



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Article: “Nova Scotia government heading back to court against Disabilities group,” G. Burrill	2035
Legal Aid Commission Annual Report 2020-2021, Hon. B. Johns	2036
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 198, Boulet, Logan: Organ Don. Awar. - Recog., Hon. M. Thompson	2036
Vote - Affirmative.....	2036
Res. 199, Greene, Fred: Death of - Tribute, Hon. S. Craig.....	2037
Vote - Affirmative.....	2037
Res. 200, World Health Day: Prom. of Mental Health, Hon. B. Comer	2038
Vote - Affirmative.....	2038
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	

No. 143, An Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 2015, the Boat Harbour Act, Hon. B. Johns	2038
No. 144, An Act Respecting Non-Disclosure Agreements, C. Chender	2038
No. 145, An Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2004, the Electricity Act, Hon. T. Rushton.....	2038
No. 146, An Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1993, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Hon. I. Rankin	2039
No. 147, An Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Public Utilities Act, Hon. T. Rushton	2039
No. 148, An Act to Recognize, Promote and Support the Revitalization and Reclamation of the Mi'kmaw Language, Hon. K. MacFarlane.....	2039
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Wilson, Rita: Children's Book Release - Congrats., Hon. K. MacFarlane.....	2039
Ol' School Donuts: 9 Yrs. in Bus. - Congrats., L. Nicoll	2039
Housing Ruling: Prem. Commit. - Signif., G. Burrill.....	2040
World Health Day: Bettering of Health - Recog., Hon. M. Thompson	2040
Voluns.: Daffodil Camp. Success - Thanks, R. DiCostanzo	2041
Camacho, Natasha: Cancer Treatment - Best Wishes, L. Lachance.....	2041
Slaunwhite, Nadine: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	2042
Gateway Meat Mkt.: 14 th Anniv. - Congrats., A. Simmonds.....	2042
Cost of Living Crisis: Impact on Srs. - Recog., K. Coombes.....	2043
Schmitt, Brayden: 2 nd Season with QMJHL - Congrats., D. Ritcey	2043
Clare Spec. Olym. Reg. Cmte.: Fun Day Org. - Thanks, R. LeBlanc	2043
Black Educators Assoc.: Advoc. in Black Coms. - Recog., S. Hansen	2044
Morden Com. Assoc.: Com. Serv. - Thanks, C. Palmer.....	2044
Abdul-Masih, Dr. Magi: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	2045
Dart. Whalers Minor Hockey Assoc.: Great Work - Recog., S. Leblanc	2045
MacDonald, Bill: Contrib. to Sports - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	2046
BRCS Girls Hockey Team: Succ. Season - Congrats.,	

C. Kerr.....	2046
Zonta Club: 70 th Anniv. - Congrats., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2047
Evolve Fitness: Bldg. Healthy Coms. - Recog., L. Lachance.....	2047
Team Deagle: Everest Curling Ch'ship. Win - Congrats., Hon. B. Druhan.....	2048
Edgar, Judie & Jim: Daffodil Camp. Work - Thanks, Hon. K. Regan.....	2048
Mossup, Joanne & Terry: Retirement - Congrats., K. Coombes.....	2049
Bernard, Tina & Leonard: Skye Mtn. Pizza - Congrats., Hon. A. MacMaster.....	2049
Denny, Chief Leroy: Adv. For Mi'kmaw Lang. - Congrats., Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	2050
Parker St. Food & Furn. Bank: Com. Serv. - Recog., S. Hansen.....	2050
Mitchell, Vicki: Slippers Donation - Thanks, Hon. T. Halman.....	2051
Mawio'mi: Raising Awar. of Truth and Reconcil. - Thanks, Hon. K. Irving.....	2051
Out of the Cold Com. Assoc.: Help for Homeless - Thanks, S. Leblanc.....	2051
Knock, Vanessa: Com. Serv. - Recog., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2052
S. Col. Com. Health Brd.: Wellness Funds Distrib. - Recog., L. Harrison.....	2052
Paddock, W./Gallivan, J.: Gala Xmas Event for Srs. - Recog., Hon. I. Rankin.....	2053
Oickle, Colby: Athlete of Yr. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	2054
Fougere, William: Organ Recip. - Recog., Hon. P. Arab.....	2054
TapRoot Farms: Recip. of Mobius Awd. - Congrats., Hon. J. Lohr.....	2055
Dal. Muslim Students Assoc.: Com. Bldg. Inits. - Recog., A. Duale.....	2055
Totten, Sandy: 1 st Published Novel - Congrats., John A. MacDonald.....	2055
CPA Boys Bask. Team: Prov. Ch'ships. - Best Wishes, B. Clark.....	2056
Melong, Dee: Volun. Tax Pgm. Efforts - Recog., Hon. G. Morrow.....	2056
Lovell, Justin: CB Fly Fishing Launch - Recog., F. Tilley.....	2057
Clarke, Erika: Sow Local Seeds Launch - Congrats.,	

K. Smith	2057
Young Perfs. Coll.: New Studio - Congrats.,	
L. Nicoll	2057
Bonnar, Nick: Hockey & Baseball Coaching - Recog.,	
J. White	2058
Lucas, Leanne: Acad. Succ. - Congrats.,	
Hon. B. Jessome.....	2058
Mihai, Maria: Math Olympiad Test Place Earned - Congrats.,	
Hon. B. Wong	2059
Green Shirt Day: Honouring Logan Boulet - Recog.,	
Hon. K. Regan.....	2059
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 405, Prem.: COVID-19 Case Count - Update,	
Hon. I. Rankin.....	2060
No. 406, Prem.: Budget Disappointment - Respond,	
G. Burrill	2061
No. 407, EECD: School COVID Cases - Update,	
Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	2063
No. 408, EECD: New School in Timb. - Commit,	
Hon. I. Rankin.....	2063
No. 409, EECD: French Lang. Educ. - Protect,	
R. LeBlanc	2064
No. 410, MAH: Short-Term Rentals - Impact. on Aff. Housing,	
S. Hansen	2065
No. 411, EECD: Overflowing Classrooms - Address,	
Hon. P. Arab	2066
No. 412, EECD: AVRCE Marking Policy - Review,	
Hon. K. Irving.....	2067
No. 413, LSI - Injured Coal Miners: Mtg. With Prem. - Request,	
F. Tilley.....	2068
No. 414, NRR - Atl. Whitefish: Proposed Harvest - Comment,	
C. Chender	2069
No. 415, NRR - Hunting Near Pop. Areas: Concern - Address,	
Hon. K. Regan.....	2070
No. 416, ECC: Northern Pulp: Blue Ribbon Panel - Inform,	
Hon. Z. Churchill	2071
No. 417, DOJ: Land Titles Init. - Update,	
A. Simmonds.....	2072
No. 418, LSI - Organ Donors: Protected Leave - Commit,	
K. Coombes.....	2073
No. 419, DPW: Bedford-Hfx Ferry Study - Update,	
B. Clark	2074
No. 420, OMHA: Phys. Shortage - Advise,	
R. DiCostanzo	2075
No. 421, ECC: Sackville Landfill - Update,	
Hon. B. Jessome.....	2075

No. 422, DHW: Min. Appt. for 2SLGBTQ+ Com. - Commit, L. Lachance.....	2076
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:	
ON MOTION FOR SUPPLY:	
A. Simmonds.....	2077
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CW ON SUPPLY AT 3:30 P.M.	2081
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 8:05 P.M.	2081
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 122, Lunenburg Rod and Gun Club Replacement Act	
Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	2082
Vote - Affirmative.....	2082
PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 129, Motor Carrier Act (amended)	
Hon. K. Masland	2083
B. Clark.....	2083
S. Leblanc	2084
Hon. K. Masland	2084
Vote - Affirmative.....	2084
No. 131, Powers of Attorney Act (amended)	
Hon. B. Johns.....	2085
Hon. I. Rankin.....	2086
C. Chender	2086
Hon. B. Johns.....	2086
Vote - Affirmative.....	2086
No. 134, Motor Vehicle Act (amended)	
Hon. K. Masland	2087
B. Clark.....	2087
S. Leblanc	2088
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2089
Hon. K. Masland	2089
Vote - Affirmative.....	2090
No. 137, Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended)	
Hon. J. Lohr	2090
L. Nicoll	2091
K. Coombes.....	2092
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2093
Hon. J. Lohr	2094
Vote - Affirmative.....	2094
No. 138, an Act to Permit Virtual Business Meetings	
Hon. C. LeBlanc	2094
Hon. P. Arab	2095
S. Hansen	2096
Hon. C. LeBlanc	2097
Vote - Affirmative.....	2097

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:

No. 101, Marine Renewable-energy Act (amended)	
Hon. T. Rushton	2098
C. Kerr.....	2099
C. Chender	2099
Hon. T. Rushton	2100
Vote - Affirmative.....	2100
No. 102, Wildlife Act (amended)	
Hon. T. Rushton	2100
C. Kerr.....	2101
C. Chender	2101
Hon. T. Rushton	2101
Vote - Affirmative.....	2102
No. 106, Condominium Act (amended)	
Hon. C. LeBlanc	2102
Hon. P. Arab	2103
S. Hansen	2104
Hon. C. LeBlanc	2104
Vote - Affirmative.....	2105
No. 107, Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act (repealed)	
Hon. B. Comer	2105
Vote - Affirmative.....	2106
No. 109, Income Tax Act (amended)	
Hon. M. Thompson	2106
L. Nicoll	2107
L. Lachance.....	2107
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2108
Hon. M. Thompson	2109
Vote - Affirmative.....	2109
No. 114, Hospitals Act (amended)	
Hon. M. Thompson	2109
S. Leblanc	2110
Hon. P. Arab	2110
Hon. M. Thompson	2111
Vote - Affirmative.....	2111
No. 115, Prescription Monitoring Act (amended)	
Hon. M. Thompson	2111
Hon. P. Arab	2112
S. Leblanc	2113
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2113
Hon. M. Thompson	2114
Vote - Affirmative.....	2114

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:

No. 94, Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act	
Hon. B. Jessome.....	2115
L. Lachance.....	2116

Hon. T. Halman.....	2116
Hon. B. Jessome.....	2116
Vote - Affirmative.....	2117
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CWH ON BILLS AT 10:03 P.M.	2117
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 10:23 P.M.	2117
CWH REPORTS.....	2117
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Fri., April 8 th at 9:00 a.m.	2118
NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):	
Res. 201, Saulnier, Austin: Saving Austin Doucette’s Life - Recog., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2119
Res. 202, LeBlanc, Alyssa/Mood, Cody: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2119
Res. 203, d’Entremont, Megan/Brannen, Nelson: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2120
Res. 204, Nickerson, Erica/d’Entremont, Lionel: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2120
Res. 205, Rodgeron, Heidi/Porter, Logan: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2120
Res. 206, Nickerson, Jessica & Jeremiah: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2121
Res. 207, Saulnier, Justine & Jason: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2121
Res. 208, Melanson, Lindsay/LeBlanc, Christopher: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2122
Res. 209, d’Entremont, Mary/Doucette, Gabriel: Daughter - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2122
Res. 210, d’Eon, Paige and Jeremy: Son - Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2123
Res. 211, Hatfield, Shannon/Surette, Robert: Son – Birth Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	2123



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 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 begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in consideration of a member's statement I'd like to read later, I'd like to table an article called "Nova Scotia government heading back to court against disabilities group." It was written by Michael Tutton of the Canadian Press and published by Global on December 2, 2021.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as the Attorney General of Nova Scotia, I hereby beg leave to table the Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission Annual Report 2020-2021.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 198

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

Whereas Logan Boulet's decision was to be an organ donor - and he made his wishes known to his parents just prior to his tragic passing in the Humboldt Broncos bus crash in April 2018, which inspired many Canadians across the country to register as donors; and

Whereas more than 4,100 people in Canada are waiting for an organ transplant, on average 250 people die waiting, and one organ donor can save up to eight lives; and

Whereas Green Shirt Day raises awareness for organ and tissue donation, encourages all Canadians to talk with their loved ones about their wishes, and honours Humboldt Broncos' Logan Boulet's legacy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize Logan Boulet and all organ donors across Nova Scotia and Canada today, April 7, 2022.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 199

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

Whereas Mr. Fred Greene, a long-time leader in the Nova Scotia seafood industry, passed away on January 20, 2022, at the age of 82; and

Whereas Mr. Greene has been an owner of Fisherman's Market for over 60 years, earning a reputation as a respected voice in the seafood industry as he evolved the business over the years, including turning the once-small seafood market on the Halifax waterfront into an international seafood wholesaler and exporter, attaining global recognition with over 150 employees and several locations throughout Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Mr. Greene's accomplishments have been recognized through several prestigious awards, including the Entrepreneur of the Year Award for Leadership and Ingenuity in 1995 and more recently the Minister of Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture Seafood Legacy Award in 2021, commemorating an individual who has gone above and beyond to strengthen the seafood industry in a way that will have lasting impacts;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the Legislature recognize the late Fred Greene for his celebrated career and give thanks for his many contributions to Nova Scotia's seafood sector and his community.

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 responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

RESOLUTION NO. 200

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

Whereas April 7th has been proclaimed World Health Day, marking the founding of the World Health Organization and highlighting the vital importance of the individual and collective health of our population; and

Whereas worldwide, people are recognizing the parallel importance of mental and physical health and the role we share as providers, governments, communities, and institutions in promoting the mental well-being of our citizens; and

Whereas the past two years have highlighted the need to care for our own mental health and support one another, and showcased the individual dedication and care that has been provided to those who have struggled with mental health and addictions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank the many frontline health care professionals, community organizations, volunteers, and individuals across Nova Scotia for their unwavering dedication and for continuing to show up each and every day to support those who need it most.

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. 143 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 2015, the Boat Harbour Act. (Hon. Brad Johns)

Bill No. 144 - Entitled An Act Respecting Non-disclosure Agreements. (Claudia Chender)

Bill No. 145 - An Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2004, the Electricity Act. (Hon. Tory Rushton)

Bill No. 146 - An Act to Amend Chapter 5 of the Acts of 1993, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

Bill No. 147 - An Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Public Utilities Act. (Hon. Tory Rushton)

Bill No. 148 - An Act to Recognize, Promote and Support the Revitalization and Reclamation of the Mi'kmaw Language. (Hon. Karla MacFarlane)

[1:15 p.m.]

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

WILSON, RITA: CHILDREN'S BOOK RELEASE - CONGRATS.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Rita Wilson of Caribou River on the release of her children's book *A Pocket of Time: The Poetic Childhood of Elizabeth Bishop*. The book highlights the early life of poet and prose writer Elizabeth Bishop.

Rita, a retired primary teacher, was first introduced to the life and writings of Bishop when she attended a presentation at the Elizabeth Bishop House in Great Village. Rita went on to spend periods of time at the Bishop House where the author and poet grew up with her grandparents. The book combines Rita's narration with fragments of Bishop's own words and features Bishop's memories of the school in Great Village.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Rita Wilson on the release of her book and wish her luck with her future writings.

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

OL' SCHOOL DONUTS: 9 YRS. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a very familiar Cole Harbour mobile food business, Ol' School Donuts.

In 2013 Noah Connolly, fresh out of high school and with some classes in entrepreneurship under his belt, decided with the help of his family to start a food truck

business. Noah and his family hand painted an old school bus an unmissable shade of bright red and called it Ol' School Donuts. It was born.

The model of this tricked-out school bus is selling old fashioned donuts like Grammy used to make. This made-while-you-wait fresh specialty donut shop travels to various locations around Dartmouth with a schedule posted on the Halifax Street Food app and on social media.

I ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ol' School Donuts for adding a bit of sweetness to our lives for the past nine years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

HOUSING RULING: PREM. COMMIT. - SIGNIF.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the House to recall the October 6th decision of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal that there was discrimination against people with disabilities who have sought improved services in housing in the community.

In an article which I have tabled that was published December 2nd by Global TV, Michael Tutton writes the following:

“A day after the Oct. 6 Court of Appeal ruling, Premier Tim Houston said his government heard the court’s message ‘loud and clear,’ and he pledged to work with the disabilities community. He also said he didn’t believe citizens should have to take the government to court to make it ‘do the right thing.’”

I ask the House to reflect on the historic significance of the Premier’s commitment to the disability community in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

WORLD HEALTH DAY: BETTERING OF HEALTH - RECOG.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge the 7th of April as World Health Day. This observance was held for the first time on this date in 1950 to mark the World Health Organization’s founding. Since then it has been an opportunity to draw attention to a topic on global health.

The theme this year, Our Planet, Our Health, concerns the global environmental crisis. According to the WHO, it highlights the need for actions to keep humans and the planet healthy and to foster a movement to create societies focused on well-being.

Mr. Speaker, all members of this House have the privilege and the responsibility to bring about positive change for Nova Scotia and, where we can, to positively impact world health. In the Fall, we passed Bill No. 57, legislation built on justice and fairness that will improve the health of our environment in the years to come and hopefully inspire other governments to take similar action.

Mr. Speaker, there is still much more to do. I ask that all members of this House join me in observance of World Health Day and in pledging to continue to work together to better that health of our environment, our people, and our world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

VOLUNS.: DAFFODIL CAMP. SUCCESS - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the volunteers who continue to make the Daffodil Campaign possible.

For more than 70 years, the Canadian Cancer Society has organized the Daffodil Campaign each Spring to provide hope to people affected by cancer and help fund nationwide support for programs and research.

I'm proud to wear my pin in support of Daffodil Month and each year I look forward to providing a donation in exchange for the pin and a fresh bouquet of daffodils. This campaign is made possible each year through the hard work and dedication of volunteers across our province, including the constituency of Clayton Park West.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House join me in thanking these volunteers who continue to make the daffodil campaign such a success, directly supporting those affected by cancer.

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

CAMACHO, NATASHA: CANCER TREATMENT - BEST WISHES

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, Spring always reminds me of Grade 1. Not my own Grade 1 experience, mind you, but rather my children's Grade 1 years under the guidance of an amazing teacher at École St. Catherine's School in Halifax, Madame Natasha Camacho.

By this time of year in her classroom, there are eggs incubating and maybe new chicks hatching as well as salmon eggs and salmon fry growing, almost ready to be released in the Sackville River on a field trip. All of this experiential learning occurs with intentional and compassionate commitment to each child's development.

I witnessed this part of Madame Camacho's magic as a weekly Reading Recovery volunteer. Despite almost 30 children in her class, she always knew who needed extra support at this important juncture in literacy development.

Mr. Speaker, let's celebrate Madame Camacho's ongoing commitment to education and send our best wishes as she undergoes cancer treatment over the coming months.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

SLAUNWHITE, NADINE: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I rise today to recognize New Germany resident Nadine Slaunwhite, who just this week retired after a 23-year career with Canada Post.

As postmistress for Barss Corner, Ms. Slaunwhite provided much more than prompt delivery of mail or assistance with in or outbound packages. We know that rural post offices connect our smallest communities to the world. They fill a vital economic as well as social role, contributing to a sense of belonging and community.

That said, so much of the role relies on the personality behind the counter. With her incredible knowledge, generosity, sunny smile, and disposition, Nadine Slaunwhite made the absolute most of every day in her post. She has served her community exceptionally well and I wish her much joy in her retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

GATEWAY MEAT MARKET: 14TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I rise in the House today to recognize Gateway Meat Market. Gateway is an independently owned and operated meat market that began its fresh start in 2008, and sells much more than just meat: also fresh produce and local groceries.

They are located on 667 Main Street. They guarantee 100 per cent satisfaction, not only on their products but also in their customer service as well. Whether you're trying to economically feed a family of five or have a big barbecue function, they're there to serve you. They've acquired many local satisfied customers over Dartmouth, Halifax, Bedford, and Sackville, throughout HRM, and beyond.

I want to congratulate them as they celebrate their 14th birthday and anniversary after serving so many customers in the area. They have evolved into a tiny meat market with a two-building establishment, so I want to wish them congratulations and thank them for their service.

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

COST OF LIVING CRISIS: IMPACT ON SRS. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today recognize the serious impacts the rising cost of living has on seniors and those on fixed incomes in our province, especially in Cape Breton in my riding of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

We know that compared to last year, basic food items are up 50 to 100 per cent while the price to fill your home oil tank is more than double.

For thousands of seniors and retirees who live in Cape Breton and have fixed incomes, these increases mean they have less money for other things beyond the necessities, and sometimes even the necessities have taken a backseat. I've heard of seniors who are unable to afford hearing aids, new eyeglasses, dental care, medications, and nutritious food.

We can't leave people with less and less real income to get by. The rising costs of living can't continue to be ignored.

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

SCHMITT, BRAYDEN: 2ND SEASON WITH QMJHL - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: I rise today to recognize an incredible hockey player from Bible Hill, Brayden Schmitt.

Brayden is a defenceman playing his second season of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League with the Blainville-Boisbriand Armada. He is an incredibly dedicated player who is not afraid to ask for extra help to see how he can improve his game and push him to be the best he can be. This sense of determination has produced very positive results in the second half of the season and directly reflects in his hard work and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating this talented and driven young man.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

CLARE SPEC. OLYM. REG. CMTE.: FUN DAY ORG. - THANKS

RONNIE LEBLANC: Despite the cancellations of the Special Olympics competitions over the last two years, our Special Olympics athletes have kept up their

training whenever possible. To encourage them, the Clare Special Olympics Regional Committee organized a fun day last July, a day which lived up to its name.

That day, the athletes had the opportunity to compete in swimming, athletics, and bocce. Afterwards, the athletes, their supporters, and the volunteers gathered for a pizza supper where each competitor received a medal. This day would not have been possible without the help of volunteers, from the people who prepared the meals to those who helped at the meet.

I ask that all members join me in thanking Bobby Comeau, the regional coordinator, and the Clare Special Olympics Regional Committee for organizing this day and wish our athletes good luck in future competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BLACK EDUCATORS ASSOC.: ADVOC. IN BLACK COMS. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Today I rise to recognize the important work of the Black Educators Association of Nova Scotia. The BEA, which is located on Gottingen Street in Halifax Needham, was founded in 1969 and is the oldest African Nova Scotian educational non-profit. To be around for 53 years is not an easy task, and their mission is to monitor and ensure the development of an equitable education system so that African Nova Scotians can achieve their maximum potential.

The work that the BEA is doing with Black learners in Nova Scotia is to bridge the evidence-based significant gaps. It is phenomenal and they offer many programs, such as their free tutoring program that operates from September to May, the Regional Educators Program, and my most favourite is they have a province-wide spelling bee yearly. They also provide many programs within the community that help further most community members' education.

I would like the House to help me recognize the many accomplishments of the BEA and wish them many more years of successful advocacy in Black communities in the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

MORDEN COM. ASSOC.: COM. SERV. - THANKS

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, I want to take a minute and rise to recognize a community near and dear to my and my family's hearts, a place where we spend much of our Summers - that's the beautiful village of Morden - and to acknowledge our neighbours and other residents who represent the Morden Community Association.

The Morden Community Association is an active group of volunteers dedicated to the upkeep and growth of the community on the beautiful Bay of Fundy. The group hosts a monthly breakfast at the Morden Community Centre, regular card parties, and other events where people come to celebrate together and mourn together.

This past weekend in particular, the community held a Play Park Spring Refresh, an event organized by the association to clean up garbage and debris from the community play park. I also want to thank and recognize all the people who look after our picnic by our well-known French Cross monument.

Please join me in thanking all the dedicated community volunteers of the Morden Community Association for ensuring Morden remains an active, inclusive and thriving community. I invite everybody to come on the Saturday at the end of every month to enjoy the beautiful breakfast and the best fish cakes in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ABDUL-MASIH, DR. MAGI: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today to pay tribute to a professor, scholar, and author, Dr. Magi Abdul-Masih.

Magi will be retiring in August from my alma mater, Saint Mary's University, where she is a deeply admired, respected, and loved professor of the Department for the Study of Religion. I had the privilege of being one of her many students during my time at SMU. To say that Magi brings out the best in her students is an understatement. There are few professors who challenge and inspire their students like Magi does. She has impacted me and countless others to always dig deeper, and to be a critical thinker, and always to truly see the other as a fellow human being. She also taught me that hope is an action and that it is only through friendship that cultural barriers can truly be broken between people.

I feel very fortunate to have been her student and to also be able to count her as a friend. I ask this House to join me in congratulating Dr. Magi Abdul-Masih on her well-deserved retirement and thanking her for her many years of inspiration to countless students and in wishing her the happiest and healthiest of futures.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DART. WHALERS MINOR HOCKEY ASSOC.: GREAT WORK - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as the minor hockey season draws to a close, I rise to acknowledge the incredible work of the board of directors, coaches, parent volunteers, and players of the Dartmouth Whalers Minor Hockey Association.

This is my second year as a hockey mom, and it seems like probably not my last, as I think my kids have actually caught the bug now. Once again, this year was not normal because of changing COVID-19 restrictions throughout the season. Once again, because of the commitment and nimbleness of the organization and volunteers, the season felt fun, sometimes frenzied, and always safe.

I want to give shout-outs to the coaches and parent volunteers of the teams my small Whalers played with: on the U9 Developing Navy, coaches John Landry, Jason Snyder, and Jerome MacEachern; on the U11 Dolphins, coaches Jason Vallis, Jody Riggs, Rob Marshall, and Jon Nicholson, and manager David Fidler; and to all the parents who worked behind the scenes to keep things organized and paid for.

There are many more people who make the hockey season happen, and I am very grateful to all of them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

MACDONALD, BILL: CONTRIB. TO SPORTS - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Bill MacDonald of Sackville.

Bill's involvement in the sports community first began in the 1970s with the formation of a minor hockey league, and his commitment and dedication has continued ever since. Bill has coached hockey, developed the Sackville Bantam Baseball League, was a founding member of the Lake District Recreation Association and the Sackville Blazers Junior Hockey Club, and was the recipient of the Sackville Volunteer of the Year Award in 2008. He also served for 16 years as president of the Sackville Sports Heritage Hall of Fame. This is rather appropriate, as Bill was recently inducted into the Sackville Sports Heritage Hall of Fame for the work he has done.

I would also like to point out to this House that Bill was a Liberal MLA for five years, from 1993 to 1998.

I would ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Bill MacDonald on becoming a member of the Sackville Sports Heritage Hall of Fame and for his incredible impact on amateur sports in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

BRCS GIRLS HOCKEY TEAM: SUCC. SEASON - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Bridgetown Regional Community School girls hockey team for their successful season. Bridgetown Regional

Community School is a small school and their team includes players from Grade 6 to Grade 12 - that ensures that they have a full roster.

[1:30 p.m.]

Players are often teammates for several years and younger players have the opportunity to develop their skill and learn from the older and more experienced players on the team. I think this greatly contributes to their success. With amazing team chemistry, huge heart, tremendous talent, and excellent coaching, they were the top team in league play. They captured the regional banner, and they earned the silver medal at the recent provincial championships.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Bridgetown Regional Community School girls team on a very successful season. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ZONTA CLUB: 70TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the Zonta Club of Halifax on its 70th anniversary. The club has been active on the local, national, and international front, supporting Zonta's international vision of creating a world where women are not exploited and women have opportunities that are equal, as well as being educated, work, and simply being able to walk down the street safely.

The Zonta Club works through local service projects, funding local charitable organizations at the district and international level, as well as through the United Nations. The Halifax club offers two scholarships, via the NSCC, and has had winners in the Zonta-sponsored scholarships at the local, district, and international levels.

Today please join me in thanking Zonta Club for their continued work with women's rights.

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

EVOLVE FITNESS: BLDG. HEALTHY COMS. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize a Halifax business that takes the business of supporting people to achieve health-related goals seriously while still having fun. Evolve Fitness was founded in 2009. Owners Matt and Mitch Benvie always look for ways to build healthy communities, from free public workouts at the Commons to collecting donations for organizations.

In March 2020 they raised \$110,000 to support local businesses. Over the past two years they have inspired and supported many people to get on a bike for the first time, or the first time in a long time, and have raised \$550,000 for cancer research in Nova Scotia, through the Ride for Cancer. To inspire continued fitness over the holidays, Evolve has an annual challenge that has raised \$35,000 for Adsum for Women and Children, as well as thousands for a local Christmas toy drive over the last two years.

I ask all members to join me in acknowledging the contribution by Evolve Fitness in keeping Nova Scotians healthy, as well as all small businesses that support communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

TEAM DEAGLE: EVEREST CURLING CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, Nick Deagle of the Bridgewater Curling Club, skip, and mate Jason VanVonderen, second Robert Phillips, and lead Ryan Sperry won gold at the 2021 Everest Canadian Curling Club Championships held in Ottawa last November. The tournament features the top “club level” curlers from every province and territory in Canada. This is the first time Nova Scotia has won gold in the history of the national championships. Team Nova Scotia won the gold medal game by defeating Saskatchewan 3-2 in a nail-biter that came down to the last shot of the game. The prize for the win is a trip to the World Men’s Curling Championship in Las Vegas.

Nick and Jason and Rob and Ryan have played together since they were teenagers. They are all good friends as well as teammates, which may be the key to their success, in addition to the hard work they have put in on the rink. Congratulations to team Deagle for this outstanding accomplishment and best wishes for many more years of achievements in the sport they love.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

EDGAR, JUDIE & JIM: DAFFODIL CAMP. WORK - THANKS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Earlier, I guess just at noon, a number of us from this House were over on the harbour in Dartmouth with Judie and Jim Edgar, at the Daffodil Garden for Cancer Survivors. We were part of an event in Dartmouth South to launch the Daffodil Campaign for the province.

Their Honours the Lieutenant Governor Arthur J. LeBlanc and Patsy LeBlanc were with us, and many members of this House, as I indicated, were there as well. During this coming month, we’re going to see about 20,000 bulbs make their way up through the grass. We can already see some of the leaves pushing their way up. This is a garden that the Edgars created after their daughter died of cancer - I think it was in 2006.

I would just like to say to the Edgars, thank you so much for all the work that you have done on this particular project, and thank you to all the volunteers who make it such a beautiful place to sit in the month of April.

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

MOSSOP, JOANNE & TERRY: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize the retirement of Joanne and Terry Mossop, the owners of the iconic Micky D's in my riding. Over a month ago, Joanne and Terry announced their intentions to retire, sending panic and shockwaves through the community. The panic soon gave way to relief when Joanne and Terry assured the community that they would ensure that the iconic eatery was going to be left in good hands. So no need to panic any further for the member for Sydney-Membertou.

Walking into Micky D's is like walking into Cheers. Everyone knows your name, your order, and you're always in for a good laugh and good food. The staff are welcoming, hard-working, and fun, and our family has breakfast there most weekends. On any given day, you can find Joanne in the kitchen or showing off her new singing and dancing festive ornaments to a customer. I wish Joanne and Terry a happy retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

BERNARD, TINA & LEONARD: SKYE MTN. PIZZA - CONGRATS.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my appreciation to Tina and Leonard Bernard of We'koqma'q First Nation who operate a business which opened on January 3rd to bring a very valuable resource to our constituency: pizza.

All reports indicate that Skye Mountain Pizza & Takeout, located just south of Whycocomagh on the Trans-Canada Highway, is doing tremendous business. Opening a restaurant is challenging at the best of times and doing so during a pandemic only ratchets up the level of difficulty. The success of the Bernards is a testament to the support the people of my constituency are willing to show each other. It also says something about the quality of food from Tina and Leonard's kitchen.

Please join me in congratulating Tina and Leonard Bernard for opening their restaurant and wishing them continued success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DENNY, CHIEF LEROY: ADV. FOR MI'KMAW LANG. - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Coming into the Legislature today, it was nice to see a familiar face in Chief Leroy Denny from Eskasoni. Leroy is no stranger to anyone in this House. He is a true champion for his community of Eskasoni, for the entire island, and with the tabling of that bill today, it recognizes a lot of years of hard work and advocacy that Chief Leroy had to celebrate and protect the Mi'kmaw language. It was so great to see him here today. I know how much it meant to him.

To the Minister, congratulations. Well done. That means so much to the Mi'kmaw community, without a doubt. That's something that Leroy has been advocating for for years, and I'm so happy to see him today. I know I speak for everyone in the House: Congratulations, Leroy.

Well done to everyone involved, whether it was in the Minister's department, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and everyone within government. That's a very important piece of legislation. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Just as an aside, Chief Leroy lives within my constituency, and I regret that I never had a chance to say hello to him, but maybe he's listening.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

PARKER ST. FOOD & FURN. BANK: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Today I rise to recognize Parker Street Food & Furniture Bank. Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank was founded in 1999 with the mission of providing food, furniture, and emergency assistance to those in need. Parker Street primarily serves low-income and fixed-income individuals through their programs, often serving a regular clientele. Their values include dignity, compassion, and innovation, and they see creative solutions to the problems faced by their clientele.

Along with their regular food bank and furniture drop-off, they offer school supplies and a Christmas hamper, and have two stores called Great Things in Store that offer clothing, antiques, small wholesale items, appliances, and furniture for a moderate price. These stores are located in the Spryfield and the Woodlawn areas.

I'd like this House to please join me in recognizing the very important work done by Parker Street for the low-income community and all communities surrounding.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MITCHELL, VICKI: SLIPPERS DONATION - THANKS

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dartmouth East resident Vicki Mitchell.

The 2021 holiday season marked the second year of Festive Families and Seasons Greetings for Seniors. These two programs were developed by the Dartmouth East office to help families and seniors who were facing additional struggles due to COVID-19.

Throughout 2021, Vicki had sewn slippers for infants and adults alike. When my office announced the return of these programs, Vicki surprised us with the donation of 20 slippers to include in some of our donation boxes. She said that she hoped it would help spread happiness and joy to those in need - and I can confirm that she did, indeed, spread joy and happiness through her contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the House to thank Vicki Mitchell for her donation and contribution to those who were in need during the holidays.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MAWIO'MI: RAISING AWARE. OF TRUTH AND RECONCIL. - THANKS

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, this past year, from September 30 to October 4, 2021, we celebrated our first Truth Before Reconciliation Mawio'mi in Wolfville. The event, co-hosted by Acadia University and the Town of Wolfville, was in partnership with nearby Glooscap First Nation.

Over the five days, ceremonies and events ranged from a sunrise ceremony, the lighting of the sacred fire, Mi'kmaw dancing, prayers, storytelling, film screenings, yoga by the Tipi, and many more. Members from across our communities gathered, shared, and raised much-needed awareness around Truth and Reconciliation. On the National Day of Vigils for Sisters in Spirit, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, we gathered in Clock Park as a wonderfully diverse community to remember and learn.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking Dr. Cynthia Alexander of Acadia, Darlene Copeland of Glooscap First Nation, and all the volunteers for their hard work staging this important and successful event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

OUT OF THE COLD COM. ASSOC.: HELP FOR HOMELESS - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the cold weather, snow, and rainstorms of the past Winter took an especially difficult toll on the unhoused folks in our province. One of

the organizations that prioritized the unhoused was the Out of the Cold Community Association. Founded as an all-gender emergency Winter shelter in 2007, it now runs the supportive housing community located on the Dartmouth waterfront.

Before it moved into the modular units on the waterfront, Out of the Cold ran a short-term emergency shelter in the Gray Arena in Dartmouth North. When Out of the Cold first moved into the arena, countless community volunteers worked to scrub the kitchen, set up beds, and sweep the floors, working to make the former rink a clean and warm temporary home. As time went on, Out of the Cold received donations of bedding, clothing, home-cooked meals, and snacks from members of the Dartmouth North community.

I rise today to express my gratitude to the board, staff, and volunteers of the Out of the Cold shelter for their unwavering dedication to the folks who have been most impacted by this housing crisis that we are in, and to those in Dartmouth North who came together to support their efforts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

KNOCK, VANESSA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize teacher and entrepreneur Vanessa Knock of Amherst, Nova Scotia. Vanessa is a teacher at the Amherst Regional High School. She cares deeply for her students in Grades 9 and 10. Vanessa is also an entrepreneur.

She started a business from the seed of an idea, and her business is called In Bloom Specialty Cut Flowers. Her business grows every year. I look forward to watching her continue, as she has purchased a new plot of land and is working it to produce a bounty of flowers.

Vanessa also volunteered on my election campaign this August and put in many hours of hard work helping. She is still an important part of my team, and I would like to thank her today for the hard work she puts into our youth's education as well as serving her community with volunteering.

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

S. COL. COM. HEALTH BRD.: WELLNESS FUNDS DISTRIB. - RECOG.

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the South Colchester Community Health Board in addressing food insecurity through distribution of their Wellness Funds.

Examples of the programs receiving funds include: Upper Stewiacke Elementary School to provide healthy free lunches to the students, increasing their awareness of healthy options and the ability to try new food; the Musquodoboit Valley Family Resources Centre, for offering free veggie and fruit bags each month, as well as providing a food cupboard; and the Stewiacke Community Meals Group, in support of their Edible Landscape project, planting fruit trees and berry bushes.

All of these creative community initiatives addressing food insecurities are given a much-needed boost and support by the South Colchester Community Health Board.

Mr. Speaker, I commend all these groups for their efforts and dedication.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

PADDOCK, W./GALLIVAN, J. - GALA XMAS EVENT FOR SRS. - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today to recognize Wayne Paddock and Jack Gallivan, residents of Whites Lake, for their volunteer work to host a gala Christmas event for seniors.

The past two years have been especially hard on seniors and caused a disproportional amount of social isolation and loneliness. Pandemic restrictions required community centres and Legions to close their doors, resulting in seniors having to change their daily routines, reduce their mobility, and reduce their social interactions. Given the toll our seniors have endured, I was especially pleased when Wayne and Jack joined forces to host an elegant evening for our seniors to enjoy tasty food, friendly conversation, and good company.

Thanks to Wayne and Jack's initiative and community spirit, the Prospect Road seniors were treated to an elegant dinner and dance. Wayne, Jack, and a team of volunteers worked together to purchase everything needed to prepare a full turkey dinner, decorate the Legion for Christmas, arrange for music, set up the hall for dancing, and even bring a visit from Santa. It was a joy to see the Christmas spirit alive and well in Terence Bay despite the challenges the pandemic has given us. With careful planning, Wayne and Jack even managed to host the event just ahead of the tightening of restrictions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Wayne and Jack for creating a delightful evening for the Prospect Road seniors, and for their contributions to enhance the quality of life in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

OICKLE, COLBY: ATHLETE OF YR. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: On March 30th, Special Olympians were rewarded for their dedication and successes during the 28th annual Nova Scotia Inspired Awards. I rise today to congratulate Queens County's Colby Oickle on being named the Provincial Male Athlete of the Year.

Colby competes in track and field, snowshoeing, floor hockey, and softball. He has competed at the provincial and national Winter and Summer Games, attending his first national Winter competition in Thunder Bay in 2020. Impressively, Colby was selected to compete at the World Winter Games as part of Team Canada's snowshoeing team.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to please join me in applauding Colby on receiving this well-deserved award. Queens County is proud of you, Colby. You set a shining example of what hard work and dedication to sport can accomplish.

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

FOUGERE, WILLIAM: ORGAN RECIP. - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I rise today to recognize the importance of organ donation and highlight one of my constituents, William Fougere, who was given a second chance at life, thanks to the generosity of another. (Interruption)

Mr. Fougere of Fairview was suffering from a disease that obstructed his airway. He needed a double lung transplant which, after a long process, and a lot of guidance from doctors, he received in 2012. Since then, he has joined the board of the Lung Association of Nova Scotia, where he serves alongside the doctor who actually helped him get on the transplant list.

William is an active member of our community, funny, kind, and a true leader - all gifts he gives back to our community, which is only possible because of the gift he received from organ donation.

Organ donation gave William another chance at life, and today, on Green Shirt Day, I invite all members to join me in thanking William for his work to our community and encourage all Nova Scotians to remain registered as organ donors.

THE SPEAKER: The member had a little bit of competition as she was making her member's statement.

The honourable member for Kings North.

TAPROOT FARMS: RECIP. OF MOBIUS AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I rise today to congratulate TapRoot Farms owners Patricia Bishop and Josh Oulton of Port Williams as 2021 Mobius Award winners. The Mobius Awards of Environmental Excellence recognize organizations and individuals who go above and beyond to divert waste from landfills in Nova Scotia.

Patricia Bishop and Josh Oulton are committed to sustainable farming and supporting our community by reducing the amount of food loss happening on their farm while also reducing local food insecurity. They run a community support agriculture program, helping to ensure they do not plant more than what will be purchased. They have also established a food delivery program for people who identify as food-insecure.

Please join me today to recognize Patricia and Josh's hard work and their commitment to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax-Armdale.

DAL. MUSLIM STUDENTS ASSOC.: COM. BLDG. INITS. - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: I guess we all deserve attention, so Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the Dalhousie Muslim Students Association for their community-building initiatives and supportive atmosphere of inclusion that they provide for students from all walks of life.

Dalhousie University has a growing number of students who identify as Muslim. It's important for a student-led group like this to exist in order to provide the new students with a level of community and comfort as they begin an important new chapter in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, this pandemic has been hard on many. It is community-focused groups like the Dalhousie Muslim Student Association that will lead us out of this isolation and into our new normal.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

TOTTEN, SANDY: 1ST PUBLISHED NOVEL - CONGRATS.

JOHN. A MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Sandy Totten of Belnan for her first published book. As you would expect, Sandy has a great skill with words, however that is not her only skill. She was also a very active volunteer with the Hants East Rural High School hockey team for years.

Once elected as the MLA, I was fortunate when she offered to continue helping with member statements, which she had been doing for years for the previous MLA. She has been a great support to me and my constituency assistant, as we have gone to Sandy for advice on several occasions.

Sandy's book *The One We Forgot to Love* is a reflection on her life experiences, which she used to create this fictional novel. I would like all the members of the House to offer our congratulations to Sandy on her first published book.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

CPA BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM: PROV. CH'SHIPS. - BEST WISHES

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to wish the best of luck to the CPA Boys Basketball team as they get set for the upcoming provincial championships this weekend in Truro.

Seeking the school's first ever championship, the team has already had a very successful season. They finished second in the Capital Region last weekend. In particular, I do want to recognize their head coach Steve Harris, and assistant coach Pat McIver, who I had the great pleasure of coaching the team with between 2015 and 2018. I just want to wish the team the best of luck this weekend - and go Cheetahs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

MELONG, DEE: VOLUN. TAX PGM. EFFORTS - RECOG.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a dedicated volunteer in our community, Dee Melong of Havre Boucher.

Dee has faithfully volunteered her time for the last 12 years to the Community Volunteer Tax Program. This program collaborates with community organizations and volunteers to provide free tax preparation services for those with a modest income who are unable to complete their own returns.

Tax season is a busy time for Dee, as her professional business is also tax preparation. She has dedicated countless hours during tax season to drive the 88-kilometre round trip from her home to our constituency office to pick up envelopes of constituents' documents. She does it all with a smile and so much genuine kindness.

I ask that the house recognize Dee Melong for her dedication to the Volunteer Tax Program and her long-standing assistance to the constituents of Guysborough-Tracadie.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

LOVELL, JUSTIN: CB FLY FISHING LAUNCH

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and congratulate Sydney Mines resident Justin Lovell, the owner of CB Fly Fishing.

Justin operates a guiding program where he introduces anglers to fly fishing in beautiful Cape Breton rivers. Justin loves to share his love of the sport with others, especially veterans. He loves to work with veterans and help them to discover fly fishing. He also teaches fly fishing, which is a great pastime for anyone who's interested in the sport of fly fishing.

On top of all of this, Justin operates his own TV show on Seaside Cable called *Cape Breton Fly Fishing* where he talks about how to tie flies and the different exploits that he's had on the rivers and lakes in Cape Breton.

I would encourage anyone who's interested in learning about fly fishing to take in one of Justin's episodes or to take him up on a guided tour. I ask the House to congratulate Justin on his new business in Cape Breton.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

CLARKE, ERIKA: SOW LOCAL SEEDS LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Eastern Shore entrepreneur Erika Clarke. Erika recently launched Sow Local Seeds, a sustainable seed-producing farm in Head of Jeddore.

Sow Local Seeds is a seed-producing farm providing Nova Scotia-grown vegetable, flower, and herb seeds to home gardeners across Canada. The seeds are non-genetically modified, untreated, and produced using sustainable practices. Her core values are to support local, to be transparent, and to grow sustainably.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Erika on her new venture.

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

YOUNG PERFS. COLL.: NEW STUDIO - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand and recognize the Young Performers Collective, a performing arts school that has been serving Dartmouth and Cole Harbour for the past three years. The school provides high-quality professional training and opportunities in musical theatre, dance, and music to young aspiring performers.

Their success has seen them outgrow their existing school space so this Summer, they'll move into their new home in Portland Hills, offering their students an expanded set of performing arts programs. The new facility will include a dance studio, theatre with a stage, and a space for an audience of up to 100, and also a soundproof booth for recording.

The YPC's mission is to provide a nurturing non-competitive environment with fully inclusive programs so that young performers can grow and make lifelong friends. I ask that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating the Young Performers Collective and wishing them every continued success.

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

BONNAR, NICK: HOCKEY & BASEBALL COACHING - RECOG.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in my place to recognize Nick Bonnar. Nick Bonnar takes volunteering to a whole new level. Nick, or Coach, as he is known, has been coaching hockey and baseball for 53 years from Tots to Junior "A" and from T-Ball through to university baseball.

In Major Little League, Coach has led two Glace Bay teams to national titles, while in University Baseball, his Capers won the 2005 Canadian Championship. He is a past president of the Glace Bay Minor Hockey Association. He rebuilt the Glace Bay Antonians Minor Baseball team, which included rebuilding the field.

He spent 30 years refereeing floor hockey tournaments, and 18 years coordinating the pre-school hockey program. Coach has participated in 18 national championships. He is the founder of two annual tournaments, the Jason Simmons Hockey tournament and the Robbie McDonald Memorial Baseball Tournament, which both have scholarships for schools.

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

LUCAS, LEANNE: ACAD. SUCC. - CONGRATS.

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Leanne Lucas, born and raised in Lucasville, Nova Scotia.

She attended Dalhousie University, completing a Bachelor of Science on scholarship, receiving honours in co-op chemistry. Subsequently, she received a Master of Science in physics and atmospheric sciences. (Interruption) If the members across the way would like to let me get through this statement, I would appreciate it.

While at Dalhousie, she was awarded the Faculty of Science Undergraduate Research Prize. Since graduating, she proudly works in developing cancer

immunotherapies at IMV Inc. She was the recipient of the inaugural Ancestral Roots Award for science from the Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute, and she somehow finds time to volunteer with the Lucasville Greenway Society, the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Women in Science Education.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in congratulating Leanne Lucas on all of her successes.

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

MIHAI, MARIA: MATH OLYMPIAD TEST PLACE EARNED - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand today to congratulate 14-year-old Maria Mihai, a math prodigy from Lockview High School.

Maria competed against thousands of students across Canada to earn a place in the European Girls Math Olympiad Canada Team Selection Team Test. She was one of 50 students who was offered the chance to write the team selection test, from which the top 15 will compete for Canada.

Maria has participated in many math-related workshops and competitions, winning the first prize at the Inventive Bridge Engineers Nova Scotia competition at the Halifax Central Public Library in 2018.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Maria on her success and wish her the best in all her academic pursuits.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. Nobody wants to talk; can you believe it?

The honourable member for Bedford Basin with 19 seconds.

GREEN SHIRT DAY: HONOURING LOGAN BOULET - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would just like to note that some of us are wearing green pins in the House today. This is in recognition of Green Shirt Day, which honours Humboldt Broncos defenceman Logan Boulet, who perished in the Humboldt tragedy.

His parents donated all of his organs . . .

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is 2:00 p.m. We'll finish at 2:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: COVID-19 CASE COUNT - UPDATE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, this is now the third day in the House that I have had to ask the Premier for COVID-19 data because he is withholding it from Nova Scotians once again. I'm sure it's not a surprise today that my first question to the Premier is: I ask for a COVID-19 case count today.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, this is the day that the case numbers are reported, the weekly epidemiology report, the same one that Dr. Strang and Public Health get. If it's not public now, it will be at some point today.

I just remind the member that at this stage in the pandemic, after two years of learning, two years of information, focusing solely on case numbers is not what Nova Scotians should be doing. They know the risks around them. They know COVID is around them in the community and they have the tools to protect themselves and to protect their loved ones.

In answer to the member's question - I don't want to pre-empt the data upload, if it has been done already - but in answer to the member's question, the case counts, the positive PCR for today is 1,305.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, it's great to know the case numbers. I'd just like to ask the Premier: Is he concerned with the trend now? My understanding is that cases over 1,000 a day, with unprecedented positivity rates from that testing - does that concern him? Will he revisit, as he said in the last COVID-19 briefing, what he is prepared to do to ensure keeping Nova Scotians safe?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as we have said a number of times, COVID is around us, for sure. People shouldn't wait for government reporting to know that. They know that from talking anecdotally through their social circles and they should take the steps that they know to protect themselves.

Also, it should not be lost on the member that we have lots of tools now that we didn't have two years ago. There's high immunity from vaccines, from high vaccine rates, but also from previous infections as well. People have the tools they need.

We'll continue to do the weekly reporting. Public Health is very much engaged in this as they always have been. They may not be as visible, but the work of Public Health is rarely visible, Mr. Speaker, to Nova Scotians.

Am I concerned about the amount of COVID-19? Of course I am, and I think every Nova Scotian should be. Am I confident that Nova Scotians know what to do? I am very confident in that.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, case counts are just part of the reason why people are asking for the information, so that they know and they can make informed decisions. We know Dr. Strang is available for media this afternoon, but the Premier isn't at present. My question to the Premier is: Are the days of COVID-19 briefings with the government aligned with Public Health, sitting together, delivering clear recommendations - are they over now?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as we move through the pandemic the response changes, the virus changes, the facts change, the response changes. Certainly, it's been an honour to be publicly visible next to Public Health and Dr. Strang. We certainly work extremely closely with Public Health and Dr. Strang, and the minister and the team at the Department of Health and Wellness, and also the Nova Scotia Health Authority. There are a lot of people working very closely together.

In terms of the best people at this stage in the pandemic to share information with Nova Scotians, to help Nova Scotians interpret information, and help Nova Scotians understand information, I think those are the health care professionals, and I would say that we have the confidence in Public Health to allow them to speak directly to Nova Scotians and that's what we'll continue to do.

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

PREM.: BUDGET DISAPPOINTMENT- RESPOND

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, since the budget was first presented, we've heard a lot of strident self-satisfaction from the Premier, as though he were unaware of the number of people who are really disappointed by the budget. The Canadian Mental Health Association says the budget falls short on addressing the social determinants of health. The Ecology Action Centre says the budget doesn't take the necessary steps to move ideas into action. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives says the budget doesn't meet the current challenges of the cost of living.

My question to the Premier is: Is he out of touch with the number of people who are disappointed with this budget?

THE PREMIER: No.

GARY BURRILL: The Canadian Federation of Students says the budget lacks solutions for the future on the affordability of post-secondary education. The Canadian Union of Public Employees says the budget does not adequately address decades of neglect. The director of the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers calls it a budget of unmet needs. Will the Premier acknowledge that his boasting about a \$13 billion budget might fall a little flat for a person making \$13.35?

THE PREMIER: Here's what I'd say: I respect and appreciate the concerns that people raise about government policy, about government priorities, government spending. For the sake of our democracy there will always be those who look to find the other side. That plays an important role in our democracy. I would suggest to the member that maybe even the member could find it in himself to acknowledge that in \$13 billion investments, there's at least some good in there.

GARY BURRILL: On the day that the budget was tabled by the government, Sheri Lecker, executive director of Adsum for Women & Children, said this:

"Life is gruelling for too many Nova Scotians. We try to remain hopeful - in our work, in our hearts. But days like this are tough. When those who could deliver real hope, solutions, and truly affordable housing fail to come through for folks, we do feel a degree of defeat."

Does the Premier acknowledge that there are many people for whom real hope and real solutions are not provided or offered in this budget?

THE PREMIER: Look, this is an incredibly stressful time for Nova Scotians. There's no question, with the cost of living changes, with the realities of life, the stresses that people are under. There's no question that it's a very difficult time for Nova Scotians. I don't want to minimize that for one second. I feel that very personally.

We'll do what we can as a government. I believe we've shown that in our government. I have great respect for the work that Adsum House does. That's why this government continues to support them and invest in them. Will there always be a need for more? Yes, there will always be a need for more.

We tabled a \$13 billion budget, and I would suggest if that were \$20 billion, there would still be those who say not enough. You know what, Mr. Speaker? They may be right, but we will do what we can for Nova Scotians every single day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

EECD: SCHOOL COVID CASES - UPDATE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Parents across the province are concerned by the lack of COVID data reported in our schools. Students are sick and teachers are short-staffed and overworked, and Nova Scotians are left without the facts. Can the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development tell us how many COVID cases are in our schools right now?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: We understand that people are concerned about COVID. We are also concerned about COVID. We've been with COVID now for two years, and it's been a challenge for everyone, but we are very proud of the work that educators are doing, and administrators are doing, and students are doing to remain in school and to keep learning. We're continuing to follow the advice of Public Health, and as we've heard already today, we need to understand COVID is in our communities and COVID is in our schools, and we have the tools to be able to handle that.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Again, to the Minister of Department of Education and Early Childhood Development: It's extremely concerning that the government is choosing not to share the facts with Nova Scotians when they're hearing of upwards of 30 per cent infections in some schools. Can the minister explain why the government has stopped sharing COVID information with families?

BECKY DRUHAN: What I would say to the member is we have the facts. We have the information. The information and the facts are that COVID is in our communities. COVID is everywhere. We know that. COVID is all around us. We have to expect that COVID is on the bus next to us, is in the store with us, is in our school with us, and we have the tools in place to deal with that. We are supporting our students and supporting our educators and supporting our communities to live with COVID.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

EECD: NEW SCHOOL IN TIMB. - COMMIT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. There was land set aside for building a new school in Timberlea, Brunello Estates (Interruption). You have a nice tie on today, so I'll give you a break.

There was land set aside in Brunello Estates to build a new school for future growth of BLT. In Summer 2021, a sign was put up that they no longer planned to develop a school on this land. As a result, Brunello Estates is making amendments to build more homes. Timberlea schools are at capacity.

With continued growth in Brunello Estates approved and another development in Beechville with approximately 500 single homes approved, will the department commit to secure new land to hold for a school expansion or revisit the release of that land in Brunello Estates?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: What I will say is that all of the projects that were in our school Capital Plan, we are committed to and continuing with. Our Capital Plan that was just released reflects that. We're very excited for the new schools that we have in our Capital Plan and that we're working towards.

What I will also say is that we fully recognize that there are population pressures. As a government, we're committed to increasing population in the province, and we are well aware that we need to plan proactively to manage infrastructure for that. We will do everything we need to do to make those plans and to deliver and meet those needs.

IAIN RANKIN: With those population growth plans, we definitely need more schools, especially in HRM. The Timberlea area is one of the fastest-growing areas.

The BLT community centre is being rebuilt for 2024 with support from all three levels of government. I think this is a prime opportunity to look at options to increase capital from the province to this building and potentially host pre-Primary or more.

Will the department consider an increase in capital investment to this project through HRM to ensure that this opportunity is considered as it has been in other places in HRM where you have recreation alongside education infrastructure?

BECKY DRUHAN: I would be happy, as I am happy, to meet with any of the members to discuss local needs around education and around schools. I would say we have been in a role in government in seven or maybe eight months now. In terms of capital planning, that's something that takes a long time to put in place. I have inherited the projects and the infrastructure that the government prior to us put in place, and we're doing everything we can, as quickly as we can, to meet all the needs across Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

EECD: FRENCH LANG. EDUC. - PROTECT

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on March 8th, I wrote a letter to both the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie calling on them to work with the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. I will table that. I called on these ministers to develop separate and Charter-compliant legislation to ensure the protection of French first language education.

My question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: Has the minister or the public service prepared separate and Charter-compliant legislation that can be tabled in this House this session that will protect French language education?

[2:15 p.m.]

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: We at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development value and understand the importance of the French language and the culture and the importance of enforcing supporting that in our education system. I can advise the member that I and the Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie are looking forward to meeting with the CSAP. We have a meeting scheduled when the House rises, and we very much look forward to furthering the conversation with the CSAP about the needs of our French communities in education.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, it's imperative that this government table legislation this session that is separate and Charter-compliant to protect French first language education. The CSAP has been asking this government to meet it since November. Why isn't this a priority for the government, and why has it taken so long to schedule a meeting?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: As my honourable colleague the Minister of Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has indicated, we have in fact set a time to meet with the CSAP. We're both, myself and the minister, looking forward to that meeting once the House rises. As the minister indicated in a previous response, she said that she inherited the capital project for the department, but what we have also inherited as a government is the government's inaction over three years of taking care of this file, so we very much look forward to taking care of it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH: SHORT-TERM RENTALS - IMPACT ON AFF. HOUSING

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In October, the government produced a seven-page document called *A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Housing and Homelessness*. The document says that the minister will meet with municipalities over the Fall and Winter to talk about the increasing number of short-term rentals across the province. Will the minister provide an update on the consultation with municipalities around the impact of short-term rentals on affordable housing?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I have met with over half of our municipal units, councils, mayors, wardens and councillors, and those consultations have covered a lot of subjects, but yes, short-term rentals have been discussed. I think I can say that there will be more to follow on short-term rentals coming from our government in the future.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, in many areas of the province popular with tourists, this is the season when year-round residents find themselves evicted from their rental properties so the landlord can make extra profit by listing their unit as a short-term rental for the Summer months. The government's document from October says that we need to ensure short-term rentals do not negatively impact affordable housing and that the minister will introduce legislation around this growing industry in this Spring of 2022.

We know that short-term rentals are having a negative impact on affordable housing. My question is: When will the minister bring forward legislation to address it?

JOHN LOHR: It is something that we've done in an enormous amount. Let me just say that our concern is for Nova Scotians and for affordable housing, for housing availability for all Nova Scotians. We're in a housing crisis, an absolute housing crisis.

There have been a number of things we've done, as the member knows. We've gone through the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Commission and there are many other things that this government is doing, including things like building more residences for NSCC, and things like that. We're addressing the problem in many ways, and as a government, we made a commitment to address that and there will be more to come.

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

EECD: OVERFLOWING CLASSROOMS - ADDRESS

PATRICIA ARAB: The population of Fairview-Clayton Park is increasing rapidly, with thousands of new units either under way or approved for construction. Who will fill these units? Families. My schools are at capacity. There's no room for portables, classrooms are overflowing. As we grow our population, we need a government that will be proactive and not reactive to this growth. My question for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: What is the plan, the actual plan - not just saying there is one - what is the plan to address our overflowing classrooms in schools?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: We as a government have an ambitious plan to grow our population in Nova Scotia. That's important for our economy, it's important for our future, and we're very excited about that. We're also very excited about the population growth that has already occurred. It's wonderful for communities.

I can say that our region and our department work very hard to ensure that we meet the population needs of our schools, but we have inherited eight years of planning and it's where we are. In the seven to eight months that we've had, the current situation I think is one that we can look to the past on, but I can assure the member opposite that we have a plan for meeting the needs as we move forward.

PATRICIA ARAB: Again, talk of a plan but no actual details on the plan, so let's move to the Capital Plan that was tabled by the government recently. I was pleased to see that one of my new schools was listed - Clayton Park-Fairview School - but was concerned to see that the overall Capital Plan for education is down \$42 million compared to previous government plans. My question for the minister: As this government is planning on doubling our population, why aren't our capital investments in education keeping pace?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I can assure the member opposite that there's been no reduction in planning, no reduction in our projects, and no reduction in spending. There were some questions that have arisen as a result of depreciation and what that looks like from an accounting perspective, but actual spending is not being decreased. I can assure the member opposite that we are fully committed to the projects that we have in place now. We are moving forward with them. We look forward to releasing new projects to meet the needs of Nova Scotians as we continue to grow our population.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

EECD: AVRCE MARKING POLICY - REVIEW

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent who needed to wait the required time to get her child fully vaccinated, so she kept her Grade 2 student home from January to March. She worked with the school staff to have work sent home and worked with Google Classroom. Her son worked exceptionally hard to complete all the work with support from parents.

Recently, after months of hard work, they were informed that the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education is requiring teachers to mark any child working from home on their report card with an "Insufficient" even though it was not done when schools were virtual earlier in the pandemic.

Administrators at the Annapolis Valley Regional Education Centre's response: The administrator stated that he doubted enough evidence could be generated from the Google activities to provide enough material for an honest assessment.

Does the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development agree that a hard-working Grade 2 student deserves an "Insufficient" mark decided by the policy of an administrator and not a teacher? Will she look into reviewing this and changing this unfair policy?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: This is not a situation that I've been made aware of, and it is very concerning to me what you've described. I'm not aware of the particular situation, so I'd be very happy to speak with the member and get to the bottom of this particular issue.

KEITH IRVING: The minister would have received a letter on my supplementary here. Landmark East School in Wolfville and Rowan's Room Developmental Society in Middleton and Cambridge are two important schools in Nova Scotia providing education for students with learning differences.

On November 5th last year, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development committed to me and the member for Kings West to visit these two schools. When I advised both schools that the visit would be happening, they were very excited by the news. Unfortunately, after several requests to the minister's special advisor and a follow-up letter from myself over the last five months for a date for these visits, no date has been confirmed. Will the minister please commit to visiting these schools before May 31st?

BECKY DRUHAN: I can assure the member opposite that I am fully committed to visiting with the schools and I'm very excited to do so. I have been interacting with and visiting as many schools as possible. I've had multiple conversations with teachers through staff meetings. Through the course of the last wave of COVID, when there were restrictions in schools, I wasn't able to go and visit in person. I was as much disappointed in that as it sounds like the schools were. I very much look forward to seeing them in person in the near future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

LSI - INJURED COAL MINERS: MTG. WITH PREM. - REQUEST

FRED TILLEY: Coal miners in Cape Breton have long been the backbone of our communities. They've provided for us over the years and provided for their families. Mr. Speaker, many coal miners have been actually injured on their jobs. Their disability benefits are either gone or are running out. These wonderful members of our society are looking for a meeting with our Premier. My question is to the Premier: Will you meet with the injured coal miners and please hear their concerns?

HON. JILL BALSER: We want to be able to hear from all communities, of course, if there are injuries in the workplace. We're committed to listening to Nova Scotians and making sure that they know what's available to them through the department and the supports that are available. Being able to have a further conversation with the member would be really appreciated to learn more about what the issues are.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, respectfully to the minister, the issues are well-known, and this group has been trying to get a meeting with our current Premier for quite some time. They've indicated that they're willing to travel to meet with the Premier. They'll do anything they can to meet with the Premier so that he can hear their story. One of our own Cape Breton members has put a bill on the floor so the government should be well aware of the issue that's happening here in Cape Breton.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is - and we've heard from the Premier that he meets with people all the time. He meets with groups all the time. Will the Premier commit to meeting with this group of injured workers after the House sits this session?

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think the member is asking about these injured workers who are coal miners, who were essentially employees of the federal government. Without hearing his exact issue being indicated in his question, I'm left to assume that it's a matter that I may be familiar with. It may have to do with these workers having been employed, essentially, by the federal government and having pension benefits through the federal government and hoping to have those benefits augmented.

That is really a matter, as I understand it, for the federal government. If the member wishes to ask a question and actually spell it out, I'd also be happy to take a crack at answering it, if this does not provide an answer for him.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

NRR - ATL. WHITEFISH: PROPOSED HARVEST - COMMENT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. The department business plan talks about responding to the wildlife crisis and about species declining to critical thresholds, but this is hardly reassuring to people who have been fighting to save the Atlantic whitefish. Without warning, the department recently posted a proposed harvest on Minamkeak Lake, a key part of a Noah's ark project to save the species from extinction.

Paul Bentzen, a scientist from Dalhousie, has said that this is the last best place for these fish on the planet. It really ought to be protected at the highest level. My question is: Does the minister agree?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: We don't put anybody on alert when something's going to be put on the page for community correspondence or input to any harvest plan. As was indicated to the member's staff earlier this month, or late last month, it's in the initial stages for public comment. I'm not sure if it's still on that web page or not, but it's not an approved plan, and our staff have yet to approve that block or disapprove that block. It's going through the process right now.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I thank the minister for that answer, because I want to ask about the process. We've been waiting years for the implementation of the Lahey review's triad model. This sets aside land for conservation as well as for matrix and high-production forestry. But until that classification happens, it cannot be said that these cuts are being made with reference to Lahey. It's not implemented until the triad model is implemented.

While we wait, Nova Scotians still have to fight for recognition of ecologically sensitive areas. At Beals Brook, citizens have forced the department to recognize species at risk in that area, but instead of admitting the mistake and reversing the cut, the department has just tweaked the plan. Will the minister commit to halting this harvest until the area is evaluated for the conservation leg of the triad?

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the plan hasn't even been approved yet. It's going through the process.

As far as the Lahey implementation, that triad model about the ecological forestry. The recommendation from the Lahey review was that we needed to have the SGEM approved ASAP. It was sitting on my desk the very first week that I was there. I approved it the very first week. Harvest plans are now meeting the SGEM approved by the Lahey review.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

NRR- HUNTING NEAR POP. AREAS: CONCERN - ADDRESS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, an issue arose in my riding a few months ago. We've actually seen hunting with long guns and crossbows in an area bordering on residential backyards in one neighbourhood. This took place in an area east of Highway No. 102, so as you're heading down toward the Bedford Highway, it's absolutely suburbia.

We know most hunters are law-abiding citizens. In this case, the residents confronted the hunters, who eventually moved to a small patch of land that was just far enough away from the local school, homes, and the local highway - all landmarks that are associated with various pieces of legislation around hunting, which I will table. For example, a hunter using a weapon may not discharge it closer than 804 metres from a public school, but they can do so at closer distances from other landmarks.

My constituents would like to enjoy their backyards without worrying that their children will be injured. Does the minister have any advice for my constituents?

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, of course this is an issue in any area where rural and urban do meet. The fact of the matter is that hunting is a recognized sport, a recreational opportunity in our province. I would certainly encourage the member's residents to reach out to those numbers that would entail the RCMP, HRM police staff, and the conservation officers who are trained on how to deal and spec out those locations. The member is quite right: There are jurisdictions and distances that are marked out in the hunting regulations and we expect Nova Scotians to follow those rules.

[2:30 p.m.]

KELLY REGAN: Actually, what we did do is reach out to his department and they suggested that I reach out to the landowner, which I did, because the area they were hunting on is obviously owned by someone and he posted “No Hunting” signs there. So great, except that my constituents made what I thought was a really good point: Why do children in daycares and private schools not have the same amount of protection from errant bullets or arrows as children attending schools?

I would be happy to have the minister come to my constituency and I would show him the area and we’ll wear hunter orange, just to be sure. I would ask that he act to ensure that all children, whether they attend private school or whether they attend daycare, have the same protection as children who attend public school.

TORY RUSHTON: Without knowing the area 100 per cent, I certainly would like to carry this conversation further. The safety of Nova Scotians, but especially our children in Nova Scotia, is of the utmost importance to any government that sits on this side of the House, and I wouldn’t expect any less from my colleagues here or my staff. I certainly want to have this conversation further.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ECC - NORTHERN PULP: BLUE RIBBON PANEL - INFORM

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the forestry sector is not only critical to our provincial economy, particularly in rural Nova Scotia, but as we move towards an ecological forestry model, and as innovations happen in wood products from renewable energy sources to renewable construction materials, it’s also critical for us to actually reduce our carbon footprint and have a greener economy.

While in Opposition, the Premier - and I’ll table this letter dated May 6, 2020, which was sent to the then-Minister of Environment, Gordon Wilson - demanded that the government of the day establish an independent, blue ribbon panel of experts to assess the environmental approval for Northern Pulp.

Could the Premier please inform the House if it is his intention, now that he is governing, to follow through on that demand that he placed on the previous government?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: As the honourable members of the House are aware, we have a Class II environmental assessment that’s taking place. That process is ongoing. Northern Pulp has two years to put forward its environmental assessment. As the regulator, I’ll be a strong steward of that process.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Considering that I tabled the words of the Premier, it would be important to know if that commitment that he made still holds, now that he is Premier of the province.

Another commitment that this party made was for full implementation of the Lahey report, a blueprint that allows us to move towards a more ecological and sustainable forestry model. It is also supported by the industry, by many in the environmental community, and by citizens broadly. Could the Premier please inform the House when will Lahey be fully implemented?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Forestry is very important to this side of the House. That blueprint was sitting on my desk from the previous minister. I signed off on the SGEM the very first day that I was sitting in the office. Mr. Speaker, we've made sure that all the previous harvests would meet that interim retention guideline, or the SGEM. The harvest plans do now. Going forward, we'll meet the SGEM's stabilization for ecological forestry. The next parts of the triad, they're being worked on as we speak. I picked up where the previous government left off. We're carrying the torch.

Everyone in this House had all said we endorse the Lahey review process. Lahey's words himself: This is not a single-generation response, but we're working on it right now.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DOJ: LAND TITLES INIT. - UPDATE

ANGELA SIMMONDS: The Land Titles Initiative aims to remove barriers towards righting an historic wrong, starting with 18th-century Black settlers who were not given legal title to their land. On March 5, 2021, retired judges Corrine Sparks and Valerie Miller were appointed as commissioners to adjudicate disputes to help speed up the process and efforts under the initiative.

A year ago, when I was executive director of this office, I was aware of files that were involving parties with competing claims that could move forward if the process of the commissioners were in place.

My question is for the Minister of Justice: When will the commissioners begin adjudicating disputes?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: At the department, we are currently in the process of looking at hiring independent consultation - outside firms - to help with this. I'll double-check and see when we anticipate that the claims will start being heard. The intent is to try to provide additional support to some of those more complicated cases than what we were able to give directly before in the department.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: The commissioners were in place to adjudicate, and what I believe the minister is referring to is the actual contract to give support to Nova Scotia Legal Aid, which is actually doing the files right now. My question is: Part of removing barriers is to have the commissioners, and will the hearings be available and accessible to community members?

BRAD JOHNS: I'm sorry, I couldn't quite hear what the actual question was. If (Interruption) I don't know, I'll ask and confirm.

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

LSI - ORGAN DONORS: PROTECTED LEAVE - COMMIT

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration. In Nova Scotia, around 20 per cent of kidney donations are living donations. Recovery time for these surgeries can be anywhere from two to 12 weeks, which can require donors to take time off work to recover, but currently leave for donating an organ is not listed on the other protected leaves, like critical illness or bereavement. This means that an organ donor may not have a job to return to after their recovery.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. There's a lot of chatter going on. The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier has the floor.

KENDRA COOMBES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, there was. Will the minister commit to adding 13 weeks of protected leave for organ donors to our Labour Standards Code?

HON. JILL BALSER: I really do appreciate the opportunity to learn more and more about issues that are impacting Nova Scotians, so the opportunity to speak to the member directly on these recommendations - I'd be really happy to do that and take it back to the department.

KENDRA COOMBES: I have another one for the minister. No one should be penalized financially when they are being victimized by a family member or partner. In Nova Scotia, we say we recognize this, but our labour laws only provide three paid days of leave for victims of domestic violence. That's three paid days across an entire year for seeking out medical help, consulting Victim Services, getting legal advice, or moving out of the home. Whether a victim of domestic violence, most often a woman, is leaving a relationship or coping with the effects of abuse, she should not be worried about losing pay.

My question is: Will the minister increase paid leave for victims of domestic violence so that they do not have to choose between taking care of themselves or paying the bills?

JILL BALSER: I really do appreciate the opportunity to sit down and talk a little bit more about these issues brought forward, and also knowing that it's important to engage with community partners, because the department is always learning, and we always want to be able to improve. We also learned from last Fall that language is so important as well. For Nova Scotians to know what they are eligible for is really important in terms of communication. Again, I really appreciate the opportunity to learn from the member and to be able to engage in this conversation further.

THE SPEAKER: Before we go further, it has been brought to my attention that there are still a number of members using their phones during Question Period. I don't know how many times people might have to be told, but please honour that. You'll have every opportunity at a later time to use your phones, but not now.

The honourable member for Bedford South.

DPW: BEDFORD-HFX. FERRY STUDY - UPDATE

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Public Works about our favourite topic of conversation, the Bedford-Halifax ferry. Since I last asked the minister about this in the House, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced 10,000 units for my riding, which I think makes the need for this ferry even more obvious. I and many other members are waiting for the results of a feasibility study that will lay out the path to get this ferry up and running.

I would like to ask the minister if she could update the House on when we might expect the results of that study.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to invite the member for Bedford South to meet at the department and talk with department staff about this very important issue that he has brought forward. The member would know that this has been a study that has been ongoing. We expect the planning phase and conceptual design to be back by the end of next month.

BRAEDON CLARK: I look forward to that. Of course, the biggest question on any project like this is funding and where the money comes from. If I could make a suggestion, perhaps: I wonder if the minister and her department would consider looking at the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program - specifically, the transit stream of that program, which as of last night has about \$170 million available to it. I'm wondering if this project in particular is eligible and a possibility for that funding stream.

KIM MASLAND: I thank my honourable colleague for his suggestions. I will say that obviously we have to wait for the actual report to come back. Once that report comes back, we absolutely will look at submitting the request through to Infrastructure Canada for Phase 2 of the project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

OMHA: PHYS. SHORTAGE - ADVISE

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: My question is for the Minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions. I'm looking for his advice on how we can solve what I call a gap in the system. A constituent who moved here from outside - or any constituent who does not have a family doctor - ended up at emergency, and they were lucky that they were referred to a psychiatrist.

He was seen by a psychiatrist. However, all he needed was medication, but the psychiatrist cannot prescribe medication if he doesn't have a family doctor who will monitor the medication. What is your advice and how can we solve this for this constituent?

HON. BRIAN COMER: If you have a consent signed and completed, just give it to me. We can dig into it, for sure.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I thank the minister for that. I'll definitely come to you with the details. I believe we have sent it to the department. We had consent and we have sent it, but I'll confirm that with my assistant.

My supplementary question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister please clarify - as I said last night at Estimates, we have lost quite a few doctors in Clayton Park West, and we have received an enormous amount of emails in the last couple of months. I don't know how bad the situation is in my riding.

My question to the minister is: Does the minister have a list of areas in the province where they need doctors? Is there a priority? Where is Clayton Park West on that list? If you don't have the list, would you provide it later?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: The Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment is working to develop - they have a working plan, but they're looking at more of a strategic plan. They're working with physicians to understand where they would like best to practise. I don't have anything to give you today, but we will continue to work with the office to support physician recruitment in the province.

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

ECC: SACKVILLE LANDFILL - UPDATE

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, in light of recent events related to the Otter Lake landfill and the dismissal of the commitment made by successive governments to the community of Timberlea-Prospect, it begs the question about the future of the Sackville landfill. I would like to ask the Minister of Environment and Climate Change: Has there

been an application from the HRM to reopen the Sackville landfill? What would he do if that application shows up?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Not that I am aware, but like anything, in a regulatory department like mine, I'll ensure that the process is followed.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to note that we have two former councillors, now ministers of the Cabinet, who have shown public opposition to this, so much so that the now-Minister of Justice tabled Bill No. 116, the Sackville Landfill Closure Act. I'll table that. My question is to the Minister of Justice: Is it his intent to pursue that ambition, now that he is a member of the sitting Cabinet?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the inference is here, but I want to reiterate to this House that for any application that is submitted, a process is followed. As the regulator, I ensure that process is followed, and I ensure that all decisions made within my department are based on science, data, and facts.

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

DHW: MIN. APPT. FOR 2SLGBTQ+ COM - COMMIT

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Nova Scotia are diverse and vibrant, but references to these communities were absent from this government's election platform, Speech from the Throne, Budget Address, and every single minister's mandate letter. This is emblematic of the fact that my community continues to face regular inequities and discrimination in government services. This government cannot address these issues if there's no one in government accountable for them. Will the Premier commit to appointing a minister responsible for 2SLGBTQ+ issues to his Cabinet?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Moving forward, we know that we need to seek better representation in our departments. We always want to make sure that communities can see themselves. I would be happy to talk to the member about some of her ideas regarding how we can better support and represent the community.

LISA LACHANCE: With all due respect to the Minister of Health and Wellness, I don't want to speak to the member as the Minister of Health and Wellness. I want to speak to the Premier. The Premier is the person who can develop the Cabinet. I would, however, welcome the opportunity to speak to the Minister of Health and Wellness if they were the Minister for 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about the policy absences of this government. The Progressive Conservatives received an F grade for their responses . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island has the floor.

LISA LACHANCE: Thank you. The budget has no new investments for 2SLGBTQ+ specific issues and the underfunded prideHealth remains underfunded. Queries and requests have been referred previously to the Minister Responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, which of course was very problematic for people in my community. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier agree to develop an action plan that will address 2SLGBTQ+ issues and celebrate and support these Nova Scotians?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, we want to make sure that government is representative of people in our communities. I'm happy to meet with the member to discuss how we can better support particularly the Nova Scotia Health Authority, as we talked about yesterday, to make sure that folks can navigate the system in a more meaningful way. I would be happy to sit, once the House rises, and have a chance to speak with you.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put By Members to Ministers has expired. We will take a 10-minute recess before we get into debate on Supply.

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

[3:00 p.m. The House reconvened.]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

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

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

THE SPEAKER: We will resume debate going into Supply.

The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, a budget is a signalling of government's priorities. You can tell a lot about who a government is really when we look at where they

are spending their money and their time. If I were judging this government based on only this budget, I would say that I do not know the Nova Scotians they were speaking with or proposing solutions for. They are not anyone whom I've spoken with.

The Nova Scotians whom I'm talking about are those Nova Scotians who are struggling to make ends meet. They are definitely not Black Nova Scotians, they're not newcomers, they are not people from the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, those who believe that housing is a crisis. They are not anyone who cares about the environment or climate change.

The proposals in these documents earmark funding for programs that I have never heard anyone ask for and they fail to make the investments that Nova Scotians have told me that we need. The budget creates a fund to revitalize hockey rinks but doesn't allow for Black seniors from land title communities to access some grants.

In highlighting some of the challenges of this budget, I will do two things: First, I will consider the health care elements of the budget. I will discuss why this overall number, as impressive as it seems, does not tell the whole story. Second, I will discuss some of the measures that for some reason were not a priority for the government.

First, on health care, the budget is disappointing, with one exception: The exception is certainly that increased spending on health care. The overall number looks great but there are two main problems with the way this is framed in the budget. The first is that this proposal makes these decisions look like they were taken by the government, when in fact many were legislated by the federal government. They were made possible through federal transfers.

Second is the fact that the dollar figure is not the whole story. How we spend those public dollars is extremely important and we have not done that the fair way. On the increase, the government says they will be spending an increase of \$413.4 million from last year, although this falls almost \$30 million short of the government's own campaign commitment. I think we all know that the health system needs these investments but it is unfair for any of us to take credit for the work they did not sink into it.

Many of the health care investments that we're seeing in this province are the direct result of investments made by the federal government. This is mostly accomplished through federal transfer payments. Increased health spending is great news for Nova Scotians, but we need to thank those who made it happen - the people who advocated for these transfers and my federal Liberal colleagues and former Premier McNeil. They not only negotiated increased health transfers from Ottawa to Nova Scotia, but they also secured specific investment agreements in mental health and long-term care.

While the federal government has long transferred funds to Nova Scotia for health care, this is among the first times that the federal government has insisted that money go

towards home care and mental health services. This is not to say that the increased spending is any less of a big news story for Nova Scotians, but if we want more of our colleagues to have conversations such as this, then we ought to see the positive benefit here of being able to thank them for their work that they have done and give them credit where credit is due.

Thanks to the increases to the federal transfers, the funds from Home and Community Care, and Mental Health and Addictions Services Funding Agreement, and even \$27 million from the Safe Long-Term Care Fund we have no reason not to see improvements in our health care system. All of that to say I would be very interested in seeing what these numbers will look like if not for the already legislated federal transfers.

Aside from the amount of these investments in health care, mental health and long-term care, this government is failing to actually make the investments strategic. They are failing to make them available to those who need them most. As I said earlier this week, while it was great to see the \$29.1 million for the Seniors Care Grant, no African Nova Scotians from land titles communities can access the funding because there are barriers. You are required to show your name on a deed or lease in communities that have been fighting for their titles to their properties for decades. This is a giant obstacle, and when I pointed this oversight out to the minister, the minister explained that the government had to get the program out the door quickly.

I want to be clear with my personal views on programs getting out the door quickly. It's not a good reason not to consider how the program will actually impact people. I was encouraged, though, that the minister of this said the government will be willing to revisit the eligibility criteria, and I do look forward to having many discussions with the minister.

The Seniors Care Grant is only one example of a program that looks great on paper but in practice has not been thoughtfully implemented and is leaving some Nova Scotians behind. Another example is the \$66.3 million that the government has set aside to provide continuing care assistants, or CCAs, with the highest wages in Atlantic Canada. Oddly enough, there's also \$17.2 million to support measures that are targeted immigration strategy, but when I spoke to some CCAs who immigrated to our province to work through the Provincial Nominee Program, they told me they were left out of the CCA wage increase. Again, marginalized communities in Nova Scotia are left out of important policies put forward by this government.

Our population recently hit the milestone of one million people. Newcomers add such value to our economy and local communities. In addition to that, there are huge labour shortages in this health care sector, so it makes no sense to me, or anyone who's paying attention, that we would invest this much in CCAs, implement a targeted immigration strategy, when we could have just given all CCAs, including those newcomer CCAs, the same raise. There isn't anything stopping them from going to a larger city somewhere in Ontario if we didn't treat them with dignity and show them that we need them here just as much as they need us.

In an oversight that has elements of both health care and not treating newcomers fairly, we must talk about our provincial response to the situation in Ukraine. There is a global crisis unfolding. There are over three million displaced Ukrainians. Nova Scotia needs people, and we are in a labour shortage. We should be trying to welcome as many of those displaced Ukrainians as possible. While the federal government has quickly responded with immigration pathways for those Ukrainians, our provincial government has yet to step up and say that we will offer health care to those fleeing the war. I was disappointed not to see this in the budget.

It isn't just about cutting a cheque or putting millions of dollars aside. Sometimes a program might be twice as effective for half the price tag if the government had gone to have conversations with those impacted and had made an effort to understand what these policies would look like as they were implemented in different communities.

Earlier this week, I told my colleagues across the floor that I'd be glad to help the government consider diverse perspectives in their policy-making, and I meant it. We cannot keep on having oversights happen where they are avoidable. A section in their budget highlights deals with equity-seeking measures; it's called Investing in Green and Vibrant Communities. They have grouped environmental initiatives in with equity on social issues. The majority of Nova Scotians belong to a minority group, whether due to their gender, race, or level of ability - those are examples. They are left out of proposals like the ones we have been debating here over the session.

As I said, health care investments are the exception to the rule about this government's first budget. Otherwise, the budget is missing important pillars that make me wonder who the government consulted with in the development of this budget. Our policy measures are completely lacking in this budget, in efforts to target the cost of living crisis. The Premier has stated publicly he has plans to protect the ratepayers from increases. He knows that food insecurity is an issue to too many Nova Scotians that are facing it. And there's no question that he knows we are facing a housing crisis, yet the budget does not tackle these issues.

Supports for social determinants of health that we all know are so important in a holistic approach for well-being and success of Nova Scotians, are lacking. I see no plans to tackle food insecurity, despite the fact that many families are struggling to feed themselves with healthy food that has doubled or tripled in price. I see no plans to meaningfully tackle a housing crisis beyond adding some change to the numbers given to the province through the National Housing Strategy. The environment section of the budget highlights - as I said, they have now called the section "Investing in Green and Vibrant Communities" and grouped equity issues in with environmental issues.

Needless to say, there are no plans to protect ratepayers from increases as Nova Scotia makes its transition off coal. There are no plans to sustainably renewable energy

sources. There are no plans for climate change and mitigation measures. We needed bold and decisive action. We needed leadership, and this government did not deliver.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, a budget tells you a lot about who a government really is. The government is one that can't pick up the phone and consult with everyday Nova Scotians to point where they think equity and social issues are one and the same with environmental policies.

This budget cannot fairly be marketed as "Solutions for Nova Scotians." They are not solutions, because they are not adequately solving problems. In fact, they're not even scratching the surface on some of the largest issues facing our time as Nova Scotians. They are not, for sure, for Nova Scotians - at least not the ones whom I have talked to.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We'll briefly recess for 15 minutes.

[3:11 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:30 p.m. The House resolved into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds in the Chair.]

[8:05 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Keith Bain, resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole 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: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private and Local Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 122.

Bill No. 122 - Lunenburg Rod and Gun Club Replacement Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I move that Bill No. 122, An Act Respecting the Repeal of An Act to Incorporate the Lunenburg Rod and Gun Club, be read a second time.

To be clear, this bill is not about the dissolution of the Lunenburg Rod and Gun Club, an organization established in 1954 and for many years located on King's Hill in Lunenburg. In 1990, in part to accommodate new industry, the club relocated to its current site on 50 acres alongside Fish Peddler Road near Riverport, just over the hill from my home in Rose Bay.

It has been a good move, Mr. Speaker, one that has permitted an expansion of the club's physical footprint and membership, which now tops 300 persons. Mr. Speaker, this is a housekeeping item in support of an organization that continues to promote both sportsmanship and safety.

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

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on Bill No. 122.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 122. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 129.

Bill No. 129 - Motor Carrier Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I move that Bill No. 129, the Motor Carrier Act, be read a second time.

It is my privilege to rise this evening to talk about this bill. Mr. Speaker, motor carriers were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Public Health restrictions. These proposed amendments will help reduce the regulatory burden and enhance safety in the motor carrier industry. The amendments will make it easier for the government to change regulations by referencing other Acts, regulations, or other documents. This will help ensure consistency and accuracy in the motor carrier industry.

This is particularly relevant to electronic logging devices that are becoming required across the country. The amendment will provide consistency to the industry across jurisdictions. The devices will automatically log distance driven, engine run time, and other trackable data. This will reduce the burden on drivers to log their data by hand.

Mr. Speaker, the devices have become the standard in logging data across the United States and Canada for interprovincial and cross-border trucking. These devices are mandatory for motor carriers that travel internationally and interprovincially, but they are not enforced until January 2023. Motor carrier employers and employees alike are in favour of using them. They have been asking for mandatory electronic logging devices.

These devices have also shown to increase compliance with federal laws. In 2020 and 2021, the government waived the annual motor carrier fee in principle, but it required a Legislature amendment for implementation. The amendment will provide the government the authority to waive fees, if they are deemed just.

Mr. Speaker, after the challenging few years due to COVID-19, the motor carrier industry would welcome these changes. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues across the aisle.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'll be very brief this evening. I just want to thank the minister and the department for bringing these amendments forward. My understanding is this is solidifying some work that was started under the previous government and we appreciate that, especially given the tremendous negative impact that the pandemic had on the motor carrier industry around the world, of course, but particularly here in Nova Scotia. We know it's a huge part of the tourism sector and so we're really

hoping that this Summer will be the best one, certainly in the last few years, so it's great news there.

Just quickly on the electronic logging device piece as well: We all know how important trucking is for supply chains. We've seen that beyond a shadow of a doubt this year. This is an important piece for safety, above all else, and making the job easier for truckers. They don't have to worry about paperwork on a daily basis when they should really be focused on driving and doing all the wonderful things that they do for us.

These are solid, common sense amendments and we don't really have any issue with them so I will take my seat, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to rise to speak to this bill. These changes really do make sense. It's important that we support our motor carriers who are often providing essential transportation throughout the province. We know that the pandemic was particularly hard for many operators, so it makes sense to look at the ways that we can support them.

I'll just echo my colleague from Bedford South: We hope that this Summer brings a rebound to the tourism industry, and that will affect this industry as well. So we look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendments Committee and that's all I'll say for now.

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

The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues from Dartmouth North and Bedford South. With those few comments, I will move to close debate on Bill No. 129.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 129. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 131, Powers of Attorney Act.

Bill No. 131 - Powers of Attorney Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 131, amendments to the Powers of Attorney Act, be now read a second time.

I am introducing changes to the Powers of Attorney Act that are aimed at preventing financial abuse to those, especially seniors, who appoint other persons to manage their affairs under a Power of Attorney.

Power of attorney is an important part of enabling adults to live well and age in place. Nova Scotians, especially seniors, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Powers of attorney are important advance planning tools for adults who wish to appoint someone they trust to make decisions for them respecting their property and finances, including in the event that they become incapable of making those decisions themselves.

However, sometimes individuals placed in these positions of trust breach that trust and more safeguards are needed to be put into place. Those who are named as attorneys under the Powers of Attorney Act are required to be more transparent so others can intervene if problems like misuse or financial abuse arise.

The Powers of Attorney Act came into effect in 1988 and has been subjected to only a few minor amendments since that time. Financial abuse is noted as being one of the most common forms of elder abuse and, as such, abuse via power of attorney is widespread. Given that particular vulnerability of some seniors, it is believed that a significant underreporting of financial abuse occurs. As the Nova Scotia population ages, it is expected that incidences of financial elder abuse may increase, as well as demand for information about estate planning tools and ways to protect seniors from financial abuse.

Specifically, these amendments will provide details and provide stronger protection and guidance as to the right and responsibilities of donors, attorneys and third parties. The proposed amendments will help prevent and address both misuse of a power of attorney due to the lack of understanding or financial abuse. Amending this Act to clarify the rights and responsibilities of all parties to this kind of legal document and ensure all parties understand those rights and responsibilities improves the level of protection available to the donor when they are first thinking about creating a power of attorney when it is in effect and when problems arise. The amendments will also highlight for attorneys their significant role and corresponding obligations.

We want to help ensure people have peace of mind and security with their affairs in planning for the future. The proposed amendments are in alignment with this government's mandate to take decisive action to solve problems for people by giving them hope for health, dignity for seniors, and a new opportunity for aging well.

[8:15 p.m.]

I look forward to the support of colleagues in the House, and with that I will move second reading.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, on its surface, the intent of the bill seems sound - to clarify, to modernize the Act, to provide safeguards to all those involved, and the rights and responsibilities of those that are involved that need this execution of the power of attorney, especially in clarifying what's in writing, dated and witnessed by two people. Given it's second reading, we certainly support the intent and spirit of the bill and the need to modernize the Act and we'll see what happens at the Law Amendments Committee. At this point, we support the bill so far.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I would agree that these amendments are welcome. They seem to come out of the 2015 Final Report on the Power of Attorney Act from the Law Reform Commission. We support the amendments but we're aware that these legislative changes don't respond to all of the issues that were raised in that review. We're interested to hear folks come forward at the Law Amendments Committee and to hear more, but certainly this seems like a good starting point.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues across the aisle for their comments. We look forward to hearing from the public at the Law Amendments Committee. With that, I'll ask for closure of second reading.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 131. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 134.

Bill No. 134 - Motor Vehicle Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I move that Bill No. 134 be read a second time. It's a pleasure to speak to this legislation this evening.

These proposed amendments support and encourage the safe use of an alternate transportation option for Nova Scotians which is low-cost, energy-efficient and convenient. The proposed amendments are permissive in nature and will allow Nova Scotia municipalities to decide if and where electric kick-scooters, or e-scooters, are allowed on municipal roads.

The key elements of Bill No. 134 include providing umbrella legislation defining e-scooters, setting a minimum age of 14 years of age to operate, setting a maximum operating speed of 32 kilometres per hour, helmet requirements, and operation restrictions, allowing municipalities to create bylaws related to where e-scooters can be operated, and other restrictions on their use on roads and sidewalks.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments give municipalities the authority to make changes and flexibility to respond to their residents. It does not require them to do so. These changes will encourage economic growth in the e-scooter industry and help reduce carbon emissions by enabling a sustainable transportation option.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues across the aisle.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: It wouldn't be a House session without amendments to "Old Faithful", the Motor Vehicle Act. Here we are again.

I appreciate the minister's comments. In general, of course, any time we're able to offer new, different, relatively green, and safe ways to get around, that's a good thing. I do think it also makes sense to give some permissiveness, some discretion to municipalities to determine on their own where these e-scooters make sense and where they do not.

The minister and I were talking and can see these being very popular, obviously, in HRM, where they were really supportive of this option, but also in university towns and other places - tourism, for example. In the Summertime, this would be a fantastic way to get around and see sights in various towns in Nova Scotia.

In general, the safety requirements, the age limit, the speed limits - all of these things make a lot of sense and legislate and regulate an area that previously existed in a bit of a grey zone. That's always a good thing when it comes to transportation and safety.

The last point I will mention here is one of anticipation, I guess, around the day when we won't have to amend the Motor Vehicle Act anymore and we can move on to the Traffic Safety Act, which was introduced several years ago. I know it's a huge task to not only do the regulations, which I believe are in their last phase now, and we're looking forward to seeing that report come back and seeing that done. But the back end work, which I think is, in a lot of ways, under Service Nova Scotia, the system changes I know are huge on that side. I don't envy getting that job done. It's a big one, and it's an older system that needs to be overhauled.

I'm really looking forward to that. I understand it could be as much as three years away. Hopefully if it's two and a half or two - every day we can shave that off is great. I look forward to that day, but for the time being those are my comments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm also pleased to stand in support of this. I mean, I think I'm in support of this bill - I'm in support of the idea of e-scooters, anyway.

We know that e-scooters are a big thing, and they're important for all of the reasons that the minister and my colleague in the Liberal caucus have talked about. They're good for the environment. They're a cheap, easy way to get around for many people. These are all good - this is a good bill, to make sure that it's possible for municipalities to regulate them properly.

As to what my colleague for Bedford South was saying, I have a few comments on that, too. I've been watching the Traffic Safety Act develop since it was tabled - since the old days - and I'm very excited about it. I say this as often as I can, with lots of compliments to the amazing amount of work that's gone into the Traffic Safety Act.

But this is the thing, Mr. Speaker: The Traffic Safety Act is three years away. I totally get all the reasons why. In the meantime, our vulnerable road users, like cyclists, are unprotected. The Traffic Safety Act is going to have regulations in it that will protect cyclists and make it easier for them to feel safe on the roads and make penalties for hurting cyclists bigger and more serious. If we are amending the Motor Vehicle Act, why can we not amend it to protect cyclists at the same time?

I really encourage - I just don't understand what the hesitation is. If we're going to open up the Act to do something until the Traffic Safety Act is ready, why can we not do it to protect cyclists as well?

Again, I'm in favour in principle of this bill, but I wish that it encompassed cyclists. I look forward to hearing from stakeholders at Law Amendments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I stand to add a few comments in second reading to this amendment to the Motor Vehicle Act. During the briefing, my initial concern, I guess wearing my nursing hat, is about the safety. I did ask at the briefing if emergency room physicians were consulted and was there any research done in other cities where e-scooters are used excessively. I think Calgary is a city that uses them.

My husband and I visited Nashville last year, and they were everywhere. It was quite a sight. There were no helmets and there was copious use of alcohol, and the combination of e-scooters and excessive amounts of alcohol means we're going to have an increased amount of visits to our emergency rooms with head injuries.

Not against e-scooters, but I hope that we make sure that we examine all of those factors around safety, enforcement - who's going to be responsible to enforce helmet use? Who's going to make sure we have increased medication for head lice if helmets are going to be shared? Listen, all the mothers in this room know that's where a lot of children in the Summer contract head lice.

Anyway, going back to helmets. When I think of helmets and sharing helmets, as a mom of four kids, head lice is where my mind goes. Will helmets be provided, and who would be responsible for enforcement of helmet use? Will it be the police, or will there be other people as well? Just a few comments, and I look forward to Law Amendments.

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

The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I again appreciate the comments in support from my colleagues across the aisle.

To the member for Bedford South, I too look forward to the day that the TSA is proclaimed. There has been a tremendous amount of work put into those regulations with a tremendous amount of stakeholder input. I look forward to that.

To the member for Dartmouth North, I will certainly take your comments back to the department and have those looked at.

To the member for Cumberland North, the great thing about this legislation is there is a helmet requirement. Right now, there are people using e-scooters who are not using helmets, and this will require a helmet.

With those few comments, I move to close debate on Bill No. 134.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 134. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 137.

Bill No. 137 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I move that Bill No. 137 be now read for a second time.

Today I'm pleased to speak about amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter that will help streamline the development approval process and shorten timelines for provincial reviews.

Nova Scotia is in a housing crisis, which has the potential to limit our growth. We must address that, and we are. The crisis is also an opportunity, an opportunity for change. To reach our goal of two million residents by 2060, we must be willing to make bold changes and bold investments now. Our government is doing that. We are acting on Premier Houston's vision for our province. Clearly, the first part of our government's action is to address the crisis in health care. We are doing that through massive investments in health care.

The second part of that vision is to address the crisis in housing. Again, we must take bold steps, and we are, across government. For example, three new NSCC residences and our building plan in senior residences will help address the housing shortage. Also, our deed transfer tax and property tax for our out-of-province homeowners will help as some of those homes will become available as rentals or for sale.

These changes to the HRM Charter in Bill No. 137 will modernize and speed up aspects of the development process. They will clarify approval processes and remove duplication of public engagement. They'll reduce upfront costs for business owners and improve development agreement processes.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia, particularly the Halifax area, is seeing huge population growth. People are struggling to find places to live. We need more housing supply, and we should have started building it five years ago. These changes are designed to help the approval process move more smoothly while still ensuring that public engagement and environmental approval processes are respected.

[8:30 p.m.]

This bill takes bold steps and will take months - in some cases, years - off the approval process. All required permitting and environmental reviews will still be required and will take place.

I'm very aware that there's a housing crisis across the province. While this bill deals specifically with the Halifax area, many of the actions we've already taken impact the whole province. These include the supports for NSCC students, housing in Dartmouth and Pictou, support for affordable housing in Kentville and Lantz, grants to community housing organizations across the province - and there's more to come.

We will listen to feedback from our municipalities and the public on what needs to be done. We will not wait to take action. The housing task force, which includes strong representation from the Halifax Regional Municipality, brought forward these recommendations. I agree with them, and I particularly want to express my thanks to the panel. They produced an enormous amount of work in a very short time. I appreciate their efforts and support and their ideas.

I look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues across the aisle.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Well, I'm all for streamlining, and at first blush, it seems great. I went to the debriefing yesterday morning. As a previous HRM councillor, many times we pointed the finger at the Province for all the bureaucracy that planning had to go through. To have the Province recognize that a lot of those hurdles were part of the problem and have them streamlined is a great thing. I'm in favour of it.

The last clause in the bill includes skipping over some of the following committees for three years: the Design Advisory Committee, the Halifax Peninsula Planning Advisory Committee, and the North West Planning Advisory Committee. I want to take this opportunity in the House to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the volunteers who have served for many years so generously providing their time and their expertise.

It's very difficult to find individuals who are willing to get involved in civic matters, as we know, and also in community planning. It's also ironic that right now, HRM is currently and actively trying to recruit volunteers to their agencies, boards, and committees.

The case of the Heritage Advisory Committee is where my concern is specifically. Its members are well-versed and educated on heritage preservation and are bound by the legislation of the Province on the Heritage Property Act, specifically. I hope that many here are taking time to look at the amazing project being constructed across from Province

House on Granville Street and the extent the developer is taking to preserve its built heritage form.

In preserving our heritage, we preserve our identity. The lived-in architecture and the strategic locations and uses of these buildings reveal unique stories telling how our city and other heritage sites across Nova Scotia came to be.

I want to ask the minister if consideration was given to the impact of removing the Heritage Advisory Committee from providing its own advice - and also I wondered if maybe we could clarify the way forward for heritage preservation in HRM during the next three years during the hiatus of these committees.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I welcome the government action to address the housing crisis, but since the announcement of this bill, we have been seeing an outpouring of concern from community groups and elected officials in the HRM. I think it should be said that this concern is over a process that will shave, at most, a few months off the development process, not the years that the minister has claimed.

While I agree with the minister that we are in a housing crisis, there's no guarantee that a single one of the 22,600 housing units in the special planning areas impacted by this bill will be affordable, by any measure. The city councillors whom we've heard from so far are worried that this bill infringes on their work to develop complete communities in the HRM. This means communities that take into account recreation, transit, transportation improvements, school capacity, and design.

When we build poorly designed communities, we are asking future governments to pay for the consequences. Our solution to the housing crisis shouldn't be a long-term pain for a short-term gain, Mr. Speaker. The Ecology Action Centre has expressed concern about the risk the development around Sandy Lake poses to one of Halifax's last remaining wilderness areas, and that this risk will increase when the voices of community leaders and experts are ignored.

The housing crisis is real, but we can't deal with it in a vacuum, and act as if the climate crisis is not also a reality. By reducing the role of advisory and regional councils in the development process, this bill further reduces openness and transparency of development in the HRM. I believe I spoke to this regarding a bill in the last session we were in.

This bill is demonstrative of the government's narrow approach to dealing with the housing crisis in Nova Scotia. When it comes to helping their developer friends enrich themselves at the expense of the democratic oversight, the minister moves at warp speed, it seems. But when it comes to asking those same developers to play their role in the crisis

by building affordable housing - as defined by 30 per cent of a renter's income - the same minister has refused to act.

The minister said earlier that he was willing to listen and hear from people at the Law Amendments Committee. Not only do I hope that there is listening and hearing, I hope that there is internalizing and understanding of what people are saying. I hope that action comes out of the concerns of councillors and community groups, should they come forward at the Law Amendments Committee.

I look forward to further debate on this topic and other topics on municipal affairs. I look forward to the opportunity to hear from stakeholders when this bill comes to the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I stand to add a couple of comments to this amendment to the HRM Charter. I just want to stand and make sure that the minister is aware that there is a housing crisis, definitely in Cumberland North and my understanding is throughout all of Nova Scotia.

Historically, since I was elected in 2017, from what I recall, whenever we saw amendments to the HRM we always saw mirror changes to the MGA. I'm not sure why we're not seeing the changes that are being proposed here being allowed across all of Nova Scotia. If the purpose is to increase the speed at which housing supply can be created, I want to assure the minister that we have the same need for a rapid, fast-tracked housing supply to be increased in Cumberland North.

It has quickly become the number one issue that we receive calls on in my office in the constituency. It's people from all socioeconomic levels, ranging from working seniors, people who need affordable housing, NSCC students - we don't have a campus targeted for Cumberland, even though we have a campus in Cumberland South, in Springhill, as well as one in Amherst.

We have a need for housing for health care professionals. The Nova Scotia Health Authority has been very adamant in telling us that the number one barrier to us recruiting nurses and physicians and other health care professionals to the Cumberland Regional Hospital is the lack of housing. Not the last site manager, but the one before that purchased a house in Sackville, New Brunswick, because nothing was available in Amherst and Cumberland.

Right now, we're looking for housing for a couple of families including a family of five children and they have nowhere to go. It is quickly becoming the number one stressor for my staff and me. I just want to assure the minister that these changes to improve and increase housing supply here in HRM are, I believe, needed in all Nova Scotia - definitely

in the area of Cumberland North. The people that I represent would love to see the minister provide the same type of supports to all Nova Scotians. I look forward to comments in the Law Amendments Committee.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank all three members for their comments, and I will consider all of the comments they have made. Like them, I look forward to hearing from the Law Amendments Committee.

I move to close second reading on Bill No. 137.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 137. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 138.

Bill No. 138 - An Act to Permit Virtual Business Meetings.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I move that Bill No. 138 - An Act to Permit Virtual Business Meetings - be now read for a second time. The bill I have introduced will amend the Companies Act, Co-operative Associations Act, Societies Act, and Condominium Act. It would give provincially regulated companies, co-operatives, societies, and condominium corporations the option to continue to meet virtually or with a mix of in-person and virtual participants.

The pandemic has challenged companies and other organizations to look at innovative ways to continue to do essential business while following public health guidelines. With this bill, we are pleased to respond to their request to permanently allow the option to hold virtual or hybrid meetings, as they have demonstrated they can do so effectively and responsibly.

I appreciate Sport Nova Scotia lending its support to our bill, noting how allowing virtual and hybrid meetings can help non-profits engage more of their membership in

regular meetings and reduce travel and financial cost for their volunteers. The Cooperative Housing Federation is also very supportive of this bill and the many benefits it will provide.

[8:45 p.m.]

The Companies Act, Co-operative Associations Act, Societies Act, and Condominium Act govern most entities that are required to hold regular shareholder, member, and director meetings. It is expected that this bill will benefit more than 55,000 entities registered under these four Acts.

In April 2020, a ministerial directive was issued under the Emergency Management Act to permit these entities to hold virtual and hybrid meetings. This flexibility ended once the provincial state of emergency was lifted.

The proposed amendments will modernize our legislation and provide clarity to entities that wish to hold virtual and hybrid meetings to support business efficiencies. The amendments are consistent with the ministerial directive and in line with other jurisdictions, including how issues of privacy and confidentiality are addressed.

Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of topics discussed at these meetings, whether in person or virtual, should be a continuing priority for the organizations. Steps to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the business conducted will continue to be the responsibility of the organizations themselves, as it always has been. This change will ensure that those joining remotely in virtual and hybrid meetings can fully participate and cast a vote when required.

I'm also very pleased to say that the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness estimates that these changes will save businesses about \$4 million annually. It will save volunteers and others involved in non-profits 460,000 hours in time, all related to travel that will no longer be required.

Allowing virtual and hybrid meetings responds to requests from our stakeholders. It will save time and money and generate greater efficiencies for more than 55,000 provincially regulated companies, co-operatives, societies, and condominium corporations.

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

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I'd like to thank the minister for those fulsome opening remarks. There's no question that this piece of legislation is good and that it has numerous benefits to the large number of corporations and societies that fall under these three Acts. It's a common sense bill. It feels like a housekeeping bill.

I appreciate that the minister did talk about privacy, but that is the one area of this bill that I still have some concerns over. When we tried to quickly adapt in 2020, to figure out how to maintain business as usual, whether it was government or it was corporations or societies, we switched very quickly into this virtual world. We jumped right in and didn't really know the questions to ask in terms of the technology that we were using to accomplish this.

A quick example is that originally, everybody was using Zoom and quite quickly the civil service of Nova Scotia abolished using Zoom. They actually moved to Microsoft Teams because Zoom had posed a security risk that they didn't think was - it was too great of a risk to risk it. Sorry, lots of risks. It's hard to do this when you're not in front of all of you.

When something's done temporarily, there really aren't the checks and balances that need to exist to make sure that there aren't any unintended consequences. I understand, and I hear the minister when he says that the onus is on these societies to make sure that the same level of privacy that would happen regularly, when they were meeting in person, is going to be an expectation moving forward.

Do you know if Zoom is still a security risk? I don't know if Zoom still has a security risk. I'm going to say that most people, especially these volunteer organizations, aren't really going to dive deep to see if the software that's free and that's accessible and that everybody uses is not the right thing to do.

I don't think that this has to be a major issue. I do think, though, that it needs to have perhaps the privacy officer take a look at it or consultation with a privacy lawyer, something that maybe is just a quick amendment that compels these organizations to make sure that they're aware of the technology that they are using to conduct their meetings and that privacy isn't going to be impacted in ways that they would never intend it to.

I'll be interested to see if we have any conversation at the Law Amendments Committee. With that, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I think that over the past two years we've all learned so much more about online meetings and teleconferences than we would probably really like to know, but I'm grateful for that. I think we've also seen how we can use these tools to increase accessibility and make it easier for people to participate at meetings. We've adjusted and adapted over this past week, so we understand the importance of that.

We are so glad to see that the government is amending legislation to allow organizations to continue to take advantage of these opportunities. Like my colleague said earlier in a previous reading, it's great to see these amendments that are being put forward.

When we open the Act - I mean, I'm a big believer that if we're going to open something, let's take a look at it, let's examine what we could be doing with it. We should be working collectively to help modernize and update a number of these Acts because, as a lot of us here know, these Acts are well outdated and 50-plus years old, and I don't know how modern that is at this point.

As I said, I look forward to hearing more from our stakeholders and I encourage all of us to really take in their concerns, if there are any stakeholders who come forward, and truly listen to what is being said at Law Amendments Committee.

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

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleagues across the aisle and in the virtual land as well. I guess that through the pandemic much has evolved, and we've adapted and with that adaptation and using Microsoft Teams and Zoom and other methods, we've also grown a different vocabulary, that - oh, your microphone is still on mute, or raise your hand, or your hand is still up, you still have a question.

Again, for the members, this is enabling legislation. I appreciate the comments of the member for Fairview-Clayton Park regarding the privacy but, again, this is enabling legislation that the onus will be up to those organizations to look at the requirements that they determine necessary as it is to maintain privacy through an in-person or a virtual meeting.

I look forward to comments and feedback from those at Law Amendments Committee. With that I move to close second reading on Bill No. 138, An Act to Permit Virtual Business Meetings.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 138. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 101.

Bill No. 101 - the Marine Renewable-energy Act.

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 101 now be read a third time and do pass.

Nova Scotians continue to be a leader in developing tidal energy technology and research. The amendments we've introduced to the Marine Renewable-energy Act will help us get there. These amendments respond to feedback we received from the tidal industry and from our four years of experience administering the Demonstration Permit Program.

The amendments include improvements to the Demonstration Permit Program, changes in the language for greater clarity about the Act's licensing system, and regulation-making authority that will help improve the Act's administration.

Developers at FORCE asked for greater clarity around what rights their licence provided them and the geographic areas of a licence. The amendments provide this clarity. With these changes, multiple projects will be allowed to share subsea infrastructure like moorings and anchors. This can lower a project's costs and risk to the environment.

Also, we are switching from a first-come, first-served approach to the competitive evaluation process for projects. This will ensure we choose projects that offer the best value for all Nova Scotians. While the framework for evaluating projects is still being developed, I can confirm that we will engage and consider the interests of stakeholders, First Nations, and the industry in the process.

The department is expanding the cap for the program from 10 megawatts to 15 megawatts as a contingency plan in the unlikely event that BigMoon Power is unable to remove the abandoned Cape Sharp Tidal turbine - which I know one of the previous ministers will be excited to have out of the water. And he's not even listening. (Laughter) It's all good. This provides another private sector pathway to remove that turbine.

Since the amendment is solely for contingency purposes, it will only come into effect in the unlikely event that it is needed and only if approved by Executive Council. I'm pleased to say these amendments do not propose any additional impacts to ratepayers. The tidal industry has enormous potential for our province as a clean source of energy, as

a job creator in rural areas, and as an opportunity to build on the expertise and explode the green technology.

We expect that these amendments will help support growth of this industry in Nova Scotia and position us as a leader in green technology.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister. As I mentioned previously, we're in support of the amendments. Just as we were in support of the original bill, which our party introduced on January 23, 2018. We ensured that Nova Scotia was the first Canadian province to introduce marine renewable legislation and that we're ready to lead this sector and welcome business from around the world.

As the minister has mentioned, it's largely administrative, but these changes will allow the department to evaluate applications and process them no longer on a first-come, first-served basis, but on the basis of which projects align most with our goals and which get us closer to our renewable energy targets.

It's important that all applications submitted to the department have equal opportunity to be reviewed, regardless of how quickly they were submitted. This will allow the marine renewables industry to further grow in this province and tap into the resources that Nova Scotia has to offer. I hope that this legislation allows for the marine renewable sector to grow and to become prosperous in the future of Nova Scotia's green economy.

Thank you to the minister and staff for bringing this forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to also support this bill as I did in my previous comments. The way it was explained to us in the briefing, and which is supported by our own research, is that this is a new area, this is a unique bill across the country, and so it will necessarily need to be updated fairly regularly to keep up with our understanding and that's what being done here.

We're also glad to see that the applications will no longer be first come, first served, but as I said in previous comments, we're looking forward to understanding how those will be evaluated as that grows. But, in general, we are in support of the bill, and we thank the minister for bringing it forward.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleagues across the floor and the colleagues behind me chirping just a second ago. I move to close third reading of Bill No. 101.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 101. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 102.

Bill No. 102 - Wildlife Act.

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I move that Bill No. 102 be now read a third time and do pass.

The Wildlife Act is one tool the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables uses to protect the health and diversity of wildlife species in our province. The current regulations do not include provisions to address feeding, which is becoming a growing problem. Whether deliberate or unintentional, feeding wildlife is harmful to wild animals and is a key driver of human-wildlife conflict interface.

The amendments will give us the clear authority to develop regulations needed to address the problematic and chronic situations where humans or wildlife are at high risk.

Nova Scotians value the rich diversity of our wildlife in our backyards. My department is committed to protecting the province's wildlife and helping wildlife and people co-exist without conflict. We want to work with all Nova Scotians to address this risk and negative impact of the chronic feeding.

Even with public education, the department responds to thousands of calls about human-wildlife conflict each year. Regulations will be a valuable tool to manage these situations before they become a major problem.

Before I close, I want to thank the honourable members for their remarks during second reading. I respect their concerns and, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure you and the

honourable members that my department will take collaborative approaches to develop these regulations.

[9:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Thank you for allowing me to respond briefly to this proposed amendment, which reads as follows: “prohibiting or regulating the feeding of wildlife in any or all part of the Province.”

The intent of this amendment is to keep wildlife wild, which is a good thing. It will strive to protect wildlife and Nova Scotians from unnecessary and unsafe encounters with one another that can otherwise be avoidable.

My initial concern that I mentioned previously was the lack of consultation, but I hope and trust that stakeholders such as hunters and farmers and community groups and tourism are consulted. All in all we support the amendments, and again thank you to the minister and staff for bringing this forward.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise to also support this bill. We know that keeping wildlife wild is important. As I mentioned on second reading, that includes their habitat. We’ve had lots of conversation in this House around what true protection of that habitat means, so just another opportunity to remind the minister that we really look forward to full implementation of the Lahey review which, we believe, will keep that habitat intact so that the animals that call it home can in fact remain wild.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I assure the members opposite that there will be a fulsome consultation process, especially with the municipalities where we had heard most of the concerns coming from.

I also want to reiterate the fact that this is not to take away legal baiting for hunting or fishing aspects. The traditional hunting and fishing and trapping aspects that were always allowed, the baiting aspect to take part in recreational sports in the province will be allowed, the backyard bird feeding will still be allowed. It’s not the intent to take away the traditional aspects that we’ve always had.

I appreciate the comments from all members on the other side, and I do move to close debate on this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 102. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 106.

Bill No. 106 - Condominium Act.

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

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I move that Bill No. 106 be now read for a third time and do pass.

The amendments that we are making to the Condominium Act will enhance consumer protection and create transparency while improving governance and management of condominium corporations.

Increasing transparency and ensuring current and prospective condo owners are protected from mismanagement is critical to maintaining consumer confidence in the condo industry. The amendments we're making to modernize the rules condominium owners and corporations need to follow ensure they're relevant to the industry today.

We have a growing condo industry, and key stakeholders have told us that their governing legislation can be improved to reduce barriers and promote growth. It's important that when stakeholders raise these ideas, they are strongly considered. This is what we've done with this legislation, and we will continue to do that as we navigate through any future changes.

This legislation modernizes how board control transitions from the developer to the condo corporation. While some amendments are administrative in nature, the changes make this process clear and relevant to today's industry.

We're also making the industry more transparent while protecting consumers' information. We're ensuring that condominiums are advertised as such and requiring unit owners to disclose their property rental agreements to their condo boards.

This legislation also clarifies to prospective buyers what existing common elements they are financially responsible for and gives the condominium board control over any purchase of common elements such as guest suites.

Lastly, this legislation adds an extra layer of protection for condominium boards and owners by requiring more frequent reserve-fund assessments to ensure that funds are available for capital repairs when needed.

Mr. Speaker, this is all good news for Nova Scotians. We're creating an environment that's more transparent for prospective condo owners and helping to increase public confidence in the industry.

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

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for his remarks. We are in support of this bill, but I would like to leave the minister and his staff, who I know are listening, with just a few suggestions.

One of the proposed changes prevents a corporation from acquiring "an interest or a right in a unit, other real property or personal property, except for no consideration" prior to the election of a board of directors in accordance with the Act. The restrictions against the purchase of a unit or real property are justifiable, and they are there to protect consumers. However, extending the prohibition to personal property may have unwanted or unexpected consequences.

For example, a corporation that is properly operating and organizing its affairs would not be able to buy a shovel for a superintendent to use, or furniture for the lobby or a power generator for common elements if the Act prevents a corporation from acquiring an interest in personal property.

Another thing to consider is the term "condo." Many are quick to reflect that condos are residential units, but consider how this subdivision issue relates to commercial condominiums. There are many buildings in HRM in particular where the entire commercial space is actually one condominium unit. An owner may want to subdivide the unit to sell the premises that the individual businesses are in. This is something that should be taken into consideration moving forward.

Another thing, and one last, is on the holdback on first sale. The requirement for a holdback only works if the units are to be sold right away or within the first year. If there are no proposed sales, the holdback shouldn't be a requirement. The requirement also ignores the fact that the lawyer who completes the registration may not actually be the lawyer who possesses the sales. As such, the undertaking may be worthless if the lawyer has no sale proceeds to hold.

Other than those minor details that at least I know the ones who are taking the notes in the background are getting, even though I just geeked out with the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services there, we are in support of this piece of legislation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we are pleased to see these updates coming forward. We did hear at Law Amendments Committee that these changes are helpful, but there is more that needs to be done. Specifically, these simply scratch the surface.

It was said at Law Amendments Committee that they initiate a full review of the Condominium Act, so as I said, if we're going to open the Act, maybe we should take a really good look at it and modernize it in a way that it reflects 2022. These updates were identified through a consultation done more than five years ago, so it is important that the legislation is kept up to date, particularly when it has such practical impacts on so many people.

In my closing, like I said, we're pleased to see these updates. We'd like to see more. Also, to the minister across the way: Your tie is saying something. It's an amazing colour. That colour really looks good on you.

THE SPEAKER: The member from Halifax Needham made his face turn as red as mine. (Laughter)

If I am to recognize the minister, it is to close the debate.

The honorable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I can assure all members of the House, I own very little orange. I think this is the only orange item that I have in my wardrobe. Blue really brings out my eyes, so that's the colour of choice.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleagues across the aisle, and as I've indicated before in other amendments I've brought forward to this Legislature, we're always open to looking at the Acts within my purview, and we'll continue to do so at the department.

Speaking of the department, I do want to express my appreciation and gratitude to all the staff at the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. They truly work around the clock to support both the internal operations of government and provide excellent service to all Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other. They're truly amazing colleagues to work with.

With those few words, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 106.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 106. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

Before I recognize the Government House Leader, the honourable minister did all colours tonight. He's got a blue jacket, an orange tie, and a red face. (Laughter)

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

Bill No. 107 - Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act.

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

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 107 - an Act to Repeal Chapter 17 of the Acts of 2003, the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act - be now read a third time and do pass.

I believe all members of this Legislature would agree that measures should be taken to remove redundant legislation from the books. The steps we are taking will simply repeal the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act legislation, which is no longer needed.

The Act was established in 2003 to authorize a volunteer board to administer the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund. This fund supported abstinence-based addiction services to the former Annapolis Valley Health District. Funds in the trust have been fully exhausted and the volunteer board is no longer active, making this legislation redundant.

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

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

HON. BRIAN COMER: I move to close third reading of Bill No. 107, an Act to Repeal Chapter 17 of the Acts of 2003, the Crosbie Memorial Trust Fund Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 107. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 109.

Bill No. 109 - Income Tax Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: On behalf of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, I move that Bill No. 109 be now read a third time and do pass.

This is a shared mandate item between myself and the honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. This amendment will provide legislative authority to implement tax changes to support fertility treatment and surrogacy in Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Fertility and Surrogacy Rebate was introduced as part of the 2022-2023 budget to provide coverage for all families, including many from the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Previously, families had no option but to pay the full costs.

We know the impact fertility can have on Nova Scotians trying to grow their family. We have heard from individuals and families that infertility is difficult emotionally and financially. There is an incredible amount of pressure and stress. For many, that cost put treatment out of their reach and created additional pressure to an already stressful situation.

We believe this public support for reproductive health can alleviate some of the pressure faced by individuals dealing with infertility. It is my pleasure to speak to this important initiative.

I sincerely thank the honourable members of this House for taking the opportunity to reflect on and share the related life experiences. I am proud to have been part of making this a reality. I know that it will have a positive impact on many Nova Scotian families.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Overall, this is a good bill. It will support families and individuals undergoing fertility treatments and surrogacy. However, I am concerned about the form of this rebate, which will help people after they've paid for the upfront expense for these costly treatments. Not everyone has thousands of dollars on hand to pay upfront for fertility treatments, so although this will be helpful to some, this bill does not help those who cannot pay those costs upfront.

While the intention of the bill is admirable, the unintended consequence is that there are still many more Nova Scotians who will not be able to realize their dream of being a parent, because of the financial barrier. Even many of those who can afford the upfront costs of fertility treatments still go far beyond their means to get there. I've heard stories of folks spending their entire savings, getting loans from family members, or selling or remortgaging their homes to afford the chance to possibly become a parent.

Getting 40 per cent of the money back is helpful, but costs are not the only barrier to fertility treatment in this province. With only one fertility clinic servicing the majority of Atlantic Canada, wait times are currently up to one year. Time is of the essence with fertility treatment, as we know, where a woman's chance of conceiving decreases with each passing month and year. So if the government is concerned about fertility treatment in this province, adding more doctors to the fertility clinic would assist in decreasing overall wait times. Tax rebates aren't overly helpful if someone cannot get to see a doctor in the first place.

This government needs to build capacity within the health care system to address the wait times associated with fertility treatments, on top of the existing private clinics. If this government is going to fix health care, they must explore public options for treatment on top of private.

This bill is a good start to addressing fertility in Nova Scotia, but I encourage the government to consider what other ways they can support those seeking this treatment.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise to speak to Bill No. 109, amendments to the Income Tax Act. Our caucus welcomes this bill and these amendments as a definite step in the right direction. We are very supportive of improving access to fertility health services for people who need assistance with having children and growing their families. Being able to access supports for surrogacy as well is absolutely good news.

However, this help coming in the form of tax credits imposes clear limitations. This path leaves a lot of people out. Only those who still have the money to pay upfront for not only the treatments and clinic appointments but the prescription drugs needed as well will

be able to afford it. Getting back some of that money later is fine, but not everyone can afford to wait.

It's important to note that the value of tax credits increases with the income of the taxpayer. This means it is a device that favours the highest-income households. The most recent statistics show that 31 per cent of Nova Scotia tax filers paid no tax at all. From a total of 765,100 tax returns, 237,160 paid no tax. Of those that did pay tax, more than 210,000 had less than \$40,000 incomes. At an average Nova Scotia income tax rate of 17.3 per cent, the credit earns you \$86.50 after the \$500 is spent in claims. However, if you are earning at the top rates, above \$150,000 a year, you get \$200 to \$250 back.

It's also important to note that the vast majority of fertility services are currently accessed through a private clinic. We believe these important supports will be more impactful and inclusive if put in place as an expansion of publicly funded insurance coverage and provision for infertility treatments, surrogacy, and the associated drug treatments.

For example, there are already some fertility supports available publicly through the IWK. There's no particular reason why the government can't expand these services, but we did not hear during Estimates that there were investments here. This would also help retain the skills and resources needed for Nova Scotians in this area in our public system.

I also need to mention the fact that 2SLGBTQ+ couples do not have their initial appointments covered by MSI while heterosexual couples do. I would urge the government to address this immediately.

We encourage the Legislature to take this advice and the information of stakeholders that we've heard to take this one step further. With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I just want to say a couple of comments about how happy I am that the government has brought forth this legislation.

For probably four or five years, I've been hearing from people across the province that Nova Scotia is one of the only provinces that didn't provide any financial support for those who are going through fertility treatments. Many of us know that having a baby is one of the most joyful times in our lives. We know that some families are not able to have their own children. The only way that they can have a baby is to go through fertility treatments.

I am so happy to see the government bring this bill forward and I'm very proud of them for bringing it forward. I know that they are going to be changing many families for the better in this province.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'd like to thank the members opposite for their thoughtful comments and their final thoughts on the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 109, an Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Income Tax Act, Respecting a Fertility and Surrogacy Rebate.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 109. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 114.

Bill No. 114 - Hospitals Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 114, an Act to Amend Chapter 208 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Hospitals Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

I will speak very briefly about Bill No. 114, but I want to begin by thanking the members opposite for their support of this bill. We can all agree that supporting health care providers to work to their full scope of practice is a benefit to patients and our health care system. My colleagues are correct. There is more that we can do to improve our health care system, and we continue to work diligently to achieve that goal.

Mr. Speaker, we have highly skilled and highly trained health care providers in our province, and nurse practitioners are some of them. We need to support them to work to

their full scope of practice. Bill No. 114 will continue to maximize their talents and optimize the role of the nursing workforce in our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am glad to rise to speak to Bill No. 114, amendments to the Hospitals Act.

Nurse practitioners are an amazing group of people who provide immense value in so many parts of our health care system, from primary care to long-term care. We've supported the expansion of the scope of practice for nurse practitioners for many years, and this is a welcome step.

Nurse practitioners can help fill many roles in the health care system if they are properly supported and allowed to work to their full scope of practice. This bill will qualitatively improve the contributions that nurse practitioners can make in collaborative settings.

Speaking of collaborative settings, we should be looking at more collaborative approaches, including collaborative emergency centres where nurse practitioners can work with other providers to keep ERs open. We should also encourage more nurses to go back to school to become nurse practitioners if they so wish. This means that we need to focus more on recruiting but also retaining nurses and encouraging them to stay here in Nova Scotia. This means addressing wages and making sure nurses' wages are competitive with other jurisdictions.

We look forward to more progress from this government on supporting health care professionals to work to their full scope of practice. Pharmacists, for example, are another incredible resource who could be doing more to care for Nova Scotians.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't mention physician assistants. (Laughter) See, it's a sign of success when the government starts repeating my talking points back to me. So yes, let's license PAs.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, it's okay that you forgot about me the first time around. It's all right.

I'm happy to speak in support of Bill No. 114, the Hospitals Act. As I said in second reading, anything that gives a full scope of practice and empowers our nurse practitioners is good by me. I think that especially in talks through Budget Estimates, this can be one piece of fixing our health care system. I'm optimistic that will happen. I am happy to support this piece of legislation.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish up by thanking all the nurse practitioners in Nova Scotia, and thanking the Nova Scotia College of Nurses for their support of this bill. (Applause) I would also like to thank the members opposite for their comments and their support.

Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading of Bill No. 114.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 114. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 115.

Bill No. 115 - Prescription Monitoring Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I move that Bill No. 115 be now read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to finding solutions that improve efficiency, responsiveness, inclusivity, and safety without sacrificing accountability and oversight of prescribing controlled substances in Nova Scotia. The changes in this bill do just that. I am pleased to see my colleagues support this bill and the amendments in it.

To be transparent, I would like to take this opportunity to address the questions that were raised during second reading. These amendments come as a direct result of an independent review of the Prescription Monitoring Board. The review's recommendation, as well as the input from the board itself, has informed government making changes to ensure our prescription monitoring program is more responsive and efficient.

Among the list of recommendations, we are making it easier and faster to appoint non-voting directors, as well as directors responsible for licensing so that the Minister of Health and Wellness can sign off without full Governor in Council approval. The purpose

of this change is simply to improve efficiency and responsiveness. It comes as part of the recommendation of the board itself.

One of my colleagues asked about opioid drug monitoring in Nova Scotia. Mr. Speaker, in 2017, the government put in place an opioid use

[9:30 p.m.]

One of my colleagues asked about the opioid drug monitoring in Nova Scotia. In 2017, the government put in place an opioid use and overdose framework which monitors opioid use and related overdose deaths and seeks to prevent them with a range of policy initiatives, harm reduction services, and treatment approaches. The monthly reporting of this work can be found on our website.

The Prescription Monitoring Program is an important piece of the challenge in preventing opioid misuse in our province. Today's bill is a step in the right direction in monitoring the prescribing of controlled substances in our province and ensuring Nova Scotians have evidence-based care supported by processes that ensure quality and safety.

I am heartened to hear people support the idea of increasing diversity of our boards for people living with chronic pain or who have experienced addiction to prescription medications. It is critical that we include their voice as part of our oversight process. We want to make sure that our oversight boards are a true representation of the impacted stakeholders and regulators.

Finally, the Prescription Monitoring Program, along with the other measures we are implementing as part of the opioid framework, has shown itself to be an important part of ensuring the safety of Nova Scotians. In recent years, we have seen a reduction in the number of annual opioid overdose deaths. Nova Scotia has been fortunate in not seeing the same level of misuse of prescription medications as seen in other provinces. This bill is a sound action that the government can take to advance our greater goals of improving the health and well-being of all Nova Scotians.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I'm happy to just take a few moments to speak to Bill No. 115. While we are in support of some of these changes, we do have a few concerns. It's definitely good to see that the changes are there that improve the diversity of the board, but it does beg a question of concern with the shift of authority to the Minister of Health and Wellness from the Governor in Council for the appointment of the non-voting directors and the directors responsible for licensing.

The minister spoke to the catalyst for these changes, which as I understand were based on recommendations from the Prescription Monitoring Board, strategic plan, and an

independent review. It would have been nice to have had access to those recommendations and that independent review prior to this bill being introduced. That is all I have on this particular bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm glad to rise to speak to Bill No. 115. It's important to make sure our legislation is always up to date, especially if it governs important issues such as promoting the appropriate use of monitored drugs. As I mentioned during the second reading of the bill, our caucus would like to see more action from this government on addressing the opioid overdose crisis in Nova Scotia. We also need to work toward a safe supply of drugs in Nova Scotia.

The increase in opioid use has translated into an increase in preventable overdoses, illness, and riskier, dangerous behaviour. The COVID-19 crisis has compounded these issues, putting individuals, families, and communities at greater risk. The number of confirmed and probable opioid toxicity deaths in Nova Scotia is in the dozens every year, but we also know that many deaths are misreported and that advocates on the ground working with folks using opioids don't have all of the necessary information that they need to do their work most effectively.

Safe supply is crucial for the health and well-being of the people who use drugs. As illicit street drugs continue to increase in fentanyl quantities, it is imperative for those particularly at risk of overdose to have access to drugs they know will not lead to overdose and/or death. Our caucus is committed to supporting the development of a safe supply of drugs in Nova Scotia, continuing to bring attention to the ongoing opioid crisis, particularly among the most marginalized, and continuing to work on the systemic issues that increase risk to people who use drugs, such as housing and health care.

In closing, I will say that we are supporting this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'd like to stand and just make a couple of final comments about this bill. The library did a jurisdictional review of prescription monitoring programs across the country, and I also have a study that I'd like to table as well.

Just a couple of comments. I do support the bill, but a couple of comments to consider is virtual care. We have a lot of patients who are receiving that in the province. How will they receive their prescriptions for benzodiazepine, valium, opioids or narcotics, morphine and codeine - those types of controlled drugs? Something to consider, as we move more towards this virtual care, is that there's a whole segment of patients that will not be able to be served.

Another thing I'd just like the minister to consider moving forward: A future change is to consider working with our fellow Maritime provinces. We have a lot of patients who move across borders interprovincially between PEI and New Brunswick. If they're from Nova Scotia and see a specialist in New Brunswick - let's say to have hip surgery or knee surgery - and come back with a narcotic prescription from another province, they can't get it filled. It requires another medical appointment to acquire that same prescription from a Nova Scotia physician. Having collaboration with our Maritime provinces, maybe consider having a Maritime prescription monitoring program.

Lastly, I would just like to read a quote here from this study, which was an overview of four prescription monitoring review programs in Canada of which Nova Scotia was one of the four provinces that was reviewed. At the end in the conclusion of the discussion, it says "Although it seems intuitive to believe that nonmedical use of opioids may be higher in provinces without a prescription review/monitoring programs, the lowest Canadian levels are found in Quebec, which does not operate a program."

It's just something to consider: What is the actual benefit of this program? Is the money being invested in this program serving Nova Scotians? Is it serving the taxpayers? If there's no actual benefit, based on a study such as this, would the money that's being used for this program be better served to help those with addictions?

Just some thoughts about the Prescription Monitoring Program. With those comments, I will close.

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, thank you to the members opposite for their comments. They've seen a lot of me today, I'm sure they're ready for me to sit down. I now rise to close debate on Bill No. 115.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 115. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

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

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 94 be read a third time and do pass.

I have just a few remarks tonight. Since 2015, Canada has recognized April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month. In April of last year, a couple from my community, Olha and Denys Khapersky, took it upon themselves to reach out and educate me about these events from the early 1930s, the period of 1932-33. I really appreciate them making a point to do so. We hear a lot about tragedies of the past and it is certainly not something that I think is too widely recognized. Part of why we're doing this today is to ensure that that part of our global history is entrenched here in Nova Scotia.

I'd also like to thank the Ukrainian-Canadian Congress local president, Andre Mereschuk, and the rest of the local branch. I'd also like to thank Dr. Lyubov Zhyznomirska for organizing this past year's 88th anniversary event that was held at the local Halifax Public Library. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for making a point to come to that on behalf of the government and read the resolution that day.

Just a couple of quick remarks. These events took place during peace times, and it was a targeted, invasive, intentional, horrible focus to suppress a peaceful group of people. What I think is really important about this bill - at least from what I observe humbly, having the opportunity to continue to learn more about that part of our global history - is that these incidents were suppressed for decades. I thought I wasn't going to cry again.

I'd like to table a pamphlet that came to me from a group at the University of Alberta, where the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies is. It's a pamphlet perhaps for members to observe and take a peek at. Again, something new to me, so I share this with the House to provide an opportunity for people to take a look at that and learn a little bit more, perhaps.

Certainly, looking to today's scenario, we see horrible atrocities that are presently occurring and what seems to be a difficult repetition of this awful past. The least that we

can do is bring recognition to this event and try to bring more awareness to what has happened in the past, in hopes that it will at some point help to influence our future.

With that, I look forward to hearing the remarks of my colleagues from around the House.

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

LISA LACHANCE: This bill is an opportunity to recognize and support the Ukrainian community in Nova Scotia. It offers an opportunity for Nova Scotians to reflect on the eternal struggle for human rights and dignity around the world.

As we know, Nova Scotians have been searching for ways to support the Ukrainian community here and overseas. I shared previously the efforts of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island constituents Jill and Daniel Chorney, who founded Pierogies for Peace to raise funds for the Red Cross. It's just one of many fundraisers. Hopefully by recognizing this day, it may be a way for us to connect past struggles for human rights with concern and compassion for the current plight in Ukraine.

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

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: First off, I want to thank the honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville for bringing this forward. This is a very important piece of legislation honouring members of our Ukrainian community here in Nova Scotia. What a tragic, horrific aspect of history that we're recognizing. Between 1932 and 1933, four to six million Ukrainians were killed in this genocide brought about by Joseph Stalin. This day will recognize that, and this day will recognize as well the great contribution of the Ukrainian community here in Nova Scotia.

I also want to take this opportunity to reiterate the Nova Scotia government's commitment to Ukrainians, our commitment in standing in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Again, thank you to the member for the leadership on this very important piece of legislation. This will be a day to honour and remember those who died under Joseph Stalin in this terrible event in human history.

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

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

HON. BEN JESSOME: Thank you to my honourable colleagues from Halifax Citadel-Sable Island and Dartmouth East. Thank you to all members in the House for supporting this bill. I move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 94.

[9:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 94. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

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 House on Bills.

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

The motion is carried.

We'll have a short recess while the committee sets up - back in five minutes.

[9:47 p.m. The House recessed.]

[10:03 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds in the Chair.]

[10:23 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds assumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 118 - Personal Health Information Act.

and the Chair has been instructed to recommend this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendment.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, that concludes the government's business for today. I move that the House do now rise and meet again Friday, April 8th between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 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. Time permitting, it will include second reading of Bill Nos. 143, 145, 147 and 148, and third reading of Bill No. 118.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do rise to meet again on Friday, April 8th between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

[The House rose at 10:24 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 201**

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas community volunteers gathered for the annual salt haystack construction at the 2021 Festival d'la Barge in Amirault's Hill on August 7, 2021; and

Whereas during this community event, Mr. Austin Doucette experienced a sudden cardiac arrest; and

Whereas early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is a key link of the Chain of Survival and the quick interventions of bystanders, including Austin Saulnier, contributed to the positive outcome and survival of Mr. Austin Doucette;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize Austin Saulnier for his quick and heroic actions and thank him for saving Mr. Austin Doucette's life.

RESOLUTION NO. 202

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on November 8, 2021, Alyssa LeBlanc and Cody Mood welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Alyssa LeBlanc and Cody Mood on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 203

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on December 26, 2021, Megan d'Entremont and Nelson Brannen welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Megan d'Entremont and Nelson Brannen on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 204

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on January 9, 2022, Erica Nickerson and Lionel d'Entremont welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Erica Nickerson and Lionel d'Entremont on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 205

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on November 16, 2021, Heidi Rodgerson and Logan Porter welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Heidi Rodgerson and Logan Porter on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 206

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on October 20, 2021, Jessica and Jeremiah Nickerson welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jessica and Jeremiah Nickerson on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 207

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on October 28, 2021, Justine and Jason Saulnier welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Justine and Jason Saulnier on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 208

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on November 14, 2021, Lindsay Melanson and Christopher LeBlanc welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lindsay Melanson and Christopher LeBlanc on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 209

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on December 17, 2021, Mary d'Entremont and Gabriel Doucette welcomed their daughter into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mary d'Entremont and Gabriel Doucette on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 210

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on March 2, 2022, Paige and Jeremy d'Eon welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Paige and Jeremy d'Eon on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.

RESOLUTION NO. 211

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is an exciting and momentous event and marks the beginning of a wonderful journey; and

Whereas few events in life are as powerful and positive as the birth of a child; and

Whereas on March 7, 2022, Shannon Hatfield and Robert Surette welcomed their son into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shannon Hatfield and Robert Surette on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them a lifetime of happiness as parents.