



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the Queen’s Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

First Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Article: “Nova Scotia premier says he won’t fight decision on discrimination against people with mental disabilities,” G. Burrill	1964
Article: “Home prices under attack: Moves by provinces likely won’t slay housing dragon,” G. Burrill	1964
Article: “BWS - Twice as Blessed,” K. Coombes	1964
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 195, Campbell, Angela: Recip. of Making a Diff. Awd. - Congrats., Hon. B. Comer	1964
Vote - Affirmative.....	1965
Res. 196, Baylis, F./Dahn, J.: Recips. of Killam Prizes - Congrats., Hon. B. Wong	1965
Vote - Affirmative.....	1966
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	

No. 137, An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Housing, Hon. J. Lohr	1966
[GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:]	
Res. 197, Judique Spirit Tartan Grp.: Hon. of Gaelic Her. - Recog., Hon. A. MacMaster.....	1966
Vote - Affirmative.....	1967
[INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:]	
No. 138, An Act to Permit Virtual Business Meetings, Hon. C. LeBlanc	1967
No. 139, An Act to Enhance Privacy and Access to Information, C. Chender	1967
No. 140, An Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2011, the Fair Drug Pricing Act, Respecting Antiviral Drugs, S. Leblanc.....	1967
No. 141, An Act to Establish an Advisory Committee Respecting Gender-Affirming Health Care, L. Lachance	1968
No. 142, An Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Income Tax Act, to Provide Temporary Tax Relief, F. Tilley.....	1968
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Vaughan, Dr. Peter: Order of Canada Recip. - Congrats., Hon. B. Jessome.....	1968
Disabled Hous. Ruling: Case Stopped - Recog., G. Burrill	1968
Brown, Chris: Music Video Release - Congrats., Hon. T. Rushton.....	1969
Aidoo, Kwamena: Extra Help to Students - Recog., R. DiCostanzo	1969
Shouldice, Andrew: <i>Tunic</i> Vid. Game - Congrats., S. Leblanc	1970
Carver, Ellie: Int'l. Cheerleading Ch'ships. Partic. - Recog., Hon. B. Adams.....	1970
Saunders, Don & Nancy: Saunders Tartans - Recog., A. Simmonds	1971
MacLeod, Alexander: New Book Published - Congrats., C. Chender	1971
Avon View Hockey Team: Great Season - Congrats., M. Sheehy-Richard	1972
Prodns. Pour le Peuple: Prix Grand-Pré Awd. - Congrats., R. LeBlanc	1972
BWS Awareness Day: Gen. Disorder - Recog., K. Coombes.....	1973
Hoeg, Jessica - Sarsoza's Cuisine: Opening - Congrats., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	1973
Dorrington, Francis: Death of - Tribute, Hon. P. Dunn.....	1974
Kousoulis, Labi: Saving A Life - Recog.,	

Hon. Z. Churchill	1975
Danica, Ellie: Death of - Tribute, L. Lachance	1975
MacDonald, Brielle & Maya: Org. of Poker Rally - Congrats., Hon. K. MacFarlane.....	1975
Beals Brook Residents: Forest Cutting Protest - Thanks, C. Kerr.....	1976
Maritime Tartan Co.: Com. Serv., S. Hansen	1976
Bear River Eats: Enabling Food Access. - Recog. Hon. J. Balsler	1977
Doucette, Dr. Paul: Elected Lib. Party Pres. - Congrats., Hon. K. Regan.....	1977
Home Price Increase: Action Needed - Recog., G. Burrill.....	1978
Gogan, Donna - Portlander Rest.: Opening - Congrats. E. Smith-McCrossin.....	1978
Lively, Capt. Nicole: 15 Yrs. of Mil. Serv. - Recog., Hon. B. Comer	1979
Pascucci, Julia: Com. Serv., Hon. I. Rankin.....	1979
Corr Scott, Briana: <i>The Pink Balloon</i> Book Release - Congrats., S. Leblanc	1980
Atkins, Josh: Head Injury Recovery - Best Wishes, Hon. C. LeBlanc	1980
Larkin, Barb: Mittens Donation - Thanks, Hon. K. Irving.....	1981
Balch, Juniper: Surfing Comp. Partic. - Recog., C. Chender	1981
Helm Center: Mental Health Supp. - Recog., D. Barkhouse.....	1982
McCarron, Vanessa: Judo Coaching - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	1982
Whitney Pier Mem. Jr. HS: Hosp. Fundraiser - Thanks, K. Coombes.....	1982
Lundrigan Lane Residents: Xmas Decor. Event - Recog., T. Boudreau.....	1983
Bethany United Church: Com. Serv. -Thanks, A. Duale	1983
Conrad, C./Whynot, T.: Curling Pgm. Fundraiser - Thanks, Hon. K. Masland.....	1983
Roach, Mattea: <i>Jeopardy!</i> Win - Best Wishes, B. Clark.....	1984
Chestnut, Stacy: Me.No.Pause Pgm. - Recog., L. Lachance.....	1984
Lun. Com. Consignment Shop: Env. Efforts - Recog.,	

Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	1985
MacLean, Debra: Retirement - Congrats., F. Tilley	1985
Daughter, Sijora - Birthday Wishes, S. Hansen	1985
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 388, Prem.: COVID Case Count - Divulge, Hon. I. Rankin.....	1986
No. 389, Prem.: New Nursing Home Beds - Promise, G. Burrill	1987
No. 390, Prem.: Econ. Growth Council - Scrapped, Hon. I. Rankin.....	1989
No. 391, Prem. - Econ. Dev.: Funding Cut - Explain, Hon. I. Rankin.....	1990
No. 392, DED - Econ. Recov.: Lack of Plan - Explain, F. Tilley	1991
No. 393, LSI - Frontline Workers: Paid Sick Days - Restore, K. Coombes.....	1992
No. 394, DED - Econ. Recov.: Missing Pgms. - Discuss, F. Tilley	1993
No. 395, DED: Econ. Dev. Council Removal - Discuss. Hon. K. Regan.....	1994
No. 396, DED: Econ. Growth Council Recom. - Rec'd, B. Clark	1995
No. 397, DHW: Lyme Dis. - Funding, S. Leblanc	1996
No. 398, DED: Econ. Recov. Plan - Inform, F. Tilley	1997
No. 399, DED: Funding Cuts to Econ. Dev. - Explain, Hon. Z. Churchill	1998
No. 400, DHW: Ambulance Delays - Address, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	1999
No. 401, DED: Small Bus. Debt Supp. - Address, A. Simmonds.....	2001
No. 402, LSI: Growth of Lbr. Force - Assist, R. DiCostanzo	2001
No. 403, DED: Struggling Restaurants - Address, C. Kerr.....	2003
No. 404, DED: Contingency Plan - Address, L. Nicoll	2004
PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 103, Youth Food Security Act F. Tilley	2005
S. Hansen	2006
J. White	2009
S. Leblanc	2013

Hon. P. Arab	2014
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2017
K. Coombes.....	2020
Hon. B. Adams.....	2021
Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	2021
No. 116, Emergency Management Act	
Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	2022
K. Coombes.....	2025
M. Sheehy-Richard	2028
L. Nicoll	2029
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:	
ON MOTION FOR SUPPLY:	
John A. MacDonald	2031
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CW ON SUPPLY AT 5:14 P.M.	2033
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 9:31 P.M.....	2034
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., April 7 th at 1:00 p.m.....	2034



HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll now proceed with 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, I wish to table two documents in consideration of two separate member's statements. Will I do them both together now?

THE SPEAKER: Please.

GARY BURRILL: I wish to table a document entitled “Nova Scotia premier says he won’t fight decision on discrimination against people with mental disabilities,” which was written by Zane Woodford and published on October 7, 2021 in the *Halifax Examiner*, in consideration of a member’s statement I wish to read shortly.

Secondly, I wish to table an article called “Home prices under attack. Moves by provinces likely won’t slay housing dragon,” from today’s *Chronicle Herald* by Stephanie Hughes, in consideration of a member’s statement I wish to make later.

THE SPEAKER: The reports are tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a document for a member’s statement I am going to read shortly. It is called “BWS - Twice as Blessed,” from an article on January 20, 2021, in the blog called *Living Larger*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 195

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

Whereas all members of this House recognize the importance of work to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in government and in their communities; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Disability Employee Network works to promote a culture that respects, values, and supports employees with disabilities in our Public Service; and

Whereas Angela Campbell, Managing Director of Corporate Services, Communications Nova Scotia, was recognized last week as a champion for accessibility and for promoting the importance of accessibility, inclusivity, and disability rights;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate Ms. Campbell on receiving the 2021 Making a Difference Award from the Nova Scotia

Disability Employee Network and applaud her continuing efforts to advance accessibility and remove barriers in government communications.

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 Labour and - no, Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 196

HON. BRIAN WONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can be whoever you'd like me to be. (Laughter)

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

Whereas each year, the Canada Council for the Arts awards five researchers the Killam Prizes for outstanding research achievements; and

Whereas this year, two of the five awards were awarded to Dalhousie University's Dr. Françoise Baylis for Humanities and Dr. Jeff Dahn for Engineering; and

Whereas having two of Nova Scotia's own researchers win these awards demonstrates our world-class post-secondary sector and their ability to compete on the national stage;

Therefore, be it resolved that all members of this Legislature congratulate Françoise Baylis and Jeff Dahn on their awards and wish them further success in their research.

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. 137 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Housing. (Hon. John Lohr)

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

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I was actually raising my hand to bring forward a Government Notice of Motion.

THE SPEAKER: With the unanimous consent of the House, we'll revert back to Government Notices of Motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 197

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this is on behalf of my portfolio in Gaelic Affairs.

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

Whereas the Judique Spirit Tartan Society, comprised of Gaelic community members Barbara Downie, Deborah Graham, Jean MacDonald, Donna MacLellan, Mildred Lynn McDonald, Patricia David, Rose Poirier, and Virginia MacIsaac, was formed in 2020 to help celebrate the Gaelic culture of music and dance, and experience the daily life of the Village of Judique; and

Whereas the Judique Spirit Tartan, registered with the Scottish Register of Tartans on Tuesday, March 29, 2021, reflects colours and a design that capture the heartbeat of the Judique community - a mixture of striking blues for the ocean and sky; green for the forest and fields; peach for the red-orange-yellow sunsets; white for the first Gaelic settlers' Winter arrival; and red for the faith and fortitude of the people of Judique; and

Whereas the dedicated and creative Judique Spirit Tartan Group is facilitating the creation of beautifully crafted, visually appealing Judique Spirit Tartan items, including a community quilt to boost community spirit, highlight the importance of family bonds and connections, and honour Judique's welcoming Gaelic cultural heritage;

Therefore, be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize the Judique Spirit Tartan Group and Gaelic community members, who have woven the Gaelic cultural institution of tartan with the Gaelic values of hospitality cherished by the residents of Judique.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I have a bill to table.

THE SPEAKER: We'll revert back to Introduction of Bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 138 - Entitled an Act to Permit Virtual Business Meetings. (Hon. Colton LeBlanc)

Bill No. 139 - Entitled an Act to Enhance Privacy and Access to Information. (Claudia Chender)

Bill No. 140 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2011, the Fair Drug Pricing Act, Respecting Antiviral Drugs. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 141 - Entitled an Act to Establish an Advisory Committee Respecting Gender-affirming Health-care. (Lisa Lachance)

Bill No. 142 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, of the Income Tax Act, to Provide Temporary Tax Relief. (Fred Tilley)

[1:15 p.m.]

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

VAUGHAN, DR. PETER: ORDER OF CAN. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. BEN JESSOME: The Order of Canada is one of our country's highest civilian honours. Created in 1967, the Order recognizes outstanding achievement, dedication to community, and service to the nation. Today I'd like to recognize Dr. Peter Vaughan, resident of Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

He's a retired physician, former Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness here in Nova Scotia, former CEO and Medical Director of South Shore District Health Authority, former CEO of the Canadian Medical Association. He's also an adjunct professor in the faculty of Computer Science at Dalhousie University, where he taught data access and flow, a foundation course in advanced analytics. He was also President of WebMD Canada, a Royal Canadian Air Force special operations flight surgeon, and Colonel Commandant of the Royal Canadian Medical Service during the war in Afghanistan.

One of the greatest accomplishments that Dr. Vaughan is known for is introducing the first province-wide digital personal health record in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Dr. Peter Vaughan on receiving the Order of Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DISABLED HOUS. RULING: CASE STOPPED - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to note the momentous occasion when Nova Scotia's top court, following a human rights complaint filed by Beth MacLean, Joey Delaney, and Sheila Livingstone, confirmed that the Province had systematically discriminated against people with disabilities.

In an article published the following day which I've already tabled, journalist Zane Woodford wrote: "Premier Tim Houston was asked whether his government would challenge the decision. Houston told reporters he wouldn't appeal the decision. The Premier sent his condolences to MacLean and Livingstone's families, and praised them and Delaney for their courage."

He said, "I just don't think anyone should really have to take their government to court to make their government do the right thing. So, we received the message loud and clear, we will work with the community to make sure that the supports are in place."

I ask the House to join me in noting the importance of the Premier's commitment made that day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

BROWN, CHRIS: MUSIC VIDEO RELEASE - CONGRATS.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I rise today to recognize Chris Brown of Oxford, formerly of Springhill, who on Friday afternoon will release his new music video *Oblivion*. Chris's new song was produced locally, and I know he and his family are very proud.

The video, *Oblivion*, was shot by Patrick Manifold from local media company Nova Social Media, and features Amherst's own Brianna Voss in the leading role. Funded by Music Nova Scotia and filmed on site at Trider's Craft Beer brewery, *Oblivion* is truly all Nova Scotian and highlights some incredible local talent and resources.

Mr. Speaker, I join Chris's family, Sara, Sadie and Ryker, along with our communities, who are very proud of Chris and his accomplishments and talent. I ask that all members of this Legislature join me in congratulating Chris and his family on the premiere of his new music video *Oblivion* at Trider's Craft Beer on Friday afternoon. Enjoy the moment, Chris, and we can't wait to see what is next.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

AIDOO, KWAMENA: EXTRA HELP TO STUDENTS - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to recognize Kwamena Aidoo, a teacher who goes above and beyond for his students at Halifax West High School. Mr. Aidoo is the kind of teacher who wants every student to be successful and volunteers his time to give extra help to the students.

In addition to offering lunchtime support, Mr. Aidoo also offers extra help after school for students who are struggling in chemistry or occupied by sports competitions. For his IB students, he has stayed late to help those completing lab requirements, and the

list goes on and on. He is an extremely committed teacher and ensures every single one of his students is successful.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House join me in recognizing the hard work and dedication of Mr. Aidoo and thank him for his outstanding service to the students at Halifax West High School.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SHOULDICE, ANDREW: *TUNIC* VID. GAME - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I rise today to recognize Andrew Shouldice of Halifax, Nova Scotia for the recent release of his video game *Tunic*. With an art style and open-world design reminiscent of the *Legend of Zelda*, and boss fights as difficult as any in *Dark Souls*, *Tunic* has earned praise from critics and gamers across the world.

It represents seven years of hard work for Shouldice, who, as an indie developer, built the game from a small studio apartment in the north end of Halifax. From such humble beginnings, *Tunic* has had a truly international reach, in part because of its inclusion in Microsoft's Game Pass service: Think Netflix for video games.

The Guardian writes: *Tunic* "recaptures the lost magic and mystery of video games" and *PC Gamer* says, "Delightfully difficult combat and meaningful exploration make *Tunic* a retro-inspired modern marvel."

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Andrew Shouldice on his momentous achievement and in celebrating Nova Scotia artists like him as they continue to push boundaries and excel in the virtual frontier.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

CARVER, ELLIE: INT'L. CHEERLEADING CH'SHIPS. PARTIC. - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Eastern Passage community member Ellie Carver. Ellie and her Youth Team Canada Cheerleading Team have been chosen to represent Canada at the 2022 ICU Junior World & World Cheerleading Championships in Orlando, Florida this month.

Ellie is 11 years old and has been participating in cheer for seven years. The all-girl team will have 26 athletes, 5 coaches, and one team manager from across Nova Scotia attend the championships.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Ellie Carver for her hard work and dedication to cheer. We wish you safe travels and many

successes as you represent Nova Scotia and Canada during the International Cheer Union Cheerleading Worlds Championships.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SAUNDERS, DON & NANCY: SAUNDERS TARTANS - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise proudly today wearing my beautiful Nova Scotian tartan, thanks to Don and his daughter Nancy Saunders. Saunders Tartans and Gifts is a long-standing family tradition in New Minas for over 60 years, filled with local souvenirs, giftware, and tartan.

I visited them recently to understand the impact the pandemic has had on small businesses in rural Nova Scotia. Small businesses like Mr. Saunders's are vital to our communities. Over the last two years, many businesses have had temporary closure and we've had the opportunity to get out and show these local businesses some support.

I'd like to ask the House to honour Mr. Saunders and Nancy for their commitment and dedication to their community and to Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MACLEOD, ALEXANDER: NEW BOOK PUBLISHED - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dartmouth South's Alexander MacLeod, who is launching his brand-new collection of eight short stories tonight. *Animal Person* follows his critically acclaimed 2011 collection *Light Lifting*, for which he was a Scotiabank Giller Prize and Commonwealth Book Prize finalist.

Alexander's new collection includes the award-winning "Lagomorph," which won the prestigious O. Henry Prize in 2019. Already this collection has been said to beat with raw emotion and shimmer with the complexity of our shared human experience, something that is perhaps a timely tool of reflection for us at this moment.

Please join me in congratulating Alexander MacLeod on his latest literary achievement. I hope everyone in this Chamber will have the chance to take in his powerful writing. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

AVON VIEW HOCKEY TEAM: GREAT SEASON - CONGRATS.,

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, as a proud hockey mom of No. 22, Brody Richard, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize the Avon View Avalanche Boys High School hockey team on a phenomenal season.

The team had success winning the 30th Annual West Kings Invitational Tournament and their own 29th Annual Birthplace of Hockey High School Tournament. They had a second-place finish in the Timber Cup Tournament in Yarmouth and their regular season record was 7-0. They then moved on to win the Western Region Division 1 Boys Championship and capped it all off with a spot at Provincials, which we hosted last weekend.

I would also like to acknowledge head coach Mark Tye and assistants Glen Earley, Brad Burgess, and Scott Lloy, along with team managers Andrew Rogers and Janet Laybolt. Without their hard work and dedication, this stellar season would not have been possible, and it has been said the team feels more like a family than a team. It felt the exact same way with the parents cheering on from the stands.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members please join me in congratulating the Avon View Boys Hockey team, coaching staff, volunteers, and parents on this successful year and I look forward to another great season next year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

PRODNS. POUR LE PEUPLE: PRIX GRAND-PRÉ AWD. - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: M. le Président, le 19 novembre 2021, Arts Nouvelle-Écosse et le Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council ont annoncé que les Productions pour le peuple est lauréate du Prix Grand-Pré 2021. Ce prix reconnaît les artistes créateurs et les interprètes dont les œuvres reflètent les valeurs culturelles acadiennes tout en faisant preuve d'excellence et d'originalité.

Jacques Blinn, Gyaume Boulianne et Éric Dow, l'équipe de Productions pour le peuple, représentent de façon exemplaire la norme élevée que ce prix vise à honorer. C'est ainsi que leurs spectacles ont été appréciés tant à travers notre province et à travers le Canada qu'à l'étranger aux États-Unis et en France.

Monsieur, le Président, je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour féliciter les Productions pour le peuple pour l'obtention de ce prix prestigieux et pour les remercier d'inspirer la prochaine génération de musiciens à composer et à jouer la musique acadienne.

[1:30 p.m.]

On November 19, 2021, Arts Nova Scotia and the Creative Nova Scotia Council announced the Productions pour le peuple the winner of the Grand-Pré Award 2021, an award that recognizes creative and performing artists with a commitment to originality and excellence, and whose works reflect Acadian cultural values.

Jacques Blinn, Guyaume Boulianne and Éric Dow, the team behind the Productions pour le peuple, exemplify the high standard set by this award to the enjoyment of audiences across the province and Canada, as well as in the United States and France.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating the team of the Productions pour le peuple for receiving this prestigious award and thank them for the role they play in inspiring the next generation of our musicians to create and to play Acadian music.

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

BWS AWARENESS DAY: GEN. DISORDER - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to acknowledge April 6th as Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome Awareness Day. Chantal and Adam Woods, with their two children, are tireless advocates for BWS. It is a genetic disorder commonly characterized by overgrowth.

The severity of BWS varies widely in children and is usually recognized at birth when a child is born presenting with larger birth weight and length, overgrowth of one side or part of the body, enlarged tongue, and abdominal organs. Twenty per cent of babies born with BWS will develop cancer, and children must be screened consistently for early detection.

Chantal and Adam are incredible advocates, and by following their journey with their children, I have learned about Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome. I ask the House to join me in recognizing today, April 6th, as Beckwith-Wiedemann Syndrome Awareness Day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

HOEG, JESSICA - SARSOZA'S CUISINE: OPENING - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to recognize Jessica Hoeg, who has opened her own restaurant, Sarsoza's Cuisine, in downtown Amherst.

Jessica has been working in the Amherst service industry for many years and is now set to open her own restaurant serving her Filipino cuisine. Jessica has worked hard

the last few weeks to get the restaurant opened on April 1st, and it's great to see someone out on her own and start something new in the community.

I wish Jessica the best as she starts this new business in downtown Amherst. Please join me today in congratulating Jessica as she starts the new restaurant Sarsoza's Cuisine and grows this new Filipino business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

DORRINGTON, FRANCIS: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. PAT DUNN: The late Francis Dorrington is remembered for his involvement in the town of New Glasgow. Making our community a safer, better place for residents was always one of his top priorities.

Francis spent 21 years from 1977 to 1997 on New Glasgow Council, taking the chair as deputy mayor for five terms, and as acting mayor for a period of time. He was the first person of African descent to be elected to New Glasgow town council.

Francis had a number of firsts over his storied career. He was the first African Nova Scotian elected to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, the first African Nova Scotian elected to the executive of the Nova Scotia School Board Association, the first to be elected to the executive of the Nova Scotia Recreation Association, and the first to chair the New Glasgow Police Commission. Francis also chaired the Aberdeen Hospital Board and received the Order of Nova Scotia in 2019.

Our town was deeply saddened when this community advocate and trailblazer passed away on February 8th, 2022, at the age of 89 years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

KOUSOULIS, LABI: SAVING A LIFE - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to take this opportunity to rise and recognize my former colleague, the honourable Labi Kousoulis, for his quick actions earlier this year that saved the life of a fellow Nova Scotian on Heritage Day.

We often ask ourselves how we would respond if an emergency unfolded before our eyes, and I'm proud to say Labi led by example. As he ate lunch at a local restaurant in Halifax, another patron began to choke on their meal and wasn't able to breathe. While restaurant staff initially attempted to perform the Heimlich maneuver, they were unsuccessful.

Labi recognized the seriousness of the situation and without hesitation ran over to the individual and with one swift heave was able to prevent what could have been a terrible tragedy, saving that patron's life.

For his quick thinking and for showing leadership in a crisis, I'd like this House to join me in thanking the honourable Labi Kousoulis. Well done, my friend.

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

DANICA, ELLIE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life of Elly Danica. Elly was a weaver, writer, mother, painter, photographer, teacher, feminist, and social justice advocate.

In 1988, Elly published *Don't: A Woman's Word*, a memoir of child abuse and incest. It is hard to overstate the impact of this book. It spoke the truth about abuse, a truth that many could not share, and garnered much recognition.

Elly demanded that society recognize that children deserve to be protected from exploitation and that survivors get the help they need. Elly bravely undertook national and international advocacy on these issues. Elly moved to the South Shore in 1998 and you can find her and her artwork throughout the community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in honouring the impact of Elly Danica and share our condolences with her family and friends.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MACDONALD, BRIELLE & MAYA: ORG. OF POKER RALLY - CONGRATS.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Brielle MacDonald and Maya MacDonald who are youth members of the Dalhousie Mountain Snowmobile Association.

These young women organized an event called A Poker Rally, which took place in February. Participants rode the trail system to different checkpoints, where they drew a playing card at each location. At the end of the day, the participant with the best poker hand won a prize.

These young women are working hard to encourage more youth to join a fun Winter pastime. Association members assist in keeping trails clear for all to enjoy year-round.

I am happy to see such a vibrant club for youth in our community where they get to enjoy the outdoors. Congratulations to Brielle and Maya on a job well done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

BEALS BROOK RESIDENTS: FOREST CUTTING PROTEST - THANKS

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous respect for folks who get out from behind their computer screens to take action and effect change. This is exactly what a group of constituents from Annapolis are doing near Beals Brook in Annapolis County.

This group of concerned citizens have camped out at the site of a planned Crown land shelter wood harvest since last December. They have endured 125 days of Winter weather, time away from friends and family in an effort to prevent the cutting of this piece of forest that they, myself, and many others believe is critically important habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in my place today to thank Nina Newington, Janet MacLeod, Randy Neilly, Debbie Stultz-Giffin, Laura Bright, and many others who camped out near Beals Brook for their deep commitment to our forests and the biodiversity that it supports.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MARITIME TARTAN CO.: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize the Maritime Tartan Company, a company whose home was once in the Halifax Needham area and now has moved and expanded to the Amherst area, the member for Cumberland North's home. The owner and creator, Sherrie Kearney, has been sewing for over 40 years and she realized she was really good at it.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, her business pivoted from making scarves and blankets to making face masks. After seeing masks online for \$25 or more, Sherrie started selling masks on a pay-what-you-can basis to ensure people who needed them could access them.

Maritime Tartan Company also puts an emphasis on helping others by using their business to fundraise for local charities, raising over \$59,000 since 2020 and they donate blankets to our seniors' homes in our community. Maritime Tartan Company creates and sells wool, fleece blankets, fleece throws, and blanket sets.

I would ask all the members of this House to help me congratulate the Maritime Tartan Company for their hard work and compassion for all Nova Scotians through this COVID-19 pandemic.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

BEAR RIVER EATS: ENABLING FOOD ACCESS. - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a wonderful committee in my community. Bear River Eats is a year-round food program organized by volunteers in the Bear River area that delivers hot meals to seniors.

The mission of Bear River Eats is to enable food accessibility to everyone in and around the area of Bear River. The only requirement is need. Although a small fee of \$4 is requested for a meal, those who can't pay will receive food regardless.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Bear River Eats has made a concentrated effort to care for those in the community and has created other activities such as producing livestreams of seminars on cost-effective meal preparation and accessibility to local food. Fortunately, the program has started up again just yesterday.

I ask all members in the Legislature to recognize the astounding contribution Bear River Eats continues to make in the community. Food literacy and security are so important for everyone. Thank you, Bear River Eats, for everything you do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DOUCETTE, DR. PAUL: ELECTED LIB. PARTY PRES. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate a constituent on a recent achievement.

Back on March 5th my constituent, Dr. Paul Doucette, was elected president of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party. I'm happy for him, but I'm a little sad for me because he was also my riding president, which means I am going to lose him, and that's a bit of a bummer. I don't know if that's unparliamentary but I'm going to say it anyway - it's kind of a bummer to lose my president, but he had served as my president for a long time.

I'd also like to congratulate all the people who ran for positions in that recent election. As all of us in this House know, we couldn't have a functioning democracy without volunteers like them.

I also want to thank my past presidents that I've been so fortunate to have - Dr. Fred French, Brian Duffy, and Laurie Edwards. Thank you all for your service.

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

HOME PRICE INCREASE: ACTION NEEDED - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the House to the instructive article in *The Chronicle Herald* today “Home prices under attack: Moves by provinces won’t slay the housing dragon,” which I have already tabled.

The article highlights how provincial initiatives on this front to date are poised to fail to bring housing prices under control, meaning that home ownership will fade further from view for many people. Many more will be trapped in mortgages they can’t afford when interest rates begin to rise.

Instead of the subsidies to developers that this government is bringing forward, bold action is needed to build thousands of new homes outside the realm of the speculative, financialized housing market. Public housing, co-op housing, non-profit housing - this is the increased supply necessary to cool the housing market and bring down housing prices. Housing is a human right.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

GOGAN, DONNA - PORTLANDER REST.: OPENING - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize my dear friend, Donna Gogan and her new Portlander Jamaican Restaurant. Donna opened in a new location in downtown Amherst on March 9th of this year. She is a dear friend of mine. We’ve shared many years raising our children together and sharing many different business ideas and entrepreneurial thoughts.

I am so happy to see the hard work that she has done - and her family has done with her - pay off. Donna has been serving the Amherst community with her Jamaican food for several years. As well as a business owner, she has a servant heart for our community and makes meals for those people in need.

Donna is a proud, strong Jamaican woman and I wish her the best in her new location. Donna has a passion for her business. I am so proud of her and so proud of her family who have been with her every step of the way. Please join me in congratulating Donna in her new location.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

LIVELY, CAPT. NICOLE: 15 YRS. OF MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay respect to Captain Nicole Lively, Mission Coordinator of the Aeronautical Search and Rescue at the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre Halifax.

Captain Lively is from Marion Bridge, with 15 years of military service to date. After obtaining her wings as a Royal Canadian Air Force helicopter pilot, she was posted in Cold Lake, Alberta. From there she went to Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador, and then to the Canadian Forces Flying Training School in Manitoba, where she taught helicopter flying as a Category B instructor.

Although there were many highlights of Captain Lively's impressive service, I will mention a few. When she was deployed to High River and Medicine Hat, Alberta, in 2013, they rescued nine people and a dog from the flood waters and delivered two doctors to the hospital. As well, she received the Royal Canadian Air Force Commendation for rescuing five fishermen in fear of capsizing from the *Northern Provider* in March 2017.

I'd like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to applaud Captain Nicole Lively on her service to our province and our country and wish her all the best.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

PASCUCCI, JULIA: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Julia Pascucci, a resident of Beechville Estates, for her strong community support, volunteerism and constant dedication to improve the quality of live in Beechville-Lakeside-Timberlea communities.

No stranger to collaborating with community groups, Julia currently sits as the Chair of the BLT Residents Association. Her most recent project has been to engage residents of Beechville Estates and bridge the community with Halifax Regional Municipality staff in the Parks and Recreation Division to provide community input in the design and planning of a new playground for Beechville Estates.

Julia has been providing general information to the community on the options HRM has presented, has been seeking volunteers to assist with polls, and has gathered volunteers to walk the neighbourhood to collect input from everyone to ensure everyone in the community has a voice at the table.

It takes perseverance and dedication of active community members to volunteer their time, talent, and energy to build strong, supportive communities. I'd like the members

of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Julia for her initiative to keep her community informed and engaged on projects that enhance her community.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**CORR SCOTT, BRIANA:
*THE PINK BALLOON BOOK RELEASE - CONGRATS.***

SUSAN LEBLANC: Dartmouth-based visual artist Briana Corr Scott's illustrations feature dreamy scenes of flora and fauna, the coastal beauty of Mi'kmaki, and fantastical characters such as selkies and a Thumbelina-sized girl.

The author and illustrator of three books, Briana recently lent her artistic talents to the book *The Pink Balloon*, which launched this Sunday past. Written by two moms raising trans kids, Cynthia Sweeney and BriAnna Simons, *The Pink Balloon* is a sweet story of a trans kid named Briar and her family and being open to whoever our children may be or become. The book starts with a gender reveal party and a single pink balloon amidst a sea of blue.

Nimbus will soon release a new board book by Briana Corr Scott called *Mermaid Lullaby* about mer-moms and their mer-babies at bedtime. I ask everyone in the House to join me in offering congratulations to Briana, Cynthia, and BriAnna on the release of their important and beautiful book, *The Pink Balloon*, and to thank the first Briana for all of the beauty she brings into our world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

ATKINS, JOSH: HEAD INJURY RECOVERY - BEST WISHES

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as I rise today, my thoughts and prayers are with Josh Atkins and his family. Josh, the father of two young boys, is recovering in hospital in Halifax after experiencing a head injury in early March.

Josh has touched the lives of many in the community through his volunteer work as a minor hockey and softball coach. His friends describe him as upbeat, great with kids, caring, helpful, supportive, encouraging, and fun. It was a pleasure to join the community as they rallied for Josh in a big way. On March 18th, a fundraiser was held at the Yarmouth Mariners Centre featuring a Tri-County Gents League All-Star Game. More than \$24,000 was raised that night.

I ask all Members of the Legislature to join me in sending best wishes to Josh and his family as he recovers from his injury, and in thanking the Tri-counties for their caring hearts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

LARKIN, BARB: MITTENS DONATION - THANKS

KEITH IRVING: During the Summer, you can find a young veteran and member of the Wolfville Legion keeping her hands busy knitting mittens. At age 90, Barb Larkin of New Minas likes to do what she can to keep the hands of young children warm during the Winter months. Just this past year, she knitted and donated 84 pairs of mittens to the Wolfville Legion poppy drive. Barb also provides mittens to her visiting care workers from VON so they can distribute them to others in need. She is most eager to give mittens to newcomers to Nova Scotia, especially the refugees who might be here for their first chilly Winter.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking Barb Larkin for her service to Canada, her local community, and her continued efforts to keep the hands of local children a bit warmer during the Winter months.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

BALCH, JUNIPER: SURFING COMP. PARTIC. - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize Dartmouth South's Juniper Balch, who will represent Nova Scotia at Surf Canada's Rip Curl 2022 Pro National Competition this weekend in Tofino, British Columbia. She's among 250 competitors from across the country, and the only Black Nova Scotian surfer to compete in her age group.

At just 14, Juniper is already making her mark in the sports and activism worlds. She volunteers with the North Preston Surf Program, where she teaches other Black youth to learn to surf, with the hope that she won't be the only one out on the waves in the future. She's also a soccer player and accomplished kayaker because, of course, she lives near Lake Banook.

Please join me in congratulating Juniper Balch on her achievements so far and wishing her good luck in Tofino this weekend.

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

HELM CENTER: MENTAL HEALTH SUPP. - RECOG.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I rise today to acknowledge the tremendous work that The Helm Center is doing in the community of Glen Haven. Kevin and Dawn Bralovich moved back to Nova Scotia three years ago, determined to fill the gap left by the closure of the Hope Farm Society, which had helped Kevin more than a decade prior.

The Helm is a hobby farm and a one-year addictions recovery centre for up to 12 men. They offer mental health support and development of life skills, work skills, and purpose. The goal is to assist these men in fitting back into society and their community.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing the ongoing work of The Helm.

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

MCCARRON, VANESSA: JUDO COACHING - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I'm here to recognize a trail-blazing local martial artist, Vanessa McCarron. Vanessa began practising judo when she was just eight years old. She has successfully competed for four years and even won a Bronze Medal in the 1999 Canada Games. In 2003, she knew it was time to move into coaching and has since helped many Nova Scotia children begin their judo journey, starting a program called Lil' Ninjas, which introduces judo to kids aged two to four.

Vanessa recently became a competition development coach, one of the few Nova Scotians to hold this high coaching certification, and one of even fewer Nova Scotian women who can coach at this level. Because of her ability to develop the athletes she works with, Vanessa has been named coach for Team Nova Scotia in the 2023 Canada Games in P.E.I. I ask all members to join me in celebrating Sensei Vanessa McCarron and wish her all the best in her judo journey.

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

WHITNEY PIER MEM. JR. HS: HOSP. FUNDRAISER - THANKS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Whitney Pier Memorial Junior High. Last week, the students and staff of Whitney Pier Junior High presented the Cape Breton Regional Hospital Foundation with a \$500 cheque. They raised the money on Superhero Day through the selling of lollipops.

Superhero Day is celebrated to raise money for Caleb's Courage in honour of Caleb MacArthur. Caleb, at the age of three, was diagnosed with Stage 4 high-risk neuroblastoma. His legacy of love and his love of superheroes lives on in Caleb's Courage, helping little

superheroes fight big battles. I ask the House to join me in thanking Whitney Pier Memorial Junior High for their generosity and in honouring our little superheroes fighting those big battles.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

LUNDRIGAN LANE RESIDENTS: XMAS DÉCOR. EVENT - RECOG.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, every Christmas Joel Boudreau, Josette Marchand and their families and friends decorate Lundrigan Lane in Petit-de-Grat. This annual event has turned into a friendly neighbourhood competition. The display of thousands of Christmas lights is enjoyed by young and old. Every year, community donations are given in support of a local organization. This past year, the Resident Recreation Fund at St. Anne Community Nursing Care Centre was the well-deserved recipient.

We would like to recognize the residents of Lundrigan Lane for their community spirit and thank them for helping various organizations in Richmond County throughout the years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

BETHANY UNITED CHURCH: COM. SERV. - THANKS

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the community work that is done by Bethany United Church's local outreach program. Through programs like Toonies for Tummies, No Food - Food Bank Sundays, and the Bethany Players live theatre productions, Bethany United Church helps raise funds to serve persons in need of food and clothing items in the metro Halifax area.

I want to acknowledge Bethany United Church's dedication to charities and sincerely thank them for their continued efforts for our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

CONRAD, C./WHYNOT, T.: CURLING PGM. FUNDRAISER - THANKS

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Liverpool Regional High School students and junior curlers Calley Conrad and Tegan Whynot. In their civics class, Calley and Tegan were assigned a service-learning project and decided to develop, organize and implement a fundraiser for the Liverpool Junior Curling Program.

Fundraising for the program had been impeded by two years of pandemic restrictions, so they created a Facebook page, gathered online auctions, and sold 50/50

squares. At the end of their two-week event, they had raised an impressive \$1,825, which was used to purchase new gear such as helmets, broom heads, sliders and stopwatches.

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate Calley and Tegan on their successful event and thank them for their efforts to support this important program. They set a shining example of incredible youth giving back to their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

ROACH, MATTEA: JEOPARDY! WIN - BEST WISHES

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, at the risk of being repetitive, I'm going to talk about *Jeopardy!* again today. As some members may know, Mattea Roach of Nova Scotia won just over \$32,000 on last night's episode. As luck would have it - funny how these things work - there was a question about the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever on last night's episode, which of course she answered correctly.

I want to wish Mattea the best of luck on a very long successful streak on *Jeopardy!* and for proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that being smart pays.

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

CHESTNUT, STACY: ME.NO.PAUSE PGM. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I hear weekly from constituents about their concerns regarding lack of access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care in Nova Scotia. Together, perimenopause and menopause can last 10 to 15 years in a person's life. The unexpected and untreated physical changes can sideline athletes.

Dartmouth East resident Stacy Chestnut is already a staunch supporter of getting everyone moving through her Girls Gone Gazelle program and Sole Sisters races. Now she is bringing her expertise and energy to this period of change and transition with a program called Me.No.Pause. The program, funded by the Canadian Women and Sport WISE Fund, is building a community through sharing health information and getting everyone out running.

I ask all members to recognize the contributions of Stacy Chestnut in keeping Nova Scotians healthy through all of life's stages.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

LUN. COM. CONSIGNMENT SHOP: ENV. EFFORTS - RECOG.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lunenburg Community Consignment and celebrate the meaningful contributions of the volunteer staff who work there.

This friendly neighborhood consignment store offers a commitment to protecting our environment by recycling quality and gently used items and keeping them out of the landfill. It also allows individuals in our communities to make more affordable and mindful purchases. What makes this store truly unique and noteworthy, though, is that 20 per cent of all sales are donated to charities as selected by the store's wonderful volunteers.

It was recently revealed that between August 2012 and November 2021, the volunteers of Lunenburg Community Consignment were able to donate more than \$185,000 to local charities.

This significant contribution deserves recognition, and I wish to officially thank these dedicated volunteers for their commitment to giving back to our local community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MACLEAN, DEBRA: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the retirement of Debra MacLean from a distinguished 41-year career in the helping industry. Debra finished her career as the executive director of Haley Street in North Sydney. Debra spent her entire career and dedicated her life to helping people. She showed resilience, compassion, dedication, and true leadership.

Haley Street is a wonderful organization in our community, and Debra was very proud of the new facility that they were able to put together to deliver amazing programs for constituents of Cape Breton.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Debra on her retirement and wish her a happy, healthy, and wonderful retirement.

THE SPEAKER: Just to add, a good Boularderie Island girl, too.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DAUGHTER, SIJORA - BIRTHDAY WISHES

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to stand today to wish a lovely little girl a happy eighth birthday. Happy birthday, Sijora Aylena Hansen. COVID-19 has

cancelled two parties for this young one, but her spirits are lifted by knowing that this year, she gets to celebrate with friends - safely, of course.

Sijora Hansen was born on the morning of April 6th at 10:30 a.m. with an easy labour and delivery for myself. She's a beautiful baby girl who continues to be the baby of the family and deserves attention from everyone. She's another small but mighty spitfire in the Hansen family.

Sijora likes to play basketball and tennis, and is super fit and full of energy. Sijora, you are a brilliant and amazing princess, and I love you very, very much. I would like the House to help me wish my little Sijora a happy eighth birthday. (Applause)

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: COVID CASE COUNT - DIVULGE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Yesterday I rose in the House and took the opportunity to ask the Premier what the COVID-19 case count was for the day. I'd like to take this opportunity again, because he couldn't offer that yesterday, or he wouldn't, so I'd like to ask the Premier again: What's the COVID-19 case count?

THE PREMIER: Of course, we're all concerned about COVID-19. It's a serious issue, there's no question about that. As the member knows, the Province has gone to weekly reporting. That's the trend across the country and further beyond as well, so the numbers will come out tomorrow and there will be lots of discussion, but I want to leave the member with this obvious fact: There is COVID-19 in our communities and people should take the steps that they know how to take to keep themselves and their families safe.

IAIN RANKIN: With so many Nova Scotians asking for it, that's why we're prepared to continue to ask until we get answers. I'll redirect to the Minister of Health and Wellness to see if she knows what the COVID-19 case count is.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: To the Premier's point, we need to continue to understand that there is a significant amount of COVID-19 in our communities. We are at

a place in the pandemic where we believe we are going from pandemic to endemic. I think the time of zero cases of COVID-19 is over, which is what we were typically used to experiencing in those early waves. That's no longer - that's just not going to be possible for a very long time.

What's important is that there are things about COVID-19 that we can't control, but every one of us has the skills and the knowledge that have been built over the last two years, and when we feed into fear and anxiety, we have to bring people back. There is a locus of control. We can follow public health measures. We do know the things that we can do to help keep ourselves safe, and I think as a group, we should be supporting Nova Scotians in order to do just that.

IAIN RANKIN: I know the minister is not implying that we're causing fear by asking the same questions that Nova Scotians are, that physicians are when they call our offices concerned about what's happening down at the QEII.

I'd like to ask the Premier - I heard him say the word "epidemiology" yesterday in justifying where we're at right now. I'd like to ask the Premier: Has he heard from an infectious disease specialist on recommendations, and is he following those recommendations?

THE PREMIER: Certainly, as the member would know, in this chair, there's no shortage of information people want to share with you, there's no shortage of expert opinions. A lot of people have thoughts and opinions that they're quite happy to share, and quite frankly, I'm quite happy to receive. The information that I focus on the most is that information that's coming from the Department of Health and Wellness, that information that's coming from Public Health. We will do everything we can to make sure that Nova Scotians are safe. That means finding a balance in mental health. That means finding a balance in physical health.

There's a lot. None of these are easy decisions. I think the minister referred to that yesterday. These aren't easy decisions, but I will assure the member, and I will assure every Nova Scotian, that we make the best possible decisions for their health and safety. That's first and foremost in every decision we make.

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

PREM.: NEW NURSING HOME BEDS - PROMISE

GARY BURRILL: Yesterday in Question Period, when I asked the Premier why he thinks that the government's February announcement of 500 new nursing home beds is a fulfillment of the commitment made prior to the election for 2,500 new beds, it seemed that perhaps the Premier was uncertain what I was referring to. What I'm referring to is contained in the government's own release at the time of that February announcement,

which says “The 500 beds are in addition to more than 2,000 new or improved beds already in progress...exceeding the government’s goal of building 2,500 beds...”

The Premier’s election promise was not to open 500 beds in addition to 2,000 beds that were already in progress, in train: It was to open 2,500 new, additional beds.

THE SPEAKER: Question.

I will table that commitment from the platform. Can the Premier see the difference between what was announced in February and what was committed to during the election?

THE PREMIER: I’m happy to revisit the member’s issue from yesterday.

I assure the member, as I did yesterday, that there’s not going to be a single day when I get up in the morning and don’t work extremely hard on behalf of Nova Scotians and the commitments that we make to Nova Scotians. We will fulfill them.

They’re not all fulfilled yet, Mr. Speaker. If something’s suggested that we somehow think that “tick, job done” - that’s not the way we do business. We don’t operate from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. We operate 24 hours a day on behalf of Nova Scotians. We will continue to work every single day to support Nova Scotians.

I think when the members opposite look at the budget that we’ve put forward - \$13 billion in investments on behalf of Nova Scotians (Applause) - the largest capital budget - they will know that we are working on behalf of Nova Scotians.

The member will have a chance to find out whether the job is done . . . (Interruption)

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

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the number 2,500 here is very important because that’s the number that is needed to get people from shared accommodation into single accommodation in nursing homes. We learned so much during the first wave of COVID-19 about how shared accommodation is a danger in long-term care from the point of view of the transmission of infection.

At least 2,500 new, additional beds are needed in order for us to get Nova Scotia to a model of one resident, one room, one washroom in our long-term care. This is a model that cannot be accomplished with just 500 new beds.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he really think that we can get to the goal of one resident, one room, one washroom on the basis of this 500-bed February commitment?

THE PREMIER: To the member: There is work to be done. If I gave the impression that I thought the job was done - the job is not done. There's work to be done. I'm sorry if we've somehow created some confusion with the press release. I want to clear up that confusion.

I want to assure the member that when we put out our plan for dignity for seniors - a very detailed plan - while in Opposition, we didn't just wait and pick away in Question Period, Mr. Speaker: We actually did the homework.

We put that information in our platform. Those are the commitments that I personally signed my name to. Those are the commitments of our government. I assure you that we will do everything possible to fulfill those commitments.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the platform that the government ran on says that we need, in long-term care, an additional 600 nurses and 1,400 additional CCAs, but the budget provides for the hiring of just 108 nurses and 441 CCAs. Why hasn't the government made the staffing investments that they themselves in the election said were required?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't accept the member's math on that, but I will remind the member that in advance of the budget, in advance of \$13 billion worth of investments in Nova Scotia, we made a significant investment in CCAs. We don't wait for the budget. There's work to be done and we get to work doing it. We won't stop. This team of solutionists is focused on Nova Scotians. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: ECON. GROWTH COUNCIL - SCRAPPED

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, if anyone thinks \$13 billion should be commended, they should know that the last budget update was \$12.9 billion. That's what he's bragging about: \$100 million of increase. (Laughter)

During a cost of living crisis, when we have inflation at an all-time high, small businesses struggling with debt, the government still has no plan for economic recovery. Instead of coming up with a plan for recovery, this government scrapped the Nova Scotia Economic Growth Council.

I want to ask the Premier: Why did he put an end to the Economic Growth Council's important work?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're happy to relitigate the former government's record. I know Nova Scotians had a chance to do that in the Summer. We're happy to do it any day of the week on the floor of this House.

We're focused on Nova Scotians. We have a great minister in that portfolio. We have a lot of people working for the Province of Nova Scotia focused on rebuilding the economy of this province, focused on moving Nova Scotia forward. That's the only thing that we're focused on, Mr. Speaker.

There are incredible opportunities for this province, absolutely incredible. I've had a chance to go to different places and talk about Nova Scotia. People are excited about Nova Scotia despite the gloom and doom they hear from the Opposition in this Chamber. (Applause)

IAIN RANKIN: We know that Nova Scotia requires a long-term economic recovery plan. That's why we put together that Economic Growth Council while we were leading the country in economic recovery last year. That economic growth has stalled. He dismissed this advisory board meant to assist in the making of that plan.

My question for the Premier: Without this Economic Growth Council, who is advising him on how to recover the economy?

THE PREMIER: In an earlier question, we talked about how there's no shortage of people, but I will assure the member of this: Perhaps when the member was in office for a short period as Premier, he needed a council to tell him what to do. But I will tell the member and the members opposite, in no uncertain terms, that we know what to do and we are getting to work on behalf of Nova Scotians.

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

PREM. - ECON. DEV.: FUNDING CUT - EXPLAIN

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I would have to say that the best leaders are ones who are confident enough to surround themselves with people who know how to address issues as important as economic growth. Mi'kmaw chiefs on that council, representatives from the Black Business Initiative, a gender-balanced committee - they had people from all different disciplines, Mr. Speaker.

We know that small businesses need our support. In last week's spending plan, we see that the government has plans to cut economic development by \$56 million. My question for the Premier is: At a time when our businesses need support the most, why is he taking away that support?

THE PREMIER: If the member opposite wants to have a look at a good solid team, he need only cast his eyes across the floor at the number of solutionists on this side. We know about teams, we know about engaging people, and we know what to do for this province.

We talked about doubling the population. Maybe the member wants to weigh in on our significant investment in the youth of this province: Anyone under 30 working in the skilled trades in this province, no personal provincial income tax on their first \$50,000. That's the type of economic development initiative we're focused on, Mr. Speaker.

IAIN RANKIN: Again, they gloat about the \$13 billion - a \$100-million increase from the last budget forecast. We see \$56 million cut from economic development spending, and they're projecting a recession in two years, in 2024.

I'd like to ask the Premier: What's he going to do to ensure that he prevents that contraction in our economy in two years? What's he going to spend to ensure that he's helping our businesses through that?

THE PREMIER: We're going to focus on Nova Scotians. We're going to focus on small - we're going to support Nova Scotia. We're going to believe in this province, believe in what is possible for this province.

There's incredible pain in the world right now, Mr. Speaker. The events around the world are absolutely heartbreaking. Those reverberate all the way to our shores, but what we can never lose sight of, and what this team will never lose sight of, is what is possible for this province.

We believe in Nova Scotians. We believe in this province. We will focus on building the best possible Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Northside-Westmount.

DED - ECON. RECOV.: LACK OF PLAN - EXPLAIN

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has mentioned that he doesn't need anybody to help him figure out what to do for Nova Scotia. However, the Auditor General - maybe we'll listen to them - has noted that several provinces and jurisdictions have released long-term economic recovery plans to kick-start their economic recovery.

My question for the Premier: Considering that a long-term economic recovery plan would help regain the health of our economy, why does our province still not have one?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: To the member, we continue to go around this racetrack, and I continue to respond that we do have a plan. That plan for recovery is directly relatable to our plan for growth. It is tied to increase of local consumption of Nova Scotia products; to internet access and continuing that work; to supporting start-ups and the growth and efficiencies and existing businesses to a green economy; and ultimately, to Nova Scotians generally doing better in their pocketbooks.

[2:15 p.m.]

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated that she is on a racetrack. It's unfortunate that she's pretty well in last place. Do you know what British Columbia, Ontario, Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and the Yukon all have in common? Guess what? They have economic recovery plans.

Instead of addressing the Premier, I will ask the minister: Why are Nova Scotians still waiting for this plan from our government?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, to the member, if we look at the racetrack, coming off eight years of the previous government, we find ourselves truly with everything to come back from. We are at one of the lowest levels of GDP, we are at one of the lowest levels of household median incomes. We have everywhere to go upwards. Nova Scotians know it. That's why they're feeling optimistic. We are going to leverage their optimism and make things happen.

THE SPEAKER: This should be an interesting afternoon, I'm telling you. (Laughter)

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

LSI - FRONTLINE WORKERS: PAID SICK DAYS - RESTORE

KENDRA COOMBES: There is a racetrack on the Northside, if both of them want to run a race, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

My question is for the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration. Yesterday this House voted unanimously to move to a hybrid sitting to help protect elected officials and staff from COVID-19. In the media, the Premier said it's reasonable for any workplace to use technology to allow people to work remotely when it's possible - I'll table that. I agree.

For many workers, though, working remotely is simply impossible. For the last three months of the pandemic, we had an all-party agreement on a solution to protect these workers: paid sick days. But less than a week ago, the government withdrew that protection from those frontline workers. The Premier keeps saying that Nova Scotians know what to do to stay safe, but without paid sick days they don't have the tools they need.

With COVID-19 cases on the rise, will the minister commit to restore paid sick days, a crucial tool for frontline workers that they need to combat COVID-19?

HON. JILL BALSER: We know that COVID-19 is on the minds of all Nova Scotians, and although a decision hasn't been made yet to make paid sick leave permanent, we are engaged in national conversations on this important issue.

We want to thank Nova Scotians for continuing to do the right thing, and businesses for supporting their employees during a time when they needed to stay home. We put the temporary program in place when the Omicron variant was at a peak, and that is a tool that we can continue to use when we need to.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 is still rising and not only are paid sick days a crucial tool to keep frontline workers safe, they are also a relatively inexpensive tool. The government initially said the program would cost \$16 million a year - and I will table that. Staff at the Department of Labour, Skills and Management estimated it would cost as little as \$10 million - and I will table that. Numbers released by the government show it cost just \$1 million last year.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister agree to table all information on the cost and the number of employees who accessed the paid sick days program between January and March 2022?

JILL BALSER: That temporary program did end on March 31st. We are continuing to look at that data.

For anyone who did need to apply or is still looking to apply, that program is open for Nova Scotians to apply until the end of April, so we're still getting the information, we're still getting the data. I'd be happy to share that with the member once it's all here and in place.

We know how important this issue is and again, Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in national conversations. We want Nova Scotians to feel safe and healthy at work, and that is a priority for the department and our government, too.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DED - ECON. RECOV.: MISSING PGMS. - DISCUSS

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the minister's arm is sore from patting herself on the back, as well as the rest of the government. If we want to look at the GDP, I suggest that the minister take a look at her own budget on Page 57 and notice where their GDP is headed.

During the CTV debate in the past election, the Premier was asked about his plan for an economic recovery. The Premier said, "How we will do it is two things - the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee and Nova Scotia Loyal." I will table that.

Both of these programs are missing from the Premier's spending plan as Nova Scotians face a cost of living crisis. These programs were supposed to be the plan for growth. Where are they?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely true that we spoke of the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee. We also spoke of a commitment to work with business, recognizing that those in individual sectors and in the business community, indeed, know their business is the best.

What have businesses told the honourable Premier and me repeatedly? They need workers. They need talent. That access to talent will be one of the largest contributors to successful economies. We will deliver on that.

FRED TILLEY: We certainly do need talent and that talent needs to have a better paycheque. The Premier was so proud of these programs that he even put the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee on the front page. The minister talks about all of the consultation. We've consulted with many business organizations, and they are telling us they haven't heard a thing.

Mr. Speaker, he was so proud but he wasn't proud enough to put it in last week's spending plan while Nova Scotians face a cost of living crisis. I will ask the Premier or the minister: Was the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee just a sound bite to sway votes or is it going to be a real thing and when can Nova Scotians expect it in their pocketbooks?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Government is about choices. Perhaps some of the member's colleagues will have told him about that experience of being in government. The reality is that we can't do everything. We are on a fast track but we cannot do everything in our first budget, regrettably so.

We promised Nova Scotians that our number one priority would be health care and we have delivered on that. However, the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee is, again, a bold idea, as is the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades program, which we did deliver on, and which is going to help us to get that talent and labour force.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DED: ECON. DEV. COUNCIL REMOVAL - DISCUSS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, at cabinet outs on February 24th, the Minister of Economic Development stated "I'd hesitate to say we got rid of the Economic Growth Council" - and I will table that. My question for the Minister of Economic Development is: How else would she describe what took place with the Economic Growth Council?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: We have many boards and commissions and councils in this province, and they have a period of time - a life cycle. The life cycle of that Economic Growth Council was cut short by a new government with its own ideas and its own plans for economic recovery and growth.

KELLY REGAN: So in fact, they got rid of it. Mr. Speaker, on that very same day the minister stated “We didn’t take lightly the information and recommendations of the Economic Growth Council” - and I will table that. However, the Council was scrapped right before it was set to release its second round of recommendations.

This government can’t have it both ways. You can’t speak out of both sides of your face. You can’t fire the Economic Growth Council and value their work at the same time. So my question to the minister is: If this government values the work of the Economic Growth Council, why did your government scrap it?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, we are - many of us - raised to be respectful and polite toward those with whom we engage on a daily basis and so we did genuinely thank the members of the Council for their contributions. But frankly, our government had promised Nova Scotians a far bolder approach to economic recovery than was presented in that very early document and, frankly, waving around a giant pair of scissors was not our idea of a bold plan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DED: ECON. GROWTH COUNCIL RECOM. - REC'D

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, the Economic Growth Council was dissolved in September just before they were set to release their second round of recommendations to position the province for economic recovery through and post-COVID-19.

I would like to ask the Minister of Economic Development: What happened to these recommendations? Were they ever received by the minister, were they ever received by the Premier, or did they just dissolve like the council itself?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: We have all of the materials that were submitted to the date when the decision was made to thank - and I suppose you would call it excuse, I refuse to use the word “fired” - this was a council that was brought together, hand-selected by the former premier and I fully respect his choices of those to whom he turned for advice. Once again, I would underscore that our government is looking directly to businesses broadly based across this province, from the little Mom-and-Pop shop to the large CEOs, and they will help to work with us and guide all of our plans and policies.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I’ll just note that the CFIB and many other national organizations praised the creation of that Economic Growth Council at the time. The minister can use whatever euphemisms she wants. She doesn’t want to say “fired.” That’s fine, but we know what happened here. It’s a real shame, to be honest, that all that work by experts was just discarded at the earliest possible opportunity.

I want to ask the minister: Before the Economic Growth Council was disappeared, did the Premier or the minister even ask for that second set of recommendations or not?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Did we ask for the second set? I would say that in communicating the fulfillment of duties under that council, we made clear that we would welcome any materials. What we received did not include a final report. Was it that close to being finished? Did it not consist of very much? We don't know. Once again, we moved forward along our own path, a path that is supported by the electors of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: LYME DIS. - FUNDING

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Lyme disease is a growing issue in our province. By 2016, Nova Scotia reported the highest incidence rates in Canada - 13 times the national average. All of Nova Scotia now has a risk of Lyme disease and incidence rates continue to increase. Even with access to antibiotics, Lyme disease can have lifelong serious impacts and many people are left undiagnosed, a problem further compounded by physician shortages, especially in rural areas.

Will the minister explain how we are to address these issues with no specific funding to address Lyme disease in the health budget?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: In the Fall we were able to increase the scope of practice of pharmacists that allows them to assess people who feel they have been bitten by a tick and provide prophylactic medication in order to prevent Lyme disease. In addition to that, on a regular basis, Public Health does education programs with Pharmacare providers across the province to support them in their knowledge of assessing and treating Lyme disease.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that's an important part of the whole picture on Lyme disease. In 2019 the Progressive Conservatives, while in Opposition, introduced the Lyme Disease Strategy Act which aimed to bring various stakeholders together, including medical professionals and patient groups, in an effort to establish a province-wide uniform response to Lyme disease. This would be a great start and we know that we must also increase Lyme disease prevention efforts and support Nova Scotia-based research, an examination of global best practises on Lyme disease.

I'm wondering how the minister can create a Lyme disease strategy that does these things but without any funding to do it.

[2:30 p.m.]

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Just because there's no additional funding in the budget doesn't mean that everything else stops. There is work that happens in Public Health on an annual basis, and there have been a number of stakeholders that have been contacted. We will continue to work on the Lyme disease program as we have in the past.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DED: ECON. RECOV. PLAN - INFORM

FRED TILLEY: The minister a few moments ago talked about the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee being a bold idea. You know what? Ideas don't put money in people's paycheques. I think that that idea is going to stay there. It's not coming out. It's a big Progressive Conservative move to cut that program.

At cabinet outs on February 24th, the Minister of Economic Development stated that "we ran on a strong vision of economic recovery and economic growth. That's the plan we'll use going forward." Yet Nova Scotians have yet to see an economic recovery plan. What they have seen is record-high gas prices, a 30-year-high inflation rate, and soaring grocery costs.

My question to the Minister of Economic Development is simple: Is this the vision of economic recovery she's referring to?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: To the member: It is interesting, and I noted it the other evening in Estimates, when he referred to the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee as a great program, and he was wondering where it was. The other night it was a great program. Now it's an idea.

In terms of a vision, we know that others in this House have lacked the vision to move our province forward. Perhaps that is why they cannot understand the vision that is held by our government.

FRED TILLEY: I'll remind the minister that he is the member for Northside-Westmount. I'll remind her of that. Also, the economy was soaring under the previous Liberal government. I think the minister should really choose her words. Nova Scotia is watching, Minister. They're not enjoying these trite answers that you're giving. Anyway, I'm going to move on.

At the same cabinet outs, the minister stated that economic recovery plan is very public and if you go through any of the ministerial mandate letters, it can be found throughout.

I've gone through every ministerial mandate letter - I'll table all of them - and I still can't find the government's plan for economic recovery. In fact, economic recovery isn't mentioned once. Not once.

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

FRED TILLEY: My question for the Minister of Economic Development: If this government's economic recovery plan is very public, then why does the public have to wonder where it is?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I would feel terrible if Nova Scotians were feeling let down by these trite exchanges, because they are, after all, exchanges. The frank truth is that Nova Scotians are not looking for our recovery plan, because they are satisfied that we have described it for them, and they have expressed their confidence in us to deliver.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

DED: FUNDING CUTS TO ECON. DEV. - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: In February, business improvement districts across the province, representing over 4,000 downtown and main street businesses, wrote to the Premier and the minister asking for support as they continue to deal with the impacts of this pandemic. We know that small businesses, particularly in rural areas in our province, continue to struggle. As our Leader mentioned earlier, we are also seeing that some economists think that we're heading into a recession, yet despite these risks and these needs from the business community, this government actually cut close to \$60 million for economic development in this budget.

My question to the Premier is: If we're cutting our ability to invest in our economy and our businesses, how do we expect them to grow?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: First of all, I would respectfully disagree with the characterization that we are cutting. There is a reduction in the line item, which reflects in part reductions from enhanced spending, which I am not questioning the appropriateness of during the height of the pandemic.

That has changed, and we are careful that every dollar that we invest is in fact an investment with the expectation of a return. In the meantime, we have consulted with representatives of small-town chambers of commerce and large town chambers of commerce. What did they tell us they wanted? They wanted to be able to safely reopen and they wanted confidence for the public to be back in the marketplace. We have worked with them and Public Health to deliver.

ZACH CHURCHILL: If the Minister of Economic Development thinks that a safe reopening means soaring COVID-19 numbers, means a positivity rate of 30 per cent - the highest we've ever had - means over-capacity in our hospitals - does she really think this is a safe reopening for the people of this province?

This is a government that promised to fix our health care system and is not even working to protect our hospitals in the midst of our worst wave yet, when people are dying more than ever before. At this time when COVID-19 can impact our economy again, this government is cutting funding - or reducing it, whichever synonym the minister would like to use - for economic development. This is going to impact our rural economies and government's ability to respond. Why is this happening?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Thank you to my honourable colleague for jumping up and trying to be a meat shield for me, but I'm fine.

The honourable members continue to speak out of two sides of their mouths. On one hand, it sounds like you would like to lock the province down again, and on the other hand you're talking about support for business . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Economic Development has the floor.

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: In fact, we were consistently asked for a public confidence campaign. We launched it at the same time . . . (Interruption) It's out there. We can show you the media stats. We launched it alongside reminders of how Nova Scotians - what they already know, the ways to keep them safe as they head out again.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW: AMBULANCE DELAYS - ADDRESS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, our province has a long history of us using the expertise and the experience of paramedics. Paramedics bring knowledge. They bring comfort to people when they're in dire need, and often in life-threatening situations. Cumberland County and, from what I'm hearing, across Nova Scotia, is seeing a breakdown of our emergency health services. Whether it's misdirected calls of 911 to other provinces, whether it's burnout and lack of resources for our paramedics, whether it's our ambulances in Cumberland County all leaving to go to other areas of the province and none being available for our own people, the fact is this is not okay for people who call 911 and expect a prompt response.

Can the minister explain to Nova Scotians: When they call 911 and wait over one hour, what are they supposed to do?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We know that there are some significant staffing issues in our EHS system, and we have been working very hard since we came into government.

We have done a number of things. We have increased the patient transfer units and the multi-patient transfer unit. We do have a committee that represents the Department of Health and Wellness, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, paramedics, both the college and the union working very diligently to address some of the staffing issues. We have the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment. We continue to talk and listen to paramedics around the solutions that they feel would help.

What I would say is that when you call 911, you get a dispatcher who's very well trained, and you get immediate assistance during that time. That's when your emergency care starts.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the member, I'm going to stress again the use of phones in the Chamber during Question Period.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Dispatchers, I'm sure, are very good, but they cannot administer oxygen and life-saving medications when somebody is in the middle of a heart attack.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, people in this province and in my county have died unnecessarily because there has not been an ambulance available when they are having a life-threatening incident, and it is not okay. We need to see a plan. We cannot just continue. New stretchers are great, and I know our paramedics wanted those, but you need paramedics to use them. (Applause)

I'm very passionate about this because people are dying . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: We are here to be the voice of the people. We have to do better. Can the minister table for members of this House their plan for retention of these valuable health care professionals, paramedics, so that we don't continue to see gaps in service that are proving to be life-threatening?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure Nova Scotians, and I want to assure paramedics, that we will continue to work very hard on their behalf. We do have a world-class system. We know that there are staffing shortages, and we will continue to work diligently to correct them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DED: SMALL BUS. DEBT SUPP. - ADDRESS

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, the government likes to brag about the \$13 billion in their spending plan. I'll keep my question for the Premier simple and short: Of the \$13 billion, how many dollars are going towards supporting our small businesses that are struggling with debt to stay afloat in the cost of living crisis?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: To the member opposite: Remarkably, having come out of two days of Estimates questions, and now no longer toting that binder, I wish that question had been asked at that time.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: So without the notes, we don't have an answer for the last question. I'll thank the minister for that.

When answering a question about closing small businesses, the Minister of Economic Development stated, "We are ever mindful, and no one has to tell us that there are businesses that are holding on by their fingernails." I'll table that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we do have to tell the minister about our struggling small businesses because there isn't a cent for them in the government's spending plan. I ask the minister: When will our small businesses see more than just mindfulness from this government?

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I just want to make a couple of comments today. We hear that the economy is in bad shape, but I can tell you that in the month of February, one of the most important economic indicators - our rate of unemployment was at its lowest monthly level for the month of February than it has been. It's the third-lowest level that it's been since the early to mid-1970s.

Mr. Speaker, there are many opportunities out there for Nova Scotians right now. As a government, we want to make sure our economy keeps chugging along, but there are many opportunities out there for the public. I think the Opposition should take heart in that. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

LSI: GROWTH OF LBR. FORCE - ASSIST

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, yes, we have very little unemployment, but we have a big shortage of labour. Two out of three businesses believe the government must

play a bigger role in assisting businesses with finding employees during this labour shortage. I'll table that. Our province has the slowest-growing labour force in the country. I'll table that as well.

Can the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration share with the House what this government is doing to help grow our labour force?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, the immigration branch had such an exciting announcement at the end of 2021: Our population hit that one million mark and we are on a trajectory to get to two million by 2060.

Another thing that the department did was launch a marketing campaign to target the skilled labourers that we need from interprovincial migrants. Of course, our immigration streams are seeing records in terms of people choosing to come to Nova Scotia.

We're going to continue to work with businesses to make sure that they can find those workers that they need. In that marketing campaign, we've hired navigators to also make those points of contact. Those are critical people in the community to help local businesses. I just want to say that I had the opportunity to also talk to people and it's been really exciting just to hear about the fact that they want to move here. (Applause)

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: The business navigators were there before. There was nothing new in that.

Over half of the small businesses in Nova Scotia believe government is not doing enough in responding to the province's labour shortage. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration to give us real, new programs that they are working on.

JILL BALSER: The team of navigators under the Immigration Branch are a new team, but we know that word "navigator" is so important. Many different organizations in government have introduced roles like that because they play such an important piece in helping businesses find the workers they need.

Our team has been talking to folks who've been calling and asking questions about what it is like to live in the Annapolis Valley, Digby, and across the province anywhere. The team is doing significant work and we are seeing the population grow. We're going to continue to follow that trend.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DED: STRUGGLING RESTAURANTS - ADDRESS

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, the restaurant sector has had it extremely tough these last couple of years. Although we've opened up and removed restrictions, the latest poll indicates that times are still tough amidst our cost of living crisis. As we love our polls, I will table that.

Three-quarters of respondents have plans to cut spending and eat from restaurants less frequently. My question to the Minister of Economic Development is: What is this government's solution to support struggling restaurants?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Thank you to the member for the question. It is true that the restaurant sector has had one of the roughest rides through the pandemic and deserves a great deal of credit for how they have rolled with the punches.

We have already opened up immigration streams tied to positions within food service and restaurants, and we will continue. We have a very good working relationship with Restaurants Canada - worked with them on support programs that came into effect through the Winter months. That is how we will continue to work with them to get them through this - but restaurants are busy right now.

CARMAN KERR: Restaurants are busy, but many Nova Scotians can't afford to support these restaurants, due to the cost of living. With food costs skyrocketing, restaurants face a difficult choice: raise prices and lose customers, potentially, or maintain prices and lose their small profit margin, if they have one to begin with.

My question for the Minister of Economic Development is: How much more pressure must these small business owners face before they receive direct support from this government?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Our government has very much delivered on our commitment to work with and to speak openly and frankly with business. Now that most of the restrictions are lifted, the idea of - it would be interesting, what you are speaking of in terms of direct assistance, because I don't want to assume that I understand.

In terms of people going out to eat and whether they will have to cut back on their eating out, at this moment in time there is no evidence of that. We look forward to a robust tourism season to pick up after this pent-up Nova Scotian demand perhaps wanes.

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

DED: CONTINGENCY PLAN - ADDRESS

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, a contingency plan is wise. My question for the Minister of Economic Development is: Does this government have a contingency plan for businesses that may be impacted by COVID-19 once again?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Thank you to the member opposite. If we are being honest, collectively, we will all acknowledge there has been no playbook for COVID-19, so there must always be a contingency plan - a plan A, B, and C, and sometimes we get further into the alphabet.

Our plan absolutely resides with a continued, open dialogue with businesses. We cannot any more predict exactly what this virus will do. This virus doesn't care what we think. We will continue, though, to work with businesses, and we will be there for them, as and where needed.

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

We'll take a 10-minute recess.

[2:50 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:05 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: It was a couple of firsts during that Question Period - some of the back and forth.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 103.

Bill No. 103 - Youth Food Security Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: I'm very, very happy to speak to this elimination of youth food insecurity bill. I think this is a very important piece of legislation that has been put forward by our Leader and our party.

I believe that, as a former school board member, as are some others in the room, we all understand youth poverty in our respective regions and the idea that youth are not able to access the nutrition that they need in order to be successful in their academics. Also, as a former principal of the Nova Scotia Community College in Cape Breton, I was able to see the issues of food insecurity that adults are facing first-hand, and tough decisions that have to be made with the rising cost of food. It's a fact that our youth are so much more vulnerable. This bill would take into account those youth in the P-6 area.

It will complement our current plan, the breakfast programs, within the schools. Teachers will tell you that when students are coming to school, they're coming to school hungry, they're not able to focus, they're not able to learn as effectively as they would if they were full and had lots of nutrients. The important piece about this bill as well is the fact that it focuses on local foods. It focuses on locally produced foods, it focuses on providing healthy meals for students in order to get the energy and ability to learn effectively.

The fact that this bill is a province-wide bill is very important for the future of our province, given the fact that we really want to do our part to eliminate not only food insecurity among youth, but also to help to deal with the severe poverty that folks are facing. You picture a mom and a dad - inflation's at 5.7 per cent, costs are rising, they're not able to access the amount of food that they normally would for the family. Students and family members alike will have to go without. The fact that this bill will provide a safe and nutritious lunch for all students, I think, is very, very important. Beginning in January 2023, I think our students will certainly be in a much better position to access those things that they need.

Following Nova Scotia's Food Guide - currently, many students are not able to access meals. Sometimes the only meal they may get is the meal that they're provided at school. We all know this to be true, especially in some of our economically depressed areas - Cape Breton being one of them. I know in my riding, the food program at our local elementary school is very much appreciated by families in our community.

The fact that this would be a provincial government-run program would certainly eliminate any issues with providing the nutritious meals and the meals that will be effective for students to get the nutrients that they need - I think that's very important.

When we compare this program to other jurisdictions, like what P.E.I. put in place with the Poverty Elimination Act - at the end of the day, we'd like to see youth food insecurity get to zero.

There are many other pieces to this that are important, as well, to take some of that stress away from families to provide lunches. We all know that it's a very vulnerable time for students in the P-6 world. When the students head to school, they want to have what their peers are having. If Mum and Dad can't afford to provide them with those meals that they need to have, it's not only a physical drain but it's a drain on mental health as well. Given the fact that students will be able to access the same nutrition as their peers, I think, is what's really important for Nova Scotians.

Our schools provide amazing services and amazing supports for our students, and I think this Youth Food Security Act would go a long way to improve the levels of service that our students receive from our province. I think that school boards - or centres for education as they are referred to now - would be very welcoming of this program and the ability to improve their overall learning environment with students.

As I said, as a former school board member and witnessing a lot of the stories of how our own teachers, the staff at the schools, dip into their pockets to help students in need to provide things, I can give you an example. In my riding at Jubilee School, the crossing guard collects hats, gloves and mitts to hand out to the students. Our office has participated and provided all kinds of those products for the students - and to see the joy on their face when they're able to receive a brand new pair of mittens or gloves.

I think this program is a great complement to what we're doing in Nova Scotia right now with our breakfast program. Imagine a time when a student comes to school and has two wonderful, nutritious, healthy meals each day and is able to learn at the top of their game. I believe for those formative years, Primary to 6 years at school, this program is very important. I would urge our members on the government side to really take a look at this bill. I think it's an important bill for the future of our province, for the future of our children, to help fight food insecurity and to help fight poverty.

At the end of the day, this bill is about making things better for our communities. It's a really effective bill at doing that. Mr. Speaker, with those words I will end my time and thank you for your time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I stand proudly today to speak on this particular Youth Food Security Bill because anyone in this Chamber who has kids or who was a kid - which is everyone - knows the value of going to school with food in your belly. I mean, we take breaks often so we can have a snack, so we can think properly. It's no different

than children in school needing a little extra to kind of keep them going and keep them engaged.

[3:15 p.m.]

Anyone who has worked in the school system, as my colleague has said, or with families and youth in any capacity, knows how hard it is to learn or achieve on an empty stomach. This is why I am always fired up, because I always eat before I come back in here. I know that I need to have the energy to be engaged in the work that I do, right? That wasn't even an example.

My example is - which is why breakfast programs in communities are really important. I know that in my own community we had a breakfast program every morning, which the kids looked forward to because it took away that stigma of not having something. All the kids went together, they all grabbed a snack for breakfast or for lunch or their recess time - I don't know if that's still a thing - and they all went on the bus or they all got back to go to school together. It takes away that feeling of you don't have, or the impoverished feeling, right?

We know that having food, whether it's in schools or in programs, also helps with the engagement of young people, their education, learning and all of those pieces. It helps to build those relationships in which my colleague had said a number of teachers and a number of administrators, they come out of their pocket to do this work because it's not in the budget. We need to make it a point to put it in the budget, because our kids are our future.

According to Feed Nova Scotia, one in six households in our province is food-insecure. What is the meaning of food insecurity? The bottom line is that it means inadequate access to affordable, healthy food. Food insecurity has numerous contributing factors, including - and I'll cite what is in Feed Nova Scotia that I just tabled - systemic racism and oppression, precarious work and low wages, lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable child care, inadequate income assistance levels, inadequate disability support, mental and physical health challenges, and the increased costs of living.

To put it in perspective, our province has among the lowest levels of income support in Canada. According to the CCPA, in Nova Scotia the employment support and income assistance rates for a single parent with one child are the lowest in the country, providing 57 per cent of what's needed. What this effectively means is that if you are living on assistance in Nova Scotia, you are going to the food bank.

I know you've heard me say it before in this House but I will say it again: Food banks cannot be the solution to poverty. We love our food banks, absolutely. We appreciate the organizations and love the volunteers who run them because they do excellent jobs,

volunteering for no money but just to see happy faces and people's bellies filled. But reliance on food banks is not a long-term solution for our province.

Our caucus has spoken a lot in this House about the rising cost of food, and everybody knows this, so it's not a surprise. It's not like, you mean that what we paid \$3.00 for two years ago, we now pay \$8.00? We know - we see it out of our money that we pay at the grocery store.

The impact that this is having on our families, especially those low-income families, amid other financial pressures - the price tag on some grocery store items, as the Leader of our party had said earlier, is absolutely shocking. Even if you can afford it, it's shocking. As prices go up, Nova Scotians are falling behind. This is devastating for families who already experience food insecurity, and it means that more children are going without healthy meals at home and in school.

For years, the Nova Scotia NDP has been calling for a universal school food program. Frankly, it's hard to argue against the idea of providing free nutritious foods to kids in the places where they're learning. Indeed, you would be hard-pressed to find a member of this House who would disagree on the principle of this policy.

Why the debate? We believe that this kind of support for kids shouldn't stop after Grade 6. Absolutely not. It isn't as though food insecurity disappears when a young person reaches a certain age. It isn't as though their family's situation suddenly improves. The last time I checked, when kids get older they need more food, not less. My grocery bill went up much higher after I had under five than when I have teenagers and university students. I can tell you, it's a lot of money.

We aren't the only ones calling for a universal school food program. The Nova Scotia Advisory of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, made up of numerous community stakeholders, is hard at work keeping this issue on the policy agenda. Leading this effort is Nourish Nova Scotia, a non-profit that champions the right to healthy food and runs numerous school food and breakfast programs across our province. I would personally like to thank Nourish Nova Scotia for their indispensable role in supporting our youth, families, and local food producers. I know that they have done a number of programs within Halifax Needham, and we are truly grateful for that.

As the coalition has highlighted, and as the media has reported, Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program. This should be reason enough to get our act together - if not countrywide, at least in our small jurisdiction of one million people in Nova Scotia - a jurisdiction which, by the way, has one of the lowest minimum wages in the country. You may have heard us talk about that already.

Speaking of jobs, there are clear economic benefits to a universal school food program beyond the cost of saving to families. When done right, these programs also create

good jobs in our communities and support local agriculture. It's the kind of investment that goes directly to people who turn around and spend money on local businesses. It's a win-win for young people, their families, and our economy as a whole. Why not be innovative?

I want to say that innovation - as was said by our Minister of Economic Development - is doing things differently, the core of any strong economy, so why not invest in ourselves? I want to add to that. Why not invest in our youth, invest in our children, invest in our communities? Why stop at Grade 6? Why not implement a school food program that covers students from the moment they enter Primary or pre-Primary to the moment they graduate? Why not make this investment in a generation of learners during these formative years of their lives?

School is supposed to be a place where everyone is equal, but in order for that to be true, we have to address the inequality that exists outside of our schools and in our communities. With the cost of living on the rise, the need to do so is more urgent than ever.

School food programs are only one piece of this puzzle. Mind you, school should not be - as we've heard in this House before - the only place where children feel safe, warm, and fed. We have to see that people are housed adequately, safely, and affordably. We have to address the cost of energy. We have to make sure people have enough income to buy their groceries. School food as part of our comprehensive poverty elimination strategy can take us a long way towards where we need to be.

We can do this in Nova Scotia. We can do it right, and we can do it now. What are we waiting for?

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

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I appreciate the importance of the topic, and as members have already suggested, it is actually a national issue, not just a provincial issue.

Food security is an important part of social determinants of health, and an important element to the learning trajectory for students. As a teacher in a classroom for the last 23 years, I can attest to that first-hand.

As a government and as an education system, we recognize the value and importance of food security. We know that our schools, educators, and administrators are always on the lookout to ensure students are supported. If a student needs food in schools, schools will ensure they get the food. This speaks to the excellent relationships that schools build with students and their families.

When we talk about schools and parents, teachers and students, we are talking about families. It is a community. It takes a community to raise a child and it's never been truer than when you're talking about the education system. That's just the way it is.

In Nova Scotia, we have a universal school-based program that all students can access called the School Healthy Eating Program (SHEP). The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development worked very closely with Public Health on implementing SHEP. The program provides access to breakfasts and beverage programs in schools. In some schools, it also provides a lunch program.

At the federal level, there is an interest in a national food program, and staff at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are actively working to advance this file. As the member for Halifax Needham mentioned, this is a national program and it should be addressed all across the country.

As a government, we also know that we need to look at the file through the lens of departments such as the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Department of Agriculture.

A national food program for our schools is something that the minister intends to raise in the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada. It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, that I will not be supporting this bill.

AN. HON. MEMBER: Wow.

JOHN WHITE: Wow is right - it's been addressed. Thank you for your comments, though.

We know that our schools work closely with families and community groups to ensure food is provided in a meaningful way. One example of this is schools providing groceries for students to take home. Many schools also have free stores where students have access to food and other products as needed. I'll address more of that in a couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker, when I get through my notes.

If a family is experiencing food insecurity, they can contact 211 to access emergency food provided by Feed Nova Scotia, a program we just announced funding for again. During the pandemic, government worked closely with Feed Nova Scotia to ensure that food was available for students who are not able to access meals during school closures.

During that time, I was one of the teachers who was volunteering his time to deliver those meals, as many teachers in my school did. I'm sure members across the floor would say the same thing. As I said before, it takes a community to raise a child and teachers do stand up for that reason.

As the Minister of Community Services pointed out earlier in the House, resources are available for families who are experiencing food insecurity. Additionally, our government is committed to engaging students around healthy living and eating. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to updating the curriculum as it relates to healthy living and has already started the work.

They are prioritizing the education of high school students as it relates to healthy eating and cooking. The government has established \$2.1 million for a healthy schools grant, money which will fund initiatives for students' health and wellness.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a man of action. I might be a small guy, but I'm a guy of action. I do not sit around and talk. I do not suggest that you visit a particular homeless shelter. I go with action - as many teachers do, I would say. One such teacher is Lisa Roach at Oceanview Education Centre.

Lisa has an adopt-a-family program where she delivers toys that kids are asking for each Christmas. They do their fundraising through the school. The Grade 8 class fundraiser for it. She's empowering the students - not just parachuting in and doing the job. She's empowering students to take matters into their own hands. That is an important life lesson in teaching. That's what teachers do on a daily basis.

Vanessa MacDonald is at Tompkins Elementary. For years, Vanessa has been doing a hat and mitten tree. Every year it's set up in front of the school and the kids are proud to bring in their hats and mittens to provide kids with these needs. It's just the way things are done and the kids are proud of it. They stand next to the tree. They actually truly do enjoy doing this job.

Tanya Fifield is at Glace Bay High School. Last year, Tanya built the garden in the yard and the skilled trades program built the boxes for it and helped her lay out the plan. That food is being used in her food preparation course. It's a complete circle. It makes its way around and it works. Also, the nursing station in the school always has food on hand for the high school kids. There's never a shortage.

Recently retired Margot O'Leary had a pajama-rama program at our school to make sure that kids have pajamas at Christmastime to go through the Winter.

Actions speak louder than words, Mr. Speaker, and I want to address my challenge to visit a local homeless shelter.

I am going to speak about myself now. During the pandemic, I joined the Meals on Wheels program. With my students volunteering with me, we were delivering 55 meals three times a week to local seniors because seniors couldn't do it themselves. That's not just delivering a meal - that's checking in on somebody. That's actually taking kids with

you and showing them that they can help. That is closing the generation gap from a senior to the teenage years. That's an important lesson to learn.

[3:30 p.m.]

My youth group - Future Ready Youth Society - planted community gardens throughout Glace Bay, totally funded on our own. We also deliver the meals, as I said, and one other thing we do is we deliver to a homeless shelter on a regular basis. Not the particular one in Dartmouth, but one in Glace Bay - actually in Sydney. That's where we go and we deliver soap, shampoo, we deliver shirts, we deliver jackets, we deliver all kinds of goods for them to help them. Stuff that is thoughtful that helps people who are actually homeless. That's a lesson that kids need to learn and that's a lesson that's important. (Interruption) Sorry? Hmm, okay. I guess it wasn't important enough to say again.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here before you as a member of the Glace Bay Food Bank Board of Directors for the past eight years. I work closely with Feed Nova Scotia. Feed Nova Scotia can turn one dollar into \$14 worth of food. That is an important aspect. If you want to make a donation, make it there. That makes your money go further and they provide the schools with groceries. The Food Bank in Glace Bay provides the school with groceries. The Vince Ryan Hockey Tournament provides the school with cereal in the morning. There is enough cereal to go around through Glace Bay and all the family schools on a regular basis.

Look, I'm not arguing that this isn't an important matter that needs to be addressed but I have been assured by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development that this is going to be a national program and I trust that's where it will be.

I just want to leave you with this. I'll give a challenge. Let's see if any of the members over there can start a registered society to ensure its success after I'm long gone. For the last 20 years I have been providing 300 families with a Christmas grocery order. That's a frozen turkey right through to ice cream and apple pie, 15-pound bags of potatoes, carrots, turnip, and everything. (Applause)

We also, for the last four years, have been able to adopt 100 kids for toys, providing ten toys each, and we wrap every single toy. The last week before Christmas I'm at home in my office wrapping gifts for kids I don't even know. My girls' toys are wrapped the last day before Christmas; that's when they get done, again, year after year.

Mr. Speaker, I say that because it is not just me. I have an entire community supporting me. I have more teachers and students in that program than you can imagine. In fact, we only actually registered the society when I was teaching at Tompkins Elementary in Grade 5, because the kids wanted to have more impact on it.

That's what we do. That's how we teach: We teach by empowering. We teach by addressing the issues and showing the kids that they are not helpless in the situation. That's what's important and that's what teachers do on a regular basis.

Look, I'm not here to condemn the bill. The bill will be addressed, I am sure, at a future time. I have been assured that and I trust that, so today I will be speaking against your bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I was not planning on getting up to speak but I will just for a couple of minutes.

Look, the fact is that school food programs are used widely in the world and they are highly successful. Not only do they provide kids and students with nutritious meals where they may not be getting them, but they teach children about food - about where it comes from, about how to eat together as a group, about how to have conversations over a dinner table. These are actual skills that some people don't have and don't get in their homes, but in certain countries this is a value. This is a value of enjoying company, of enjoying conversation while eating food together.

Food is central to all cultures and central to the way decisions are made and the way that people organize around each other. Fundamentally, a school food program is not about making sure that every child is fed. Obviously, that has something to do with it, but it's much more than that.

The reason I want to get up and speak is because I think that all of us in this House would, obviously, honour the people in our communities who are running the food banks, who are running the Christmas hamper drives, who are doing that work, like the honourable member in his community. We all have folks like that doing that work in our communities. It's also important that the kids get involved in that stuff.

Last year we had a beautiful story of kids from John Martin Junior High in Dartmouth North who went down and brought food or did a bottle drive in their community to raise money for the homeless shelter, a temporary homeless shelter in Dartmouth North. It was extremely meaningful to those children and extremely meaningful for their teacher. It was a source of pride and that's really wonderful. I don't think anyone in this room would suggest that that is not worth celebrating and not worth acknowledging in this House.

Mr. Speaker, if we really want to teach our children about the issues, if we really want to show our children that we are working to change the levels of poverty in our province, if we really want to show our children how to be part of a functioning society where people do not have to make decisions between buying food for their children or

buying oil for their furnace or paying their power bill, then we need to do a bit more than running food banks and volunteering at them.

Yes, it's important - I'm not going to argue that charity is not important. However, system change is what's actually going to keep people from starving to death or dying because they don't have a home and they're sleeping rough. Yes, we need a school food program. Yes, we do. But we also need adequate wages in Nova Scotia. We need a minimum wage of \$15 today and we need a plan to get to a living wage tomorrow. We need to make sure that every person in this province is adequately housed.

We need to make sure that food banks go out of business. Food banks were never meant to be a solution to the food insecurity problem. They were meant to be a temporary measure and they've become this entity that we rely on and that we use to address - in a band-aid way - a serious issue of income inadequacy.

Again, Feed Nova Scotia has its head office in Dartmouth North. I am a big fan of Feed Nova Scotia, of course. I honour the work that they do, but I really cannot wait for a day when a government of Nova Scotia actually brings policies into place that puts Feed Nova Scotia out of business.

Getting back to the bill, school food programs are important for feeding kids and for teaching kids about food. I think that any food literacy that we can provide our children - whether we are millionaires or whether we are living on income assistance - is essential for good development, so I think this bill makes a lot of sense.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, there's a lot going on in the Legislature today, in the Chamber. I'm honoured to be here and to speak on this bill. I want to echo the sentiments that were started by the member for Dartmouth North in response to the member for Glace Bay-Dominion. I feel that everybody in this Chamber understands the effort that goes in by teachers, by volunteers, in order to make sure that our kids are getting the best start to their day, to having the best day possible.

I am a former educator myself. I was one of those teachers who brought granola bars and apples and juice packs into my classroom - at the high school level, at that. I was one of many who made sure that if there wasn't a formal breakfast program that was running in the school, that kids had a place to come in to get something to start their day or to maybe give them a bit of a peck in the middle of the day or in the afternoon.

The member for Glace Bay-Dominion talks about SHEP, which is a wonderful program, but from personal experience and from experience throughout my community that I now represent in Fairview-Clayton Park, I see the amount of effort that has to go into getting benefits from the SHEP program. There's a lot of fundraising that needs to take

place on the front end of it. Which is wonderful and if you have time to do that, it's something to be taking advantage of, but as the member for Glace Bay-Dominion and many of us know, teachers are already overworked, parents are already overworked. The amount of fundraising and the amount of work that goes in on top of your actual teaching doesn't necessarily allow for this.

What this bill is trying to do is to alleviate some of those stresses, some of that front-end work to fill a basic need to our kids to start another day. We're starting with elementary age. The member for Halifax Needham said it point-blank: You need to start your day off right. You need food for fuel, especially when your mind is developing, especially when you're getting used to being in a structured environment like you are in the early elementary grades.

This is something that is going to give that permanency. It's not going to be something that you have to depend on other factors in order to get. This is going to be just like breathing air. You know the money is here. You know these programs are going to be able to roll out in all of our schools. Our kids are going to get a good start. All of that other effort that's been talked about can be going towards other things.

I'll speak to my community in Fairview-Clayton Park. We have a number of great breakfast programs that are run through volunteers and through teachers who give of their time.

The biggest one that I can think of off the top of my head is at École Burton Ettinger Elementary school and a former teacher, Pam Carter, who ran this program for a number of years. She would make sure that those kids had the best possible start. This was not just juice boxes and granola bars. It was pancakes, it was eggs, it was cheese - full on. She would do the purchasing; she would plan the meals. Even though she retired a number of years ago she still runs that program. She still helps facilitate the program. She comes back and she does the purchasing for the program. This is all because she truly understands and believes that those kids need to have that sustenance at the start of their day in order to be able to go forth and learn.

I know at Mount Saint Vincent University, another school in my riding, the students in the nutrition program help the various breakfast programs. They go in and they do volunteer hours to help run these programs and help establish the ones that aren't there.

Just imagine what could be accomplished if the worry of the funding of these programs was taken off their plate. Again, this is what this bill is meant to address. It's not to stop teaching kids about how to do any of the things, how to do it for themselves, how to learn; not to stop kids from learning how to socialize or how to be a part of a meal the way that the member for Dartmouth North rightfully said is an important part of a breakfast program.

This is the funding piece so that you don't have to worry about that. You can actually put your efforts into all of these things. To speak against the bill or to say that it's going to come back or it's going to be revisited at some point, I don't really get to understand that completely. But that's okay because this is a conversation that needs to be continued and there needs to be action that's taken on it.

I feel like all of us in this Chamber realize that this is important, this is something that is necessary for our kids' well-being. I think that we could even be so bold as to say that it's something that should continue on into later grades. As I've said, my personal experience is with those older students who sometimes even have more difficult experiences and challenges that prevent them from having the nutrition that they need to start their day or having it throughout the day.

You know, it's hard to understand where there would be a disconnect on this. It's hard to understand how anybody would be in disagreement with this in one way or another. Now this is packaged as an Opposition bill. This is something that we're bringing forward, but it's something that I implore the government - if it's not this bill - you don't want to have this be a bill that you move forward - I understand that. I know how this works, but it's something that really needs to be addressed and needs to be looked at.

The food insecurity issues that we have in this province are getting worse. I agree with the member for Dartmouth North: We need to get to a point where we don't need food banks or we don't need to rely on generosity or volunteerism, that people can actually do for themselves - not to paraphrase her. I'm sorry if I didn't get that integrally right.

But we need a fix right now. We need to have a piece to it right now that moves us forward, that gives our kids the start they need, that alleviates some of the stressors that are on parents, that are on teachers, that are on volunteers, that are on people in the community. I believe that this bill does that.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture estimates that as much as 92 per cent of our food is imported from beyond our borders. This bill addresses that. This bill allows that our food system can replace some of that necessity, some of the food that is consumed from outside of our borders. We shouldn't be dependent on what's happening in the outside world. We should be focused on the locally grown food producers. This bill ties in with that. It allows us to focus on them, to help that, to help these industries.

I want to close by giving a shout-out to the teachers and the volunteers and the people who are out there who are already doing so much for our kids when they start their day. I really hope that we'll be able to find some resolution to alleviate some of the stressors that they have in getting that done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North, with 20 minutes to go.

[3:45 p.m.]

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: The members across the way - I used to be with their party - they know that this is a very important topic. I know that they know that it's a very important topic to the families, to the people here in Nova Scotia.

In a perfect world, I think every one of us would love to see every family be able to have enough food in their homes to be able to send their children off to school every day with a full belly and pack them a beautiful, healthy, well-balanced, nutritious lunch with a nice balance of protein and carbs and fats. We all want that. Every one of us here in this Chamber wants every child of every family in this province to be able to have that luxury. It shouldn't be a luxury. It should be what every family experiences day to day.

But we don't live in a perfect world. We don't live in this utopia. We have seen, in the last number of years and decades, this increased reliance on all these stopgap measures in an attempt to help provide healthy, nutritious food to our children.

In a perfect world - since we're talking about utopia - each one of us could stand in here freely and speak like I am able to as an Independent and not worry about which team I'm on, but just speak freely about what the needs of the people are, what the needs of, most importantly, the children of the people we serve are.

I honestly believe that the only reason some people are saying no to this bill is because it was tabled by somebody on the other side. In a perfect utopian world, we'd all be on the same team. Wouldn't that be awesome if we were all on the same team?

I look at some places - I've studied democracy a lot since June 24th, and I've learned that when democracy first started, there was no such thing as parties. Everyone was voted in by their people as an Independent, and their sole goal was to serve the people who elected them. It wasn't until a few years later on in England when parties developed, and that sort of back and forth.

I think sometimes we think that our job in here is to entertain and to fulfill this type of stereotype that the media love and play into. They're always looking for that adversity and who's fighting with who, back and forth, when, ultimately, I believe the very heart of each one of us in this Chamber made a decision to put our name on the ballot and to serve the people because we want to see change. We want to see improvements and changes in our communities. This is just such a great example of who wouldn't want to see children be better fed and have access to consistent, proper nutrition. I have to believe that every single person in this Chamber wants that and would want that.

This may be an opportunity for us to create an all-party committee. Wouldn't it be awesome if all of our work could be collaborative, and truly with the intention, and with the desire about accomplishing what's better for the people, as opposed to who's going to

get credit for something - whether it started ten years ago, eight years ago, or last year - or worrying about what the media might say - but rather focusing on what is the core foundation of why we're here? The core foundation of why we're here is to do good for the people who elected us and for the people of Nova Scotia.

Let's talk about our youth. Let's talk about our babies, our children, who are going off to school. Many of my friends and even family are teachers. When I hear the stories about some of the lunches or lack of lunches, that some of these poor, dear babies are coming to school with - pieces of crust folded over with ketchup inside, fruit roll-ups - just not in any way food that is going to help them to learn and grow into healthy, strong, and mature adults. There's no question, I think each one of us here in the Chamber would all agree on one thing: that our children deserve better. Our children deserve to be fed healthy food each and every day.

We all see in our communities some of the stopgap measures. In my community of Cumberland North, we have food banks like most of you do. We have breakfast programs that are sort of piecemeal. Every school that you go to, they're a little different. They're funded by different organizations, such as the Rotary Club or the Lions Club or different church organizations. Thank gosh for those volunteers.

There's an After the Bell program in one of our schools. A group of organizers literally sent home grocery bags of food with some children because they know they would not have food on the weekends if they didn't have that. I remember one of my constituents during the campaign was looking at how we can make sure that people in the community have food. We started a take-what-you-need, leave-what-you-can food pantry. There's food in it each and every day, and a child or adult - anyone - could come along, just open the cupboard, and take what they need.

We know there's a need. We know there are lots of stopgap measures. One of the best ways that we can create change sometimes is by looking at other places that are doing a better job than us. We all know, and I know the colleagues across the floor know, about what an incredible job Prince Edward Island is doing with their school lunch program.

Probably about two years ago, I had a meeting with the person who started that school lunch program and found out all of the details about how they did it. Basically, Premier King was elected and said, we're going to do this. He took one of the existing people, so it didn't cost any more money that way, working in government - I think it was in their Department of Agriculture - and said, I want this. I think he said it was July. The Premier said I want this to happen when school starts in September. This person had basically two months to roll out a school lunch program for the entire province of Prince Edward Island. You know what? He did it.

He did it because he was given a budget, and he was given a timeline, and he was given a clear directive. He only had two people working with him, and they also were part

of government already. I think he had a nutritionist and a chef to come up with the recipes and make sure that the recipes had the proper nutritional content. When I asked him what the obstacles were, what some of the challenges were in rolling out the province-wide school lunch program, he talked about the data, the database. They actually hired a Nova Scotia company to create the software. He said there were some kinks. It took them a while to get it exactly how they wanted it, but they were able to. So he actually even suggested a Nova Scotia company. Why don't you use the same software? We've got it working the way it should.

In this software, they basically allow every student to be registered. They have it set up so teachers can do the order. The parents send in the order and the teachers input the information. Basically, we don't have to reinvent the wheel. The work's been done as far as laying out the infrastructure and foundation of how to roll out a very effective, strong, good school lunch program with our neighbours.

You'll hear me talk more about this, but I feel very strongly that Atlantic Canada is too small a region to be all working in isolation. We need to work together, and this is a great example of where we could reach across the way and talk to Premier King and his team in P.E.I. and ask for help to do the same thing here in Nova Scotia, so that we know each one of our children who want school lunch can have access to it.

We don't need to reinvent the wheel. I know we already have in Cumberland County a non-profit organization that provides all the cafeteria services in our schools. It's called the Cumberland School Society. We have actually offered the government to be a pilot site. Any time you start something like this, you have to have a governance structure in place, and you have to have that infrastructure, which we already have in Cumberland County.

The only thing we really need is the will and the desire to do that. In the Fall session of the Legislature, I put forth a Notice of Motion about this very thing, and unfortunately - or fortunately - I believe everyone in the House voted yes except for one person, so it did get voted down because it had to be unanimous consent. I'm hoping that this government will reconsider.

At the forefront of all of our decisions, we always have to sort of put our ego aside, put the games and teams aside and always focus on the number one issue: What are we trying to accomplish? That is to make sure that we're making the decisions in the best interests of our children, of the adults, of our families, of our communities here in this Legislature and make sure that we're not ever letting any obstacles, such as ourselves, get in the way of making the best decisions for the people.

I do definitely support this bill. I love to see it; I hope that it helps drive this very important topic to create some positive change here in our province.

[4:00 p.m.]

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to rise but the member for Cumberland North, our Independent member, said some things that really, really stuck with me. One of them was - as well as the member for Dartmouth North - talking about food.

We've talked a lot about food insecurity in our caucus and in the session. One of the things I've also discussed here is the fact that healthy food is more expensive than food that is not healthy, that is not of good nutritious value. When you are a family who lives low-income or below the poverty line, it is really hard to send your child to school with a healthy lunch.

It is actually almost impossible, because it is cheaper for a family to buy the foods that are not as nutritious, because they can feed the most people within the family. For some kids, school programs like the lunch program are the only time that a child may receive a healthy, nutritious meal. We all know nutrition equals success in the classroom. A child can't learn when they are hungry.

I'm hearing from the members across and I'm actually getting really tired of it, Mr. Speaker. I'm tired of hearing the Conservative government argue that the issues that . . . (Interruption) You can't be progressive, Mr. Speaker, if you are not using progressive programs.

They argue the issues are national, as if that absolves us in this House of our responsibility. It doesn't. I've heard it several times in this House over this session: oh, well, it's national, it's international. These are international problems of food insecurity, of low wages, of poverty - as if that absolves us of our collective responsibility. It doesn't.

To say that food insecurity is a national problem while we wait for a national solution is ridiculous. We don't have to wait for the federal government to get their act together to start a national food program. We have a provincial government with a provincial budget, where we can put that in the budget. We don't have to wait for the feds. We don't have to wait for their money so that the government can actually say, look what we did, we created a food program for students. Yes, with national money you created it, but you didn't create it with your own.

When we're talking about our youth and we are talking about food security for our youth, looking at these programs - yes, they are stopgap programs. But at this point, when obviously there is no appetite on this government's behalf to raise wages to living wages . . . (Interruption) I heard a member say to ask the CCAs. The CCAs had to campaign, had to shame the government in October to actually get their wages. I know because I was there.

As I was saying, with no appetite to raise wages to living wages, it seems, and with no appetite to really do the work to eliminate poverty - because if you're going to do the work to eliminate poverty, you are going to have a substantial strategy - without having all of that, a youth lunch program to coincide with the program for breakfast is a good idea. It is a program that needs to be implemented so that our children can learn. It helps. When our children learn, when they are sitting in those classrooms and they are actually learning because they are not focused on the fact that their stomachs are growling, they are going to actually absorb the knowledge that their teachers are bestowing upon them.

With that, I think this is a great idea. I'm going to leave it with the fact that food banks are not grocery stores and we should not be relying on them as such.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care, with one minute and 20 seconds left.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that when children watch this session of the Legislature is - we talk about wanting them to see us treat each other with respect. There is nothing more important to each of us than our name. If you started calling me Barb or Barbie, it's going to offend me. My name is Barbara, and I expect to be called such.

The name of our party is the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia and for any person in this Chamber who can't remember that, there is a sheet of paper right here with it written right across the top. It's got the number 31 there, right beside it. There are a whole lot of Nova Scotians on August 17th who put a tick right beside our name.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I've got about 14 seconds left. The only thing I would say in the debate is that I appreciate everybody's comments. I know that this matters to everyone. The only thing I would bring to it is that a lot of the work's been done on the lunch program in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. It's there . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time for debate on Bill No. 103 has expired.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 116.

Bill No. 116 - Emergency Management Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm honoured to rise in my place to talk a bit about this bill and provide a little bit of history that you would know, Mr. Speaker, from some of the more challenging times that we've had in the CBRM and watching some of the natural events that we've seen across the province.

With this bill, essentially what we're asking for is that government act as quickly as possible to provide assistance on the ground in the event of a storm, natural event or disaster that can affect communities. I really wanted to get up on this one because I want to talk a bit about the experience that I had during the 2016 flood in Sydney. I'm actually happy my colleague is here with me. He was the Minister of Municipal Affairs at the time, the member for Yarmouth. It was devastating.

We've seen events since then, but I go to my time in Sydney when we saw homes destroyed, we saw families lose everything, we saw a record amount of rain in an eight-hour period that pretty much wiped out a huge section of our city. It wiped out one of our schools, it wiped out municipal infrastructure, and ultimately a lot of families lost everything they owned during that time.

I do want to thank, not only for that event but for every event - I had the privilege of being minister of that department as well and working with the good folks at Municipal Affairs and the staff in EMO. They left their families for weeks to come down and support families on the ground. They worked through disaster financial assistance applications for residents across the greater CBRM and beyond. I believe we had around 1,150 applications in total. I think 750-plus received support through that program at the time.

I do want to give a huge shout-out to them because of what they're trying to coordinate, not only for supporting families on the financial side, but coordinating with the RCMP, coordinating with all the first responders, the work they do over in Dartmouth - it's pretty amazing stuff. They go above and beyond to make sure that Nova Scotians are looked after and they do whatever they can to protect them. I want to thank them.

Some of the rationale around this bill is based on what I saw in 2016 and the response compared to the response timeline this past year with the major event. I have a number of documents to table, but essentially what we looked at in 2018, it was immediate. When the disaster happened, we were on the ground that day, really, with first responders trying to assess what was needed to support families.

One of the things that happened, what we realized immediately is that we needed to get resources on the ground. Within 48 hours - with the help of my colleague here - we had over \$500,000 on the ground, working with the United Way, to feed people.

That was very important and a huge shout-out to the folks from the United Way and the Salvation Army who are just saints at any event that happens on the Island; they really support a lot of families. But that money was out the door almost immediately. The

Premier came down - at the time Premier McNeil - and the member for Yarmouth came down the next day and we did an assessment. So the money was out the door.

If you look at the application process for Disaster Financial Assistance - and that's tied to the federal government as well - we had that application ready in a week. People were applying for that very quickly in 2016. We had the \$500,000 on the ground within two days, we had the applications open, and I can table some of this stuff - a news release from 2016, the flood happened on Thanksgiving weekend, and on October 16th our first release of Disaster Financial Assistance program funds to help with damages. The decision was made almost immediately. That was on top of the \$500,000 that we put on the ground right away.

On October 14, 2016, which was pretty much - if I go back and look at my dates - was probably 24 to 48 hours afterwards, that's when we announced the \$500,000. I'll table that as well. The Premier and the member for Yarmouth were involved with getting the money on the ground. October 20, 2016 is when we decided to waive the Disaster Financial Assistance deductible. Because of my colleague here, the member for Yarmouth, that was done four days after the event.

I can table some other documents. We were making decisions to buy homes within about five weeks. Again, another press release I can table, on October 14th: "Nova Scotia gives \$500,000 in immediate flood aid to storm-ravaged Cape Breton." Really, the narrative that I'm providing here is that time matters in these events. It matters especially for elected representatives when they're being inundated with families. I can appreciate the event that took place here just before the new year. I had conversations with the member for Antigonish and she worked tirelessly on it.

For me, with this bill, it really solidifies getting that money on the ground faster, because when I started looking at the timeline between the events that took place, it was well over a month before they announced the financial package. That would have been the same in northern Cape Breton as well. I don't want to take away - there were some really good volunteers. They had the roads washed out and people were shipping food. So it's not a reflection of that. Really, for me what it is is that we knew and we saw right away the importance of getting that money on the ground within the first 72 hours to feed people. Everybody knows when you flood out like that, you just lose everything.

People just don't know where to go. These organizations immediately need the assistance. That's really the justification of why we think this bill is important. I think that we need to solidify that part of the process in place so the government reacts. All of our first responders always react, our volunteer fire departments, our Salvation Army, United Way. I look at the member for Glace Bay-Dominion, the Volunteer Fire Department in Glace Bay. He was part of that flood as well, so he knows the damage that took place in his area. All of those people are ready at a moment's notice and our communities would be lost without them.

[4:15 p.m.]

The government needs to be able to react quickly, too. When Premier McNeil and the member for Yarmouth and the former member for Glace Bay-Dominion did the tour - Minister Goodale came down days later, did the tour - we got this money out the door fast because we knew people had to eat. We knew that we had single families that lost their apartments that needed a place to stay. My concern was - when I saw the event in this past year - not the work on the ground, not the volunteers, not the people, not the organizations, it was the timeline for the response. There should have been money on the ground within 72 hours. There should have been.

I think the Disaster Financial Assistance should have been released before a month. It's not about we did this and you did that. I'm just going on timelines. It could have been faster.

I think this legislation doesn't set EMO or set the volunteers, as I said. It just gives government a target that says that within 72 hours, this is what we're doing in the event of a disaster, whether it's based on the weather or anything else. It's important to put that timeline on and get that money into those communities.

Again, I have a few other documents to table here. It was December 13, 2021 - and I'll table it - when the first announcement went out for Disaster Financial Assistance from the storm, which was a month. It was a month from the storm. I'll table that as well.

Again, I have some other documents to table here. I'll just table this for people's historical references. We were making decisions very quickly back in 2016. We made the decision to buy 18 homes, really, within a month and about two weeks from the time of the flood in 2016. Again, I'll table for the House - this is the program to provide Nova Scotians with up to \$200,000 in disaster relief to cover uninsured storm damage. Again, that was December 13th. That was about a month and a bit beyond the storm that took place in November.

I'll take the last few minutes just to say that people work extremely hard when these events happen, but ultimately, they are waiting for decisions of government to allocate resources. This bill, in the event of any situation that happens in communities, at least the communities know that there is money coming. At least as government you know that within 72 hours, this is what we know is going to happen.

Then you build those relationships with all of the organizations that can help distribute that money. That's why we used the United Way, particularly in the flood in 2018. It was an organization that could actually take that money and flow it into a way that was transparent, that got the money out to families as quickly as possible. We used the Salvation Army for a lot of the other services as well.

I'll finish off by saying that this is an important bill. I think it sets some parameters around what you need to get done in the first few hours in an event, when communities are in crisis and families are at a point when they are really lost in trying to figure out what the next step is going to be. This allows you to build those relationships with organizations so you can set up what you need to within those 72 hours to get that money on the ground. Ultimately, that's the easiest decision government can make in this.

Disaster Financial Assistance is a process. People need to apply. We could talk for hours about that. We need insurance and overland water insurance and this kind of insurance and that. I went through 1,100 applications for it. That's always a fight for elected representatives to support their communities.

I do know that based on the time that we went through it in CBRM, based on how fast he moved with the department, the member for Yarmouth, when we needed him, how fast Premier McNeil came into town - having those relationships with the United Way, having those relationships with people, we were able to flow the money very quickly. Time matters, that's for sure.

Mr. Speaker, I'll leave it there. I'll stop in my last two minutes to again recognize EMO, recognize our volunteer firefighters, all of our first responders, our utility people, everybody who has to go out in the worst of it when this happens to protect all of us. We all can't thank them enough. We ask so much of them every day.

I think this is an important bill to show people in the community that if a disaster happens, the government is going to move quickly.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: To the member for Sydney-Membertou, I remember the flood and I remember the conversations we all had. I was just about to be elected to council at that time and I got a trial not by fire but by water. The member for Sydney-Membertou had lots of conversations with the CBRM council that I was on at that time with this and did work extremely hard and continued to keep the communication open.

Before I start talking about other things, I want to talk about the communication aspect. The communication that we had in the CBRM during the storms after that event - municipal, provincial, and federal - was really productive in assessing what supports were going to be needed. I want to thank the member for Sydney-Membertou for, at that time, always leading the way on those aspects.

In recent years the flooding and the damage these floods have caused has become almost a fact of life for the residents of Cape Breton. It's almost now where any time it rains, people are wondering if their basement is going to flood and when. Some are preparing for those floods to occur. That 2016 Thanksgiving weekend storm that the

member for Sydney-Membertou referenced - as he said, there are hundreds of houses and other buildings that were impacted by the downpour. Over 100 millimetres of rain and in some areas, 200 millimetres of rain that caused the Wash Brook in Sydney to overflow. There was so much flooding in many areas.

The then-minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office, the member for Yarmouth, estimated the cost of these floods in Cape Breton to exceed \$15 million, and I will table that. That's \$15 million in all the damages.

The November 2021 storm caused flooding in downtown Sydney again, in Ashby and in the South End. In my own riding of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, areas of Whitney Pier had flooding. Areas within South Bar, New Victoria, Victoria Mines, Scotchtown, River Ryan, Lingan, and New Waterford had received significant flooding as did Gardiner Mines and Reserve Mines. As well, areas in Sydney like Tanglewood also had severe flooding.

These significant downpours that have been affecting Cape Breton have really impacted and have devastated a lot of people. It is devastating when your constituents call you and they tell you, I just lost my whole freezer full of food; my basement, because the power went out, the sump pump went in my basement, and the water has risen past the stairs; I'm scared that my upstairs is going to be floating next.

This is becoming a very normal thing to hear in our offices. It shouldn't have to be. It shouldn't be. But we are hearing it. A lot of the times, what is happening, what's causing some of these problems, is infrastructure, underground infrastructure that is failing. That infrastructure that's failing is oftentimes - most times, all the time - owned by municipal units.

Many municipal units can't afford the upgrade, so you have a small pipe going into a large pipe going into a small pipe. The underground infrastructure can't handle it, and then you start seeing water coming up off the road. It has nowhere to go, and it's flowing down the streets. People in their homes are looking, and they know it's coming right to my house - it's going to be in my basement within the next hour, what I'm seeing on the streets.

I know the former municipal colleagues who are in this room, most of them have experienced this situation in their own municipal units of their infrastructure failing because they just can't afford the upkeep of it. It's not the municipality's fault. The fault comes from lack of funding and that lack of funding leads to these types of disasters that we have seen.

These storms have forced many people from their homes and are more than just "typical Maritime weather." They are a sign that our climate is changing. We know from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that these types of weather events are going to become more frequent.

In Nova Scotia, 70 per cent of our population lives along 13,300 kilometres of coastline and is especially vulnerable to rising sea levels and flooding. When the NDP were in government - happy days - every municipality was required to create a climate action plan. Many, however, have been unable to take action on that plan due to, as I said before, a lack of funding and coordination from the province.

This was a major concern when I was on CBRM Council, and it still is a concern within the CBRM Council, who are working on a plan to minimize future damage and hardship endured by the residents from flooding. The main issue is that the money isn't there - or as the member for Sydney-Membertou said, it isn't there soon enough.

It's critical that our communities are equipped to protect residents from the impacts of climate change. That's why last Spring I introduced legislation to create a local action on climate change fund, Mr. Speaker. This would directly assist municipalities with planning and infrastructure needs.

As Frankie MacDonald says, be prepared. But are we really prepared for the extreme weather that's in store for us? By the way, a shout-out to Frankie if he's watching this, but I'm sure he's watching the weather. It is an important time to be looking at our Emergency Management Act and the question of disaster relief. We've got to meet the reality of global warming head-on. Municipalities can't go it alone.

Some areas have modernized their emergency management legislation. British Columbia did in 2021 by strengthening the province's ability to respond effectively to pandemics, floods, wildfires, and other disasters. They included new standards and best practices as well as guidelines concerning Indigenous communities - and I will table that.

In an opinion piece last Fall, public policy student Eric Bowdrige stated it bluntly: "If B.C. was prepared on paper for disaster, then Nova Scotia's official state of readiness is a veritable dumpster fire." Those are harsh words - our preparedness is a dumpster fire - but I don't think he's wrong. That is not a criticism of anyone, but we do need to be prepared. I'll table that.

He goes on to explain that in 2016, our province's Auditor General found that Nova Scotia had not met its responsibilities for the National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure. We have an Emergency Management Act that has not been updated in eight years, and yet we have yet to see a plan from the Emergency Management Office that addresses the Auditor General's concerns.

What's exactly in our province's plan? When are we going to hear about it, Mr. Speaker? Our tax dollars are funding the province's emergency response efforts and Nova Scotians deserve accountability. Where is the foresight from government that has not added a single dollar to the budget for Emergency Management Office, and in fact cut funding from this office? The dumpster fire is burning on.

The cost is real. Every time there's heavy rain, people are left to deal with the floods in their basements or worse, significant damage bills, and in some cases, displacement from their homes, and the patchwork of relief is woefully inadequate.

I will also say this: I have people in my community who have PTSD from the flooding from the rain. I have people in my community who cannot sleep when it's raining because of what they experienced from that October 2016 onward. I have people in my community who cannot get insurance because they've had too much water damage. We need a plan that anticipates disasters and prepares our communities before they happen, not one that's based on mopping up damage when it's too late. However, I will agree that when damage has been done, a stringent timeline for relief is much-needed.

We have to remember the impacts of extreme weather are not felt equally. When thinking about climate change mitigation adaptation, we have to focus on things like affordable housing, food security, and reducing poverty. If we don't take this approach, the inequality in our province will be exacerbated every time another storm hits. It shouldn't just be those with means who can afford to prepare their homes and shoulder the cost of repairs, and it shouldn't come down to where you live.

For example, the residents of Indian Gardens Trailer Park in Antigonish who - I'm sure the member opposite for Antigonish remembers this quite well - had to be evacuated from their homes last November, some of them by boat. From those in the CBRM, we understand that quite well, and our hearts were heavy when we saw that, and our hearts were heavy with understanding what the member representing Antigonish was going through.

Not everyone can afford to relocate to higher ground or buy a more weather-resistant home, especially not during the current housing crisis where for many, it is impossible to find housing, period. We need a plan that protects everybody in the province, a plan that takes the reality of climate change seriously, where we can look toward the future, not with fear and anxiety, but with hope and confidence.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, and I will, again, thank the member for Sydney-Membertou for bringing this forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I'll be brief with my remarks, but I would like to speak to this proposed amendment that would require the department to respond to applications for financial assistance within the 72 hours, whenever financial relief program is initiated, in response to natural disasters. Nova Scotia EMO has a dedicated team that works with federal government and non-government organizations such as the Red Cross and other partners to provide timely response to Nova Scotians when disasters occur.

The announcement of a disaster relief program depends on a number of factors, including the nature, duration, severity of the event, and kinds of damage sustained. It takes time for property owners to assess their damage and submit a Disaster Financial Assistance application. In many cases, contact with disaster relief program applicants is within 72 hours of submission of these claims.

When storms like the heavy rainfall we experienced in late November happen, Nova Scotia's Emergency Management Office is prepared and ready to respond. We know when Nova Scotians are dealing with flooding and other damage to their homes and businesses, they are worried and looking to us for help. Providing timely response to Nova Scotians when they need our help is critical, no question. It's our focus. It always needs to be the right response for the situation.

We work closely with our municipal, federal, and other partners such as the Red Cross and 211 to provide prompt and appropriate support for Nova Scotians in their time of need. Many factors come into play when it comes to announcing disaster relief programs, not the least of which include the nature, duration, and severity of the event in question.

We also need to look at the kinds of damage incurred and the time that may be needed for the property owners to assess their damage and submit applications. When a disaster financial relief program is announced, our dedicated staff, who are subject matter experts in administering disaster relief assistance, are prepared to respond in a timely manner - and often it is within the 72 hours.

Let's look at the track record for a minute of the prior government. We spoke so much about the flood of 2016. I would like to speak a little bit about the one in 2019, which wasn't that long ago. I'll take us back, and it was such a big event. In fact, it had a name - it was called Dorian. We had a storm so large that we named it. That was in September 2019, and it took until December 2019 to actually make an announcement of funding, three months after the storm occurred. That did not open until January 8th.

Enacting this legislation is simply unnecessary. Each event takes time, with careful consideration, which could impact the response in other areas. For this reason, we will not be supporting the amendment.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: This bill is a pragmatic bill. It will require the government to respond to applications for disaster relief within 72 hours - three days. As we heard just now, many of the times the applications are responded to within that time, so I'm not sure why the commitment is not able to be made by approving this bill.

During times of emergencies, families and small businesses can't wait weeks or months to find out if they'll be receiving support from the government. Every day spent, as we know, waiting for financial assistance is time spent worrying while potentially those displaced from their homes or their businesses cannot open the doors, waiting for this funding.

As described earlier by my honourable colleague, time matters. There are no excuses as to why the distribution of emergency funding should take so long. That's weeks when people have to figure out where to live, weeks where the businesses were unsure of when they could open to the public again, weeks of anxiety, of uncertainty, waiting for assistance among the stress already felt by the passing storm.

I know personally I have seen it on the news, and the devastation is real. The emotions displayed are very real. This government closed the application for emergency funding for the November storms on March 31st. The application states that eligible applications should receive assistance within six to eight weeks of applying. I'm not sure why this process takes upwards of two months to receive funding assistance. Why are there two-month delays in turnaround time when in 2016 this money was able to flow quickly?

It just doesn't make sense, and the purpose of this bill is to make sure that no one ever has to ask those questions again. This is about efficiency and about responding to the needs of people, because time matters, as they said, and especially during emergencies. Given how often extreme weather events will continue to happen in the future - I know that from what I have dealt with in the past, as other members have said, in municipal politics - the expediency in how the Province responds to these emergencies is critical. I'm sad to hear that they're not supportive of that. It's just a pragmatic bill to commit to a three-day time frame.

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

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: That concludes Opposition Business for the day. I appreciate the conversation and debate from my colleagues on all sides. I now pass it over to the Government House Leader to continue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I am happy to rise to discuss our Solutions Budget 2022-23. This is not a budget that will fix every problem that Nova Scotia is facing. Our election promise was that we would fix health care. However, we did not say we would fix it overnight. We told Nova Scotians it would take time.

I know the Opposition would love to say it is getting worse under our watch than theirs. The problems with health care did not start last month, seven months ago, or even a year ago. This has been ongoing for 15 years.

I'd like to use trains as an example. If a train is going down the track, you do not radio and tell it in 200 feet, I need you to change. They have to slow down, plan, get ready to change. All of this takes time. This is how effective change happens. Of course, it would be great if I'd be able to say here is exactly what will happen today, and all will be fixed. There is just one problem - there is no quick fix.

I want to speak on one set of our first responders - our volunteer firefighters. Here is a timeline on what has been done in the past. Volunteer firefighter plates - for members who are in good standing as of December 1, 1999 - came into effect by the then-Minister of Business and Consumer Services, Neil LeBlanc.

The Volunteer Firefighter and Ground Search and Rescue Tax Credit was created in the 2008 budget by then-Minister of Finance, Michael Baker. It started at \$250. It went to \$375 in 2009, and then \$500 in 2010. It requires the members to attend 20 per cent of training, meetings, and responding to calls.

Volunteer firefighters were covered by the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia in 2019 by the then-Minister of Labour and Advanced Education, Labi Kousoulis, which included six cancers. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, in February 2022 the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board changed it so the tax credit was based on only responding to calls, because most members could not have meetings or do training.

As part of our election promise, it was to add more cancer drugs for firefighters in Nova Scotia. Our government announced that just last month. We also added 13 new cancers. It's interesting, 13 keeps coming up this year in budgets. We have also added for cardiac events within 24 hours of a member responding to a call. As well, \$10,000 per volunteer fire department to help offset the inability for them to be able to fundraise during COVID-19.

In this budget, the cost is \$4.4 million. We have agreed to continue to pay the costs until the 2025-26 budget, when it will then be the responsibility of the municipalities. This was done in consultation and support with the municipalities.

[4:45 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I know we have many firefighters in our Chamber. I am just not sure if anyone, other than those members, knows what it takes. I will speak on how the volunteer fire service works in Hants East.

A member of the community lets the fire department know they are interested and what they are interested in doing. You may or may not know, but in the volunteer fire service there is a job for everyone. We need people to drive the trucks, run the pumps, go to medical calls, help with MVCs, do traffic control, help with the paperwork, go into burning buildings, rehab, and inventory, just to name a few.

No matter what you have to do, you have to have the proper training. So if you want to go into a burning building, let me tell you, that is 160 hours. It was for me when I did mine in 2010. It may be longer. That is 160 hours of mostly weekend courses, practical and book work. Normally, that would be eight hours per day, so you may notice it is about 10 weeks. However, it is spread out over three or four months, because you do not want to burn out a new member.

Mr. Speaker, this is just the start. This would not include medical first respondent (MFR) training. That alone is 40 hours. Then if you want to do rapid intervention teams (RIT) training, these are the members who are waiting for the call that no one wants to hear: firefighters down, swift water rescue, high angle. I could go on and on.

By the way, most of these trainings are not once. It's not once and you're done. A lot of training is good for two or three years and then you have to go back and do a refresher or update.

Then you can look at the cost of properly outfitted firefighters. Turnout gear keeps the member safe - \$3,000. Structural firefighter boots are \$200. Now you need to have an SCBA, which is a self-contained breathing apparatus. That is going to cost you \$2,000 to \$3,000, and that's per member, not per department.

Then you need to actually have trucks to go on the calls. Tankers, which carry water for when you are not in a serviced area, start at \$300,000 or \$400,000. Engines are starting at \$600,000 minimum. Pickup trucks, for transporting members and used for medical calls, an easy \$100,000. Aerials, which right now start at about \$1.2 million, go up from there.

Then each department has a monthly meeting and training nights. Normally it's the same day of the week. For me it was always Wednesday. That's another four or five nights

a month, which is two or three hours for each member. Training nights would be driver training, medical, how to do self-rescue, pumper ops, how to use the radio, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, all of this does not even include calls for service that the fire department would get. All the above training is to make sure the members are ready to be the best they can for when the pager goes off and they respond to a call. Most departments have mutual aid. That's where when one department gets called, another is called to help. All members work together to get the task done.

I've learned a lot from my time as a volunteer firefighter. It's a very diverse group. In my area we have 13 volunteer fire departments. Some may say that seems like a lot, but if you look at the coverage area for my district, it's huge.

I'd like to highlight a couple of things I've learned. Complacency is never good. You should never pre-judge what you're going to do or how you're going to react, or worse, that you know all the answers. The moment we believe we have nothing else to improve Nova Scotians' lives is the moment we have lost faith.

Do not panic. I'm not sure I've got this one all down. However, in the fire service you are expected to take a breath, and take in what you see before you make a decision. Panic causes reaction, not action.

Firefighters could not do it all on their own. Firefighters work with police and EHS. I say work with, as each group has their own expertise and responsibility, with some overlap. I am fortunate to be able to work with those groups together.

Madam Speaker, I know that Nova Scotians see the first responders at calls and are thankful for what they do. Who gets missed most of the time? Their families who are home. No one can do it by themselves. It's missed birthdays and suppers, or half-eaten suppers. It is their family who stays behind, keeping things in order, while the first responder is gone for 20 minutes or for hours. Spouses, partners, children, are all home wondering when you're coming back and, depending on the type of call, they are worried. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The motion to resolve into a Committee of the Whole on Supply is now carried.

We'll briefly recess for 15 minutes. We'll be back at 5:05 p.m.

[4:50 p.m. The House recessed.]

[5:14 p.m. The House resolved into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds in the Chair.]

[9:31 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds in the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply reports:

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole on Supply has met and made progress and begs leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That concludes government business for today. I move that the House do now rise and meet again on Thursday, April 7th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Following the Daily Routine and Question Period, government business will include the continuation of the Committee of the Whole on Supply to deal with Budget Estimates. With time permitting, second reading of Private and Local Bill No. 122; and second reading of Bills No. 129, 131, 134, 137, and 138. In addition, Bills No. 118 and 120 will be considered by the Committee of the Whole House on Bills; and third reading of Bills No. 94, 101, 102, 106, 107, 109, 114, and 115.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise and meet again on Thursday, April 7th from 1:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until April 7th at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 9:32 p.m.]