lucille Harper on her appointment to the Order of Canada. (Applause) Lucille is a community leader and a feminist who led the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services from 1988 to 2018. Lucille has advocated for socially just policies and has been an advocate for thousands of girls and women experiencing social

exclusion, violence, and poverty. Lucille's vision, service, and advocacy resulted in the founding of the Antigonish Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program - the first SANE program outside of HRM.

Lucille has been a champion for many things: for the Antigonish Community Transit, Antigonish Poverty Reduction Coalition, and school-based sexual violence prevention programs, to highlight just a few. She currently sits as a member of the Syrian Antigonish Family Embrace Board welcoming and settling Syrian families in our community.

I want to thank Lucille not only for her lifelong service and leadership but for her mentorship during my career. She has taught me a great deal and has challenged and empowered me to do better. I ask all members of the Legislature to join me today in thanking Lucille Harper for her tireless work and for her immeasurable contributions to our community and province and congratulate her on this much-deserved honour.

THE SPEAKER: The score is even now, okay?

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

BELLIVEAU, ANNE: WOOD CARVING SKILL - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Anne Belliveau, a wood carver from Hubley.

Anne expresses her creativity through wood carvings and became interested in this art form because of the sound of the chisel going through the wood, which Anne found to be very relaxing. Anne's passion for wood carving started with a Lee Valley Tools course in 2019. Since that time, Anne has been refining her skills, adding tools, and enhancing her reputation among family and friends.

Anne would recommend anyone who enjoys creating three-dimensional things to try carving. You can really feature your own vision in this form of artwork by the wood you select, the shape of your design, the chiselling depth, and the colours you select. Anne enjoys carving wildlife and characters and has a love for carving flowers from earlier work in flower design.

I would like the members of this Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Anne for following her creative passions and sharing her skills and talent.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

NICKERSON, STEVE: CONTRIB. TO AIKIDO - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge a local constituent, Steve Nickerson, and his 30-year contribution to the sport of Aikido. Steve Nickerson Shihan is a 7th Degree Black Belt who began his Aikido training in 1992 and served as the Chief Instructor of the Buseikan Dojo in Borden, Ontario until 1997.

In 1995, Lieutenant Nickerson was a participant in the first-ever international instructors' Gasshuku held in Japan. During his stay in Japan, Mr. Nickerson received training from the highest-ranked Yoshinkan Aikido instructors in the world. Later that same year, the Canadian Forces honoured Mr. Nickerson as the Canadian Forces Command Athlete of the Year in recognition of his leadership, service to the community and accomplishments. In 1997, Mr. Nickerson was relocated to Halifax, where he opened his new dojo, the Makotokan, and then his second in 2001 in Greenwood.

As he prepares to celebrate his 30th anniversary in the sport, please join me in acknowledging Mr. Nickerson's commitment and dedication to furthering the growth of Yoshinkan Aikido among youth and adults alike in Kings West.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MO.: ENDING CULT. OF SILENCE - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister of Community Services and the Status of Women for her notice of motion today. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Sexual assault, domestic violence and misogyny are among the most violating experiences someone can go through.

I agree with the minister that education and awareness is of vital importance for all Nova Scotians, but I'd like to address a piece the minister did not mention. Many victims of sexual assault are not aware of the information she shared until they go through their own experience of sexual assault and violence. The lessons learned from survivors is that there is a culture of silence, a culture where the supports are not there for them.

The government can start by ensuring the supports are there and start by training law enforcement, Crown prosecutors and judges in sexual assault and violence. I encourage everyone to learn more and encourage our government to start putting words into actions for victims of sexual assault.

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

TUCKER, NAPHTALI: ORG. OF FUNDRAISER FOR UKRAINE - THANKS

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, when Naphtali Tucker, a Grade 8 student at George P. Vanier Junior High School in Fall River, saw what was happening in Ukraine, she knew she wanted to help out.

Naphtali and her friends created ribbons and more than 300 buttons for a March 9th fundraising sale at the school, with various slogans saying: Stand with Ukraine, Support Ukraine, I Love Ukraine. Both are done in the Ukrainian country colours. As of the end of March 9th, \$2,600 was raised and will go to the UN Refugee Agency and possibly UNICEF.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking Naphtali and her friends for their thoughtful and caring concern for those suffering in Ukraine.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

SMITH, MACKENZIE: BASKETBALL ACCOMPLS. - CONGRATS.

NOLAN YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 19-year-old Mackenzie Smith of Shelburne. A recent graduate of King's-Edgehill, Mackenzie is now playing NCAA Division 1 basketball at Saint Joseph's University in Pennsylvania and has been named to the Atlantic 10 Conference all-star rookie team.

In the regular season finale, Mackenzie led her team to a win, posting a career and game high of 26 points, seven rebounds, three blocks, three steals and two assists and she ended the season third in the entire league with a 41 per cent three-point field goal percentage.

Mr. Speaker, Mackenzie maintains a balanced lifestyle by demonstrating a strong work ethic academically as well as on the basketball court. I respectfully ask all members to join me in congratulating Mackenzie Smith and wishing her all the best in the future. I am sure Mackenzie Smith will be a name you'll hear often in the future.

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

STEVENS, TERESA: ADVOC. FOR RAPID COVID TESTS - THANKS

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Teresa Stevens, a woman who is demonstrating a great sense of community responsibility on the Tancook Islands.

The islands of Big and Little Tancook are historic fishing communities which remain connected to mainland Nova Scotia by a ferry. These communities saw several

outbreaks of COVID-19 over the past two years and Ms. Stevens advocated successfully for them to receive and distribute shipments of rapid tests.

On behalf of the communities of Tancook, I want to thank the Office of Public Health for their response to the needs of these communities and thank Teresa Stevens for her advocacy and work on behalf of her neighbours.

[10:00 a.m.]

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is 10:00 a.m., and we will finish at 10:50 a.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: PREV. CAP & TRADE POS. - ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Today is when the federal carbon tax increases by 25 per cent. Luckily in Nova Scotia, we have a cap and trade system that has protected the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians for the last number of years, and the cap considers the hard work Nova Scotians did because we have an implicit cap with our electricity sector, the biggest part of our emissions.

We actually created a Green Fund. The Premier would remember this fund on the cap and trade system which he called a scheme to collect more money from Nova Scotians, which I'll table. My question for the Premier is: Does he still stand by those statements?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): I thank the member for raising this important issue. Of course, we know that the system that we have at the moment is up for renewal and there are discussions happening with that as we speak.

I guess in general what I'd say to the member is we had a lot of questions about things that that party did when they were in government. We had a lot more questions and concerns about what they didn't do, and that's why we've been so busy in the first few months in this government picking up files and getting stuff done. We will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

IAIN RANKIN: This government and his ministers actually like to brag about this Green Fund and the money that they're spending out of it, the very system that that

Premier called a scheme at the time. This actually forces future governments to spend money to tackle climate change and protect people at the pump and their power bills.

As mandated, the carbon tax will increase by 25 per cent today, and I want to ask the Premier: Is he aware just how much money people are saving at the pump because we didn't have a PC government at the time which accepted that carbon tax?

THE PREMIER: What I'm aware of is that Nova Scotians are struggling with inflation and the cost of living, and we feel that very deeply and very sincerely. Nova Scotians aren't alone. This is happening across the country and certainly around the world. Inflation is a real thing, and Nova Scotians are struggling with the price of gas. That's why as a government, we've gotten to work so quickly putting together programs to help Nova Scotians.

Just this week, Mr. Speaker - I don't know if the members are aware - we tabled a budget, with \$13 billion of investments. I'm very proud of the work of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and his team. The government on this side - we will remain focused on Nova Scotians. We will do everything we can to support Nova Scotians, and the Opposition might not know it, but Nova Scotians know this government is here for them.

IAIN RANKIN: What Nova Scotians should be concerned about is that the Premier, the person who will ultimately decide the negotiation with Ottawa, doesn't know the difference. It's 11 cents, Mr. Speaker, that Nova Scotians are saving right now because of the cap and trade system. That means more money in Nova Scotians' pockets who are dealing with the cost of living crisis.

My question for the Premier is: Considering its success, is the Premier prepared to fight to keep our cap and trade program or something that has equivalent savings for Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very proud of the work of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and his department, and I'm very proud of the relationship that we have with the federal government. We're working hand in hand with the federal government on a number of files.

I think what we're seeing is that for eight years when they were in government, that party had an idea of what it meant to save money. You know where they saved money? On health care, on seniors, on providing services to Nova Scotians. This government, we understand that we are here to serve Nova Scotians. We will invest in Nova Scotians. Every single day we have the privilege to serve them, Mr. Speaker, and Nova Scotians know it. They know they can count on us. (Applause)

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

PREM. - CODE CRITICALS: RISING NUMBERS - CONCERN

GARY BURRILL: People are alarmed when they hear about Code Criticals, the situations where in a whole county there's no more than two ambulances, sometimes one - sometimes none at all. We've all heard moving accounts of people who have had very long waits for an ambulance because the ambulances had to come from so far away.

What is particularly alarming is that while there were 213 Code Criticals in all of 2021 in our province, there were 333 in the first two months of 2022. Does the Premier share a sense of alarm about these numbers?

THE PREMIER: I will assure the member that the Premier is deeply concerned about the status of health care, as is our government. Nova Scotians know that we were pretty upfront with them in the election. There are big issues in health care. That's not up for debate. It's going to take time. It's going to take money.

We are trying to fix a system that deteriorated for eight years, and I will say this: We have gotten to work supporting paramedics across this province. They do incredible work. They're feeling the stress. We got to work immediately on patient transfers, on supporting them . . . (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: We got to work immediately with a number of files that were sitting gathering dust on the side of the previous Health And Wellness ministers, plural. Our Health and Wellness Minister is not looking away from problems, is getting to work, supporting paramedics, looking out for Nova Scotians. When Nova Scotians call 911, a paramedic should be there. Those paramedics want to be there, and we are doing everything we can to make sure that they . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party on his first supplementary.

GARY BURRILL: While waiting for an ambulance in an emergency situation, when 40 minutes feels like 40 hours, it makes a profound difference if the person you have on the phone offering you instruction and support is themselves a trained paramedic. Recently, the government began to allow people who do not have paramedic training to take up positions as 911 ambulance dispatchers. I want to ask the Premier: Why would the government permit this?

THE PREMIER: I think this is symbolic of a lot of issues that the Opposition have, where what we're doing is following the Fitch report. What we're doing is

following best practices in the industry. What we're doing is what's in the interest of Nova Scotians.

I know the Opposition needs some fodder to talk about in Question Period, but we're not focused on that. We're focused on doing what's right for Nova Scotians. (Applause)

GARY BURRILL: Paramedics speak a great deal, and when they do, they're not speaking fodder. (Applause) They speak a great deal about the rate of burnout amongst members of their profession, and they speak very commonly about the numbers of members of their profession in our province who are leaving or preparing to leave Nova Scotia altogether. This isn't terribly difficult to understand when we think about the fact that primary care paramedics make up to \$28.30 an hour in our province, but up to \$44 an hour in Ontario.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he agree that in order for us to have more effective retention of paramedics, Nova Scotia's got to have more competitive paramedic wages?

THE PREMIER: This government listens very closely to paramedics and health care professionals across the province every single day. The Opposition can laugh all they want, but I don't think it's funny when the government pays attention to those health care workers on the front line. We're very concerned about the state of health care in this province. That's why we're getting to work on the Fitch report. That's why we've increased the budget for EHS by \$12 million.

We will do what's right for Nova Scotians. We will do what's right regardless of what the Opposition might say. We will do what's right for Nova Scotians. That's our only focus.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - CAP AND TRADE: FED. RENEG. - PRIORITIZE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Last Friday during Question Period, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said no decisions had been made with respect to the next phase of cap and trade. There is still a lot of internal discussion taking place within the government and discussions between them and Ottawa. I'll table that.

We all know that the cap and trade system in Nova Scotia saves the people paying gas 11 cents a litre. I ask the Premier: Knowing that the cap and trade is saving Nova Scotia and their pocketbooks, why is his minister not prioritizing, after seven months, to ensure that we get a good deal with Ottawa to save Nova Scotia families money?

THE PREMIER: It would be absolutely incorrect to say that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is not prioritizing this. I can assure the member, the former Premier, that this is a priority of this government. We're talking to the federal government. We're looking at what's possible for this province and we will do what is in the interests of Nova Scotians, just like we do with every single issue.

The member is right: Nova Scotians have invested a lot. That's why our power rates are where they are. We've done our part. We will continue to do more, and the Province supports Nova Scotians in that effort, Mr. Speaker. We'll be there for Nova Scotians, and they know that. Just this week they saw 13 billion reasons that we're there to support them.

IAIN RANKIN: I know he can appreciate my concern - and Nova Scotians do - that the Premier doesn't know that we people are saving 11 cents a litre, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to tell the Premier that there are three options to be looked at: carbon tax; there's a hybrid system; and then ultimately there's the cap and trade system we have here. The irony is that the other Conservative-led provinces will see the price shock today at the pump, Mr. Speaker - Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, and so on down the line.

My question to the Premier is: If he is not able to get a deal, will he ask Ottawa to hold off on the increase of that carbon tax on Nova Scotia next year?

THE PREMIER: I assure the member opposite that we're working closely with the federal government, and I assure the member opposite that the federal government understands our concerns for the impact on the cost of living on Nova Scotians and I believe they share that, Mr. Speaker. The member may be giving up on the federal government, but I'm not.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DPW - CAP AND TRADE: PREV. STATS. - REGRET

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, during the debates on the cap and trade program in 2017, the current Minister of Public Works stated that under cap and trade, sadly, consumers will be taking one under the chin once again and costs will be downloaded to the consumer. Let's face it, in rural Nova Scotia we all need to drive to work. I will table that.

Considering that Nova Scotia consumers have now saved 11 cents per litre on gas, they'll be saving on power rates because of the system that I will note many members of the government voted against at the time, my question to the Minister of Public Works is: Does she stand by her previous statements on this?

HON. KIM MASLAND: I'm really glad that I am providing some Sunday afternoon reading for the honourable member across the aisle.

What I will tell you is that in 2017 there were a lot of questions being answered about what cap and trade was going to look like, what the economic impact would be to people, especially in my constituency. I was hearing from seniors that they didn't know. As long as people have questions, I will continue to ask the questions, whether I'm in Opposition or in government. If it's going to impact my constituents and Nova Scotians, I'll keep asking the questions.

BRAEDON CLARK: I'll thank the minister for that and note that there's no issue with asking questions, but I think the answers are pretty clear at this point: the cap and trade system is working. It's saving money for Nova Scotians. I will agree with the minister that many Nova Scotians - especially those in rural areas - need to drive to work, but it isn't the cap and trade system that is causing the problems. It is record-high gas prices and Nova Scotians have seen very little relief at the pump recently.

Mr. Speaker, again my question is for the Minister of Public Works: If the cost of rural Nova Scotians getting to work was a concern back in 2017 when the cap and trade program was debated, why isn't it a concern now when gas prices are at \$1.70?

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

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Again, as I noted yesterday in my response, it is the UARB that sets the gas prices in our province on a weekly basis. Gas prices went down, thankfully, this week. This board sets the price free of any political or industry influence. As the member noted, global affairs that are happening around the globe - natural disasters, other pressures - influence the price of gas in the benchmark.

Maybe a point of clarification regarding carbon pricing in our province: It is currently at 1.18 cents, so maybe not 11 cents we're saving at the pumps, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

ECC: HOME HEATING - COST

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia has the second-highest percentage of homes heated by oil in the country, with nearly 50 per cent of all houses relying on oil to keep them warm. I will table that. We know that a carbon tax system will make heating their home even more expensive for nearly half of these Nova Scotians who rely on oil. This is just another example of how the cap and trade system is protecting people in the cost of living crisis.

My question for the Premier is: How much more will Nova Scotians pay to heat their homes if he's unable to secure the cap and trade program by year end?

[10:15 a.m.]

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: I just want to reiterate that there's a lot of ongoing discussion taking place. The affordability issues we're seeing in Nova Scotia - the affordability issues we're seeing across Canada - are at the forefront of all of our minds.

I want this House to know that when we say we're having these ongoing discussions internally, and with Ottawa, it's about the just transition. It's about looking after the interests of those 200,000 Nova Scotians who meet that just transition off oil. This government will always have the best interests of Nova Scotia first and foremost.

CARMAN KERR: Our previous Liberal Government was working closely with the federal government to secure funding that would help transition oil-heated homes to electric. Can the Premier provide the House with an update on what he is doing to secure these funds and transition Nova Scotians off of oil heat?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I've had discussions with my federal counterpart - the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault - and I've raised that issue with him.

In the last federal election, \$250 million was promised. I indicated to the federal minister that we have great off-oil programs here in Nova Scotia that could only be enhanced if we can get access to that. I want to assure the honourable member that those discussions are taking place with Ottawa.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW - UNIV. PHARMACARE: IMPLEM. - COMMIT

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends the Shingrix vaccine for adults to prevent shingles disease. Shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful rash, and some adults with shingles will develop lingering and debilitating nerve pain. In Prince Edward Island, seniors can receive the Shingrix vaccine for free. In Nova Scotia, seniors have to pay \$300 to receive the same vaccine. Will the Premier agree to make Shingrix free for seniors in this province?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, we have been reviewing what is publicly covered in the Department of Health and Wellness. We have heard from a

number of people, and the Department of Health and Wellness is currently reviewing our capabilities to do that.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I thank the minister for that answer. I am hopeful that this policy will change. Our caucus believes that every resident in Nova Scotia should be able to get medication with their health card, and not their credit card. Despite the promise to fix health care, we haven't heard much from this government on prescription drug costs.

Mr. Speaker, with the federal government now agreeing to pass the Pharmacare Act by the end of 2023, will the Premier commit to working with Ottawa to implement a system of universal pharmacare in Nova Scotia?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Since we have formed government, we have been talking about the Pharmacare program in Nova Scotia. We have been looking at a number of the programs that we have to offer. We will continue to review those programs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

PREM. - N.S. POWER: RATE INCREASE - ACTION

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Last week in the Legislature, the Premier eventually revealed that he had known about Nova Scotia Power's planned increase for power rates in Nova Scotia. My question to the Premier is: Why did he not take any action until this issue was made public?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things happening on that particular file. To suggest that we waited any length of time would just be absolutely ridiculous.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Weeks went by from the time that Nova Scotia Power made the presentation to the Premier, and by the time the Premier made a comment to the public. The Premier did reveal that he knew power rates were going to go up. He did not say whether he knew about the change to net metering which would impact the solar industry.

I know we got some mixed messages last week from the Premier on this, but could the Premier clarify for the House: Was he also made aware of the changes to net metering, which would impact the solar industry as well, at that meeting?

THE PREMIER: I think that's been revisited a number of times, but if the member wants to continue to till the same ground, we're happy to do it. The answer is that when I found out about the solar changes, we acted very swiftly.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

PREM.: N.S. POWER RATE HIKE - ACTION

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, when asked about how long he knew about Nova Scotia's plan to kill the solar industry, the Premier replied, "About two hours before I killed it." Yet the Premier said he knew since early Fall about Nova Scotia Power's 10 per cent rate hike that would empty Nova Scotians' pocketbooks in the cost of living crisis.

My question is for the Premier. Why didn't he kill the 10 per cent rate hike that would impact all Nova Scotians?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: On behalf of my colleague, the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, I believe there is a bill on the floor of the Legislature talking about power rates. We've been very clear that ensuring affordable, reliable, and sustainable electricity to Nova Scotia ratepayers is a priority for our government. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that we will do everything we can to protect the ratepayers of this province.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Thank you, minister, for the response regarding the bills and what's happening after the fact. My question is: If the Premier voiced his displeasure at Nova Scotia Power regarding the increase request, why does he believe that Nova Scotia Power went through with it anyway?

THE PREMIER: I'm happy to answer the specific question. Again, this has been discussed a number of times. When I first learned about the rate increase, I voiced my displeasure. The reason I didn't say anything is because I was actually quite surprised that they went ahead and filed one. There will be a lot of discussion around these rates in this House over the coming days. There's no question about that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

PREM.: N.S. POWER RATE INCREASE - ADDRESS

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, speaking of energy and costs, let's talk about Nova Scotia Power and the Atlantic Loop. In January, after Nova Scotia Power's 10 per cent power rate increase request, CEO Peter Gregg stated that these rate hikes are needed to help the company in its transition to renewables. I will table that. In February, the CEO then stated that Nova Scotia Power is seeking funding from the federal government to cover the cost of transition to renewables. I will also table that.

These sound like the same request. My question to the Premier is: Is the CEO of Nova Scotia Power looking to the federal government and to Nova Scotians to cover the same costs?

THE PREMIER: Happy to answer on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. What I would say to the member is that we're very focused on meeting the 2030 goal. There can be no question about that. There should be no debate about that. We're very focused on meeting that goal. We'll look at all alternatives. The Atlantic Loop is something that has the potential to be very good for Atlantic Canada, so of course we're looking at that.

These things are evolving. There are a lot of discussions taking place around the relationship between the ratepayers and the utility, and those discussions will continue. I can assure the House of that.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, if Nova Scotia can secure the \$2 billion for the Atlantic Loop, will the proposed 10 per cent power rate increase still be required of Nova Scotians or was this increase the Plan B all along?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, I don't think the increase in rates that Nova Scotia Power is seeking from the NSUARB is related to meeting our renewables target. I think there are a number of parts to that. The member can certainly look at their general rates application filing and see what they're attributing the increase to.

I can leave this thought with the member: On this side of the House, we are very focused on protecting the ratepayers of this province. That will only ever be our focus.

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

MAH: CODES OF CONDUCT REGS. - ADDRESS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. More than a year ago, this House passed a bill that required the government to create regulations for municipal codes of conduct. This was in response to a long-standing demand from women in municipal politics who had enough of the rampant discrimination and harassment - I being one of them.

This week we saw another incident - a councillor, instead of assisting a constituent with her housing issue, asked for personal photos. Municipalities have been waiting for code of conduct legislation for years. When will it finally be ready?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for the question. As most members of the House will remember, yes, there was a bill passed in the previous government. What was not done were regulations around that bill. So the bill passes and enables the Legislature or the department to create regulations. We are working hard on creating those regulations right now.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, we are eagerly awaiting it. What is often highlighted in cases of misconduct at the municipal level is a dissatisfaction with the process, resulting in sanctions or lack thereof. Currently, there are not standards for sanctions and many municipalities do not have the resources to fund a third more objective party to handle violations of their code. Sanctions can be costly as well, involving intensive training and much-needed education.

My question is for the minister: Will the regulations prescribe sanctions and will the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing give municipalities the resources to properly implement them?

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to provide a bit more detail. As a department, we could have just said, here are the regulations. Rather than doing that, we have struck a committee with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities and the Association of Municipal Administrators, chaired by the Mayor of Yarmouth. I haven't seen a preliminary report on their work, but I know that it is under way. We expect that the work will be finished this year when we brought it forward.

The reason I don't mind saying - for me, my choice as minister, would be: Do we just find something and say here are the regulations? We decided not to do that. We wanted everybody to own it. We are doing it in partnership and consultation with the NSFM, with the Association of Municipal Administrators, so that this is not the department's rules and regulations. This is all municipal officials. They have a part in that, too. We want to do that collaboratively with them.

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

PREM. - ATLANTIC LOOP: TIMELINE - COMMENT

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I am feeling optimistic today. Let's say that the federal government does give us the \$2 billion for the Atlantic Loop. My question through you to the Premier is: How long does he believe it would take to actually get this project fully operational?

THE PREMIER: The optimism of the member opposite - it is a Friday morning and isn't it wonderful here in the Legislature? Listen, this is a big project. The engineering requirements are significant. The construction requirements are significant. This is the reason that there is a sense of urgency in discussing this with the federal government, but it is years and years to get the engineering and the construction. There can be no doubt about that, Mr. Speaker.

This is urgent. This has to come to a head. I think we have expressed that quite clearly a number of times through the media, to Nova Scotians, and also to the federal government.

PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Premier for that answer. At a press conference following the Council of Atlantic Premiers meeting just over a week ago, Premier Higgs stated that the Loop “would take seven or eight years to have it up and functional, maybe longer.” This has been tabled already in this House.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Premier is: Does he agree with Premier Higgs’s assessment of this project?

[10:30 a.m.]

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. This is a big project. Nobody should underestimate the size of this project. Nobody should underestimate the significance of this project. Certainly, nobody should underestimate the complexity of this project.

Premier Higgs said seven to eight years. I’ve said years. It is going to take years. Seven to eight is just as good an estimate as anyone else’s. I have no reason to dispute that. It is going to take a long time. This is a pressing issue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

ECC: GETTING OFF COAL - OTHER PLANS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Three CEOs at Nova Scotia Power later, I know with 1,000 per cent confidence that both the minister and the Premier knew about the power rate increase and the decision around solar well before their meetings.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Nova Scotia has a plan to get off coal by 2030, yet we are hearing from Premier Higgs leaves us with less than eight years. That is cutting it awfully short.

My question to the Premier is: Why does the Premier still believe that Atlantic Loop is Plan A to getting off coal by 2030?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: This is a very important conversation that we’re having because we’re talking about not only our approach to energy but also our overall plans for greenhouse gas reduction. We’re talking about our overall plans for mitigating and adapting to climate change. The Atlantic Loop is a big undertaking, as the Premier has indicated.

The Atlantic Loop is also part of many other steps we’re taking, whether it’s the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, whether it’s the Coastal Protection Act, whether it’s the upcoming climate plan, which we plan to release later this Spring. Mr. Speaker, we are taking big steps to deal with climate change.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I appreciate the comment from the minister. I too agree with a lot of the initiatives that he mentioned because they were brought in by the previous government.

The Premier said in January that it's way too early to start speculating on Plan B, Plan C, or Plan D right now. We're very focused on Plan A, which is the Atlantic Loop project. Considering that we have to get off coal by 2030 and that the Atlantic Loop could take eight or more years, as Premier Higgs has said, why does the Premier not have a real Plan B in the event the Premier fails to secure the funds for the Atlantic Loop?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: We have multiple plans to deal with energy efficiency. We have multiple plans to deal with climate change. The ultimate plan you saw tabled by the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - our budget, solutions for Nova Scotians, solutions for health care. I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that budget could be renamed cleaning up the mess left by the Liberals.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North. (Interruptions)

Order, please. The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DOJ: SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES DROPPED - NUMBER

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Some of the most courageous people I have met since I have become an MLA are victims of sexual assault. It takes a great deal of courage to report a sexual assault to law enforcement. It takes a great deal of strength to go through the collection of evidence, often humiliating procedures and often in a culture with little compassion and no support.

Several victims have come to me to ask why changes cannot be made, including why charges were dropped with the excuse of COVID-19. How many criminals have gone free because our courts do not have proper resources? My question to the minister is: Can he share how many cases have been dismissed due to COVID-19 and the nature of these cases?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, when I had an opportunity to sit down in my office and have a discussion with the member, I actually expressed to her at the time that there were not a lot that were being dismissed because of the Jordan case, which of course is a time limit for cases to come before the court. I will say that I certainly agree and personally agree with the member that any sexual assault needs to be dealt with in a very serious manner, and I have relayed that through to the department as well.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say one case is one too many. If you're the victim, the message that you are being sent when your case is being dismissed because of COVID-19, the message that's being sent to law enforcement

after they have collected evidence and have enough proof to put someone behind bars who belongs behind bars, the message we're sending them as a government when there's not proper resources to try these cases is the wrong message to sexual assault victims.

Crown attorneys are quoted by CBC in the Fall saying "It's not for me to decide whether or not I prosecute a drinking and driving over a sexual assault. Somebody is going to have to tell me and they're going to have to start prioritizing these cases." I'll table this document.

Could the Attorney General clarify for members of this House what level of the Jordan ruling is being applied to cases pursued by the Crown when they're being dropped, and have any steps been made to aid prosecutors in assigning priorities so that those who have endured sexual assault and other violence will not be further victimized by this government and lack of resources?

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, through you to the honourable member, what I would suggest is that there are very few cases, as far as I know, that are sexual assault cases that are being thrown out because of Jordan. I do recognize that there are cases. I'm not saying that they're specific to sexual assault.

What I will say is that Victim Services recognizes the need for supports in sexual violence. I've given personal direction to staff that I want to ensure that when somebody is a victim of sexual assault, if it's a female victim, they have an opportunity to have a female officer and a female worker working with them.

At the end of the day, I think everybody in this House would agree: sexual assault, there's no place for that, and we deal with it strongly.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DOJ: NDAs SILENCING VICTIMS - ADDRESS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: My question is for the Premier. In the paper this week, the president of the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union spoke to the troubling trend of workplaces using non-disclosure agreements to silence victims of sexual harassment. In these cases, victims are put in the position of signing away their voices in order to obtain a settlement. The outcome is protection for the perpetrator and silencing for the victim. Does the Premier acknowledge that the abuse of non-disclosure agreements must be confronted?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that comment. P.E.I., being the first province in Canada, just recently passed some legislation to look at NDAs. It is an ongoing issue. We recognize at the department that it is certainly something that's being abused in the system and the impacts of it. I've listened

to the CBC interview that went out here a while ago, and it's something that we're looking at currently in the department. We anticipate coming back in the Fall with some legislation once we get some more information on this.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: That's true, P.E.I. did recently bring legislation. Not only that, but it was all-party collaboration - genuine all-party collaboration - and it was an Opposition bill. The campaign Can't Buy My Silence, which I'll table, calls on legislators like us to recognize and put an end to NDAs, so aside from the CBC article, we could pass that particular piece along.

I'm really glad to hear that there's legislation coming forward. We would love to have an advance look at that and be able to discuss that. I'm getting a headshake of a no from the Premier. I guess the days of all-party collaboration are gone, but we will certainly support the legislation if it comes forward in an appropriate fashion.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

ECC: PLANS TO MEET CLIMATE TARGETS - SHARE

HON. KELLY REGAN: I just want to note that the Environment and Climate Change Minister rhymed off a whole list of legislation and programs. Gosh, they were all ours. Some mess.

New Brunswick has a massive stake in the Atlantic Loop project, and we're already seeing them commit to other energy project agreements with other provinces, excluding Nova Scotia. This week, New Brunswick entered into an agreement with three provinces - Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan - to implement a plan for nuclear energy. I will table that.

While we are seeing other Premiers take proactive steps to meet their climate targets, we're watching our Premier fail to introduce a legitimate Plan B in case he fails to secure \$2 billion from the federal government. Other provinces are being proactive on this issue... .

THE SPEAKER: Question.

KELLY REGAN: Why isn't the Premier?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, every day I am observing new heights of Liberal arrogance. The Acts they have referenced don't belong to one party, they belong to Nova Scotians. Whether it's the Coastal Protection Act or the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, they don't belong to one party, they belong to Nova Scotians. I need to reiterate, those pieces of legislation, they belong to the people of Nova Scotia. We need to ensure that at the end of the day all of us are

working together. We can all take ownership of these things, because they are for the betterment of Nova Scotia.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, he called Nova Scotians' work "a mess" - great job.

A couple of weeks ago the federal Department of Natural Resources Canada released the final report of the *Clean Power Roadmap for Atlantic Canada*. This report notes several times what the future of nuclear energy in the Atlantic Region could look like. Interestingly, the Nova Scotia Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, the department the Premier is responsible for, co-authored this report, which I will table.

Considering that the Premier co-chaired this report that explores the future of nuclear energy, my question to the Premier is: Is the reason why he isn't sharing his plan B with Nova Scotians because it's nuclear?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Again, on behalf of my colleague the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, Nova Scotia is a national leader in fighting climate change, Mr. Speaker. When I think of leader, I think of the leadership that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has brought to this province in the introduction of EGCCRA. We are in good hands, we are in great hands, as we are committed to Nova Scotians on the path of renewable energy.

I'd like to remind the members opposite that back in February our province's procurement administrator released the largest procurement for renewable energy, which will bring 10 per cent of renewable energy to this province. We're committed to doing this and more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

ECC: ATLANTIC LOOP PROGRESS - SLOW PACE

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, when speaking to reporters following Question Period last Friday, the Premier stated that if we moved fast, 2030 is still attainable for the Atlantic Loop. It has been almost eight months now and this government has not been able to make any significant progress on this file. My question is: Why should Nova Scotians believe that this government will act quickly now, based on the very slow pace of the last eight months?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: We are not simply marking time, we're making a difference, especially on the climate change file. If you look at the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, we began to work immediately on expanding extended producer responsibility for printed paper and packaging.

Mr. Speaker, we are making a difference. We are getting to work on those goals, and much more will be revealed when we release a climate change plan.

[10:45 a.m.]

BRAEDON CLARK: I appreciate all the detail on the Atlantic Loop there in that answer. As I said, the Premier has said that if this government moves quickly, 2030 is still attainable for the Atlantic Loop. Mr. Speaker, I guess the question is: how fast? What is the deadline? And there must be a deadline, as these projects are planned out to the tiniest of details. My question is: What is the deadline by which the Premier must have the \$2 billion for the Loop, if we are to get this done by 2030?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: The work is ongoing. You've seen the Premier working with his provincial counterparts. There are ongoing discussions within the government. This is a file that not only the Premier but multiple departments are working on.

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to those goals. That's why we put 28 goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, goals that are legislated, goals that are clear, goals that are achievable.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

ECC: EXT. ON USE OF COAL - COST

HON. KELLY REGAN: We know that if the Premier fails to secure the \$2 billion from the federal government, we won't be able to get off of coal by 2030. He won't be able to close the last two coal plants here in Nova Scotia without the Loop. Wind won't be enough, and tidal can't fill the gap, either. My question is for the Premier: If he fails to secure the \$2 billion for the Atlantic Loop, is the Premier prepared to extend the use of coal in Nova Scotia past 2030?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: The legislated goal is clear in EGCRA. We are to get off coal by 2030. That is why this government is actively working on that, not only internally but also with our partners in Atlantic Canada. I want to assure members of the House that these goals are of the utmost priority to this government because Nova Scotia is a leader on climate change, and Nova Scotia will continue to be a leader on climate change under this Premier and under this government.

KELLY REGAN: We know there are social costs and environmental costs to using coal to generate electricity in our province, and now there are economic costs too. Coal prices are at an all-time high globally. If the Premier fails to get the funding for the Atlantic Loop Project and has to keep the coal projects open longer, we would like to know: What will the cost be to Nova Scotians?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Certainly, these things are not lost on us. As we negotiate, as we work with our partners on the Atlantic Loop, all these variables are factored in. We know affordability is at the forefront of the issue here in Nova Scotia, and that is factored into all that we do. You see that in our budget, and you'll see that in our public policy going forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

NRR: PROV. PARKS - ACCESS

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Premier. This government ran on a platform that centred health and spoke to the value of tourism and land protection. Where these intersect is in our system of provincial parks, but the trouble is that Nova Scotia doesn't enjoy the full benefits of our parks because most gates are closed throughout the Winter. Hike Nova Scotia is advocating for better access. Will the Premier commit to ensuring the provincial parks are accessible year-round?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: On behalf of my colleague the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, I'll bring that question back to the department for the member.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I have one more to bring back, I suppose. Our parks system is a core component of tourism, much of it rural, which needs to be strengthened with investment and expansion, and if we are to meet the important goal of at least 20 per cent protected land by 2030, we have to be moving quickly. Chris Miller from Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Nova Scotia has estimated that the increase in protection amounts to roughly the size of eight new Kejimikujik Parks, or three Cape Breton Highlands Parks, and I can table that. Why was the budget silent on investments for parks and protected areas?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Make no mistake, our protected areas are critical to our quality of life. Protected areas are critical to the economy of Nova Scotia. They support traditional activities. Of course, we know they have special cultural and spiritual significance, these protected areas. It is a top priority of this government to move towards that 20 per cent goal.

Certainly, my department and the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables are working very closely to attain the goal by 2030 of 20 per cent of land and water to be protected.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

ECC: MEETING CLIMATE TARGETS - DELAY

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I just realized what this government's Plan B is: It's blowing hot air, because there seems to be a lot of it coming from that side of the House.

Meeting our climate targets by 2030 seems to be even more difficult when you're relying on others along the way. In order to get off coal by 2030, the Premier is waiting for \$2 billion from the federal government. Just last week, it was announced that the Nova Scotia block of Muskrat Falls and the Maritime Link were suspended due to software failure. The Maritime Link and Nova Scotia block of Muskrat Falls are quoted as being critical to meeting Nova Scotia's goal of an 80 per cent renewable energy supply by 2030, and I will . . .

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board on a point of order.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'd just like to rise on a point of order.

During Question Period, the member for Sydney-Membertou in his commentary - I won't be able to quote it, but I will do my best - indicated that he had met with three CEOs of Nova Scotia Power and that he would know with 1,000 per cent certainty that if they were going to do something he would be aware and suggested the Premier would have known.

Mr. Speaker, this point of order is around something which I believe is unparliamentary. Only a member knows what they know. For another member to suggest something otherwise is for them to suggest that another member is not being truthful. That is unparliamentary.

I would ask that the member retract the comment and I'll leave it up to himself if he wishes to apologize. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, procedurally I have a point of order as well. I'll respond to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. I used my own experience indicating how we met during my time as minister with the utility. I'm using my own experience as a preamble to my question, so I don't see where the grounds are where I'm actually out of order. There is a disagreement between what I said and

what the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said, so I ask you to take it under review.

THE SPEAKER: I will take the point of order under advisement and report back to the House.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I also have a point of order. During Question Period, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change referenced “the Liberal arrogance” in his response to a question. I ask you to take that under review as well.

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

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, in the heat of debate. I’d like to apologize to my colleagues. They know I have respect and that can just be attributed to the heat of the debate. My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: This will now provide an ideal opportunity, since there was some to and fro, to take a 10-minute break.

We’ll recess for 10 minutes.

[10:53 a.m. The House recessed.]

[11:08 a.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

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. 114.

Bill No. 114 - Hospitals Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 114 be now read a second time.

Nova Scotia's Nursing Act enables a full scope of practice for nurse practitioners, which includes admitting patients to hospital. However, the Hospitals Act currently does not authorize a nurse practitioner to admit patients. It only authorizes physicians, midwives, and dentists. This amendment will change that. As a result, the acute health care system, and most importantly, patients, will benefit.

Nova Scotians deserve a positive health care experience, and from the moment they access care to the moment they return home, we want to do that. It is incumbent on all of us to take steps to ensure the health care journey is a smooth one. This often starts with changes in policy and legislation that can enable our health care system partners to make necessary and beneficial changes. Permitting nurse practitioners to admit patients means timely access to care, increased hospital efficiency and improved patient flow.

Mr. Speaker, we often hear about issues related to access and flow within health care, and here today I present another option to improve the health care system and the experience of patients. If this amendment passes, and I do hope my colleagues in the House of Assembly recognize the importance of this amendment and do support it, then the Nova Scotia Health Authority and IWK can begin to make the necessary changes to give nurse practitioners permission to admit patients to hospital.

We know this will have an impact, Mr. Speaker. Our health care system saw the positive benefit back in 2015, when the Hospitals Act was last amended to give nurse practitioners the ability to discharge patients. Since that change, we have seen the benefit to patients having additional providers with the authority to discharge.

Nurse practitioners are highly skilled, highly trained, and are licensed to admit patients. They, like other health care providers, play an important role in the care needs of patients whether they are providing one-on-one care or as part of a collaborative care team. This amendment will continue to maximize their talents and their skills, and it optimizes the role of the nursing workforce in our province.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to sincerely thank our nurse practitioners for their commitment to their patients. I would also like to thank the Nova Scotia College of Nurses for supporting this change.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I'll speak very briefly on Bill No. 114 and start with a little bit about myself. I'm an extremely organized person, and I'm practical, so when I

see things that are disorganized and impractical, it actually drives me insane. When you say that the Nursing Act allows for something that the Hospitals Act does not allow for, it actually physically impacts me. To see that these amendments will make those two pieces of legislation aligned, just for starters, is wonderful. It's a step in the right direction.

When we talk about doctor shortages, nurse practitioners play a role in that conversation. Nurse practitioners are the ones who are there helping us fix that part of our health care system where it's lacking. Anything that empowers them more is something that I'm very in favour of, that our caucus is in favour of. The amount of respect that we have for nurse practitioners and the role that they play in helping our stressed-out health care system goes beyond any words that we can say here in the Legislature.

We want a health care system that runs more efficiently. Nova Scotians expect that, Nova Scotians deserve that. Those who work within our health care system deserve that. I look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendments Committee, if any do present, and hope that there will be some good stories speaking to the positives of this, which, to any of us who have sat on the Law Amendments Committee, isn't always the case with who actually comes to present.

I appreciate the minister bringing this forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I will also speak quite briefly to this bill. We think it's a good bill and are excited to see this change happening. We've supported the expansion of the scope of practice for nurse practitioners for years, so this is a welcome step in the right direction. Anything that can be done to help to improve the flow of the hospital system is a good thing. In fact, I would say that I'm hoping that the department and the minister are looking at expanding the scope of practice for all kinds of allied health professionals. There are lots of things that could be happening that aren't right now that will improve our health care system.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't say that we also believe that we should be licensing physician assistants in Nova Scotia for the very same reason. We have physician assistants who are in the province who could work tomorrow if they were licensed to work. Again, I'm encouraging the minister and the department to look at physician assistants as part of the solution of the very complicated health care system.

I appreciate this bill and I look forward to hearing from the public at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to speak towards the amendment to the Hospitals Act. When I saw this amendment - I fully support nurse practitioners and allowing them to work to their full scope of practice, but my first reaction was, admit to what beds?

[11:15 a.m.]

There are not enough beds now for physicians to admit to. The doctors who do have admitting privileges do not have any beds to admit them to, so the government is adding more health care professionals to a list of already frustrated people who are trying to admit people where there are simply no places to admit them.

As a registered nurse for 32 years now, I am completely supportive of all health care professionals working to their full scope of practice. I fully support the integration of nurse practitioners into our hospital system. However, I do worry about the increased frustration they are going to face.

Nurse practitioners are an incredibly valuable part of our health care team. Collaborative practice will be a key success factor in bringing a world-class health care system, which I know is achievable here in Nova Scotia. However, I worry that this amendment to the Hospitals Act is going to cause further frustration in a system that needs more beds, not just more people who have admitting privileges to beds that don't exist.

I worry every day about the women and men working in our health care system. They are working in unsafe and unhealthy conditions and have been for too long, and they are worsening.

Historically, the entry point for primary care was a physician's office. When you needed a doctor you showed up, and you just waited until they had time to see you. I remember visiting Dr. Forshner's office in Pugwash many years ago and that was the case. Sometimes you waited three hours, but you always knew you would be seen before you went home.

Science and pharmaceuticals are helping people live longer. Many people with chronic diseases such as COPD, diabetes, hypertension, and generalized anxiety disorder, require medical management and people are scheduling regular appointments, which leaves less appointments available for acute illnesses such as ear infections or bladder infections. Many family physicians are booked for weeks ahead with patients requiring appointments to meet these requirements of chronic disease. For example, diabetics require lab tests for hemoglobin A1C, for foot assessments, eye exams, blood pressures.

In a perfect world, family physicians and nurse practitioners would also provide illness prevention and early detection for screening for colon cancer, cervical cancer,

breast cancer, and prostate cancers, among just a few. But those are getting missed, even more so during the last two years of this pandemic.

Primary health care and medical care has changed. The demand on family physicians and nurse practitioners has increased exponentially. This demand has led many family physicians to work in different settings rather than in a traditional family physician office. Many family physicians are choosing to work in an emergency department or as a hospitalist or in a pain clinic, where there is no 30 to 35 per cent overhead charge on their earnings, where their income is often 30 to 40 per cent higher in their hourly wage, and when they go home at the end of their shift, they don't have three to four hours of computer and paperwork to do.

So where are people going? They are going to our emergency departments, often sicker because they've waited too long. They often don't have a primary care provider and go to the ER as the only access for care.

Law enforcement often bring people to the emergency department who they deem unsafe and require medical treatment. Emergency departments are filled beyond capacity, hallways lined with stretchers, admitted patients unable to get a bed. In an acute care unit, I've seen up for five days - can you imagine? I've had family members contacting me because their 90-year-old mother has been lying on a stretcher in the emergency department for five days, unable to sleep due to the noise and the lights because there is no bed. While I applaud increasing what nurse practitioners are allowed to do, what we need is our current beds to be first opened and then we need more beds beyond that.

We all know that this is the reality in each one of our hospitals around this province. Our nurses and our physicians in the emergency departments are working in unreasonable conditions. Because of this, many of them are leaving, taking a leave of absence due to stress or sick leave, or simply leaving the province or taking other jobs that are not as stressful.

One of the issues that we're seeing, at least in our regional hospital - Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this is happening around the rest of the province, but we have many vacancies and many unfilled nursing positions. That is leading to bed closures, is what I'm being told.

As an MLA, I've been actively trying to recruit other nurses to come to our area. Even though there was documented 15-plus vacancies for registered nurses, when registered nurses were applying for jobs at our regional hospital, they were not being offered full-time positions.

So I am recruiting and trying to get people to come to our area and saying how desperate we are - we've got ICU beds closed, surgical unit beds closed, operating rooms

closed - and then I finally convince a registered nurse from Ontario or New Brunswick to come to Cumberland and they're offered a 0.6 or 0.8 with no full benefits.

What is going on? I'm told that part of the problem, and I'm not sure if the union needs to be involved in coming up with the solutions with this or who behind the scenes needs to fix this - the nurses who are taking a leave of absence for other jobs or other positions. For example, I know of a registered nurse who has taken a position to help with One Patient One Record. That person's job, because they're on a leave, cannot be filled by another registered nurse.

We're trying to recruit nurses who have current full-time positions and full benefits in other provinces, but we will not offer them full-time positions. Is this because many of them are women? I don't know, but it's a problem that needs to get fixed. It's a major problem and that is one of the things that needs to get fixed if we're going to be able to hire more nurses, open up the beds that we have, or even expand the amount of acute care beds that we have in this province.

Our acute care beds in hospitals are being used for placement of people who should be in long-term care facilities or residential care facilities. The level of bureaucracy in continuing care is getting worse. Patients are not being moved from acute care hospital beds to long-term care facilities fast enough. This has been going on for a long time. Why are these standards not being met, pandemic or no pandemic?

Two years ago, the average length of time to get someone moved from hospital to long-term care was 12 days when there was an empty bed in a nursing home. You all know that I live right beside New Brunswick, so I know a lot about the New Brunswick health care system. There are certain things that we do better and there are things that they do better. This is one area where they do much better.

Why? Because they have no middle level of bureaucracy called continuing care. The discharge planners in the hospital work directly with the long-term care facilities - there's no middle person. Also, the long-term care facilities do not get paid unless their bed is full. If their beds are empty, the government does not pay them. So guess what? They fill those beds because they're a business and they need to make sure they have enough revenue.

It's not rocket science. We need to fix this problem. We have numerous empty long-term care beds and numerous residential care facility beds, yet our acute care hospital beds are filled between 30 to 40 per cent and some up to 50 per cent with patients who are awaiting long-term care placement. It's frustrating for everyone: patients, families, nurses, doctors, everyone.

Today we heard the leader of the government, the Premier, talk about how much they're listening to paramedics. Well, not the paramedics who live in Cumberland North.

Maybe some of the rest of the province, but I can assure you, every single day I am hearing from at least one paramedic who is either leaving the profession or who is on stress leave, and not because of what they're seeing in their job, but because of their work conditions. They cannot continue with this.

The other thing is that New Brunswick was paying their paramedics significantly higher wages, and they just had a change in New Brunswick where they've changed unions and they just got another huge increase in their hourly wage. We cannot compete when our neighbouring province is paying 20 to 30 to 40 per cent higher in wages to do the exact same job. Our paramedics need to have an increase in their wages, and we need to do a deep dive into what is causing the problems within our 911 emergency health care system.

The Minister of Health and Wellness knows - I've written to her on several occasions, and I'm looking for more information - that it is not fair to the people I represent, and I'm sure there are many others in this House who are in the same condition. It is not fair that out of all the ambulances and paramedics who are supposed to provide 911 service to Cumberland County, every single day those ambulances are being pulled from my area and sent into other areas of the province.

There have been numerous days that there have literally been zero ambulances in Cumberland County. If you know Cumberland County, it's one of the largest counties in the entire province. When you go from Advocate Harbour from Cumberland South's area to Malagash, it's a two-hour spread. There are many days when there are zero ambulances.

If the public knew every day what was happening, there would be a huge outcry. We don't want to cause despair, but people deserve better. There are times when our physicians have called for emergency to take someone from Cumberland Regional to Halifax due to urgent cardiac needs, and the physicians are there, but there is no ambulance available.

I was a little surprised to hear the Premier's comments today boasting about how good the communication is with paramedics and all the improvements in EHS. I would disagree. That is not what we're experiencing. That is not what we're seeing in Cumberland North and Cumberland County and in the region. There's no question in my mind that we have had increased mortality because of the lack of 911 service to the people of our area. There's no doubt in my mind.

When ambulances are called and do arrive, they often arrive to hospitals where they cannot off-load a patient. Just this week, I had a paramedic wait 20 hours with a patient in an emergency department because the emergency department was not able to admit and take that patient.

Another issue that I'd love to see our province take a look at with regards to paramedics is the licensing. I know that our Premier is the Chair of Council of Atlantic Premiers, and I know there is some work being done on licensures with health care professionals, but paramedics need to be part of that.

[11:30 a.m.]

Right now, if someone from Truro or Amherst or Parrsboro decides to take paramedic school in Moncton, because it's only 40 minutes away, instead of Halifax, which is two hours, when they graduate they have to write another licensing exam in Nova Scotia. They will earn less money, and the licensing exam is \$1,500 alone, plus they have to pay an additional licensing fee. So what do you think their decision is going to be, Mr. Speaker? Their decision is going to be "I think I'm going to work in New Brunswick." That's what we are seeing time and time again.

Nova Scotia needs to be competitive. It needs to be competitive and we need to take care of our paramedics. We need to take care of our nurses. We need to take care of our doctors. I see first-hand the emotional toll of working understaffed, not being paid fair wages compared to other provinces in Canada, especially our paramedics.

I see the emotional toll that this takes. Many of our health care professionals suffer with PTSD from some of the work and things that they experience, and we are not there for them. We recently lost someone in our area, a medical professional, because we weren't there for him. Our area has a federal penitentiary. Very, very difficult work and I know of two people in the last year alone who have taken their lives - professionals who work with the criminals but not able to cope with the PTSD.

We need to do better. We need to do better and provide positive, healthy workplaces for the people who we are expecting to take care of our mothers and our fathers and our children when they are in need of health care services. We have a responsibility as employers for these health care professionals to provide a healthy workplace for them with healthy supports and right now we are not doing that.

EHS, it's confusing for a lot of people, but EHS may be the government portion of 911 service, we know that this service is contracted out to a private company, Medavie Blue Cross. It is not the fault of this government but I know in the past when I first became an MLA the relationships between board members of Medavie Blue Cross and our health board and people working in our Health and Wellness Department who were associated with Medavie Blue Cross, there was a lot of entanglement and a lot of questions needed to be asked.

It is time for our government to stand back and take a very serious and sobering look at the contract that our taxpayers are paying this private company. Are they being

held accountable? What are the key performance indicators? Are they being met? If not, maybe it is time for a change.

When I was growing up in Cumberland County there was always an ambulance available. It was a different service. It was run privately but I can guarantee you our community was never ever left with no ambulances available in the entire county. Yet this is a daily regular occurrence in this current system. So it is time to stop and take a sober look at the contract that we have with this private company that is currently not able to provide the services that Nova Scotia taxpayers deserve and the people whom I represent deserve when they have a health care emergency.

Placing COVID-19 on top of all the challenges that existed before has really put a stress on our health care professionals that is too much. We have a responsibility to govern and to ensure safe, responsible workplaces for all of our health care professionals. I have a lot of questions about the days ahead and the next COVID-19 wave and what we are going to do differently. What have we learned from the last two years? What are we doing to ensure that our health care system is not shut down again? Although what we are experiencing in our regional hospitals is many of our beds are still closed and our operating rooms are still closed except for emergencies due to COVID-19, due to nursing shortages.

While I applaud nurse practitioners being able to admit to hospitals, I think what we need to do first is actually open the beds that currently are closed and find ways to make sure that there are beds that exist for nurse practitioners who are in situations to be able to admit patients who are in need of acute medical care.

People of Cumberland North, people of Cumberland County, people of Nova Scotia deserve more and deserve better. I look forward to seeing more changes than this amendment that is proposed today in the Hospitals Act.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I rise to close debate on Bill No. 114.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 114.

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 Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 115?

Bill No. 115 - Prescription Monitoring Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I move that Bill No. 115, an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2004, the Prescription Monitoring Act, now be read a second time.

I believe all members of the Legislature would agree that we want to find solutions that improve efficiency, responsiveness, inclusivity, and safety without sacrificing accountability and oversight of prescribing controlled substances in Nova Scotia. We also want to make sure that our oversight boards are a true representation of the impacted stakeholders of regulations. Finally, we want to make sure that we implement the recommendations of the independent firms we hire to assess our institutions. This bill does all of that and is a sound action that the government can take to advance our greater goals of improving the health care and well-being of Nova Scotians.

The amendments to this bill will strengthen the department's oversight and fiduciary responsibilities; increase the number of public board members from two to four - this will increase the diversity of the board, and include people living with chronic pain, people who work in the field, and people who have lived experience to be represented on the board; shift authority from the Governor in Council to the Minister of Health and Wellness for the appointment of non-voting directors and directors responsible for licensing and make minor housekeeping changes to the Act.

We're in the business of doing government business as efficiently as possible. When it comes to prescription monitoring, it's no exception.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable for Fairview-Clayton Park

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I thank the minister for the introduction of this bill, Bill No. 115. I'll keep my remarks brief at this time, but keeping along with the theme of practicality, the first practical question I have is around the tracking of opiate use.

I'm not familiar with this Act, so I'm not quite sure if it's already in here or if this is something that could be entertained, but it's the data that would be mined or collected in terms of who and how many are - what the prescription trends would be for opioids within the province. I think that the more data that we have, the better able to tackle the opioid crisis that we are living with.

Then again, in a political - in a practical but could be deemed political - statement on this, I find it very frustrating to hear the minister refer to expanding the public board for the sake of diversity, for this particular board, when it's the same government who dismantled the Health Authority board. I'm curious why, when it comes to the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Board, diverse first-person account experiences are relevant and important, important enough to now make this change in this Legislature, with those experiences, that knowledge, that first-person perspective wasn't within the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board?

It frustrates me. It does. Again, it's one of those things where I see an impracticality and it gives me tingles. It's too much.

I look forward to hearing from stakeholders, I look forward to perhaps hearing a response to my one innocuous - and maybe the other not-so-innocuous - question from the minister. I feel there will be more to come in third reading. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill. We in the NDP recognize the importance to be constantly improving legislation, based on current science. I am glad to see - although I take my colleague from Fairview-Clayton Park's comments, I take those, I think that's a good point. I was going to say we are glad to see the changes that improve the diversity of the board, so I suppose any change is positive, when it comes to improving diversity, and to include people who have lived experience with drug misuse.

I do have a question about the shift of authority to the Minister of Health and Wellness from the Governor in Council for the appointment of the non-voting directors and the directors responsible for licensing. I hope that maybe the minister can address the reasoning behind that shift, perhaps today, perhaps in third reading.

Mr. Speaker, over the last six years more than 250 Nova Scotians have died of drug overdoses. Thousands of families have been impacted and we know it's a growing issue. There is a growing crisis coming our way from other parts of Canada because of an increased poisoned supply of drugs on the street.

The NDP wants to see additional action on the opioid crisis, including more support for people and families struggling with opioid addiction, access to safe supply and further harm-reduction actions. We're looking forward to hearing from people on the front lines of this crisis, through Law Amendments Committee, for ways of further strengthening the bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you to the minister for the amendments to this bill. I would be curious to know what triggered the need for the amendments.

[11:45 a.m.]

I'm just wondering if maybe, in future discussion on this amendment, the minister could share with the House the data, like my colleague mentioned, on the efficiency, the effectiveness of this Act. The other provinces in Canada have a prescription monitoring system, and the provinces that do not have a prescription monitoring system that monitors prescription writing of narcotics and other medications such as benzodiazepines, Valium, Ativan, those kinds of drugs. Are we doing a better job because of this prescription monitoring system? Do we have fewer drugs on the streets, prescription drugs on the streets, or are we the same, or do we in fact have more?

I would like to know from the minister the effectiveness, what is the data showing of this system, and what did trigger the need for the change in the board? I am also pleased to see the increase in public representation, I think that is always a good thing, as well as the diversity changes in the board.

With those few comments I will close debate.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'd like to acknowledge the comments and the interest of my colleagues on the other side of the House. We do know that we need to do better in regard to ensuring representation in our health care system and this is a positive change, and I acknowledge that there is more to do.

This current shift aligns with the current work of the board and the current board members are in agreement with the changes, but there will be more to say in the third reading.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on Bill No. 115.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 115. 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. 118.

Bill No. 118 - Personal Health Information Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 118 - an Act to Amend Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2010, the Personal Health Information Act - be read a second time.

The Personal Health Information Act plays an important role to protect the information of patients in our province. The Personal Health Information Act came into force in 2013, and with it a mandatory review after three years. This review was in 2016 and involved an extensive consultation with numerous partners.

The review was published in 2018. The review found that the legislation was working as it was intended to. However, there were several recommendations to further strengthen and modernize the Act for the benefit of patients.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we as a government have an obligation to ensure there is legislation in place to keep patients' information safe, that it's up to date, and that it reflects modern practices. It's also important that we find the right balance between protecting personal health information and recognizing the needs of those who are required to collect, use and disclose the information to manage health care.

The seven proposed amendments will do just that. For example, one of the recommendations will authorize the government to review the Act every five years to ensure it remains current and reflects modern practices. This creates proactive monitoring and will ensure the continued effectiveness and accountability of the legislation and of those who are responsible for personal health information.

Some of the changes may seem small or insignificant - corrections to language or providing clarity. However, changes of any size contribute to the operation and overall improvement of the Personal Health Information Act.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the minister for the introduction of Bill No. 118.

We walk a fine balance of wanting to protect privacy with the expectation that access to information is also given. The health care system is one of those perfect

examples of I don't want anybody knowing my business, but I should be able to walk into any hospital and have the expectation that the clinicians there know my medical history.

Banking at financial institutions - there are a lot of places that walk this fine little balance of needing to protect, but then there's an expectation on the other side to provide as well. Any piece of legislation that helps us navigate that system, that helps government walk that balance, is a good thing.

I do have a few questions that I hope will be answered at some point. The review created 25 recommendations, but only 18 of them have been accepted. I'm curious: What were the seven not accepted? Why were they deemed not beneficial? How does this piece of legislation tie into the One Patient, One Record system that we are anxiously awaiting to have unfold in our province? Again, that is a tool that will allow that balance to be achieved.

With this piece of legislation, what privacy impact assessments have been done? What other tools have been used by the department to make sure that these aren't going to trigger unintended consequences, that the balance is actually being achieved?

One of the seven changes talks about a new clause to give an authorized person who is conducting an audit or review to collect personal health information without the individual's consent if the audit is related to the services provided by a custodian. What are the consequences of that, if any? Again, that sends off a little spidey-sense - that this might be something that has an unintended consequence to it where it comes to privacy of personal health information.

I don't feel that there will be much to be discussed at the Law Amendments Committee on this particular piece of legislation but I do hope that perhaps in the minister's closing remarks or her opening remarks on third reading, we can dive a little bit deeper into what this legislation is actually going to accomplish for us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: We are happy to see the government responding to the review and taking action. It's always good to see. Would that there was more action from many other reviews in this province. We look forward to hearing more at Law Amendments Committee.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: The member opposite's questions and concerns are duly noted, and we will discuss them in third reading. I now close debate on Bill No. 118.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 118.

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 Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 120.

Bill No. 120 - Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act.

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

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 120 now be read a second time.

Proposed amendments will enhance the protection of patients under the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act. The Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act is meant to assist people having a mental disorder or severe, persistent mental illness by enabling them to be admitted for involuntary treatment, either in hospital or in the community. A review of the Act in 2013 identified potential legislative amendments that would strengthen the clarity and functioning of the Act.

Following extensive consultation, government is proposing amendments to the legislation that would clarify the language, increase protection for patients, and amend the structure of the review board. The amendments will give the review board greater discretion, including the ability to replace a substitute decision-maker who is not acting in the best interest of the patient. The review board will also have the authority to order that a patient be treated in the community rather than a facility.

We are also proposing the addition of a vice chair position on the review board. This will improve the board's functioning when the chair is unavailable and ensure that matters continue to move ahead. Additional changes will ensure that patients and their legal representatives have access to their health file in a timely manner without the need to complete additional paperwork. This will increase efficiency and reduce the number of hearings adjourned due to the delays in the production of these health files.

These amendments will protect the best interests and mental health needs of Nova Scotians. With these changes, we are ensuring that patients continue to receive appropriate mental health treatments while also getting more timely access to legal representation and review hearings.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: The Minister of Health and Wellness gets a break, but I do not. Very important amendments to a piece of legislation for some of our most vulnerable.

I believe I heard the minister say that the intent of this bill was to clarify the language, but I do not feel that that has necessarily been done to the fullest extent that it could be done. There are a lot of clauses and a lot of changes that are made that still make this a very confusing piece of legislation, when really our goal should be to make this as easy to follow as possible.

For those suffering from a mental illness, those who are responsible for them don't necessarily have the means to have a lawyer represent them or to know how to negotiate legislation. One example of that, and again, we'll wait until Law Amendments Committee and possibly have some amendments in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills - it refers to the obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Referring back to another piece of complicated policy does not clarify.

There's a lot of detail, which I appreciate. I know that that is the case. I have seen lots of pieces of legislation in my time here, paid attention to more of them than I'd like to admit. I'm not reading them on Sunday afternoons, I'm sorry to say, for the Minister of Public Works, but I think that this is one of these instances.

I'll probably say this to everything that comes up through the Office of Addictions and Mental Health: we have to make things more clear. We have to try and get away from the double-talk. I don't mean that negatively - I respect legislation, I respect the procedure and the wording that needs to take place. But I think that there has to be a way to make things more clear so that the average person has the ability to know what their rights are and not have to depend on someone else or legal services to be able to do that.

I don't mean to pick on the minister. He's getting this to something that could be applied to all of us. I'm sure there are many who will stand up and will say the same sort of thing about any piece of legislation. I look to the Minister of Community Services - I'm sure there're a number of pieces of legislation that sit on her desk that impact the most vulnerable and do not make a lot of sense. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I know first-hand that there are a lot of things. The Minister of Service Nova

Scotia and Internal Services has the Residential Tenancies Act, one of my favourite Acts in the whole entire world - no, it's really not - but it's extremely complicated, and the average person doesn't understand that.

I think that when we talk about mental health and addictions, I think that this might be a good place to start to make our legislation a little bit more user-friendly. See what we can do to have those conversations. We want people more engaged in the process as well. You need to be able to understand what's being said in order to understand how we are regulated or how, you know, the rules that apply to us.

I went off a little bit longer than I intended to on this piece of legislation. I thank the minister; I look forward to comments from Law Amendments Committee.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I am rising on behalf of my caucus to speak to this proposed bill. I know that this is a bill that can be difficult to discuss, particularly for individuals and families whose lives have been impacted by it.

The need for involuntary psychiatric treatment tears people, families, and lives apart. It is not simply when someone is living with a mental health issue, but it is truly when folks are in a mental health crisis. In those moments, it's difficult to see the way forward, no matter whether you are the patient or the caregiver, and it comes at the end of a long cycle of need for treatment, of health care crisis, of failures, of systems - multiple systems - and everyone involved carries trauma and is exhausted in those moments.

I agree with the honourable member who spoke before me in terms of the need to really take care when we are dealing with the most vulnerable. As a government, when we take on this role of caregiving, when we apply this Act, we need to make sure that we do have the best standards that are monitored, that are reviewed, and that put patients first.

In particular, just to note that a lot of time folks who have been in successive mental health crises struggle with other social determinants of health and actually may not have a support system. It is them often on their own and very likely they don't have access to an advocate outside.

Some of the amendments so far look good. I'm looking forward to hearing from folks at Law Amendments Committee, but certainly, it's all in the implementation. When it talks about emphasizing that decisions must be based on evidence, the evidence around mental health and psychiatric treatment is always evolving. So how are we going to make sure, in implementing this Act, that the people making the decision are connected to that, and that there's an agreement on what constitutes evidence.

The people must be treated with cultural safety and, again, that is very important but also really calls for the need to involve communities and people and families with lived experience to be part of understanding what cultural safety looks like in the context of severe mental health crises and involuntary treatment. I note that it also will update the definition of capacity. It will require facilities to provide information about the patient's rights and how they may exercise them.

[12:00 noon]

On that, I guess I would also recall the comments of the previous member around what that actually looks like. Again, it is around the implementation. How do you communicate with folks who may need access to this type of treatment? I've never worked in communications, but it is also knowledge mobilization, so that people have access in language that meets them where they're at in ways that are accessible to understand what their rights are.

We also need to ensure that folks are trained and are aware of the standards that the changes in this bill will set. It is all well and good to pass this Act but if people on the ground, who are the people working with folks in mental health crisis - that in itself is a very difficult role - they also need to understand what the patient's rights are, what has changed and what they can offer or provide.

I look forward to further discussions of this bill at the Law Amendments Committee and thank you for bringing this forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I support the amendments to this Act. I support the work that's being done to improve medical care for persons suffering with mental illness.

My former colleagues in government know that I tabled amendments to this very Act twice, once as a member of the PC caucus and once as an Independent. I have been assured by the staff working in the department that the amendment we had asked for will be made in this bill, and that is that Cumberland Regional is added to the list of facilities that can use the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act. Currently, Cumberland Regional is the only regional hospital in the entire province that was not included in the facilities list and that has caused a direct deficiency in acute mental health care for the people in our area.

There are so many more changes that are needed, and I am confident that the minister responsible for mental health is working on those. I am encouraged that this government did make mental health its own office and I would like to see, as I'm sure

many members here would like to see, more investment, more of the health care budget placed in mental health care.

Certainly, in the area that I represent in Cumberland North and throughout Cumberland County, we have lost too many people from suicide, from unintentional drug overdoses, and homicides involving illegal drug situations, involving mental illness. Unfortunately, we don't want to lose anyone but many of the people that we have lost are young people. Many of them have been friends of my own children. The families of these young men and women who have died from mental illness and addictions - their lives have been changed forever. I have witnessed that first-hand.

Amherst is the first town in the province and illegal drugs, like crystal meth, are cheaper in our town than anywhere else in the province. These drugs are changing the mental state of our people. These drugs are inducing mental illness and these drugs are killing our young people. Mental illness is also induced by PTSD and, as I mentioned earlier, we have a federal penitentiary in Cumberland South only 30 minutes from my home. Just in the last year we have lost two professionals who have taken their own life, we suspect due to PTSD that was not treated.

We have persons with schizophrenia who are going without medical care because they have no primary care provider. Whether there is a young man with mental illness that is drug-induced; whether it is a middle-aged professional with suicidal ideation from PTSD in the workplace; whether it is a young woman with mental illness not yet diagnosed, homeless, no shoes on her feet, delusional; whether it is a 14-year-old young teenager who literally cannot leave her bedroom, with overwhelming thoughts of suicide; whether it is a middle-aged man living in filth with rats, unable to take care of himself due to schizophrenia - these are just some of the examples of people living in my area who have not been able to receive medical care for their mental illness when they asked for it or when their families asked for it. These are real situations.

What happens in our area, and again a lot of it is due to the lack of access to psychiatric and mental health care, is 99 per cent of the time a family member or law enforcement bring these individuals - some of the examples that I just mentioned - to our emergency department as that is often the only access to care. More often than not, they're discharged without any treatment. I have witnessed it myself first-hand as a patient advocate. Unbelievable. It's unbelievable to witness it first-hand. To be with a delusional young person who is homeless and absolutely in an acute mental health state to be discharged with no shoes on their feet and no place to go. What did I do? I drove around my town for about three hours with this person because I didn't know what to do.

Usually, I'm in my MLA office and I have people coming to me and telling me about situations like this, but in this one instance I was the advocate and witnessed first-hand what I've had families and law enforcement police officers tell me for the last five years. It is so wrong, the stigma that continues to exist in our health care system.

In one incident, an RCMP officer brought someone in an acute psychotic state to our emergency department and I went just to make sure the person was in the emergency department waiting. I had a commissionaire say to me, “You know this is not a sloth house.” I say, what? This person needs medical care. This person would be treated very differently if they came in with a broken leg. The stigma is real, and it exists with people doing security in our own hospitals. It’s unbelievable to witness it.

People suffering from mental illness and addictions, you know what they need first? They need compassion; they need people to care about them. Then we, as a government, have a responsibility to ensure that the medical services are there when they are in need. This is happening continuously, so I’m hoping that the changes with this bill will be one step closer to making improvements, at least in our area.

We’re supposed to have a Mental Health Crisis Team 24/7, but we don’t. We’re told that there’s a Mental Health Crisis Team available Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30. If you try to plan your acute mental health crisis during those hours, you might get some help, but the reality is if you go to the emergency department at about 3:30 p.m. or 4:00 p.m., they’ll say, well, sorry, my shift is done at 4:30 p.m. so I can’t come.

The real hours of our Mental Health Crisis Team are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and that’s if there are no holidays, because if there’s a holiday, then they are not working.

Recently I had a conversation with the people who work in the department and one of the reasons that I was given, and our local team was given by the province is that there’s not enough money and there’s not enough demand. My response was this: How often does a respiratory technician get called when maybe a baby is born that is having difficulty breathing? How often does someone come into the emergency room with an aneurysm bleeding and needs an emergency CAT scan?

I don’t have the actual data on that, but I would guess, Mr. Speaker, from what I know, that maybe once a week, these on-call technicians and specialists would get called in through the night. If we can fund people to be on call for an X-ray and a CAT scan, and for respiratory and for breathing, why can’t we fund people to be on call for a mental health crisis? The reason is because we don’t value people’s mental health the same as we do their physical health. We see that in the way we spend our money, in the way that it is budgeted. It needs to change because people are dying because of the way we prioritize our spending.

Psychiatrists are another example. Why do we have internal medicine, surgeons, anaesthetists, obstetricians, emergency room doctors, radiologists, pathologists, medical examiners, all those medical people on call for when they are needed, but most psychiatrists aren’t? Because we’re not valuing mental illness the same way that we value physical illness.

Psychiatrists should have an on-call schedule the same as our internists. We should have an on-call rotation so if someone is in acute mental illness, a psychiatrist can be called in the same way as if you come into the emergency department at 3:00 o'clock in the morning with a heart attack, that the internist is called in. We do not have that.

[12:15 p.m.]

Historically psychiatrists in rural Nova Scotia were paid less than a psychiatrist in urban Nova Scotia. That needs to change. The psychiatrists that service Cape Breton, Yarmouth, and Amherst are just as valuable as psychiatrists who service Halifax, Bedford, and Dartmouth.

Our psychiatrists need to be remunerated equally to our other specialists. Right now they are not, and that is one of the reasons we have a shortage of psychiatrists in Nova Scotia. Follow the money and you will have your answer.

In follow-up from my comments about what happens when people come to our emergency department in a psychotic state, or delusional, or some sort of mental health crisis, mental illness, because we are not included in the facilities list of this Act, if an emergency room physician does deem this person to not have capacity or form them, they have to go to Truro or the IWK, if they are a youth.

What happens many times, Mr. Speaker, is that when the emergency room physician calls Truro, which has the in-patient psychiatric beds for the Northern Zone, more often than not the psychiatrist on call there says, sorry, we have no beds; we cannot see your patient. We don't have psychiatrists on call in Cumberland, so what happens with the patient? They're discharged with no medical care for their psychiatric illness. Just last week, we had a teenager, and the same thing happened with the IWK.

Then what happens with the patient? Now our community is trying to deal with this patient who needs acute medical care. Law enforcement is left trying to deal with medical problems. They're not medical professionals, Mr. Speaker, they're not social workers. Time and time again, they will bring people to the emergency department. In one case, I had a young woman who had to be brought to the emergency department four times within 24 hours before she was actually treated for her psychiatric illness - four times within 24 hours.

Mental illness deserves the same investment as physical illness. We're seeing a lot of virtual care in our health care system and moving towards that model. In some cases, it's very good to help fill the gaps. But there are also times when patients need to see people face to face. A lot of times in a mental health crisis, they need someone to do a personal face-to-face assessment. If I call 911, someone picks up the phone. If I have a mental health crisis and call the mental health line, I listen to, for such-and-such, press one, for such-and-such, press two. If you're in a state of anxiety or in a psychotic state,

you do not have the patience or even the ability to navigate that type of a phone system, yet that's what we have set up for our mental health patients in an acute state or chronic state of mental illness.

Our community is doing its part. We recently opened a new youth centre for people 30 and younger to provide community supports. Maggie's Place, led by Sarah MacMaster, recently opened this up. It's a beautiful location with support workers - I'm very encouraged by the financial support from the Department of Community Services and the minister to support this new youth centre. We have a group of Moms Who Care - they call themselves - opening, in the works, a social enterprise to provide supports for our youth recovering from mental illness and addictions.

Our community is doing its part. We have several departments involved in supporting that "in the works" social enterprise as well as the local credit union, co-op, which is providing a physical building for our youth to actually do the renovations, hands-on learning the trades. It's incredible to see and very encouraging. Our community is doing its part. Our community is doing everything we can, but our government needs to provide the supports.

We recently had someone who needed detox, an alcoholic, worried they were going to take their own life, who was ready for help. They were told to just wait a week. When you're in that kind of state, you don't actually think you can wait a week.

I know it's kind of a downer listening to all this, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, but this is the reality. What I'm sharing with you is the reality of what the people in my area, my constituency, are experiencing. As the MLA, these are the issues that I'm dealing with in my office. These are the people - the individuals, the families, the community members, law enforcement, social workers - the issues that we are facing in our area. I'm hopeful and encouraged to see this amendment come through today and encouraged to hear that Cumberland Regional will be added as a facility for the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act.

I know that our physicians will be encouraged, but we still need so much more. We need psychiatrists, we need psychiatrists on call, and I can tell you we need a mental health crisis team that's available 24/7. Mental illness is important, and is just as important as physical illness.

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

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

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable colleagues for their comments. With that, I rise to close debate on Bill No. 120.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 120. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 94.

Bill No. 94 - Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act.

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, and through you to the House, dobroho dnia, which means "good afternoon."

Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 94, an Act to Establish a Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day, be read a second time.

This bill, Bill No. 94, recognizes the Ukrainian famine in the Soviet Republic over 1932 and 1933, a famine caused by the intentional intervention of the Soviet state through its drive to collectivize Ukrainian agriculture. Under Soviet leadership, better known as Joseph Stalin, Communist Party officials forced Ukrainian countrymen and - women to give up their land and property, and many were forcibly deported to pursue state policy.

The collectivization of agriculture led to a fall in food production, upheaval within rural communities, and food shortages. The policies of the USSR in this matter, enacted from Moscow for illegitimate and political objectives, resulted in the death of millions of Ukrainians.

The famine is rightfully recognized as a genocide by 16 countries, including Canada. Bill No. 94 commits Nova Scotia, like other provinces, to recognizing the Ukrainian famine as a genocide and undertakes our province to observing the fourth

Saturday in November as Holodomor Memorial Day. This bill comes at an important time in our history; in the history of Ukraine; in the history of Ukraine with its larger neighbour, the Russian Federation; in the history of Ukraine and Canada; and the history of Ukraine and Nova Scotia.

Ukraine's people have rarely been closer to the centre of our thoughts than they are now. On February 24th, the Russian president ordered his forces to invade Ukraine. The world has watched in horror, Mr. Speaker, as the Russian military has attacked Ukrainian targets and continues to inflict widespread destruction and human suffering. Nova Scotians stand beside the rest of Canada and Ukraine in condemning this illegal invasion in the strongest possible terms.

The scale and tragedy of the conflict has been clear to see. Thousands of Ukrainians have lost their lives. Many more have been injured. Roughly a quarter have been displaced, and of that, roughly four million have fled to neighbouring states.

Ukraine and Russia have a long and complex history, and Putin has justified this attack with rhetoric infused with a skewed and unfounded version of that relationship, rather than speaking factually about Ukraine's desire for peace and freedom. Yet despite the supposed strength of their adversary, the Ukrainian people have showed tremendous spirit in their defiance to Russian aggression.

Along with their allies and the entire democratic West, we here in Nova Scotia have stood in admiration of the Ukrainian resistance. Under the inspirational leadership of President Zelensky, Ukrainians have shown the world what it means to be courageous, to support community and to support patriotism.

The Ukrainian leaders and people have stated that they stand in defence not only of their own independence, but in defence of international order based on laws and respect for a peoples' sovereignty. Current events give this bill new weight and emphasize the significance of observing the Holodomor Memorial Day here in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia has become home to many Ukrainians from their homeland and many people of Ukrainian descent. We truly appreciate the contributions that this community has made to our cultural integrity here in the province. We have seen this community and their supporters wearing blue and yellow in anti-war protests across the province in the wake of Russia's invasion.

To note, five other Canadian provinces have already passed legislation recognizing Holodomor Memorial Day, including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. It's high time that we do the same. (Applause)

In saying that, I look forward to hearing some more remarks from around the House and for your support, folks. Dyakuy. (Applause)

[12:30 p.m.]

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

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise to speak to Bill No. 94, the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act. I want to take a moment to acknowledge and offer a big thank you to the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville for bringing this very important piece of legislation to this Legislature. (Applause)

As my honourable colleague for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville indicated, Nova Scotia will very soon join Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec in recognizing the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day, joining 16 countries, including Canada and the Vatican.

Nova Scotians who may not have known much about Ukraine have become very familiar with this country in the last five weeks. Unfortunately, that's because war in Ukraine has been in our living rooms every night. Suddenly, cities like Kyiv, Odesa, Mariupol, Dnipro are part of our everyday conversations. Certainly, I know at the supper table my children often ask questions about what is taking place in Ukraine.

I think the most important thing as Nova Scotians that we've discovered is the strength, pride and resiliency of the Ukrainian people. I think of my good friends Vlad and Christina Maksymiv and their two beautiful daughters Helen and Maria, who were just a few weeks ago at Peace and Friendship Park, where a rally was held in support of Ukraine. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate the Nova Scotia government's unwavering commitment in standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. (Applause)

We know that the strength and the pride of Ukrainian people have been tested in the last month, and it continues to be tested. This bill brought forward by the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville reminds us that this Russian invasion is not the first time Ukrainians have been put to the test. The Ukrainian famine, the Holodomor, occurred between 1932 and 1933. Between four to six million Ukrainians died.

The term Holodomor is translated to mean "murder by hunger or starvation." It has been described as the Ukrainian Holocaust. It emphasizes that the famine was man-made, a product of Soviet communism, a product of that evil tyrant, Joseph Stalin. In 1929, Stalin decided to collectivize agriculture. Teams of Communist Party members forced peasants to hand over their land, personal property, and housing to collective farms. They deported the wealthier peasants and those who resisted.

Production dropped and there were food shortages. Ukrainians began uprisings and rebellions. The Soviet empire then took a series of decisions that widened and deepened the famine in the Ukrainian countryside. Farms, villages, and whole towns in Ukraine were placed on blacklists and prevented from receiving food. Peasants were forbidden to leave the Ukrainian Republic in search of food, despite growing starvation. Food requisitions were increased, and aid was not provided in sufficient quantities.

In the Spring of 1933, death rates in Ukraine spiked and mass graves were dug across the countryside. Hunger also affected the urban population, though many were able to survive thanks to ration cards. Still, in Ukraine's largest cities, corpses could be seen in the street.

The famine provided cover for a campaign of repression and persecution by the Soviets that was carried out against Ukrainians, carried out against their culture, carried out against their religious leaders.

As the famine was happening, news of it was deliberately silenced by Soviet bureaucrats. Party officials did not mention it in public. Western journalists based in Moscow were instructed not to write about it. That sounds familiar, doesn't it?

By early 2019, 16 countries, as well as the Vatican, had recognized the Holodomor as a genocide. Both houses of the United States of Congress, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, had passed resolutions declaring that Joseph Stalin and those around him committed genocide against the Ukrainians in 1932-33.

This is a chapter of history that many of us may not have been aware of. I know that many of us are shocked and angered. We are saddened to learn that Ukraine and her people have been victimized twice in less than a century at the hands of the Russians in such a brutal and unfair way.

Here is what I know for sure: the tragedy of the Ukrainian famine did not defeat the Ukrainian people. Rather, they regained their strength, they threw off the shackles of communism, and like many in the Eastern Bloc, reduced that toxic ideology to the dustbin of history.

They went about building a modern, vibrant, and democratic country. Similarly, the unjust invasion that Ukrainians are enduring now will not extinguish their spirits. We watch that fierce spirit every day on the news, and we know that they will prevail in 2022, just as they did after the famine.

I sincerely want to thank the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville for showing the leadership in bringing in this very important piece of legislation. I can tell you on behalf of the government, we are honoured to support you in this. We stand with

Ukraine. The Government of Nova Scotia stands in solidarity. Please, we want Ukrainians to know that this provincial government stands with them.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I'm happy to rise to think about the relationship that Nova Scotia and Canada have had with Ukraine over hundreds of years. I know that we all know the history of immigration of Ukrainians and the ongoing pride in heritage that we see in Ukrainian communities across Canada. I remember my first taste of borscht. I remember learning how to make perogies. It wasn't just about the food, it was about the honour, the forbearance, and the strength of Ukrainian people.

I think it's also important to recognize that, throughout the past number of decades, in fact, Canada has had an ongoing relationship with Ukraine. When I worked at the Canadian International Development Agency, there was a vibrant Ukraine program that sought to support Ukraine to build its governance structures. More recently, Canada has actually been supporting a lot of work with the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Ukraine.

I know this bill recognizes a historic event, but I think we can all agree that right now, Ukraine is not far from anybody's mind and that we can condemn the current aggression and honour past struggles.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, for introducing this bill back in November last year. Back then, we had no idea that in a few months, Russia would invade Ukraine in an illegal war.

I want to thank my colleagues in the House for their thoughtful remarks on this particular bill. As the Holodomor shows, Russian aggression against Ukraine is nothing new. If my colleagues will indulge me just a bit, I would like to share with them a bit about the Holodomor. I will say that the member for Dartmouth East had a lot of information in his speech, but I wanted to make sure people understood sort of the resonances that we are seeing today.

The Holodomor was a man-made famine, as we have heard, that crippled the Soviet Republic of Ukraine from 1932 to 1933. It was actually part of a broader Soviet famine that started in 1931 and lasted until 1934. It also caused mass starvation in the grain-growing regions of Soviet Russia and Kazakhstan. The Ukrainian famine was made deadlier as a result of a series of political decrees and decisions that were aimed mostly or only at Ukraine.

The origins of the famine lay in the decision by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin to collectivize agriculture in 1929. Teams of Communist Party agitators forced peasants to relinquish their land, personal property, and sometimes their housing all to collective farms. They deported the so-called kulaks, the wealthier peasants, as well as any peasants who resisted collectivization. Not surprisingly, this collectivization led to a drop in production and the disorganization of the rural economy, and ultimately food shortages resulted. It also sparked a series of peasant rebellions, including armed uprisings in some parts of Ukraine.

Stalin was worried about the rebellions because they were happening in the same areas that had fought against the Red Army against the Russian Civil War a decade earlier. He was also concerned about anger and resistance to the state agricultural policy within the Ukrainian Communist Party.

In Fall 1932, the leadership of the Soviet Community Party took a series of decisions that intensified the famine in the Ukrainian countryside. This is what the Politburo did. Farms, villages, and whole towns in Ukraine were placed on blacklists. They were prevented from receiving food. Peasants were forbidden to leave the Ukrainian Republic in search of food. Despite growing starvation, food requisitions from the area were increased, and aid to the area was inadequate.

In Winter 1932-33, organized groups of police and communist operatives ransacked the homes of peasants, and they took anything that was edible - crops, personal food supplies, even pets. These folks were driven by hunger and fear, but their attitudes were reinforced by more than a decade of hate and conspiracy theories that were spewed by the Kremlin. That sounds familiar to me.

I should note that the famine was accompanied by a broader assault on the Ukrainian identity. While peasants were dying by the millions, agents of the Soviet secret police were targeting the Ukrainian political establishment and intelligence. I think we remember at the beginning of this current war, we heard about the possibility of Russia actually targeting political leaders. Sounds familiar.

The famine provided cover for our campaign of repression and persecution that was carried out against Ukrainian culture and Ukrainian religious leaders. The official policy of Ukrainianization, which had encouraged the use of the Ukrainian language was stopped in its tracks. Anybody who was connected to the Ukrainian People's Republic - which was the independent government that was declared in June 1917 in the wake of the February revolution, but was dismantled after the Bolsheviks conquered Ukrainian territory - those folks were subjected to vicious reprisals. Patriots were often vilified, jailed, sent to the Gulag, or executed.

As we just heard from my colleague from Dartmouth East, as the famine was under way, news about it was deliberately silenced by Soviet bureaucrats. Party officials

wouldn't mention it in public. Western journalists based in Moscow were instructed not to write about it. At least one journalist who did was murdered for doing so. Stalin actually went so far as to repress the results of a census that was taken in 1937. In fact, the administrators of that census were arrested and murdered, in part because the figures revealed the utter decimation of the Ukrainian population.

[12:45 p.m.]

Between 1931 and 1934, at least 5 million people perished of hunger all across the USSR. According to a team of Ukrainian demographers, at least 3.9 million Ukrainians were among them. The term Holodomor is a term that comes from pairing the Ukrainian word for hunger - Holod and extermination - mor. Because the famine was so deadly and because it was officially denied by the Kremlin for more than half a century, the Holodomor has played a large role in Ukrainian public memory, particularly since independence.

Monuments commemorating the Holodomor have been erected by the Ukrainian government as well as by Ukrainian diaspora. Holodomor Memorial Day is observed around the world on the fourth Saturday of November and that is what this bill does, if it passes, and I believe it will. Like much of the world, we will pause and remember the victims of this man-made famine on the fourth Saturday of November.

Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful my maternal grandparents' families came to this country in the years before the famine began. They came to Canada to farm. They didn't know famine. I am so grateful to my colleague for introducing this bill and to my colleagues here in the House for considering it today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: It is a great honour here to speak in support of Bill No. 94. I thank the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville for bringing this forward late last year. I am also very thankful and impressed to see him at the commemoration day that was held back in August.

Many Nova Scotians support the people of Ukraine and those who live here. A couple of constituents of mine, in support of their neighbour Julie Bayuk who is supporting her mother and brother in Ukraine, have developed a ribbon that I wear with pride today. Patti Williams and Kathleen Rusinak are supporting Nova Scotians of Ukrainian descent.

Back in November, I met with Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine, Ambassador Galadza, and we spoke about the relationship, the good relationship between Canada and Ukraine. We spoke about the relationship of the local community here in Nova Scotia and Ukraine, and the importance and welcoming of both. We also spoke about the

unsettled political climate that we have now come to know as being worldwide condemnation of that and the works that are happening now.

August 24, 1991 is Ukraine Independence Day. I had the great fortune as an HRM councillor and deputy mayor of attending a number of the ceremonies that were held here in Halifax to celebrate that independence day. Canada was the very first Western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. Ukraine's settlement here in Canada began over 125 years ago, and there are currently over a million people of Ukrainian descent, and a lot of them came through Pier 21. We have that strong connection with Ukraine and the people.

It was an honour to be with the Ukrainian community on November 27, 2021 to recognize the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day here in the province of Nova Scotia - the honourable member from Hammonds Plains-Lucasville was there as well. Our intention is to pay respects to those souls who perished in the Soviet Republic of Ukraine between 1932 and 1933, and to show our ongoing support for Ukraine and the people of Ukraine now.

As many now know - thank you to the comments of colleagues here in the House - Holodomor was an act of genocide. Millions of people died, and what is shocking is not many people knew about this until now. It is equally shocking to see what is happening in Ukraine today. There is no justification, there are no words that can really explain to people in my family and to myself as to why this is happening.

We as a province and a government are proud to stand with the international community to recognize Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day as a day of remembrance. This still has a profound effect on people around the world, now especially. Generations of people still feel the negative ripple effect of this unspeakable pain that was purposefully inflicted upon the Ukrainian people, and again less than 100 years later, the same thing. Different, but the same. It is our responsibility to make sure the senseless tragedy of Holodomor shall not be forgotten, nor the current events.

Last year, as I had alluded to earlier, the Premier officially proclaimed November 27, 2021 as Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day. I was proud to read the proclamation at that gathering, and I will do it again here and table it. It reads:

Whereas every fourth Saturday of November is known as Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day, which recognizes man-made famine in Soviet Ukraine that killed millions of Ukrainians from 1932 to 1933; and

Whereas the term Holodomor means extermination by means of starvation, was an act of genocide caused by a policy that included rejection of outside aid, seizure of household goods, and restrictions of population movement for Ukrainian farmers; and

Whereas Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day provides and opportunity to reflect on this horrific event, to commemorate those who died, and to learn more about the history of Nova Scotia's Ukrainian community;

Therefore I, Premier of Nova Scotia, do hereby proclaim November 27, 2021, to be Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day in the Province of Nova Scotia.

We will now, with all of our support, put this into legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support Bill No. 94, Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act and I thank you and I thank the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

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

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the members from Dartmouth East, Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, Bedford Basin, Sackville-Cobequid and certainly all the members in the House who listened carefully, and I know support this cause as well.

I move to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 94.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 94.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill be referred to the Committee on Private and Local Bills.

We are going to reach a moment of interruption for a few minutes, and we'll recess for 10 more minutes.

[12:53 p.m. The House recessed.]

[1:20 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. First of all, I will apologize that our 10-minute break actually went for a half-hour but there was some House business that had to be looked after.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 104.

Bill No. 104 - Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I now move third reading of Bill No. 104, amendments to the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act.

This is a good piece of legislation that is going to have a significant impact on the lives of Nova Scotians who rely on child support and spousal support payments. As I said during the second reading of this, so I won't take up a lot of time here now, this legislation will make it easier for Nova Scotia families living in different parts of this country to fix and collect court-ordered child support and spousal payments from their ex-partners.

These amendments will simplify the administrative process for establishing, varying and enforcing child support and spousal support orders when one party lives in Nova Scotia and the other party lives in another province or territory outside the country.

Today we are streamlining and putting simple processes in place that help make sure children and families get the court-ordered support payments they are entitled to in a timely fashion. Where you live in Canada should not limit your ability to receive maintenance payments or make changes to orders or affect the enforcement of those orders.

This bill today eliminates the requirement of certified copies for court orders and documents to be sworn. It permits the use of electronic documents and removes the requirement for paper.

Many people who rely on support payments - when those payments are late, in arrears, are back payments - they can't call their bank and say I'm late and I can't make my bank payment. They can't call their landlord and say I'm late, I can't make my rent payment. Nova Scotia Power will extend it for only so long. It's not right that people in Nova Scotia are waiting and waiting and having to choose between power, food, making those decisions when their partners owe them money.

I said during the second reading of this that about 96 per cent of all support recipients in this province are women and this will have a significant impact on those women and those families that rely on this money.

Mr. Speaker, with those brief remarks I move that we close third reading on Bill No. 104.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, what we want to say is that we are really happy to see this bill go forward. I spoke about it at second reading, and we fully support this going forward. I think it will be a great movement and shows what leadership can do when collaboration happens, and I thank the McNeil government for being able to work with all the Atlantic provinces, so thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, we also support this legislation. We support legislation that modernizes the Act that we have, and particularly in this situation where it makes it easier for women in particular to get the child support payments that they are owed. We know that the arrears outstanding to Nova Scotia parents with these types of orders are astronomical. We support the bill, and we are hopeful that there will be further action in obtaining those arrears and making those families whole.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I stand in support of this bill and ask the minister to consider reaching out to fellow Maritime provinces, since many of the people impacted, often the other parent, is directly just on the other side of the border. I was encouraged to see other provinces in Canada taking these measures, but I'd love to see our fellow Maritime provinces as well. Perhaps this might be something that the Premier could take to the Atlantic Premiers' Council.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I once again move to close third reading of Bill No. 104.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 104.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 99.

Bill No. 99 - Quality-improvement Information Protection Act (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 99, an Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2015, the Quality-improvement Information Protection Act, be read for a third time and do pass.

We have a strong culture of reporting in Nova Scotia, and it's important we continue to take steps to encourage the reporting of patient safety incidents. This legislation will ensure that health care providers feel safe and comfortable reporting patient safety incidents and will allow them to have trust and confidence in the reporting process. The amendment will not prevent the disclosure of recommendations or actions as a result of the review. With those few comments I take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Our caucus is supportive of any work that provides greater protection for health care workers and patients, and we will be supporting this bill.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading of Bill No. 99.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 99.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 96.

Bill No. 96 - Dismantling Racism and Hate Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. GREG MORROW: I move that Bill No. 96 now be read a third time on behalf of the Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives - one of the all-time greats.

I want to express my thanks to the all-Party committee for developing this important and ground-breaking piece of legislation. I appreciate the passion and the dedication of the members opposite who highlighted some items yesterday that are certainly very important. I want to assure them that their ideas will not be lost as we move forward with developing a provincial equity and anti-racism strategy. As we work with municipalities, villages, colleges, universities, and other public bodies to ensure this important work is embedded in all aspects of Nova Scotia society.

As some of my colleagues have shared, community members who took part in engagement sessions were clear that they thought legislation should be fully inclusive. It should recognize the many unique communities in Nova Scotia, including the Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities, along with the contributions they have made and the challenges they have faced. This bill does that, Mr. Speaker.

It is also inclusive enough that hopefully all marginalized communities can see themselves represented here and understand how this bill will support them through the months and years to come.

We have been clear from the beginning that this is a step on the journey, not the destination. It's a starting point. One piece of legislation is certainly not the sum total of government's work to address systemic racism, hate and inequity, but this bill is a framework to show us where we want to go together.

This bill calls for the creation of a strategy and a community network. It calls for development of data standards and it requires regular reporting to ensure that government is accountable for its progress in addressing systemic racism, hate, and inequity. It calls for a health equity framework to help ensure that all Nova Scotians have safe and inclusive access to the care they need.

These steps are on the journey, Mr. Speaker, and I know all members of this House support these important steps. I look forward to the passage of this legislation on behalf of the minister. I want to assure Nova Scotians that we are fully committed to making Nova Scotia a province where there is no place for racism, discrimination and hate - where everyone has an opportunity to succeed.

With these remarks, I will take my seat and welcome comments from other members.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Government can and must play a critical role in dismantling racism, hate, and inequality in our province. Today is another step in this journey, where we are one step closer to Nova Scotia being free from hate and discrimination, with a more equitable future for all.

I know that other jurisdictions are going to take note because one of the most important things about this bill is that it won't let you forget. It requires further action, and it will help to hold public bodies accountable. It is the first legislation of its kind in Canada defining hate and racism.

It is true that we have a long way to go, but Nova Scotia is leading the way. Never has another legislature built a bill quite like this, based on collaboration, consultation, and responsibility. It commands government attention, and it will help hold government and public bodies accountable. It will help them form the most effective actions and it will provide decision-makers with concrete data so that we can track and make real progress on fighting racism in this province.

Our conversations were difficult and some of you had a taste of that last night and yesterday. They were meaningful, they are representative, they are raw, and they are hard. Most importantly, they are necessary and worth the truth of what it means to be Nova Scotian. They reflect lived and social experiences that many of you here do not see nor have felt. Mr. Speaker, this is a rare and sad truth when we are talking about inequities, racism and discrimination.

All too often, those with lived experiences and first-hand knowledge of social issues don't have a platform like this. In our last session, when we introduced this bill, it was our caucus that understood we would have to be deliberate and approach consulting folks by including more voices in the conversations at every step of the draft. The people we invited into the room were Nova Scotians from countless backgrounds and ethnicities across all communities.

The work of this bill started before the pen hit the paper during the drafting and at the final stages of completion before rising in this House to introduce it. Over the last few

months, more Nova Scotians were included. Hundreds added their voice through consultation with the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism and their staff.

Party lines were crossed and this bill, in the form before you today, is the work of an all-party committee. It is both by and for Nova Scotians. This is why I think it's only part of the journey to push forward to make a difference towards eliminating systemic racism in this province. It makes all the difference when the people in the room making decisions are those most impacted by the outcomes.

The Office of Equity and Anti-racism knows this. That is why it was our government that created it to ensure ongoing dialogue between government and community. Everyone in that room - those with lived experiences, those who are allies, and those who share a vision of a future without hate and racism - through many challenging, emotional, and difficult conversations, collaborations, and truths, a bill was created by the very people most impacted by the harms it seeks to address. I believe in some small or big way, it will make the difference for more people who call this province home. (Applause)

Whether you are Indigenous to this land, arrived here on ships as enslaved peoples, on your feet and choose it, or have been isolated from it, it is both by and for Nova Scotians. This is why it is so important, and that is what will make the difference. This is a bill for those who for far too long have been left out of rooms and have been shaped by our stories.

In the spirit of this legislation, and in the work that lies ahead, I and my colleagues call on our government to follow its own lead. We hope that the government takes it upon itself to create a committee because it is the right thing to do, not because it was legislated. The ball is in your court. You have the team. You have the tools. This legislation guides you to do what it right.

We must be able to recognize that there cannot be relationships unless there is commitment, trustworthiness, and acknowledgement with persistence. As James Baldwin said, we can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and the denial of my humanity and right to exist.

The hard work of the Opposition brought the bill to the floor. The teamwork made it law. Now we will wait, watch, and hope that the government seizes the moment. (Applause)

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

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I should begin by recognizing my own lack of qualification to speak to this subject. Recognizing that as a white, cis man of income and privilege, I speak to the subject before us as one without personal authority. Having

recognized that, however, I would like to add to the comments which will be offered by the members of our caucus who have taken part in the all-party committee.

In the spirit of humility, I have a couple of thoughts and observations, beginning with the thought that the great poet Ezra Pound used to keep above his desk, in large letters: the letters G-I-F-O-A, which stood for “go in fear of abstraction.” This indicated the poet’s understanding that that which is merely general or abstract, that which is broad, or let us say vague, can often be quite unconstructive because it can provide the illusion of substance. The shell - the casing - of something worthwhile, therefore, can cover up even the absence of that which has organic connection with the real problems people face in their real lives.

In this bill, Mr. Speaker, I submit that there is much of the kind of non-specific vagueness that Pound wrote of. We have here, there is no question, many laudable sentiments, many very fine words, and many positive formulations. These are sentiments and formulations and words which are, nevertheless, I want to suggest, the abstract general husk of what a real meaningful equity and anti-racism bill actually could be.

This not to say that there is anything at all wrong with the sentiments, generalities, and words in the bill. They are worthy, they are good, and we will recognize this worthiness when the time comes for us to register our vote. Nevertheless, in all the conversations with affected communities in the development of this legislation, I feel confident to say that no voice has been raised to say, please, provincial government, give us more good words, please provincial government, our communities are hungry for aspirational statements of vague and broad intentions.

Of course not, because everyone in the flesh and blood world of real communities knows that generalities at this moment are not what is called for. Rather, what people have looked to this legislation for with real hope is, instead, the opposite of the general or the vague. It is rather that which provides concrete, specific, particular, real change.

Therefore, I think that any note of self-congratulation on the government’s part about this bill is not entirely in place. It takes not a great deal of boldness or vision to simply say anti-hate, pro-equity, and anti-racist words. This is not where the rubber hits the road. The rubber hits the road on the question of whether or not such generalities are joined with specific, concrete, life-improving actions.

This is what the members of the NDP caucus who have participated in the all-party process leading to this bill have, throughout the meetings that brought us to this place, attempted in the course of the whole process to bring forward for this bill. This is what they have worked on throughout this entire process, from the time our party agreed to participate in it they have worked on the process to provide.

This is exactly what our caucus attempted in the Committee of the Whole House to provide for this bill, with the range of proposals and suggestions and amendments that we at that time brought forward. We brought forward a series in the course of the meetings leading up to the development of the bill, and then again in the examination at the Committee of the Whole House a series of concrete, specific and particular suggestions. We've done this at every part of this important process.

[1:45 p.m.]

We've called for a series of concrete, real, particular actions ranging from the establishment of a Standing Committee on Equity and Anti-Racism here in the House of Assembly, to the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls - the recommendations in those two commissions that have fallen within provincial jurisdiction - to incorporating in the legislation a legislated ban on street checks in Nova Scotia.

The government has in effect, however, replied to these proposals: oh, but see how many conversations we have had; see the quality of our words and our formulations and our concepts; see our commitment to bring forward a strategy in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest this is to entirely miss the point. When we are dealing with inequity in all its ugly forms, it is the specific and the concrete and the real which are the real measure of what is being offered. This point, I am afraid, has been missed, and therefore sadly an opportunity is also being missed in this legislation.

It is, I feel compelled to note, being missed by a government who yesterday was presented with an opportunity to support the concrete specific establishment of a standing committee on equity and anti-racism and who decided to oppose that suggestion. An opportunity is being missed by a government, every one of whose members also, yesterday, stood and registered their personal stance against a legislative ban on street checks in our province.

We will offer our votes on this bill, Mr. Speaker, as those who entirely support its principle, and we will offer our votes as those who entirely support its innovative and helpful provisions for anti-racism initiatives within the government of Nova Scotia. But we will also offer our votes as those who are disappointed relative to what could have been accomplished by this bill in its present final form.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I am proud to stand in support of Bill No. 96, the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act. I would like to thank the member for Preston for first bringing this bill forward in the Fall. I do applaud the government as well for

creating an all-party committee to work on this important bill. Although comments shared last evening in debate would suggest improvements could be made, it was a good first step.

Our province's history on race relations is not a proud one. It's incumbent upon all of us to educate ourselves, talk to others, and act immediately to the concerns being raised, and ensure that not another Black life is lost to racism. These are difficult conversations, and there is deep-hearted pain, and healing is needed. Our commitment to change cannot be temporary, and I look forward to more work dismantling racism and hate in this Legislature and throughout the province of Nova Scotia.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I wasn't planning on actually standing up to speak on this bill in third reading. I was going to leave it to the voices of my colleagues who have the lived experience that this bill speaks to directly and who are part of the committee who gathered to talk and hash things out, but I realized as I was sitting here that if I didn't speak, I would be doing a disservice to the community that I come from.

You see, it is really easy for me to forget, as a first-generation Lebanese immigrant, that my place here is a privilege, that one generation above me didn't believe they deserved, didn't think that it would ever happen. It's easy to forget when I sat across as a minister that having that privilege was something that was new to my community here.

The first Lebanese immigrants came here at the turn of the 20th century and suffered extreme racism. Nobody would do business with them, and nobody would hire them. I'd like to say that that ended quickly, but when my father immigrated here in the early 1960s, he faced a similar situation. He had a Grade 6 education and couldn't really speak English that well, was illiterate in English, and didn't have any opportunities here, and relied on the existing small Lebanese community to help him and help him make his way, as so many others did.

When immigrants come here, the system doesn't bend for them. They have to find ways to navigate that system, they have to find ways to make their voice heard. Maybe they can hide that they are an immigrant. Many have changed their names; many have pushed down their ethnicity in order to make life a little bit easier for them here. This isn't 50 years ago. This is 10 years ago, even five years ago. This is currently happening as we sit here. This legislation also speaks to a large group of people who will benefit from it tremendously.

You know, there's a stereotype, and I'll speak to the Lebanese - there's a stereotype. We own corner stores and we own pizza shops. Why? Because we're entrepreneurs? I think that we made that part of our story, that's part of our narrative, but

it's because people wouldn't give us jobs. They wouldn't hire us, so we had to find a way to provide for our families. You take the savings that you come with, you take the small odd jobs, somebody might let you rake up the leaves in their backyard, maybe somebody's going to let you haul out the trash for them, you take that money and you put it into a business, and then you become your own boss and then your destiny is your own.

We look at the Lebanese community, and I'm so proud of the Lebanese community and what we have become. You look at that community and you think, oh, this is privilege, and it is. We are a privileged community, but that's because of the people who came before us and the sacrifices that they made and the hardships that they made.

There's another stereotype and this applies to many ethnicities, that immigrant parents beat the need for an education and good grades into their heads. That's not because immigrant parents care about education more than anybody else's parents. It's because immigrant parents know that the only way that their kids have even a shot at succeeding is by having an education.

These all become trivial, trite things which in a way is nice, because it normalizes and it makes us all feel like we're a part of something. I feel no less Nova Scotian than anybody else. I feel no less Lebanese than anybody who was born in Lebanon. I feel no less Canadian than my dad felt, even though he was Canadian by nationalization, not by birth.

I wish I actually had taken time, because I know that there are stats that I could have cited. There are statistics when it comes to the inherent racism that my community has faced within the criminal justice system, within the government entities that are out there. I speak on behalf of them when I say thank you to my colleagues on this side of the House and on that side of the House for taking this issue, for starting this process to try and make sure that the immigrant experience of those to come will be more supportive and better than the immigrant experience of those who came before us.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I'm pleased to rise again. I am pleased to have another chance to put some words and thoughts about this bill on record, because as I've spoken about a lot, I'm very concerned that we participate in a process that doesn't have a record. I think a lot of what we talked about yesterday was about building transparency into a process that to date has been limited. There has been consultation with Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians have filled out online surveys, they have attended Zoom meetings and consultations. In that sense, there hasn't actually been a dialogue back and forth.

A framework was presented, Nova Scotians reacted, and that was taken and wrapped into a bill. The same effort to get people into consultations to develop the

themes was not undertaken with the bill. I feel like the bill in particular is the result of really pretty old-school, closed-door government discussions.

We want to introduce amendments to hold ourselves as legislators accountable and to ensure Nova Scotians see results, and we don't have that. The challenge now is the Progressive Conservatives' - this is their challenge, so it's this government's challenge to listen to what was said by community, think about the other models. While this is a unique bill in and of itself, there are bills in Ontario and B.C. that are similar. We do have other jurisdictions to look at which also funded their strategies and are measuring their strategies and reporting on their strategies.

You have a lot of resources. You have asked communities a lot. What happened? What do you want? It's in your hands to develop an equity and anti-racism strategy that reflects what we have learned.

I hope through that process that we will do our best, although I don't have a lot of faith because the development of a strategy is an internal, departmental ability and responsibility. You did not need to come here to get that ability. Thank you, but you didn't have to come. You actually don't have to come back to us to talk about building the strategy. As a matter of fact, you don't have to go back to anybody else because you didn't build in those accountability measures.

I hope, and we will advocate, that you provide time and support for communities to participate, and please stop asking communities and community organizations to do this work for free. Please stop asking community organizations that are volunteer-based or that have a staff or two, because you only fund organizations for a year, maybe - if you funded them at all. Stop asking them to send their only staff person to spend an afternoon or half a day with you.

You have to support people in this work. That is the type of work I did before becoming elected. I fought with lots of governments like the government of Ontario, to fund community consultation adequately. Otherwise, you're creating more conditions of oppression if you don't.

I know there's no money in the budget. That's okay because the strategy is not supposed to start until next year. But what that tells me is that you also have not put any funding aside to support community members to participate. Not only will that stress the whole level of organizations to be part of it, but you'll also lose a lot of folks. A lot of folks will not be able to participate. They will go to work instead and provide the services that Nova Scotians need.

We'll be looking for it. You don't have to tell us about it, but we have high expectations about how this will roll out. I think in particular - obviously I have spoken a lot and I'm not going to stop. Here's the deal, folks: I'm queer, I'm here, and I'm actually

not going anywhere. Every day, given the chance, I'm going to ask you what are you doing for communities that account for about 10 per cent of Nova Scotians? What have you been doing for them? You have been silent. If you think that I haven't asked this question enough, I have asked it in other ways too.

I'll table this letter, once I finish reading it. This is a letter to Minister Comer, the Premier, the Minister of Advanced Education, the Minister of Health and Wellness, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and I think there was one other minister - anyway, a lot of ministers and the Premier. You get the idea. This is dated February 8th, so we met the previous week:

“Dear Minister Comer;

It was a pleasure to meet with you and members of our respective teams last week to touch base on 2SLGBTQ+ priorities in the current government.

During our conversation, I appreciated the supportive and cooperative approach of yourself and your team. I remain concerned, however, that the current government has not fully considered its role in supporting 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and communities in Nova Scotia.

We do not have a clear sense of your government's philosophy and priorities across the many mandates of provincial government departments, including health, education, advanced education, business, justice, culture and heritage, housing, African Nova Scotian Affairs, accessibility, community services, Status of Women, L'Nu Affairs, and more.

Mental health and addictions is also part of this cross-cutting portfolio . . .”

For many of us - actually I would say for most of us - having our issues referred to the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health really recalls to us a painful recent past where our sexual orientations and gender identities were seen both as a psychiatric disorder that required treatment, and were so devastating that they were outlawed.

I provided the ministers and the Premier with some reference documents. I provided an overview of the work that I've been doing through my constituency office in hosting a 2SLGBTQ+ provincial forum. I provided the ministers with the Yukon 2SLGBTQ+ action plan, as well as an article from CBC talking about that action plan and

the Yukon's move on gender-affirming care. I also included a link to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.

[2:00 p.m.]

Then I said that we hope the government will move forward on a number of issues that are important to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Modernizing Nova Scotia's gender-affirming care program is essential and a good first step. I encourage you, however, to look beyond this issue to imagine a Nova Scotia where its vibrant 2SLGBTQ+ communities and residents flourish and show how our government can support this.

This went unanswered. I said this on February 8th and I have yet to receive an answer. If anybody wants to make an appointment, I'd love to have a chance to talk about it.

You know what? I actually thought it's probably okay because I really thought that this government was actually getting it. I actually thought that you were going to fund gender-affirming care. I actually thought that you were going to properly fund pride health. I actually thought that was happening because I actually thought you wanted to fix health care. So far, I don't see any sign of that.

I also spoke yesterday about the process to achieve change. This is not a peaceful timeline. Very rarely, any government - I can't come up with a great example even right now - has ever stepped forward and actually been good at acknowledging systemic discrimination and the remedies needed to overcome it.

In fact, it is always about community. It is about people who do the work and we do it in 100 different ways. Just in case you don't recognize it when you see it, we do it by protesting in the streets. We do it at pride festivals. We do it when we boycott. We do it when we stand in this House. We do it when we've gathered together our community. We do it 100 other ways. Please do not tell me that nobody knew what communities were saying before this. Do not pat yourself on the back for this initiative.

We need to see action and we need to see it now. I do honour the dedication and skill of the staff of the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism. I actually, again, have shared this in committee. Again, you don't know that because there's no record of it.

I actually think the fact that they had to work a ridiculous amount through holidays and weekends - you get the idea - is actually emblematic of how we're treating diversity issues. Don't make people bust their guts - I'm sorry, I don't know if I can say that. Don't make people actually put their own wellness at risk and work and advance on diversity issues. That's not actually helping the case. Since we've done this work for decades, there's no reason why you need to treat people that way. I thank them, but I do

not think it's a model. That is not how I want this Legislature to ask the public service to work.

I do hope that you take advantage of working across government with the many departments and many people who can offer input into the strategy. At our own table, we had a couple of communities represented. We actually had very limited representation from diverse communities.

I asked why no one came from the Accessibility Directorate. Surely that is a body of government that holds an enormous amount of expertise on getting us to 2030. They never came. We never saw them. We had a visit from the Deputy Minister of L'nú Affairs. Again, because we asked for it and, again, for one meeting at the very end. Mi'kmaw and Indigenous voices were not at the table either.

We didn't hear from anybody in the provincial government who focuses on 2SLGBTQ+ issues. Oh, wait. That's because there isn't anybody. For 10 per cent of the population, there is nobody - aside from some diversity, equity and inclusion consultants, who are not focused on the queer community, at the Department of Health and Wellness - that's just not good enough - who can come forward.

We had established a manager of 2SLGBTQ+ issues in Communities, Culture and Heritage in 2012, and the Liberals let it die. We had a manager of 2SLGBTQ+ issues in the Department of Health and Wellness, and the Liberals let it die. This government has not chosen to rebuild that.

In fact, I was standing there, luckily, at the very least, amongst all the other ways in which I've organized in the queer community, which is a lot, having had my 2SLGBTQ+ forum that was able to meet and consider this. So we sponsored one of the community consultations, the folks came in, and I really tried to make sure. I think I worked harder than any government minister - thank you - to get people to respond to your consultation.

I shared it with folks in the Jewish community, I shared it with folks in the abilities community, and hosted this meeting, and encouraged people to go online and do the survey. So I bought in, I worked hard. I think we're quite disappointed by where we've landed.

I will support this bill, but I'm not supporting it because of the work the government has done. I want to honour the legacy of people in this province who have fought for rights and justice for hundreds of years. I will remain in the struggle with those communities. If it's not my own experience, I will strive to find genuine and credible ways to bring those experiences forward. I look forward to seeing how it all turns out.

THE SPEAKER: Before we go forward, I'd ask that the member table the papers that they used for reference.

The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I have more than 60 seconds so I'm very happy, really excited that I can speak. I just wanted to add something - once I saw my colleague, the MLA for Fairview-Clayton Park speak - about immigrants. I came here as a student and we have an opportunity here to see what is happening and the amount of students who are coming and staying, the value that immigrants are bringing to Canada.

There is no one who is more proud of our immigration system in Canada than I am. I speak about it to everybody, and I have friends all over the world. I think our immigration system is improving in the last 40 years. We're bringing immigrants - we just bring them - just come - and then they worked as taxi drivers and were not able to get their jobs.

We have changed our immigration system to bring what the country needs, the value that this has brought to Canada is incredible, guys. We're bringing the 2 per cent, the cream of the crop to this country. They come loving this country and want to do the best they can. They struggle finding jobs, or because they have an accent, or because they have a name that we have a hard time to pronounce.

I get those in my riding, or my office, more than anything else. They all write to me and I know, as soon as I read your name is different, that's why you didn't get a job. The majority of the things that I deal with are jobs, and the only way I can speak on behalf - if you can, make a concerted effort to hire as many, and to help them get there. It is the only way that we can really keep them here. We've lost so many who go to Toronto and to Vancouver because it is easier for them to get a job there. They've had more time with immigrants so they're more used to it.

If there is any way I can just beg you all, in my riding, as well, another issue that I'm very concerned about and spoke about it, is the new immigrants from Africa who are incredible, from Nigeria. They are highly educated entrepreneurs, they are doing amazing things, but I do worry about their kids. I do not want them to go through what I hear from my colleagues here, and what they went through.

We just need to truly believe in immigration and the value that it's bringing to us. We are so lucky here.

Canada is admired by so many countries, but it is the immigrants who built this. Whether it was from Europe, or it was the Greeks, or the Lebanese, the Italians - they've done an incredible job, and we have this 10 times now, with all the people coming from 10 different countries at the same time. The value they bring is incredible to this country.

I just beg of you, give them more opportunity when you have an opportunity or job. I try my best, when I get an application if I'm hiring somebody or going out, even as volunteers, if it's a different name, I give them a priority as long as they have the English and the ability and the skills.

We need to do that to give them the self-confidence and to teach them. You know so much that you can teach to them and bring them in as well.

With that, I just want to make sure - there are two things, as my colleague mentioned, that are really important for new immigrants, for Africans, for anybody: education and jobs. If we can help them with those, we stand to be one of the best countries in the world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I have to say, many communities in Nova Scotia have been calling out for action on discrimination and racism. We have consulted large groups on this issue to come up with many solutions - and I would like to say steps - to racism and hate. We spoke to communities that were the most affected and asked them all to be vulnerable and share stories, some extremely hard and traumatizing. Yet we promised them all that we would listen to their words and act upon them in this piece of legislation.

I want to speak to all of those who shared and expressed your thoughts and your experiences, took the time for these consultations, exhausted your energies to express your experiences with us. I want you to know that I am listening. Our caucus is listening. I will continue to speak your truths here in this House, the People's House.

I don't know if anyone is aware of this, I wear a different colour skin than everyone else in this space here. There's a few of us here who have similar. I need everyone to understand that when people look at me, they don't necessarily see the bubbly character, the lovely, the smart, the vibrant and - I mean, I'm only patting myself on the back because I'm saying these things to build myself up - to let everyone know that before I say anything out of my mouth, you see the colour of my skin. I'm based and judged upon that every single day of my life.

I need everyone else, for all of my colleagues or people who are MLAs like myself - last evening was truly an eye-opening experience. I thank you all for showing me your true colours. I see them shining through, and I really feel, like I said yesterday, that you all need to sit into this and press into the feeling of uncomfortability, because it's going to happen a lot here in this House.

I will continue to press that for all of my constituencies and my communities that I serve. Not only do I serve my own constituency, many of your own constituents message me regularly to let me know how they feel in their own communities because

they can't express themselves to their own MLAs or their people that they trust, because there's no lived experience or understanding of who they are and how they feel.

I want everyone to know that my fight for social justice and equality in this House will be one fought with a small team, but if you don't already know, I'm small and mighty. Many Nova Scotians will feel this throughout my term. Unlike most of my other MLAs, when you see me, like I said, you see colour first. That's not my status. It's more than just the colour of my skin. I will continue to strive for equality and equity and justice for all here in this House.

Last evening, I brought forward amendments to this bill to help strengthen the bill, amendments that were derived from the input from consultations, community input, Law Amendments. I've heard all week from this government that we're listening to Nova Scotians. We're listening. We're paying attention. We hear you.

Well, I'm listening too and I heard that over and over again. Yet specifically, Nova Scotians spoke clearly about how they don't want their voices and input hidden in strategy. That word keeps floating around - talking about strategy, we need strategy. Well, we do have some smart people out there in this world who know what legislation means, and they don't want it in strategy. They said it.

They want it to be legislated, yet this government will do just that and create a wonderful strategy with no funding to do this work, which should already be done. They should already be working on that. The departments that we have should already be looking at things through a diverse and equitable lens, so the work should be ongoing.

What I'm hearing from community members is they're saying, why should we give our input if you don't want to hear it or put it into anything that's going to be substantial? I'm just going to say what was written today to me: Don't ask for our input if you're not going to use it. I know that dismantling hate and racism, or racism and hate, will always be an uphill battle. Y'all need to know - excuse me, Mr. Speaker - everyone in this House needs to know that I've got my hiking boots on and my team with me, and we will take this journey for all Nova Scotians that experience racism and hate until our government does the right thing, working towards dismantling this system that was never designed for us or even by us.

Here was an opportunity to listen and act and use our ears, and the vote last evening spoke volumes on how some of us truly feel. In closing - and I don't think this is in closing - but last evening this government and my colleagues opposite dismissed my community input, our Nova Scotian input, Nova Scotians who spoke loud and clear about what they wanted. When I hear: I'm committed to Nova Scotians - and I hear this every single time we sit in here - when I hear: we're listening to Nova Scotians; when I hear: Nova Scotians have spoken and we listened - some of us in here need to get our hearing checked, possibly clean out the wax.

[2:15 p.m.]

I take from all of that, from last evening's discussion, that this doesn't include me, which means not all Nova Scotians are included. Work will continue on my end for as long as I sit in this seat and represent my riding and my community, and I speak for those who experience racism and hate. I will continue to fight for social justice, equality for all Nova Scotians. I will not be silenced, not ever, and I appreciate my colleague beside me who said the same. I need everyone to know that I will be supporting this bill, as I know something is better than nothing, and we will recognize this worthiness. I supply my vote on the premise that the title of the bill will be just that: first steps to dismantling hate and racism.

I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors who have been here for over 400 years - my Indigenous brothers and sisters, my 2SLGBTQ+ folks, my disabled and superpowered folks, my community and my constituents and all Nova Scotians, and I thank them all for being my driving force for justice and equality in this House. I need us to remember, because I wanted to comment on this at the end, but I need us all to remember what sparked this particular bill.

We can't forget why this bill work came to fruition. An action created a knee-jerk reaction. Let us not be a province that continues to react because something has happened and we need to quickly fix it with a band-aid. Let us be a province that does the work, digs our feet in deep, and makes sure that we are recognizing all Nova Scotians for the good work, the worthiness that they have here in this province, and we do the work for them, with them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: I'm honoured to rise in this House once again, to speak on a bill that we all believe is historic. It is definitely long overdue, and which has a great potential for improving our society and province as a whole. A bill that I can once again tell my kids and grandkids that I stood for and supported Bill No. 96, the Dismantling Hate and Racism Act. It is not lost on me, the importance of the moment we're in and the great privilege and opportunity we all have as legislators in this House.

Before I begin my prepared remarks, I would just like to take a minute. I know a lot has been said about the collaboration that has been happening and maybe not happening with the process of this bill. I don't think I'll get into all the specific numbers of the amount of consultation that has been done - enough has been said about that - but I do want to gently remind my friends opposite that this government, in my time in this House so far, has been very collaborative in much of the legislation that is put forward.

I think back to when we passed the environment bill back in November. Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said that we don't accept changes in legislation, but I remember

when that bill was passed that we did accept changes made by members opposite to make that bill better. It was about how that bill would not affect marginalized communities, how we would do our best to prevent environmental racism. Before this government put forward a bill to dismantle hate and racism, we have already been working with members opposite collaboratively to dismantle hate and racism.

Like my honourable friend from Halifax Chebucto, I don't pretend to stand here and understand the lived experiences of many members of this House and many members outside of this House in this province, but I want the members in this House to know my words today are very sincere. After the last few days, I want them to know that I am sincere in everything I try to do and say every day, and I practise what I preach. Mr. Speaker, I seek to learn at every opportunity I can, and that's what I consider each day I'm in this House - an opportunity to learn. I learn from colleagues on my side of the aisle and, yes, from the other side of the aisle too.

Before I begin, I just want to take a minute and thank the honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, the member for Pictou Centre, who is unfortunately not here today. We all wish him a speedy recovery. I want to thank him - I don't know if he hears it enough - for the fine job he's doing as a minister, leading this effort with a bunch of other people in our House. I just wanted to extend my thanks to the honourable minister for doing a great job in his role for Nova Scotians and all those marginalized experiencing racism and hate.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would just like to mention to the member that you cannot talk about someone not being in the House. You just can't make that known, that's all.

CHRIS PALMER: That's a rookie mistake. I apologize.

THE SPEAKER: Not a problem.

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank all my colleagues from across all the parties who have worked to bring this bill to this point. It has truly been a collaborative effort.

No one political party can claim to be the sole party that represents those marginalized or who feel disenfranchised because of the colour of their skin, their place of worship, their ethnic background, or their sexual identity. This issue transcends politics, and we here in this Chamber have the opportunity to do right by those I have mentioned. Many of my colleagues have referenced this process as like being on a journey. It is truly a journey, and many have been on this journey already for some time. Some of us are now joining them on that journey, hoping to make a difference with them.

This bill, like the Environmental Goals and Sustainability Act, sets out markers, goal posts, and a framework which holds government to account, again in an all-party effort. Continued public engagement, guidelines, accountability with regular reporting to this House, seeking additional consultation and feedback, and addressing workplace racism are all integral parts of this legislation, Mr. Speaker. This bill sets a strategic framework on which to build.

Like all of us in this Chamber, I have had great experiences learning from different community leaders in my area, leaders like Charity Huntley from Berwick, who is a strong advocate for the BIPOC community in the Annapolis Valley. Charity organized an anti-racism town hall a couple of summers ago in Berwick, and I met with her on a few occasions discussing inclusivity, hatred, and racism.. She has worked hard to gain many allies through her work. I am happy to support Bill No. 96 for Charity.

I consider it an honour to represent the Annapolis Valley First Nations community in Cambridge. Through many conversations with leaders there like Chief Gerry Toney, I see how people from various backgrounds can work together. I have also, unfortunately, seen a darker side to some people outside of their community, but I am inspired by all those who want to work with people from different backgrounds to improve not only their community but the greater communities around it. I support Bill No. 96 for the Annapolis Valley First Nations community.

I'd also like to speak about my friend Jude Gerrard, a strong advocate in the Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia and the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Jude is someone who has been on this journey for quite some time. For many years I have had conversations with him and I know he sees the value in this bill and the ground-breaking protections it can offer many Nova Scotians. Mr. Speaker, I support Bill No. 96 for Jude and his family.

As I mentioned earlier, this bill has provisions in place to establish strategies for workplace racism and discrimination. I would like to take a second and reference my friend for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, who is not here today.

Oh, I did it again. Mr. Speaker, I apologize.

THE SPEAKER: Two strikes.

CHRIS PALMER: I know. I would have referenced her because she made some comments yesterday about a constituent who had been experiencing workplace racism. I too have just recently been dealing with a constituent who has come into my office and has experienced discrimination and racism at a very large employer in Nova Scotia. I am very saddened to hear in this 21st century that he has had to go off from work for mental illness and PTSD because of the experiences that he has gone through.

I want members to know that it's not only opposite that you'll want to keep track of what's going on. I want to make sure on this side of the House that my constituents, like this gentleman I am speaking of - I am going to make sure that this doesn't happen to other people and I can make sure he has better outcomes for what he is going through. We will be keeping track, too.

Mr. Speaker, it's quite a name this bill has: Dismantling Racism and Hate. I am not sure if any Act of government could ever get rid of hatred or stomp out racism. Humankind - we're fallen creatures. As long as mankind is on this earth, unfortunately, evil will always be present. There will always be hatred. But this bill will chart a path for many Nova Scotians to let them know that their government will defend them to the best of its abilities and give them hope.

I'd like to take a minute and just chat about my hope and where I get my hope from. My faith gives me my hope, and my faith tells me to love one another. I try to live by that every day in the dealings I have with everyone, regardless of the colour of their skin, where they worship, their ethnic background, or who they love.

Speaking of faith, I think it is important that we recognize today on this day that Pope Francis has officially apologized to the Indigenous communities of Canada for the Catholic Church's role in the residential school issues. I think that is an important thing that we should all be aware of.

In closing, I would like to say that I have been very fortunate to share the gift of music with so many people from various backgrounds through the years and have had wonderful, enriching experiences through that. I've had the privilege of performing at the Our Lady of Lebanon Catholic Church. Once in Fairview - I played there twice. I think it is in Clayton Park now, I believe? Right? Yes, it is now - and on a few occasions in a few Black churches around this province. If you really want to feel the Holy Spirit, you have to go to a Black church and sing some praise music, because it is a wonderful, wonderful experience.

I have experienced some music with my friend Mark Riley and his band Shoulder to Shoulder. Together we have raised much-needed funds in our communities. We work together. Maybe someday I will even get to sing with my good friend from Halifax Needham. I would enjoy that. We'll have to have a unity concert together.

Mr. Speaker, I say these things because I believe that music is the great healer. It's a great uniter. It brings people together. It's because I have had these experiences that I feel I want to represent those people whom I have met along the way. It's for all of those people that I support Bill No. 96.

I've shared my comments today not only as someone honoured to be a legislator passing this historic bill, but also as a dad, a husband, a grandfather, a business person,

and a community leader who is sincere in wanting to dismantle hate and racism at every opportunity that I can. I look forward to giving a big yes really soon when the vote is called. I am thankful that all members of this House will join me.

[2:30 p.m.]

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

HON. TONY INCE: First, I'll discuss my colleague, the member for Halifax Needham and how she shared with us yesterday a passionate, honest, and heartfelt request to all of us. Let me explain how I felt when seeing the member's frustration, I guess I'll call it. I saw the history of my cultural community in action there. Her frustrations, Mr. Speaker, are those that I have seen since I was a child - community leaders and members doing the same thing that we're doing here today.

I was also bothered by the members of the third party standing up and being displeased with the vote. They have a right to do that, and they should, but I take exception when somebody is voicing their displeasure and then looking at me. I'm a Black man, who for 64 years has had to deal with a lot of this. You don't need to look at me and tell me how I need to vote.

As I said - 64 years. There are not many people in this House who can recall first-hand the actions and the emotions of communities when someone in our community has made a movement to give us hope, and then their lives are taken away from them. Examples are Martin Luther King, JFK, Malcom X. I saw the reactions of the community on those specific days and what happened. That's what I remember. I saw it. I saw the tears.

In Grades 3 and 4, I recall what I now know today, at this ripe age, is racism. Many people look at me - they have heard me speak about education. My first real experience with racism was in the education system. I was the only Black student in an all-white school. In Grades 2 and 3, I had an educator physically abuse me - not anybody else in the class, me. I had an educator who would not let me go to the bathroom. She let me sit in my seat and wet myself, because of her perception of the skin that she saw.

I was raised by a single mother and my neighbourhood. My grandmother, my mom, my aunt all instilled respect in me and - when I sit back and think about that now - respect for everyone, regardless. I was trying to become a man at a young age when I didn't have a father, and the only role models in my life were my uncles and the males in my community.

You can imagine the mistakes I've made. I've done things that all young men do because they think they are going to live forever and nothing can stick to them, but I can say that I've made a lot of mistakes. We're talking about the 1960s and 1970s when we,

as males, believed we ruled the roost. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it was the women in my life who taught me the difference.

Let me share something with this House. We were all elected as officials, and all are painted with the same brush. You can go out there, and because we all know that most citizens aren't truly engaged, many individuals will look at us and say, you are all liars. That's because in my opinion, we've inherited a lost and broken systemic system. We who sit here today are the only ones who can make that change and do something about it.

I thank all those who stood up and spoke on this bill, but I believe there's a lot of dishonesty, there's a lot of wordsmithing, and there are a lot of idioms thrown. I don't believe that we intend to behave the way we do, but we are following a system that wasn't truly designed for me. We are following a system. I'm jumping into the system and doing what a young Black man has to do from the time he is little - he had better learn quick and survive.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard it in many of the people's speeches here: We have to first - and I do my gosh darndest ability - try to be as truthful with all those we engage with. We have to do that as politicians. Quite frankly, in my opinion, we have a lot of work to do still.

I spoke about allies. My definition is someone who will stand with me, listen, and debate; be respectful in that debate, honest and truthful, and advise and back me in times when I'm not there; and someone who truly understands compromise. As I have said in the past - and I'm going to say it several more times because I need you all to hear it - we don't need protectors, we need allies.

You all know that there are many in our communities who are very optimistic. In my community, many are optimistic. I have had some in my community say to me, since I have gotten to this position, that we have become blind - blind to the system we are in. I would agree with them because, in some cases, that has happened. That hasn't happened with me because, every step of the way, I have always had what I saw was not possible in the forefront of my mind, that I'm the only one here. I have to speak.

When we talk about those individuals who have become blind, those are individuals who adopt behaviours and routines that the dominant group will tolerate and accept. That, in my opinion, allows for a false sense of acceptance.

We have been given a gift here, everyone. Let's not miss out on this opportunity. Don't worry about the rest of Canada and what Canada has to offer. We need to worry about here: Nova Scotia, those who are here, the immigrants who move in, those who have been here for a long time - as a number of my colleagues have raised - and the Indigenous community, who welcomed us all with trust, who believed that they were

dealing with people who had the same constitution as them. We have the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

[2:45 p.m.]

I have to remind everyone, Black people cover all those gamuts. I have to remind everyone that, while we discuss dismantling racism and hate, what we are leaving out of the conversation - which should allow us to begin to have these conversations and start to deal with the uncomfortableness - is the fact that there is a large part of it that is anti-Black racism.

As I've said, I've always tried to understand people who may share the marginalization that I have. I've always tried to be an ally.

Now as I'm speaking on this, I have to assure everyone that this bill is important and I will vote for it. However, I have to remind us all, don't just go through the motions. We people of African descent have 400 years of that. We've seen it. As I said, you saw my colleague from Halifax Needham. I stayed up most of the night because that bothered me, because I saw my community's reaction to historically being told that they were listened to, that they will be heard - when it suits them, we're listened to and heard.

I'm appreciative of all the work that the government is doing. As a matter of fact, I was joking with some community members. I said, they're doing a lot of work and they're moving forward and giving money here and here in the community. I can't even criticize them in government, they shot me down, I've got to keep quiet now.

However, I say that when I make that statement it also comes with this caveat: We've seen that. We've seen the government in the past, and during the campaign I've heard them walk through the communities talking about - and I've had members in the community talk about - well, they're talking about they started African Nova Scotian - No, they didn't start anything. It was the community who came to them. Yes, you may have taken steps to do those things but I'm going to say that throwing money at it and not providing supports and doing the things that are needed to make sure it's successful - those years are done, it's not working.

I've got three other colleagues in this House with me now and I can assure you that neither they nor I - we can't and we do not claim that we are the ones to have the solutions for our communities. Therein lies what - we talk about consultations. When I say consultations, I'm talking about true consultations.

When I was the Minister of Communities, Culture and Heritage, any community that came to me, I ensured that we had true consultations. If that meant it took longer, so be it. I feel that this process is rushed. I feel that those who have done the work I appreciate them, I'm happy that they're getting out and communicating and dialoguing.

However, when we talk about communication, in this world that we are in, folks, it's not communication. I sat on that side; I got the education. We are here to spin our message. Get any question, you put your message out. That's not communication. The media are part of this, because they help perpetuate all of this. We have a system that we all need to truly work towards correcting.

Folks, be prepared for what may be, when we move forward with all of this, very honest, uncomfortable conversations - and not all in this province will agree with us. I can tell you for a fact that when I was minister there were people who didn't agree with the direction we were going, and many levels of the status quo, they were trying to slow the process.

There are people who are comfortable in power and positions, who don't want to give it up, and they'd rather see friends and neighbours than try to be diverse and look at the overall big picture, which is not about us. We who work in this world, we're here to serve everybody else, not us.

Let me share a few other things with you that many people don't know. When I got elected, none of you know the number of threats that I got; none of you know the phone calls to my office because of this. Let me give you an example. Just the most recent election, when I was calling Liberal members along with community, I've had one specific individual on the phone, they know I am the minister, they're a member, say to me, Tony, I don't like what you guys are doing with the Black Lives Matter. I said, pardon me? He said, I don't agree with all this on the buses and all that stuff. That's public.

I said, first of all, you have to understand who you are speaking to. Second of all, I don't make those decisions - that's municipal. You want to complain about it, call them. Let me tell you why I called you today, put that stuff aside. It showed me, as recent as the last election, we still have those sentiments out there. They feel tired. They don't want to hear any more.

Being here and advancing the African Nova Scotian issues, talk about the issues, about Black Lives Matter, and what really freaks me out is when people in this House and society talk about, heaven forbid, the lost life of George Floyd. Folks, what about Rodney King? We saw what happened to him on TV. It wasn't the first time.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I get a little animated, and if it seems like it's directed at you, it's not.

I've got people in the community who don't think I was there for them. You know what? That's water under the bridge now. I can let that go because when Tony closes his eyes, I know for certain what I've tried to advance for every issue in my community.

Now we're at a point where we're going to vote on this bill. I hope what I've shared with you folks is not lost but I feel it is because the last time I spoke up about racism and everything else, I also shared with this House if you truly want to get just a snippet of what it is, and the anger, I said watch *13th* by Ava DuVernay. The 13th Amendment. We're talking primarily about what's happening in the U.S. but let me share how Tony thinks of this.

We're in America, North America. When Canada and the U.S. were starting to grow, there were no borders. Everybody came back and forth, took property and everything with them. What goes on there goes on here. I implore you, if you truly want to get a snippet of what it is that we're talking about and why we're so angry and upset, look at *13th* because it shows how legislators, law makers, manipulate in those cases.

You can pat yourself on the back about \$13 billion. I saw very little for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, especially given the work that they're going to be tasked with.

You tell me you're going to walk the walk? You're going to throw out sound bites? First, we are here to do the right thing. It is incumbent upon every one of us because of your children and your grandchildren that we truly delve into this and not pat ourselves on the back because we got something done in a couple of months when it took us 400 years to get here.

There's going to be at least 100 years before we even start to reverse, so let's do it in earnest. Let's do it in honesty. Let's make this change. I know I won't always get everything I want, and many of us all know that, but it all starts with the first step which I commend the Premier in doing. But my community and many others wonder how sincere that was because in your first actions, you took us back 10 years. Now you're trying to correct that. In my head, if you're going to jump into that space, then do a proper analysis and think about what you're doing. Don't act out of political expediency.

I'll leave it at that. I appreciate all that we've had the opportunity to do. I appreciate all that those folks who have done the work, who have worked really hard, but you have to remember that those of us who are from the African Diaspora have a lot of trauma we have to deal with based on the 400 years that brought us here. Let's deal with that, and the first step to deal with that is to deal with this piece of legislation in a true, respectful way. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: I apologize. I got on a rant, and my colleague for Halifax Armdale wanted me to share something with you.

[3:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: We'll take a short recess for a little while and provide the honourable member for Halifax Armdale the opportunity to speak.

We are now recessed until at least 3:15 p.m.

[3:01 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:18 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: Good afternoon, members of this House. I just came back from Friday prayer, which is my weekly ritual.

Sometimes God has His own way of how He does things. I didn't know there would be such a bill that would arise in this House, in this nation. I didn't know that one day I'd be standing at this desk and addressing this House. I didn't know this bill would end today, the day before Ramadan. I didn't know the day would go to this hour while members of this Legislature, who came from far away with their family, are still here Friday afternoon.

Did he know I would have the chance to speak to this bill and to follow two admirable African Nova Scotians who have endured the last 400 years of such oppression? Also, I am grateful - all those things that I mentioned - to be the one who will address this House.

Thank you, Premier, for your leadership. You had the guts to make a decision and to create a committee that speaks in this House. It was not an easy task. To go back to when this bill was thought about, I was lucky enough to be invited by the former Premier of Nova Scotia, whom I admire for a lot of things. I said, my friend, as the leader of this province - and that was the beginning of my journey to be here today - I thank you for the very short time that you were the Premier in this province, the campaign that you ran on justice and equity for this province. (Applause)

I think I am going to repeat what I said again, so I can hear more claps. (Laughter) Really, because that was not fair. So I am going to repeat it again. I thank you for creating the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives in this province, and running your election for Nova Scotia justice in the very short time you were the Premier of this province, and I thank you. (Applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, this subject matter is not an easy one. It touches people's lives, and it hurts people. Also, we know a lot of great leaders on this Earth have lost their lives - and I can say names, one after another. I really believe we as humanity have the opportunity to correct the past and to create a better future for our children. That's why we are here, and that's why we are the very lucky ones who the people of this province chose to make decisions.

It was not an easy journey to be here where we are today, but also, I have to give my testimony at this House. Our public service tirelessly worked on this bill day in and day out, gave up their Christmastime, which is one of the most precious times of members in our community.

I thank my fellow members of this House who are part of that committee. I admire you. Do we agree with everything? No, we don't, and if that's the case this House should not be a democratic House - it should be a communist House. That's the beauty of democracy, to disagree and agree.

Have we got everything that we want? No, we do not. Did we compromise with each other? Yes, we did. We did, and we need to admire that. We need to be grateful for one another when we listen to each other, when we compromise with each other, when we show Nova Scotians leadership and why we are here. We're not here to agree every time. If that's the case, we should not be here. We're here to agree to disagree too. (Applause)

Unfortunately, I cannot speak about the historical pain of African Nova Scotians because I haven't lived here that long. I cannot speak for them, neither do I have that experience. I'm a newcomer to this land, but I can give you my testimony. When I walk in the street, nobody knows where I come from, but everybody knows me as a Black man walking in the street, and everybody will treat me as a Black man walking in the street.

Having said that, I'm a proud refugee Black man. I don't owe anybody anything, and I did not ask anybody for anything. (Applause)

My fellow colleagues, what the committee is talking about and what some of the members of this Legislature talk about is real. It's real. It's pain. I want each one of you to recognize that and realize that. We have work to do. Are we there yet? No, we're not, but I really believe we'll get there. I'm very optimistic, I'm very grateful, and I'm thankful. We have work to do. Let's hold hands with each other. Let's move this province forward. Let's respect each other. I thank all of you.

Before I finish - thank you, Tony, for reminding me of this. I'm just going to say my testimony being a part of that committee. I think most of the time we agreed, and we accommodated each other. What I will make clear for the record, being a member of the Liberal caucus, is why we made the decision we made yesterday to not accept the

amendment. I'm going to make it clear why we made that decision. The idea was whether we need to have a committee or to have an office that looks after and is dedicated to these particular issues.

The majority of us agreed as a committee to follow the procedures of this House. That subject matter was brought to the floor. I personally believe the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives is more equipped, more dedicated, and has more outcomes than any other committee. That's why I vote and that's why I advise, with my colleagues, my caucus: that is the way we are going. I have to make that clear.

We know committees meet once a month. Somebody takes the minutes, one month later somebody else will send you a last-minute agenda and you go for it. That's not the way to go. This is real, this issue is real. We have an office dedicated 24/7, but also we give this office a clear path on how to deal with these issues, step by step. With that legislation, if you read it, step by step accountability, a timeline, how to address the issues, who to look for. In the bottom of my heart, I cannot see a better solution than that office.

I just want to share with this House: I just learned this morning that what we're doing here will be history and we are paving the way. David Shepherd, MLA in Alberta, has presented a bill to create the Office of Anti-Racism. We haven't finished the bill yet, so what I'm saying is we're taking the lead and we need to get it right. Through my testimony, David is NDP.

So, my friends, let's celebrate this. Let's embrace this and let's work together.

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

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my friend and colleague, the Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, I want to again express thanks to the all-party committee for developing this important, historic, and ground-breaking piece of legislation. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, this is a step in the journey. It's not the destination, it's a starting point.

I'd also like to thank all members today for their extremely passionate and moving remarks: the members for Cole Harbour, Fairview-Clayton Park, Clayton Park West, Preston, Halifax Armdale, Halifax Needham, Halifax Chebucto, Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, Cumberland North and Kings West. We've listened and as a government we'll continue to listen. Anyone who wants to be a partner in dismantling racism and hate in Nova Scotia will be heard.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll close third reading on Bill No. 96.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 96. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

To members, before I recognize the Government House Leader, I want to correct a statement made in error earlier today during Second Reading of the Private Member's Bill No. 94, An Act to Establish a Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day. That bill actually stands referred to the Law Amendments Committee and not to the Private and Local Bills Committee. It will go to the Law Amendments Committee. Just for your information and to make the correction.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Monday, April 4th, from the hours of 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Business will include the continuation of the Committee of the Whole on Supply to deal with Budget Estimates.

For members' information, the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet Monday between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to consider Bill Nos. 94, 106, 107, 109, 114, 115, 118, and 120. Thank you and have a great weekend.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn until Monday, April 4th between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned until Monday April 4th at 4:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 3:36 p.m.]