



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2022

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HALIFAX, FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll begin with the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, in my capacity as Attorney General of Nova Scotia, I hereby beg leave to table the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission annual report for 2020-2021.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table an article entitled "Nova Scotia government to appeal ruling in disabilities discrimination case," which was published on December 3rd by CBC News and written by Blair Rhodes, in consideration of a member's statement I want to read shortly.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 212

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

Whereas this week, April 3rd to 9th, is Adult Learners' Week and Nova Scotians are marking the outstanding achievements of adult learners at events throughout the province; and

Whereas literacy skills increase confidence and open doors to the rewarding education and employment opportunities our province has to offer; and

Whereas the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to helping Nova Scotians reach their full potential by supporting the development and delivery of adult literacy programs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing and celebrating Adult Learners' Week and encouraging all Nova Scotians to celebrate the value of literacy as the foundation to lifelong learning.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 213

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

Whereas Scott McCain and Leslie McLean have established a new bursary and emergency funds for Indigenous students at Mount Saint Vincent University; and

Whereas Mount Saint Vincent University has matched their \$500,000 contribution for a total investment of \$1 million to support Indigenous students; and

Whereas these investments will provide Indigenous students with the necessary supports to attend and succeed at their studies;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature thank Scott McCain, Leslie McLean, and Mount Saint Vincent University for investing in the future of Indigenous students.

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. 149 - Entitled an Act Respecting Certain Financial Measures. (Hon. Allan MacMaster)

Bill No. 150 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 31 of the Acts of 2004, the Police Act. (Rafah DiCostanzo)

Bill No. 151 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Act of 2006, the Midwifery Act. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 152 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code, to Provide Paid Leave for Events of Domestic Violence and Other Emergencies. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 153 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code, Respecting Organ and Tissue Donation Leave. (Kenda Coombes)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RESOLUTION NO. 214

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day, I shall move the adoption of the following resolution.

Whereas Nova Scotians are experiencing a significant increase in cost of living due to the highest increase in inflation rates since 1983; and

Whereas the high levels of inflation will result in increased revenues for the government; and

Whereas the people of Nova Scotia are suffering financially because inflation impacts so many aspects of everyday life - shelter, food, gas, travel, and everything;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House agree to take steps to acknowledge the strife of the people we represent with such actions as temporary removal of the provincial portion of taxation on all food and by reducing the provincial motive gas tax and diesel tax by 5.5 cents per litre, effective June 1, 2022, until December 31, 2022.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The motion is tabled.

[9:15 a.m.]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

MEAGHER, ANNIE: 100TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Annie Meagher of Pirate Harbour and wish her a belated happy 100th birthday. Mrs. Meagher turned 100 two weeks ago, the same day that we came into this House so very long ago.

When I called her on her special day, she said she was just waiting for her children and grandchildren to arrive to celebrate. During our conversation she told me about growing up on a small farm on the old homestead, with beef cattle, dairy cows, homegrown vegetables and a horse, for both work and travel.

I want to recognize Mrs. Meagher on this day because, aside from her birthday, this is a special day for her. You see, it's the season opener for her beloved Toronto Blue Jays. They take on the Texas Rangers tonight and I can assure you Mrs. Meagher is eagerly awaiting the first pitch, with her Blue Jays blanket handy. When I asked her who her favourite player was, she said she didn't really have one but in previous seasons she sure enjoyed watching José Bautista play, like we all did. I am sure she was pretty excited by the famous bat flip back in 2015.

I'd ask members of this House to join me in recognizing Annie Meagher for turning 100. As the headline in the *Guysborough Journal* stated, Annie Meagher is truly ahead by a century.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

HOUSING RULING: PREM. COMMIT. - SIGNIF.

GARY BURRILL: I rise today to recognize the importance of the court's finding on October 6th of discrimination against people with disabilities in our province.

Blair Rhodes, in an article published by CBC News on the 3rd of December, which I've already tabled, wrote the following:

“In a landmark ruling on October 6th, the Court of Appeal found evidence of systemic discrimination in the case of Beth MacLean, Sheila Livingstone and Joseph Delaney. The three were housed at a Halifax-area psychiatric hospital, despite opinions from doctors that they could live in the community.

A day after the ruling, Premier Tim Houston” - I’m sorry, Mr. Speaker, the Premier - “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 join me in recognizing the weight of the Premier’s words to those affected by this ruling, and the significance of his October commitment to them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MITCHELL, FELICITY: PAGEANT PARTIC. - CONGRATS.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Felicity Mitchell of Salt Springs, Pictou County for being selected to participate in the Miss Teen North America Pageant that will take place in Orlando, Florida this July. She will be representing the North Shore as Ms. Northumberland Strait, North America.

Felicity has been participating in pageants for five years now, including the Pictou Lobster Carnival pageant in 2019. She enjoys competing in pageants because they provide an opportunity to meet new people. When she isn’t preparing to compete, Felicity is busy with her studies at Saint Mary’s University. The winner of July’s pageant will travel through North America promoting the event and participating in charity work.

I wish Felicity the best of luck, and I am confident she will represent Pictou West and the Northumberland Strait very well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

ANCIENT, REV. WILLIAM: LIFESAVING ROLE - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ensure an important chapter of our history is preserved and that appropriate recognition is given to Reverend William Ancient, a resident of Prospect.

On April 1, 1873, the ocean steamship SS *Atlantic* struck rocks off Myers Island in Nova Scotia. Hundreds of terror-stricken passengers piled on deck to escape the sinking ship and managed to safely make it to several large rocks and escape the sinking ship.

Unfortunately, several passengers, unable to swim, clung onto the rigging of the ship waiting for help as the ship began to break apart. The sea was rough that night and

even the most experienced fisherman did not think a rescue of the remaining passengers was possible.

William Ancient, an Anglican priest from Terence Bay and retired sailor from the Royal Navy, was determined to save the crew before the ship went down. Working under extreme duress late into the night, William and four other volunteers headed in a small boat to the wreck and managed to safely rescue the remaining crew.

William Ancient was praised around the world for his incredible courage, seamanship, and endurance, and received numerous medals and awards.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in acknowledging William Ancient for his heroic lifesaving role in Terence Bay.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

GRADUATES: COM. ACTION TRAINING - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the new crop of community advocates who have finished the community action training at The North Grove in Dartmouth North.

In spite of many challenges and delays because of COVID-19, the community action training enabled the participants to learn to advocate for themselves and support their neighbours and greater community. The training consisted of 10 sessions that covered advocacy around a number of issues including harm reduction, tenants' rights, political organizing, food security, and more - all very important issues in our community.

I was very fortunate to join the group for their political organizing training to talk about my job as an MLA and the advocacy I do in the community, and at the provincial level. I was inspired by the group's energy and enthusiasm.

I want to recognize Danielle Rouillard, April Savoury, Chris Paris, Sarah Rex-Hachey, and Cindy Fowler - Dartmouth North's newest community advocates. I look forward to working with them to make impactful change in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

BUCHANAN, MILFORD: DORY BLDG. SKILL - RECOG.

NOLAN YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Milford Buchanan. He is well known to residents as a talented cabinet maker, whirligig builder, and community volunteer. Milford is best known as a wooden dory builder at the Shelburne Dory Shop, maintaining Shelburne's long history of building wooden boats.

Milford, having built over 100 dories, remembers helping his father gather natural knees from tree roots. He later trained under Master Dory builder Sidney Mahaney and can be seen in the Summer plying his trade by teaching visitors the history and traditional ways of building dories.

I respectfully ask all members to join me in thanking Milford for his commitment to the preservation of this important piece of Shelburne and Nova Scotia history.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

THE REFUGE PODCAST: RESETTLEMENT DISC. - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Today I would like to recognize *The Refuge* podcast and the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition team behind it.

This monthly show brings the voices of young refugees, academics, and community partners together to discuss the key aspects of the refugee resettlement experience. They deal with everything from transitioning to school and work, learning a new language, and even the impact of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the CYRRC team for this wonderful podcast, for giving a voice to the historically silenced, and for being so welcoming to me as a guest.

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

DEVCO MINERS: WCB BENEFITS FIGHT - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize the injured Devco miners of Cape Breton. Their issue was first brought to my attention by Bobby and John Gillis when I was a CBRM councillor in 2018, which I happily brought before council.

The injured Devco miners have been fighting for an extension of their WCB benefits by advocating for an exemption for former Devco miners, and the money would be paid by the federal government. The individuals who have been advocating tirelessly for these changes and the extensions are the Devco miners and their families.

Living in a mining community, we are aware of the severe and long-lasting injuries miners live with every day. I wish to express my support for the Devco miners and their families.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

TUCKER, LILA: 90TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

TOM TAGGART: I rise to congratulate Lila Tucker on her 90th birthday.

A long-time resident of Tatamagouche, Mrs. Tucker has been a committed, hardworking mother who raised her family, supported her friends, and enriched her community.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Lila and wishing her many happy returns.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

SABINE, KOELBË: GRAND PRÉ BAGELS OPENING - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: One of the positives of the pandemic has been the innovation and risk-taking by Nova Scotian entrepreneurs. One of those remarkable innovators is Koelbë Sabine of Grand Pré, who started making bagels for his wife during the pandemic and has now turned that passion into a brisk bagel business in rural Nova Scotia.

Koelbë graduated from culinary school in Lunenburg in 2004, and has worked as a sous-chef around our province before settling in Grand Pré in 2017. You can find Koelbë's savoury bagels at the Essentially English Bakery & Cafe in Hantsport and Simply For Life in Kentville. Guests at the Gingerbread House Inn Bed & Breakfast in Wolfville are treated to these tasty bagels each morning.

I ask my fellow members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating entrepreneur Koelbë Sabine of Grand Pré Bagels on the opening of his popular bagel baking business and wish him all the best as his business continues to grow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CRIPPS, LEE: CONTRIB. TO CRAIG GALLERY - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize Lee Cripps, who recently ended their decade-long tenure as curator of the Craig Gallery at Alderney Landing.

Lee has brought an incredible cross-section of artists to the gallery for all of Dartmouth to enjoy. The gallery also hosts local and amateur artists, as well as the Canadian Mental Health Association's Mosaic for Mental Health Art Exhibition & Sale.

Lee was instrumental in creating the ArtCart creativity hub, a community arts studio that provides supplies and teaches art techniques to all ages, including my kids and their friends.

Lee is an artist in their own right and will be taking some well-earned time to focus on their own art practice. Please join me in thanking Lee Cripps for the years of dedication and work that have made the Craig Gallery a destination for the community and visitors to Dartmouth alike.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MACDONALD, DR. ALLAN: ORDER OF CAN. RECIP. - CONGRATS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to bring respect to a man who co-founded the first ever liver transplant program in the region: Dr. Allan MacDonald.

Though Allan MacDonald has lived in Sydney, Cape Breton since 2005, his impact on health care in Halifax and across the entire Atlantic region has left a truly lasting legacy. Dr. MacDonald has done locums in Amherst at our Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre for several years and is one of my most respected mentors in health care.

Dr. MacDonald spent several decades as a faculty member at Dalhousie Medical School and as a clinician practicing at the former Victoria General Hospital in Halifax, and has now been bestowed the Order of Canada as a member. His citation credits his pioneering innovations in the field of kidney, liver, and pancreas transplantation, and positively impacting the lives of patients, notably within Atlantic Canada.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Allan MacDonald on receiving the Order of Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

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

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Juniper Balch, a 14-year-old surfer from Lawrencetown who is heading to Tofino, British Columbia this weekend to represent Nova Scotia at a national surfing competition.

Juniper is the only African Nova Scotian surfer to compete in her age category in the entire province. Juniper is also a volunteer with the North Preston Surf Program and helps to introduce other African Nova Scotian youth to a sport that she has been participating in since she was seven years old. Although Juniper doesn't identify as a trailblazer, she is a mentor to many young surfers and enjoys sharing her love of the sport.

Juniper has won the last three contests in our province for her age category - and a thank you to the Black Wellness Co-operative of Nova Scotia, which stepped up to fundraise and support Juniper so she could travel to the competition this weekend.

I ask that the members of the Assembly join me in recognizing Juniper's athletic achievements and volunteerism as well as her continued success as she conquers the waves on the west coast of Canada. Good luck, Juniper!

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

VOLUNS.: GREAT BEDFORD CLEANUP - THANKS

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the volunteers and organizers who are getting ready for the Great Bedford Cleanup, which will be taking place two weeks from tomorrow on April 23rd - the day after Earth Day. It will be taking place at six locations across my riding of Bedford South and the riding of Bedford Basin as well.

These kinds of community efforts are absolutely essential. We're into Spring now, which is wonderful. All the snow has melted. That shows all of the garbage that has been left behind over the Winter. There's a lot of work to be done across the area.

I really want to thank all the volunteers and organizers who will be doing that, in particular Anette Goodwin, who is kind of leading the charge. I look forward to being out there on the 23rd and wish them all the best.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

902 MANUP: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the important work of 902 ManUp, which was established in 2016 by Marcus James and Peter Campbell as a result of gun violence in the community.

Since the beginning of the pandemic and current housing crisis, 902 ManUp has provided, managed, and staffed several extreme cold pop-up shelters. They have also been managing and staffing hotels that are provided to people who have nowhere else to quarantine because of COVID-19 and who had to isolate themselves through various facilities over the past two years.

The compassion and understanding these men displayed professionally while dealing with some of our most vulnerable - those affected by COVID-19 and displaced and homeless Nova Scotians - has been unmatched. 902 ManUp recognizes the support needed

in the community more than ever for those facing or experiencing homelessness and now has three full-time staff members dedicated to supporting them.

I would like the House to join me in recognizing the important work that they continue to do as 902 ManUp continues to work in the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

SPRINGHILL BAPTIST CHURCH: HELP FOR SENIORS - RECOG.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Springhill Baptist Church for taking the steps to help the seniors of their church and the community.

The Springhill Baptist Church applied for and received a grant for the seniors' program. This grant allowed them to invest in streaming equipment, which allowed their services to be brought into the homes of seniors.

The church also purchased iPads and matched up seniors with knowledgeable high school students or members of the congregation to teach them how to use this new technology. They met in the church once a week and were instructed on every aspect of the iPad so they would become able to participate in virtual or live aspects of the church and other community life activities. This training allowed the seniors to move from being passive observers to being more active participants in the whole community.

I ask the House to join me in recognizing and thanking the Springhill Baptist Church for all they do for the seniors and the community in and around Springhill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRIENDS OF PETERSFIELD PK.: MAINT. IN WINTER - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize and thank a group called the Friends of Petersfield Park.

Petersfield Park is a beautiful park in the riding of Northside-Westmount where many families can go to enjoy the walking trails, the green spaces, and basically just have some great family time and attend wonderful events.

This park is only maintained by the province in the Summer, Spring, and Fall seasons. So this group came together to create a team that would maintain the park during the Winter months to make Petersfield Park a year-round place where people can go and enjoy.

I'd like to congratulate the Friends of Petersfield Provincial Park, led by councillor Steve Gillespie and many other community people in Westmount. There are over 60 members, including our office. Congratulations to the group.

[9:30 a.m.]

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

BAYLIS, F./DAHN, J.: KILLAM PRIZE RECIPS. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, we are so blessed in Nova Scotia with a vibrant post-secondary community. Today I would like to recognize the Nova Scotia 2022 recipients of the Killam Prize.

The Killam Prize is a prestigious national award given to researchers who excel in their fields. Ethicist Dr. Françoise Baylis of Dalhousie University won one of this year's prizes for her groundbreaking work in assisted reproduction, transplantation, and genetic enhancement. Also from Dalhousie, physicist Dr. Jeff Dahn is a recipient of the prize for his pioneering work on battery technology in electric vehicles.

I ask that my colleagues in the House join me in recognizing Dr. Baylis and Dr. Dahn for the time and effort put into their research and for being named winners of such a notable award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

MURPHY, RILEY: APPT. TO OPS. MGR. AT SEASIDE FM - CONGRATS.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Eastern Passage native Riley Murphy on his appointment as Operations Manager of 105.9 Seaside FM radio. Riley majored in radio while studying music, arts, radio, television, and journalism.

As a Summer student, Riley had the opportunity to be mentored by the late Wayne Harrett. Riley's role will be to oversee the administrative side of the station, but also the production, on-air, and technical aspects. Riley will be able to demonstrate his skills gathered from three years of working with the Maritime Broadcasting System.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Riley Murphy on his recent career appointment with 105.9 Seaside FM radio, as well as wishing him many successes.

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

FRANCIS, RYAN: WILLIE O'REE COM. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize one of just three finalists for the Willie O'Ree Community Hero Awards. This award recognizes an individual who has worked to make a positive impact on his or her community, culture, or society to make people better through hockey.

Ryan Francis of Cole Harbour helped launch the Hockey Nova Scotia Female Indigenous Hockey Program, which encourages young Mi'kmaw girls to play hockey. His efforts are focused on breaking down the barriers that commonly keep girls from playing the game by making equipment and resources more easily accessible. A member of the Acadia First Nation, Francis believes in the importance of creating a safe community and support network for young girls in Nova Scotia.

In its first two years, the program has had 190 unique participants from three different Mi'kmaw communities. I ask the members of the House of Assembly to please take a few minutes to vote for Ryan Francis, our own Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia, Canada's finalist and Nova Scotia's only finalist, at nhl.com/oreeward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MOCEAN DANCE: 20TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Mocean Dance, which is marking its 20th anniversary of creating original, contemporary dance in Nova Scotia. Mocean Dance was founded in 2001 by Carolle Crooks Fernando, Sarah Rozee, Sara Harrigan, Alicia Orr MacDonald, and Lisa Phinney Langley, and is now expertly directed by Susanne Chui and Sara Coffin. It is rooted in a collaborative process and since its founding, its members have been creating excellent and nationally recognized work, collaborating with challenging and exciting dancers and choreographers, and developing emerging dancers. I am a big fan.

Over the years, Mocean Dance has produced 46 works, 20 productions, and worked with more than 50 artists who have enriched audiences in our community with provocative and beautiful pieces. This weekend they will celebrate by presenting a new piece, *Fluid Forms*, at Alderney Landing.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Mocean Dance on its 20th anniversary and in thanking the company for its contribution to the cultural life of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

CONNOLLY, JOEL: PARAMEDIC WORK AND COM. SERV. - RECOG.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, it gives me considerable pleasure to rise today to acknowledge the achievements of Joel Connolly of Falmouth. Since 2009, Joel has served as a paramedic with only one goal in mind: to work for LifeFlight as a critical care paramedic.

In our province, there are just over 1,300 paramedics and very few of them are critical care. Thanks to the brand new Nova Scotia Critical Care Paramedic Program, this number will grow, and will continue to grow. Joel's dream is now a reality.

Joel is not only a committed paramedic but also deserves recognition for the fact that our local gym now has an AED machine. Last Fall, his fundraising efforts were successful when he delivered the potentially lifesaving device to the Locker Room Health & Fitness Club.

Can we please applaud Joel for not only his frontline work, but for going that extra mile to help save lives on his own time?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

U21 CURLING TEAM: GOLD MEDAL WIN - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Nova Scotia U21 Women's Curling Team, who won the gold medal in Stratford, Ontario, this past weekend. Nova Scotia was represented by Skip Taylor Stevens, Lead Cate Fitzgerald, Second Alison Umlah, Third Lauren Ferguson, and Coach Mary Mattatall.

With a perfect undefeated record heading into the final game, Nova Scotia needed to defeat Ontario to win the title. Answering the call in the 10th end, Skip Stevens made a last shot takeout to edge Nova Scotia 6 to 5 over Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House join me in congratulating the Nova Scotia U21 Women's Curling Team for their outstanding performance to win this season's national title, and a special congrats to Cate Fitzgerald.

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

PAUL'S FOOD FACTORY: 40TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Paul's Food Factory, located in Whitney Pier, on its 40th anniversary in business. Paul's Food Factory was established by Paul Price. At the time, Paul owned a convenience store and had a man

selling him subs and sandwiches, but he wasn't coming regularly enough, so Paul decided he would make his own.

Before long, Paul became famous for his pizza burgers. Paul's Food Factory has become a staple in Cape Breton, whether on a Friday or Saturday night snack or as an awesome surprise in your lunch bag.

Paul's is now owned by his daughter, Jennifer Price-Shepard, who is keeping the family business alive and well. In September, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality Council made Paul's pizza burger the official food of the CBRM.

I ask the House to join me, especially the Cape Breton members, in congratulating Paul's Food Factory on its 40th anniversary and in wishing them continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MCCROSSIN, JOEL: ATHLETIC AWDS. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to have a proud mother moment. I can't help myself. One of my sons, Joel, just won last night at Mount Saint Vincent University Co-MVP for his varsity basketball team and Mount Saint Vincent Male Athlete of the Year.

I just can't help myself. I wasn't going to stand and say it, but I can't help it. You may have noticed that the first Friday in the House I was missing. I did get permission from the Speaker because the Mount Saint Vincent Varsity Boys team went to Nationals. This was Joel's final year of varsity basketball. He started playing in Grade 3 and finished off his basketball career at Nationals.

I'm just so proud of him. I'm so thankful to Mount Saint Vincent - the athletic team, the coaching staff. It's just an incredible university.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SMITH, MARK: ACHIEVEMENTS AS SOFTBALL PLAYER - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, Halifax's Mark Smith is considered to be one of the greatest softball pitchers to ever play the game. Mark's outstanding athletic ability quickly placed him on the international stage, travelling the world as a star for Canada's national team.

Smith pitched the first no-hitter in Pan Am Games history in 1979 and was selected as the outstanding player at the 1981 International Softball Congress World Tournament. His extensive playing career then spanned 25 years, two continents (North America and

Australia), three countries (Canada, the United States, and New Zealand), and several Canadian provinces.

Smith won four gold medals at the Pan Am Games and also received a Major League Baseball tryout with the Kansas City Royals. He was also an outstanding player at the 1992 World Championship, winning gold.

In 1999, Smith was voted one of Nova Scotia's top 10 male athletes of the 20th Century. He was inducted into the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame, the Softball Canada Hall of Fame, and the International Softball Congress Hall of Fame.

I would like all members of this Legislature to join me in recognizing a super elite athlete and a proud Nova Scotian who was committed to excellence in his chosen sport.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SMITH, JUANITA: 35 YRS. AT E. PRESTON DAYCARE CTR. - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I rise in the House today to recognize Mrs. Juanita Smith. She's an early childhood educator at the East Preston Daycare Centre, and she's been there for over 35 years. Mrs. Juanita is the heart and centre of the East Preston Daycare and is loved by all. She's loved by her staff, children, and the parents and families, including my children, who actually had the pleasure of being at the daycare with her throughout many years.

I want to take this time to acknowledge her, as she's celebrating 35 years, and thank her for all of her hard work. She's definitely been a trailblazer in our community and beyond, so thank you, Mrs. Juanita Smith.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DAIN, JASON: ASTROPHOTOGRAPHER WORK - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize an amazing Halifax Needham resident, Jason Dain. Jason Dain is a local astrophotographer and he's been taking photos of the night sky for two and a half years. He is also a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. Jason has had his work published nationally and has also had it recognized by NASA on their Astronomy Picture of the Day site twice, including a recent photo of the Northern Lights taken at Martinique Beach.

I would like to congratulate Jason Dain on his recognition as an astrophotographer, and I hope to see many more of his stunning photos in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

THOMAS, DAWN: SUPP. TO SRS. - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to a truly selfless individual in our community. Her name is Dawn Thomas.

Dawn is the Coordinator for the Senior Safety Program in the Digby area. Her role is to educate seniors on crime prevention, health and wellness, and to promote safe and independent living. She facilitates public events, presentations, and workshops on various topics of interest to seniors, and provides connections to community agencies and health care options, and so much more. Dawn goes above and beyond to help individuals on the regular day, and especially now due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing Dawn Thomas and the exceptional role she plays in our community. Her support to seniors is extraordinary and the Digby area is lucky to have her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

ROOTED TO CARE: GROWING FOOD FOR SRS. - THANKS

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, a few years ago the Rooted to Clare Garden Club came up with a project to grow produce to be distributed to seniors who could no longer tend their own gardens, or seniors whose family gardener had passed away.

With a grant from the Conseil de Santé de Clare and donations from local businesses and groups, the garden club built seven raised beds at the Hub Culturel in Comeauville. Two of these are far enough apart to allow people in wheelchairs to access the raised beds. Last year, their harvest surpassed 300 pounds of produce.

As the group prepares for the 2022 growing season, I ask that all members join me in thanking Rooted to Clare for their initiative to ensure that our seniors have access to fresh, locally grown produce during the Summer and Fall months.

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

HOSPICE HALIFAX: END-OF-LIFE CARE - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: End-of-life care remains a critical part of our health care system. Today I would like to recognize Hospice Halifax, located in my constituency, for their innovative and much needed work in this area.

Hospice Halifax started in 2001 and has since grown into an impressive non-profit organization with over 40 employees and dozens of volunteers. Their site in the south end serves as a modern, comfortable, and compassionate place where Nova Scotians can go to

receive end-of-life care, and where their families can access comprehensive parallel support services. Friends and family, anyone affected by grief, can also access four free sessions of grief counselling.

I ask that my colleagues in the House join me in acknowledging the vital role that Hospice Halifax plays in ensuring Nova Scotians can live out the end of their lives surrounded by love, comfort, and compassion.

[9:45 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

PATCHWORK PALS: GIFT TO DR. STRANG - RECOG.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: For over two years, Nova Scotians have gotten to know our province's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Robert Strang. In addition to tuning in for the latest COVID-19 news, during many debates Nova Scotians also saw Doctor Strang's vast assortment of ties.

Patchwork Pals, a quilting guild in my constituency, appreciated Dr. Strang's dedication throughout the pandemic and his passion for ties, so they crafted him a beautiful, one-of-a-kind, handmade quilt made of ties. The day I returned to the Legislature, I had the honour to visit the Department of Health and Wellness to deliver this very unique gift to Dr. Robert Strang as a token of appreciation for his leadership and guidance over the last two years.

I ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing Patchwork Pals' creative and thoughtful gift to Dr. Strang, and thank them for their ongoing work to support our communities and province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

WEIDENFELD, JOHANNES "HANS": DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: On April 6th, Johannes "Hans" Weidenfeld passed away at the age of 87.

Hans was a man of deep and abiding faith and was very active in his church community, especially with the Knights of Columbus. He was a loving husband of 55 years to Annette, a devoted and proud father and grandfather and great-grandfather and cherished brother. To the rest of us, though, Hans was the real Santa Claus.

For almost three decades, Hans brought true Christmas spirit to us all. In the weeks leading up to each Christmas, he would be out and about in our community with his long

white beard, red velvet suit, and bag of toys and treats that he gave to children and adults alike. It was his kind, gentle demeanour, and the sparkle in his eyes as he would you a candy cane that really made you feel the magic and wonder of Christmas.

I ask this House to join me in sending condolences to Annette, his children, and wider family and thanking Hans for so generously giving us nearly 30 years of Christmas magic. He will be truly missed and fondly remembered.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

BROWN, BEN: SPORT ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to recognize my friend and constituent para-athlete Ben Brown for his determination and commitment to sport.

In 2006, Ben was diagnosed with a spinal cord injury after an accident while training for motocross and as a result is paralyzed from the chest down. That didn't stop Ben Brown. When he was 22, he started participating in wheelchair racing and during the next 12 years went on to win five national titles, as well as many other achievements.

Ben was Nova Scotia's first para-athlete to compete in both the Canada Summer and Winter Games, and was named 2015 Male Para-Athlete of the Year by Athletics Nova Scotia. If that wasn't enough, Ben has made the switch this year to para-sprint canoe, which he hopes leads him to the national championships on Lake Banook this Summer and onward to the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

Please join me in congratulating Ben on his past achievements and encouraging him to continue to pursue his goals as an elite para-athlete for Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

MCCORMICK, HEATHER: COM. SERV. - THANKS

CARMAN KERR: When I think of a community leader in Annapolis, I think of Heather McCormick. This amazing woman is the kind of person who gets things done, all while keeping a positive attitude and a great sense of humour.

Among her many contributions to our community, she has led the Annapolis Region Community Arts Council, she spearheaded the redevelopment of our junior high school into beautiful homes in Annapolis Royal, and she's inspired generations of Annapolis County children as a teacher and principal at both Annapolis Royal Regional Academy and Middleton Regional High School.

Heather is the project coordinator currently for CORAH. It's a tremendously successful provincial pilot for older adults, and she's active in ensuring the Fundy Hospice in Cornwallis is a success. She was my co-campaign manager, my Grade 4 teacher, and I'm proud to call her my friend. Having said that, I'm probably in trouble because she doesn't run towards public praise.

Please join me in thanking Heather McCormick for all her years of exceptional service to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

SAMPSON, ANDREE: RICH. CO. VOLUN. OF MO. - RECOG.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I would like to recognize Andree Sampson of L'Ardoise. She was recently honoured as Richmond County's Volunteer of the Month for February.

Andree plays a lead role as a community volunteer. She's actively involved in the annual Acadian Day Festival and is the main organizer of Christmas activities that are enjoyed by young and old.

This August will mark the second annual Harbour Wars, which is a fundraiser for the Tom MacNeil Cancer Patient Care Fund at Cape Breton Regional Hospital. Andree is always promoting community events and is part of many fundraising activities. The community of L'Ardoise is very fortunate to have such a dedicated community advocate.

I ask all members of the Legislature to please join me in recognizing Andree Sampson, one of the many excellent volunteers that Richmond County is lucky to have.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

SS ATLANTIC HER. PK. SOC.: HIST. PRESERV. - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today to recognize the SS *Atlantic* Heritage Park Society for their hard work on a special project to mark the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the wreck of the SS *Atlantic* off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1873.

The SS *Atlantic*, a modern ship at the time, was built in Belfast in 1871. Many of the passengers aboard the SS *Atlantic* were of Irish descent. Although some passengers perished in the wreck, many of the others were rescued and survived.

Most of the fisherman and families in the fishing villages of Prospect, Lower Prospect, and Terence Bay were of Irish descent, and without their courage and kindness, all aboard the ship would have perished that night. In 2023, the society is planning to

commemorate this significant event and highlight our Irish history with a variety of extraordinary events and activities.

I applaud the efforts of the society's work to keep this story alive and connect the event with residents of these communities in the present day. The society plans to host descendants of those connected to the disaster for a period of 10 to 14 days both in Halifax and in the villages in Summer 2023. This event will not only preserve our history but also strengthen our ties between Nova Scotia and Ireland by encouraging visitors and tourists to visit this area to remember this disaster and enjoy the hospitality of the local area.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the SS *Atlantic* Heritage Park Society for their ambitious project to preserve our history and heritage.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

COOK, CRISPIN: PROV. VOLUN. AWD. REP. - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Crispin Cook, who was recently named the 2022 Provincial Volunteer Award Representative for the Town of Lunenburg. He is a perfect choice.

Crispin embodies the spirit of community. He has been an active and faithful member of the Zion Lutheran Church for over 74 years, serving as a worship leader, a greeter, a choir member, and a beautiful soloist. Now retired following a long career in the grocery business, he is constantly caring for his neighbours and friends by running errands for them or taking them shopping. He has even made appearances as Santa for many parades and at our local nursing home.

No matter where you encounter Crispin, his twinkling eyes and somewhat devilish grin ensure you a brighter day. It is a true honour to have this opportunity to congratulate Crispin on receiving this well-deserved recognition. We are all richer for having Crispin in our lives.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

DUBÉ, ANGELA & BRANDON: 1ST BABY OF 2022 - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: It's a boy. Welcoming a new baby into your family is always a reason to celebrate. Being able to welcome our province's first baby of the year is extra special.

At 12:03 a.m. on Saturday, January 1st, Angela and Brandon Dubé welcomed Nova Scotia's first baby of 2022 at the Valley Regional Hospital in Kentville. Roman Dubé

weighed in at a solid 8 pounds 5 ounces and 20.5 inches in length and will be calling Walkerville, a small community in Kings South located between Windsor and Wolfville, his home.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Assembly to join me in congratulating Angela and Brandon Dubé on welcoming into this world a new Nova Scotian just as we passed the one-million mark in population and wish them all the best as Roman grows and experiences the wonderful journey of life.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

GUILDERSON, MONIQUE - FOFLS: TRAILS MAINT. - THANKS

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Monique Guilderson and members of Friends of First Lake Society in Lower Sackville.

The Friends of First Lake Society, a fantastic group of volunteers, first began in 1995, and since then they have successfully fundraised over 1.2 million dollars and built kilometres of trails around the lake.

Monique Guilderson, Chairperson of Friends of First Lake Society, says that the community's continued effort to help in the protection of the watershed is very much appreciated. The first goal of the society is stewardship, which includes water quality monitoring; the second is to provide the community with access to and use of the beautiful area that surrounds First Lake.

I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Monique and, literally, the Friends of First Lake for their continued efforts in providing the community with these beautifully maintained trails.

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

MACDONALD, LUKE: FIT IT FORWARD CAMP. - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize Cole Harbour resident Luke MacDonald, a partner at Aerobics First on Quinpool Road, and his business, Strategics Community Outreach Program.

As a small business partner, Luke identified the potential in what he called "corporate litter": returned footwear and items that would inevitably end up in a landfill. Over 15 years ago, Luke and his partners at Aerobics First created the Fit It Forward campaign. The goal was to help those who are homeless and those facing poverty on barriers in life by providing them with the very best-fitting footwear.

Luke took the same idea to several of his suppliers across the country, proposing a solution for their congested warehouses and now, 15 years later, approximately 6,000 pairs of shoes have been donated and properly fitted by Luke himself.

I ask that the members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing Luke MacDonald and Aerobics First for their quiet leadership that is continuing to make a huge impact on those in need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

S. SHORE REG. HOSP. AUX.: HOSP. DONATION - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the members and volunteers of the South Shore Regional Hospital Auxiliary and their incredible contribution to health care in our community.

The Auxiliary has committed \$1 million towards the hospital's \$115 million modernization project, which will expand the emergency, endoscopy, and day surgery departments as well as bring dialysis treatments and an MRI scanner to the South Shore. According to the Health Services Foundation Board Chair, Nick Saunders, "the Auxiliary's donation will support the day surgery department expansion, as well as four dialysis units."

The Auxiliary, which formed 70 years ago to make jam for patient trays and curtains for the former Dawson Memorial Hospital in Bridgewater, is now a leading force in the redevelopment of regional health care. The donation is one of the largest made by a hospital auxiliary in Nova Scotia.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Auxiliary and its many volunteers, including those who work at the Shoreline Gallery, the Gift Shop, and The Daisy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

CARD, RICK: ORG. OF HOCKEY LEAGUE - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, hockey is a huge sport in Yarmouth and across the province and country for all ages.

Yarmouth's Rick Card has been the organizer of the Yarmouth Oldtimers Hockey League for many years now. This league provides a great opportunity for men in our community aged 40 and up to get together a couple of times per week and enjoy a healthy lifestyle while playing the game that they love.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Rick Card for his many years of organizing the Yarmouth Oldtimers Hockey League and wishing him and the league many more years of keeping their sticks on the ice.

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

ENCH. FOREST MINDFUL PARENTING: FOREST SCHOOL - RECOG.

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to highlight a new initiative being launched by Enchanted Forest Mindful Parenting Inc.

Understanding that children thrive outside and foster many benefits with increased outdoor play, they are creating the Enchanted Forest School in a nurturing and magical atmosphere in Clifton. They will offer young children an opportunity to explore their natural world around them. Through exploration, free play, and lots of song and stories, two guides will emphasize the sense of wonder and mystery in the natural world.

The pandemic has really highlighted our need to get back to our roots and embrace the calming and healthy effects of being out in nature. I commend the Enchanted Forest School for recognizing this and for creating these opportunities for our children in a safe and nurturing environment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

HOUSE WORKERS: MAKING LEG. RUN - THANKS

BRAEDON CLARK: As we near the end of what has been a long week, I wanted to take a chance to thank everybody who makes this place work. This is a list I just came up with, so I do apologize in advance if I missed anybody.

The Speaker's Office staff, Legislative Television, Hansard, the caucus office staff from all parties who are burning the midnight oil - every time I go back at the end of the day, they're there. Commissionaires, Halifax Regional Police members, media, pages, the Legislative Library, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and custodial staff. Last but certainly not least, the Clerk who has been doing it all by himself. (Standing Ovation)

Thank you to everybody who makes this place run. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much and well deserved by everyone, especially the Clerk. (Applause)

The honourable member for Queens.

COUGARS HOCKEY TEAM: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Queens County Cougars Under-11 hockey team and to congratulate them on bringing home the Annapolis Valley Minor Hockey League championship banner.

On March 27th, the Cougars earned their berth in the league final by defeating the team from West Hants. In the final game that evening against their rival team from Bridgewater, the Cougars dug deep, fought hard, and earned the championship title.

Please join me in congratulating the coaching staff, players, and their families on this impressive and well-deserved victory. You have made Queens County proud.

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

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The time is now 10:00 a.m. We'll finish at 10:50 a.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: STRIPPING HRM PLANNING TOOLS - EXPLAIN

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, in October, when the new HRM housing task force was created, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said that the "task force won't override HRM's vision." That was the title of a CBC article, which I'll table. Yet six months later, we've seen this government strip HRM from much of the planning and development tools they have within the municipality for the next three months.

My question for the Premier is: What has happened between October and now? Was the minister's statement wrong?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Obviously, we know of the housing crisis that's in the province right now. We need supply of housing. That's the solution to the crisis. We're moving forward.

I understand from the minister and the work of the task force that it's a very collegial atmosphere there, and things are happening. I saw the mayor's comments that he

didn't see the need, I don't think, for an elected councillor on there and thought that things were - he was optimistic about the way things were going.

My message to Nova Scotians is that we understand that the issues around housing require more supply, and we will do everything we can to get more supply constructed for Nova Scotians.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, this government promised strengthened local decision-making. They said they'd return local decision making in health care. They said they'd return local decision-making in education. Yet this government is taking away local decision-making from HRM when it comes to housing, skipping over the Halifax Peninsula Planning Advisory Committee and the North West Planning Advisory Committee, and the list goes on.

Considering this disregard for local decision making, what sort of message is this sending to other municipalities throughout the province?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, look, we have great respect for communities. Communities understand their community more than any government ever will. We have great respect for local decision-making.

The member will be well aware of his own government's efforts to strip local decision-making away with school boards and in health care, for sure. We are restoring local decision-making to communities. We will make sure that we move this province forward on every single front possible.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, since he's criticizing that move to consolidate the school boards to the education centres, I'd like to ask the Premier: Is he going to bring back school boards, as he promised?

THE PREMIER: The Official Opposition is very fond of talking about our ministers' mandate letters. From their careful review of that, they would absolutely know that, yes, we will restore local decision-making in education and in health care.

What form that will take, I don't want to presuppose, but I will assure the member and all Nova Scotians that we have great respect for communities and their own knowledge of their own community. We will work hand in hand with them on every single opportunity.

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

PREM.: PAID SICK LEAVE PGM. - REINSTATE

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Question Period the Premier said, as he has said often in recent days, that people have all the tools they need in order to protect

ourselves from COVID-19. But this is not entirely the case. One of the tools people need in order to protect ourselves is the ability to stay home when they're sick without negative financial consequence.

Paid sick leave is a program that was done away with last month in our province. The Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table reports that in the United States, states that have paid sick leave had an estimated 50 per cent reduction in the number of COVID-19 cases per state per day. I'll table that.

At this moment, a very high concern in our province is: Will the Premier reinstate the paid sick leave program?

THE PREMIER: I do thank the member for bringing this very important issue to the floor here today. We know that there's still a federal program that exists. The member is absolutely right: The provincial program did expire. But I want to assure the member, and all members of this House, and all Nova Scotians, that the work the minister is doing on this file is tireless, working with national colleagues.

We are looking for opportunities to support those Nova Scotians who are in need of paid sick leave. We don't know what form that will take, but this is a serious question and I will assure the member that we are looking seriously at what we can do to support those Nova Scotians.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, the government brought in the paid sick leave program partially out of recognition of the gaps there are in the federal program. Yesterday the Premier also said here, about COVID-19, that we have lots of tools now that we didn't have two years ago, and I think this is right.

From May 10th to July 31st last year, we had the important tool of a paid sick leave program in Nova Scotia to fill in those federal gaps. From December 20th last year until the end of March this year, we had a second paid sick leave program, which was an important tool, because it filled in exactly those federal gaps. These are tools we had in our toolbox for dealing with COVID-19, which worked and which helped.

My question to the Premier is: Why will the government not reinstate the paid sick leave program now?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I'll just say it again, that we understand the importance of the program that existed. As the pandemic changes, the response changes, for sure. That's absolutely true. The member referenced that subtly in there but, absolutely, we know more about the virus. Nova Scotians know more about how to protect themselves. We have higher immunity. There are all kinds of factors that, as the pandemic changes, the response needs to change.

I will say it again, that the member raises an important issue and it's one that we are acutely aware of and we're looking to see what is possible for providing additional support for Nova Scotians. We're looking at it, there's no question about that.

GARY BURRILL: I think about what the Premier said in the video a couple of days ago with Dr. Strang: You already know how to keep your family safe. I think those words - "what we already know" - these are important.

We already know, for starters, that the number one site, the number one place for the transmission of the infection, in all of our lives, bar none, is the workplace. This is welcome word, that the government is looking at the re-establishing of paid sick leave, continuing the program they rightly brought in in January and wrongly discontinued in March.

My question to the Premier is: Will he tell the people of the province when this welcome change, this welcome reinstatement, could be brought about?

THE PREMIER: First off, thanks for the positive comments about that video. We didn't receive a lot of positive comments (Laughter) but I appreciate the few of them. It is what it is, folks.

What I would say, Mr. Speaker, is we are looking at options. We are looking at what is possible to support those Nova Scotians. I don't want to presuppose what the outcome of that will be, but I can't stress enough that we understand this is a serious issue and we want to do everything we can to support Nova Scotians and we will do everything we can to support those Nova Scotians. I thank the member for bringing that to the floor this morning.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

MAH: HOUSING GOALS - DELAY

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, we saw in the Affordable Housing Commission's progress report that came out in January that the short-term goals recommended by the commission weren't attended to yet. These are foundational goals, that's why they are Recommendations 1 and 2: to establish an arm's-length, independent provincial housing entity; and, the second one, recognizing housing as a right and a key strategic sector for economic development, health, and social equity. I'll table that report.

My understanding is that this government, like the previous one, endorsed these recommendations. My question to the Premier is: What is the holdup on accomplishing these short-term goals? When should Nova Scotians expect them to be complete?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I just want to clarify before I answer that. I believe that both of those two goals in the Affordable Housing Commission progress report are very directly bills before the House right now. I have to go back and look, but both of those are - I'm just wondering if we just have a ruling from you, I can reference the bills on your behalf, or maybe the Clerk can let you know.

THE SPEAKER: We'll just take a very brief recess for a second.

HON. JOHN LOHR: What I can say is that we have worked very hard on all 17 goals of the Affordable Housing Commission report, as the members opposite know. We have acted very quickly on them. Some are more complicated than others, and we are working very hard on Goal Nos. 1 and 2. I will say that. We certainly respect the Affordable Housing Commission. Members opposite know that we have addressed them all and will continue to do so.

IAIN RANKIN: The government and the minister are described as acting with lightning speed, Mr. Speaker, to address the affordable housing crisis, and to address the recommendations in this very important report. I'll table that.

I was happy to see the new government augment the investment to deal with some of the short-term recommendations, but these two are very key and very foundational: to protect investment in housing with a stand-alone entity, and to clarify that housing is a right.

I would like to ask the Premier if he considers delaying the first two actions of this report as acting with lightning speed or are these recommendations abandoned?

THE PREMIER: I want to assure the member and members of this House that we are acting with - I didn't use the expression "lightning speed," but I certainly would. We feel an incredible sense of urgency. That's the very reason for the task force. The minister's dedication and sense of urgency on this file is unquestioned, except maybe by members opposite who, in the first question, thought maybe we were going too quickly to get things done with the structure of the committee.

I will assure the member that we understand that there is a housing crisis in this province. We understand the very real impacts it's having on Nova Scotians across the entire province. We are acting with a sense of urgency and respecting the recommendations of that commission in every single way.

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

MAH - HRM PLANNING: PUB. ENGAGEMENT. - ADDRESS

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, we know this government made sure that their housing task force does not have to engage with the public on any decisions that are made behind closed doors regarding development in HRM. Public minutes indicate that development discussions are in camera, which is unheard of by HRM. It has always been transparent in that regard.

My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is: Why do you believe that public engagement is a deterrent to development in HRM?

HON. JOHN LOHR: We created the executive panel or housing task force to address crisis in the province. Is it a crisis or merely a blip? We think it's a crisis. If you don't have a home, if you don't have a place to stay, it's a crisis. This panel is short-lived - for three years - and is acting to address the crisis to do what the province needs to do. It's not simply about HRM. It's about what the province needs to change and what we can do together, and we're working with them.

The minutes of the panel are public, and in fact, the work of the panel is entirely public now. The panel produced an enormous amount of work, which is all out there in a bill before this House and in the planning areas that have been announced. Everything the panel has done is very public.

LORELEI NICOLL: I guess I'll have to go and revisit it to see if that is really public because I haven't seen any development applications mentioned there.

Mr. Speaker, there is a concerning pattern emerging from this government with an unwillingness to consult. The government has not only taken away HRM's ability to plan for their future but is also imposing a three-year moratorium on referring planning decisions to expert advisory committees and community councils, like the heritage bodies, the accessibility and active transportation planning.

My question for the minister is: Why is this government removing public input from the planning of their city? Isn't their voice important?

JOHN LOHR: Again, in terms of what we are doing - and this is really getting very specific into a bill that is before the House, which was discussed last night in second reading. It will be in the Law Amendments Committee on Monday. I'll just ask for a ruling view: Should we delve down into the issues of this bill or wait for third reading?

THE SPEAKER: Not in reference to the existing bill.

JOHN LOHR: It is very directly referring to the bill. Shall I carry on?

[10:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: It doesn't matter, your time is up anyway. (Laughter)

The honourable member for Kings South.

MAH - NEW HOUSING UNITS: ENV. IMPACT - EXPLAIN

HON. KEITH IRVING: The Minister of Affairs and Housing, through several pieces of legislation, has taken power from elected councillors, professional urban planners, community groups, and the citizens of HRM. This power grab is unprecedented in this country.

With this power grab comes great responsibility. The minister is now responsible for the protection of urban wetlands, the efficiency of urban transit, the access to recreation - how communities look and feel. In essence, the liveability of neighbourhoods. The designation for special planning areas means the minister is the sole person responsible for the success or failure of these neighbourhoods . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question.

KEITH IRVING: This power grab has been done under the context of a housing crisis, but we have an existential crisis as well . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question.

KEITH IRVING: Will the minister tell us how these 22,600 units will be developed to meet our environmental goals to address climate change?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I would disagree with the characterization entirely. We know that, in fact, there's a housing crisis all across the province. It's in every community across the province and felt almost nowhere more directly than right here in HRM. We're 20,000 to 30,000 housing units short, and with projected growth, we're going to be further behind.

We felt the need as a government to say, let's figure out how we can work together. The panel represents us working together very closely with HRM. I'm very proud of what the panel's done and what the Chair's done. They've worked very hard.

This is meant to streamline things. Some of the things the member references are items that will last only for three years. It's just a short-term measure, but we are working at lightning speed here, I would say, to make this happen. We're very proud of what we're doing. I'm very proud of the panel.

KEITH IRVING: The minister is now responsible for 22,600 units. This will house the equivalent of 10 per cent of the population of the city. The minister has the power to further the government's priorities on climate action. An example of what he could do is not permit oil heating for these homes.

The government's Green Fund, which is money collected from taxpayers, is being used right now for the critical work of taking people off oil to meet our greenhouse gas targets and save homeowners money. Urgent action on climate change is needed. The minister has the power to ensure that the next 10 per cent of HRM homes are not sending us backwards, away from our goals.

Can the minister tell us if he has used his power to ensure that these 22,600 homes will not use oil heat, and if he can't tell us, why is he not committed to Nova Scotia's environmental laws?

JOHN LOHR: I just want to clarify: The question is in reference to the nine special planning areas. Those planning areas will have to meet all environmental and permitting goals that we set from the very beginning. The companies that are developing these areas have to go through all the correct processes, and they will do so.

I can't predict exactly right now what those individual areas will look like. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that if the executive panel recommends to me - this one we're not seeing the development go the way we want, pull it out, then we're pulling it out. There's no guarantee it stays in. It meets all the environmental and planning requirements. Our goal is to speed up housing, and I see your goal is to speed me up.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH: AFFORDABLE HOUSING - SUPPORT

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I mean, you're going to keep standing up.

In a recent announcement about developments that will add more than 22,000 units in HRM, we learned that only a few hundred will be designated as affordable or below market rent. The Nova Scotia director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said it appears the government is taking the approach that if more market-based housing is built, "somehow that will trickle down and people who really can't afford market rent will somehow get access."

My question is: Will the minister table the evidence to support this trickle-down housing theory?

HON. JOHN LOHR: In terms of the 22,500 units, as the member may well know, we did do an announcement that 373 of them will be affordable, and we said there would be more announcements to come. There will be more announcements to come.

As the member will be very aware, in the budget we're adding 550 rental supplements. We're bringing the province's total number of rental supplements up over 5,000. There are many areas we're working at to keep housing more affordable. We're very proud of that. We know we need to do more. This is a big issue across the province. People need to have a place to live, and we're very concerned about that.

SUZY HANSEN: Even with the investments through the National Housing Strategy, across the country we have lost 15 affordable homes for every one new affordable unit that has been created. Increasing market-based housing supply has led to the demolition of many small-unit buildings that provided affordable rentals for many years, so they can be replaced with shiny new apartment towers with units rented for \$1,700 a month. We cannot address the housing crisis by standing by and letting the few affordable rentals we have be bulldozed by big developers.

My question is: Will the minister agree to establish a right of first refusal for government to buy affordable properties up for sale to make sure we aren't losing affordable housing options?

JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I'm not aware of the data that she refers to. Maybe she could table that. I'd ask her to table that.

As the members all know, Nova Scotia has a very strong portfolio of public housing, which is 11,600-some units, which we're very proud of and we're working very hard to update. We're doing energy refits, we're making them more accessible, we're spending a lot of money on that public housing, and we're very proud of that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

MAH - HRM PLANNING: PUB. CONSULT. - EXPLAIN

BRAEDON CLARK: Earlier today in Question Period, the Premier talked about the importance of respecting local decision-making, which is a bit strange because the housing task force is doing the exact opposite thing when it comes to the planning area of Indigo Shores.

After debate at HRM Council, after public consultation, council - including the local councillor in particular - voted against the development of Indigo Shores, primarily due to concerns around school capacity, which is an issue across the board in all these planning areas.

I would like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Why does he not respect the local decision-making authority of HRM Council and the councillor for the area?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Again, this is referring to the nine special planning areas, and yes, Indigo Shores is one of the special planning areas. We're working hard to provide housing across the spectrum. Maybe I should let the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development refer to the school building plan, but in terms of what I understand about that is it's built based on actual demographics - when we see who's actually there, that schools are built on actual need. We're just continuing to work as a government to meet all of these needs.

BRAEDON CLARK: Another project in the special planning areas that was voted down by HRM Council after public consultation was Sandy Lake, which is in my riding of Bedford South. This is an important watershed, a fragile ecosystem, and the plan is to have about 6,000 units in that area over the next number of years.

We know that the task force is not engaging in any meaningful or serious public consultation, which I think is a mistake, but luckily for them in this case, a lot of that consultation has actually already been done. There are reams and reams of documents and testimony on the importance of Sandy Lake.

I would ask the minister: If he's not going to call for new consultations on Sandy Lake and other planning areas, will he at least consider seriously the work that's already been done there?

JOHN LOHR: What I can say about that is, as the member says, there has been significant consultation done on that. As I stated in a previous question, all required environmental permitting and permitting of every sort will still be required. The required amount of consultation in the HRM Charter will take place for all of these planning areas. We respect that.

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

EECD - HRM PLANNING DOC.: AVAILABILITY - UPDATE

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, in Question Period earlier this session, I asked the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to provide something tangible that outlines the relationship between HRM and HRCE with respect to planning. This, to be clear, was in addition to the long-range outlook, which is usually available for public consumption. I came to find out recently that the document that we utilize to share current enrolment and future projections is now unavailable as well.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to give us an update on when we might see this baseline document and the long-range outlook expressed coming in the near future.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Let me just say that we take our responsibilities to families, students, and taxpayers very seriously. I made sure I prepared myself for this role by reviewing the Auditor General Report released a few years ago about the prior government's practices in decisions around capital planning and education. I noted a few things that that report said.

First: "We identified several unsupported decisions during our audit, each of which approved a new school or renovation that was either not being requested by the local school board or had been scored lower by the committees than other projects which were not approved."

The second thing: "There is no evidence to support why these projects were approved ahead of other projects ranked higher by the evaluation committees, but not approved."

Third: "We are particularly concerned by decisions which appear to contradict information on which areas are most in need of new schools and significant renovations. We understand that ultimately Executive Council makes the final decisions."

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that we all take our roles seriously in this House. That goes without saying. I don't distrust that the minister does take her role seriously, but I'm looking for answers to questions about this stuff. I'm not looking for regurgitations or giving people a hard time about the past. Seriously.

What is clear to me is that there are delays at schools, there's nothing in this year's budget about new schools, and poof, we've added 10,000 new units to an area that's already strapped. There has been no transparency about any of it. None. Can we get at least an indication that there's something tangible in the works from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to express to my constituents?

BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I'll continue with some of the comments from the Auditor General: "On a provincial level, decisions such as this reduce the funding available for all other projects and reduce the Department's ability to meet the needs of all students." Let me say that if the members opposite have questions as to why we are where we are with school capital planning, I suggest they speak to their colleagues who were engaged at the time and involved in these decisions.

What I can say is we completely understand the urgency in communities to get our schools up and running and to meet the enrolment demands. We will be making those plans.

We have a lot of work to do based on what was left on our desks, but I can commit to Nova Scotians that we will deliver.

[10:30 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: So much for the love. (Laughter)

The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

MAH - CITY PLAN. RESOURCES: INADEQ. - RESPOND

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'll try to do some of that, Mr. Speaker. Now that the government has taken over planning from HRM, I'm curious about what resources the Province has to offer in terms of planning.

I will keep my question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing simple: How many planners does the province currently employ?

HON. JOHN LOHR: We've been very transparent about this. I don't know the exact number, but I can get that number to you. In reality, we're relying on the fact that HRM has a large planning staff and we're working in partnership with them through that executive panel on housing. In terms of the nine special planning areas, that is the case.

In terms of the bill before the House - I don't know if you are asking about that one or the other, but in terms of the bill before the House, that is HRM's planning that is doing that. I hope I am answering clearly.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I can give the honourable minister the answer. The municipality has over 120 municipal planners and the city goes as far as saying that this is not enough. My supplementary question to the same minister is: Why does the minister believe that the government has sufficient resources to take over planning for HRM and we didn't see anything in the budget?

JOHN LOHR: I can't comment on whether HRM has sufficient planners or not. That's up to them. But in terms of how we are going about doing this, we have been very transparent that we are relying on HRM's staff, too, in terms of the nine special planning areas.

Mr. Speaker, let me say there's the old joke: Is it a recession or a depression? The answer is it's a recession if your neighbour lost his job but it's a depression if you lose your job. If you are homeless, if you need a place to stay, this is a housing crisis. We're stepping in. We're not holding back. We're addressing this housing crisis. We know that Nova Scotians across the province wanted us to do it. We're doing it in multiple ways, across multiple departments. We're working hard.

There's no one thing that's going to solve it, but we hope that all of those things together will solve this housing crisis.

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

FTB - BILL NO. 148: REPEAL PROMISE - COMMIT

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Liberal government's Bill No. 148 froze the wages of 75,000 public sector workers and is most likely unconstitutional. During the election, the Progressive Conservatives said: We have already committed to repealing Bill No. 148 so that collective bargaining can take place. These are heavy-handed processes that will cost taxpayers more money than negotiating in good faith.

However, after the election, as the case for Bill No. 148 proceeds through the courts, the Premier's government has filed a factum which continues the previous government's arguments in support of Bill No. 148. Not only are these actions disappointing, they completely contradict the Progressive Conservatives' commitment to repeal Bill No. 148.

My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier stop fighting public sector workers in the court and repeal Bill No. 148 like he promised?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, what I would say to the member is there is something very important in what she just said there, and that is "so that collective bargaining can take place." We believe that's critical. The last government did not respect the collective bargaining process. We do.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, 162 bargaining units have been exempted from the restrictions of Bill No. 148 to regulation and 135 more are pending. We want to ensure that the collective bargaining process is respected because if we don't have respect for it we end up with bad relations.

KENDRA COOMBES: I agree with the minister's comments, so repeal Bill No. 148.

The Premier has been ordered to take another look at the salaries it pays provincial and family court judges. The order comes from the Nova Scotia Supreme Court, which quashed a salary contract imposed by the former Liberal government. In a strongly-worded decision released Wednesday, Justice Ann Smith said, "The question before the court is whether the government politicized the process of setting judges' remuneration . . . There is plenty of evidence before the court that it did."

Instead of dropping the case, the Premier said his government will need time to study the court decision before deciding whether to appeal it. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is: Does the Premier plan to negotiate contracts at the bargaining table or in the courts?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: The decision that was laid down was a verbal decision and we're still waiting to actually get what the written decision of the court was so that we have direction, so we can see where we're going.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

FTB - NEW PROP. MEASURES: REV. PLAN - DISCUSS

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, the newly implemented measures for the provincial property and deed transfer taxes are estimated to generate \$81 million for the new government.

My question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - on behalf of the Warden of Annapolis, Council of Annapolis constituents, and all Nova Scotians - is: What is the government's plan to invest this new source of revenue?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: This revenue will flow into general revenues. I think it's clear. We started last Fall with a \$35-million investment in housing, and we followed up in the recent budget year with another \$15 million. We're very concerned about the low supply on the housing market. We want it to increase. These revenues that come in will be helping us with that. We have many, many programs that are focused on improving housing for people, whether it's rent supplements or incentives for people to build new housing.

We haven't received those revenues from them yet, but one could say we have already been making investments in this area.

CARMAN KERR: Beyond the budget and beyond recent announcements, can the minister commit to ensuring that this new source of revenue will also be spent on affordable housing across Nova Scotia?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that these new revenues will certainly help us. I think it's always important that government is nimble and is able to start saying certain revenues are dedicated to certain things. I think at the end of the day, we will be judged on what we were able to do and the investments we make. This is new revenue. It will help. We're making significant investments to help people with their housing needs, and we will continue to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

MAH - RURAL HOUSING: NO NEW INITS. - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: This government has seemingly only prioritized housing initiatives here in HRM, Mr. Speaker, with an HRM task force, nine special planning areas in HRM, and amendments to the HRM Charter. However, the housing crisis is an issue across this province, in our towns, in our rural communities.

Yet while this government says they're moving at light speed to address the housing crisis in Nova Scotia, they haven't moved forward with any initiatives for rural Nova Scotia. My question to the Premier is: Why?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I would like to disagree completely with the premise of the question. We have recognized that housing is a crisis across the province, and we're working at it across the province. The first example I would say is that, as the member knows, we're going to over 5,000 rental supplements. That's distributed across the province. Our portfolio of 11,500 public housing units is distributed across the province.

We're working at it across the province. We have given money to community housing groups across the province. We have brought in bills, for instance, inclusionary zoning, which was being asked for since 2016. How did that happen? Since 2016 it wasn't addressed, even though it was being asked for. We brought that bill in last session. We will continue to do more.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Then perhaps the minister can tell us how many units are planned in rural Nova Scotia. Perhaps he can itemize them from community to community, since they're doing so well and moving so quickly in rural Nova Scotia to address the housing crisis.

JOHN LOHR: We're very concerned about rural Nova Scotia, and as the member will know, we doubled the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant across the province this year. I have a very aggressive mandate to renegotiate the MOU. In our relationship with all of these municipal units, we want to work with them. I know housing will be on the table when we're having those discussions. We're working across the province, and we will continue to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW - EMCI: LACK OF ACCOUNT. - EXPLAIN

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Last night during Estimates, our Minister of Health and Wellness shared with one of our colleagues that EMCI, or Medavie Blue Cross, hasn't actually ever been charged a penalty. I was really surprised to hear that, considering that we all know in this House that they have not been able to meet performance standards. I know of numerous situations where people in Cumberland County have waited well over

an hour where there have been no ambulances available in our entire county, either because they're not being staffed or because they're being pulled to other areas of the province.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Why is the government not holding this private company accountable, EMCI? Are there plans to do so in the future?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, through a number of meetings and conversations with the member for Cumberland South, I'm very aware of the stresses in the Cumberland County area.

What I would say is that there are times that EHS can't meet standards outside of their control. We meet with them on a regular basis. We work with them. We will continue to monitor those accountability standards and if fines are warranted, they will be actioned.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: It would be interesting to know what the performances standards are and what the reasons are as to why they're not being met - if it's government's fault, how can we fix those problems, or if it's actually EMCI's fault.

I do know that sometimes ambulances aren't staffed. I also know it's very frustrating for our paramedics who are staffed to serve our communities, and they're being pulled every single day. Every single day, as soon as they start their shift, they're told to go to Truro or Halifax. They know they're leaving their own constituents, their own people, unserved. I'm very concerned.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: If this isn't working with the private company EMCI, Medavie Blue Cross, what are we going to do with things like Maple - the virtual care, that private company? How are we going to hold them to account if we're not doing it with EMCI?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we know that the EHS system is stretched. We've been working very hard since we formed government. There are a number of things happening with EHS. It is a provincial resource, so we need to protect all Nova Scotians. When we have to pull from areas, we do that in order to prioritize calls. It's a system status plan. It's moving minute to minute. We want to make sure that people who need emergency services have those.

We have increased the patient-transfer units, the multi-patient-transfer units. We have a working group with the Department of Health and Wellness, the paramedic union, Nova Scotia Health, and the College of Paramedics. We've increased paramedicine by creating a graduated licence. We now have units where there are non-medical drivers. We are very, very focused on paramedicine. We're working closely with not only the employer but also paramedics themselves to find solutions that will keep Nova Scotians safe.

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

FTB - RISING INFLATION: BUDGET MGMT. - EXPLAIN

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. We know that this government tabled a \$13 billion budget, but this year's budget comes in only 2.8 per cent higher than what was forecast for last year's budget. Meanwhile, Nova Scotia's Consumer Price Index is expected to remain at 4.2 per cent this year. This government's budget does not even keep up with inflation. Mr. Speaker, can the minister admit that this budget actually represents less than what it takes to keep the lights on?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: No, because there were many expenses in last year's budget associated with COVID-19 that we don't have this year.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, let me put this another way. If the government was a regular Nova Scotian and had a dollar last year, it might have bought a can of tomato soup. This year, the same can of tomato soup would cost \$1.04, but we would only have \$1.03. We would be a cent short. This is nothing to brag about. Can the minister explain how he plans to manage the 2022 budget on behalf of Nova Scotians with rates of inflation continuing to rise?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important issue, and that is the impact of inflation on things like food and fuel. We're watching it very closely. I can tell you I watch it daily.

We took matters into our own hands before this budget to put out supports to people who are most impacted, people at the lowest income levels. We wanted it to be targeted. We want it to be meaningful. We used existing programs so that we could do it quickly. We, as a government, retain the ability going forward, if we continue to see inflation being a challenge for people, to help them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

MAH - USE OF RENTAL SUPPS. - EXPLAIN

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing admitted that this government used the words "rental supplements" and "new affordable housing units" interchangeably. Can the minister please explain to the House the difference between rental supplements and physical housing units?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for the question. We're very proud of our public housing portfolio and we're very proud of the fact that we're doing rental supplements. We're working very hard on both of them. We recognize that there's a crisis across the province and we're working very hard to address it in many different ways.

As I mentioned earlier, a lot of these endeavours that we are on should have been done five years ago. That's a question that we asked: Why weren't they done five years ago or two years ago? That's a concern of mine and we're working very hard on it.

[10:45 a.m.]

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I thank the minister for the response. There was no answer to the question, so maybe they're not sure of the difference between rental supplements and physical housing units. We'll move on.

Mr. Speaker, upon learning that the terms "rental supplements" and "rental units" were being used interchangeably by this government, we know that this government never did have an intention of building the 1,100 rental units as they had so eagerly announced last Fall - which I will table. My question for the minister is: When taking rental supplements into account, how many affordable housing units does the government actually plan on building?

JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for the question. As the member knows, and as all members of this House know, it's been 30 years since there have been any new units added to the public housing stock. That's on all of us. That's one issue.

We're very proud of the public housing stock. We're working very hard to work on it. As the member mentioned, the Quick Start program, which we announced last Fall, takes time. You make an agreement with a company, whether it's a for-profit or not-for-profit, it doesn't matter - either way it takes time for those units to get constructed.

The numbers that have been quoted in the releases will be achieved, but it takes time. Frankly, we should have started three, four, or five years ago, so we're picking up the work that wasn't done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

MAH: DOWN PMT. PGM. CAPS - INCREASE

BRAEDON CLARK: Home ownership is a dream for many Nova Scotian families. As I've said before, and as I will continue to say, that dream continues to slip further and further away as we deal with the housing and cost of living crisis.

Nova Scotia's Down Payment Assistance Program was one way to help modest income families get into their first home. The problem is - and I believe the minister knows this - the limits are far too low: \$300,000 in HRM, \$200,000 outside of the municipality. We all know it's very difficult, if not impossible, to find homes for that price point at this rate. I'd like to ask the minister: Is he considering further increases to the caps for the down payment program?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Yes, and that is a question I have: Why didn't the previous government see the need to raise those limits? We did that in October with no fanfare, no announcement. I saw those limits brought to my attention and I said let's put them up. We're very committed to home ownership, and I believe in home ownership. I want to see us do better. We will do more on the home ownership front.

BRAEDON CLARK: I appreciate the minister's response, Mr. Speaker. I was not part of any previous government. I'm not particularly interested in throwing stones back and forth. I think this is a really serious problem that needs solutions and answers.

The Down Payment Assistance Program supported 320 families during the first two years of the program. It's based on a first-come, first-served basis. I'd like to ask the minister: Is he considering the change to a needs-based system? I think it would be more appropriate given the volatility of the overpriced housing market.

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that I know there are federal programs coming. The federal government is addressing this, too, on home ownership. We're very concerned about that. I'm concerned about ownership of homes.

We're working very hard to keep seniors in their own homes through multiple programs. We're working right across the housing spectrum. We want to see home ownership also not be lost as a dream. We realize the cost of homes has gone up immensely. We're looking at everything that we're doing. We know we need to do more. It is a big concern of our government, and we will do more.

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

We will take a 10-minute recess and come back for Committee of the Whole.

[10:50 a.m. The House recessed.]

[11:00 a.m. The House reconvened.]

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 itself into the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: We'll resume debate going into Supply.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: A day or two ago in Question Period, the Minister of Economic Development was asked many questions about the province's plans for economic development. Several times the minister's answers included the phrase, "a bold idea." Even though we in the House didn't get any details of the minister's bold idea or ideas, her answers inspired me to suggest a few of my own bold ideas for this government to incorporate into the budget.

My speech today is entitled Really Bold Ideas.

Mr. Speaker, Queen Latifah once said, "Be bold, be brave enough to be your true self." And so, in that spirit, I present Bold Idea No. 1: Fund the arts properly. There is no money in this budget dedicated to providing emergency funding to arts and culture organizations in the province, organizations that are used by this government as assets to leverage tourism, organizations that contribute in a substantial way to the GDP of this province, that contribute to the cultural life and contribute to the attracting of professionals, like doctors and nurses, who, if they are going to live and work in Nova Scotia, want to know that they can take in a concert, or a play, or a dance performance, after a long day at work.

These organizations are suffering deeply from the pandemic, but they were hurting well before the pandemic happened, so they need emergency funding, recovery money from the pandemic. More than that - and this is the bold idea - they need a doubling of their operational budgets.

William Shakespeare once said that "virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful." So in his honour, I present my Bold Idea No. 2: Triple the amount of money invested in energy efficiency programs. Offer more and bigger incentives for householders to do deep energy retrofits to their homes, boldly take on the retrofitting of all public housing in the province so we can take a chunk of our greenhouse gas emissions out of the air and, as well, we can make sure that all people have access to homes that are warm in the Winter and cool in the Summer and that don't cost more than they can afford to pay for that heat or cooling.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change is extremely proud of the groundbreaking agri-legislation, but this budget has no new money to fund the programs that we need now to meet our ambitious climate change goals. Not only would a bold investment help us get there, it would also create a lot of good-paying jobs in the clean energy sector.

The wise philosopher Ed Sheeran once said, "Be original, don't be scared of being bold." So taking my lead from Mr. Sheeran, whom I love, I present to you Bold Idea No. 3: Wait for it - pay paramedics a wage competitive with their colleagues in other parts of the country.

The Premier has said he will fix health care and spend whatever it takes to do it. We have also heard leaders in the Department of Health and Wellness say that to fix health care we need to focus on people. I say a hearty yes to this idea. Paramedics are people who are working 14- and 16-hour shifts without breaks. They are people who are first to respond to terrible accidents and to very sick people. They have skills that can save lives and they do it every day. These are people who are tired and burnt out and have exit strategies in place because they don't know how much longer they can take doing their job short-staffed. They are overworked and underpaid.

If paramedics in Nova Scotia were paid competitively with paramedics in Ontario, for instance, then we would be able to attract more paramedics to Nova Scotia and so, when paramedics are off because of injury, we would have enough others to fill shifts and avoid the Code Criticals that we are constantly finding ourselves in in this province.

Finally, Euripides once said the bold are helpless without cleverness. In that spirit, I offer one last bold and very clever idea: Create - now, today - an economic recovery task force that includes representatives from small business owners, from unions, from municipalities, from African Nova Scotian communities, from Mi'kmaw communities, with environmental experts, and artists, and make sure there is good representation from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Hear from these bold and clever representatives about what their bold ideas are for a robust, creative, and clean COVID-19 recovery.

Speaking of a clean recovery - this is like a little addendum, so I didn't really craft this into an excellent speech - Bold Idea 4.2 is remember that a clean and green recovery includes the caring economy. Not just solar companies, which are amazing; not just battery storage companies, which are amazing; not just wind farms, which are amazing; not just deep energy retrofitting contractors and energy assessors - home energy assessment people - but ECEs, teachers, nurses, CCAs, and artists. They are all part of a clean recovery. The jobs they do are caring jobs and they do not tax the environment.

Boldness requires courage, creativity, and action, but it also requires money. In this status quo budget, one that barely accounts for inflation, I do not see the investment required to take actual bold steps to ignite our economy while we protect our environment. I encourage the government to take a second look at this budget and to make the necessary changes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: That's a hard act to follow. Very impressive.

I'd like to give a reply to the budget, and I'd like to start by thanking the government and congratulating them on the first Progressive Conservative budget of their first term in government. I want to also thank all of the members, all of the staff and their departments,

and especially in the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. I can imagine that it was a very busy time and a very exciting time for them all, so congratulations.

The question, when we look at this budget, is: Will it be sufficient to serve and meet the needs of the people of Nova Scotia? Only time will tell. This budget is only an estimate of what we know, of what we think will happen, but we all know what happened two years ago when the pandemic hit and what happened to that budget.

We are still living in turbulent times, and the budget is off. Right now, it's overshadowed by many other issues that our society and our people are facing, such as soaring inflation. We are seeing soaring inflation that is 5.7 per cent higher than a year ago, which represents a new decade high since August of 1991. This is not the government's fault; however, we are called to respond.

The rise in the cost of living has a direct financial strain on the people of Cumberland North and on all Nova Scotians and all Canadians. We are seeing a 6.6 per cent increase in the cost of shelter, the largest annual increase since 1983. We are seeing a 7.4 per cent increase in the cost of food, the largest increase since 2009. We have seen an increase in gas prices - 6.9 per cent in a single month. The increases in the cost of housing, food prices, and gas prices are hitting the pocketbooks of our people hard, and not everyone has a buffer in their monthly budget to manage these extra increases. Mr. Speaker, I will table the document that I received those statistics from.

We also have the pandemic happening. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over, and the future impacts are unknown. It continues to cause strain on our health care system, on our families, on our education system, and on our businesses - and government supports have dried up. Businesses and business owners are on their own to figure this out and deal with the impacts of COVID on their businesses and, most importantly, on their staff, the people who run their businesses.

We have the war. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is fuelling economic uncertainty, and many believe the Russian invasion of Ukraine will destabilize food, oil, and fertilizer prices around the world. Those in positions of knowledge on Russia have advised the best thing to do to end the war is for Western countries like ours to stop buying gas and oil from Russia right away.

We must find a way to export Canadian oil to Europe to help stop their dependence on Russian oil. Western countries have to stop giving Putin money in any way in order to destroy his regime. Many people worry that this war is only getting started.

Where is our oil coming from? Is our Premier working with fellow Canadian Premiers to ensure that no Russian oil is coming into this country, and that we are able to use environmentally friendly Canadian oil? Nova Scotia's provincial budget is overshadowed by all three of these major geopolitical factors.

Let's take a closer look at the Nova Scotia provincial budget. Very exciting, I love numbers - not everyone does. From a high-level look, we have \$12.7 billion in estimated revenue, which comes directly from taxpayers, either from here in Nova Scotia or Canadian taxpayers from across the country in federal transfers.

We have \$13.3 billion in estimated expenses for government services and programs to taxpayers. That's leaving an estimated deficit of \$506 million - over half a billion dollars. Net debt-to-GDP ratio is estimated to be 34.9 per cent. This government is projecting six years of continued deficits and a projected net debt-to-GDP ratio of 40 per cent in four years.

Each year of deficit means provincial debt is also increasing. It is estimated to increase by half a billion dollars the first year. The net debt is estimated to be \$18.4 billion after Year 1, and after four years the estimated net debt is \$22.9 billion for Nova Scotians - that means each Nova Scotian of all ages will, on average, owe \$22,900.

Increasing the debt-to-GDP ratio is generally not good. I apologize if this is a bit of a downer speech - I read it to my husband last night about midnight. He was like, that's really not good.

I think it's important . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: Our poor husbands.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I know, our poor husbands, but I think it's important to really look closely at what we're doing.

Increasing the debt-to-GDP ratio is generally not good. A high net debt-to-GDP can be a key indicator of increased default risk to creditors, and often they seek higher interest rates when lending. That means higher interest rates in the future for our government, which means more of our operating budget will go to interest payments and less will be available for things like health care and other services.

Nova Scotia has enjoyed very strong credit ratings from three major global credit rating agencies: Dominion Bond Rating Service, Moody's Investors Service, and Standard & Poor's Ratings Service. Unfortunately, we may lose these strong credit ratings in the future as our net debt-to-GDP ratio increases.

We are living in unprecedented times, but does that justify six years of projected deficits? Typically, a Progressive Conservative government is a fiscally responsible government. We all need to manage our own personal budgets and live within our means and so should our governments. In general, we should never spend more than we earn. When we do, we are leaving debt for someone else to pay. We are choosing - choosing - to live beyond our means and are expecting someone else to pay for it.

[11:15 a.m.]

Sometimes it is important to borrow money to make needed investments. Right now, the government is choosing to do that for health care. This investment must be financed by borrowing more money. There must be a plan on how the borrowed money, along with interest, will be repaid. However, Nova Scotia has no plan. Nova Scotia is only paying interest on the debt. Nova Scotia is not paying back any of the actual borrowed money. It seems irresponsible to me. I also find it strange that no one is talking about this. If we all had bank loans and mortgage payments and forever only paid interest on it and never, ever paid back the principal - for one thing, banks would just not allow us to do that.

A quote here I'll read, and I'll table the document:

“Over the past 13 years, government debt across Canada has grown quickly. This accumulation of debt has reversed a positive trend towards balanced budgets and lower debt burdens that prevailed from the mid-1990s to the late-2000s at both the federal and provincial levels . . . In just over a decade, combined federal and provincial debt has grown by \$981.2 billion, or 95.4%.”

Nova Scotia saw the lowest debt increase of all Canadian provinces of 12.9 per cent from 2007 to 2021.

“Revenues directed towards interest payments mean that in the future there will be less money available for tax cuts or government programs such as health care, education, and social services . . .”

That's kind of the doom and gloom part of the speech, but it's not all doom and gloom. There is a good possibility that due to inflation, we could have stronger-than-projected revenues, and that could help our budget's bottom line in the short term.

Will the Nova Scotia government pass on these increased revenues to the hard-working people of Nova Scotia? Government could pass on these increased revenues to help Nova Scotian families through tax cuts to gas and diesel, through tax cuts on all prepared foods in grocery stores, and by removing the deed transfer tax to new young homeowners.

Ontario and Alberta did just reduce the provincial tax on gas and diesel, and that's one of the reasons that I proposed that our government do that same thing in my notice of motion this morning.

Nova Scotia needs serious long-term budget planning that sets us on a road for lasting prosperity. Earlier today, I stood to brag about one of my children. The reality is, I think many of us are here because we're worried about the future for our children and our

grandchildren. We want to ensure we're setting them up for success as a province, as a government.

I believe our children and our grandchildren deserve a massive climate change transformation plan. I believe our children and our grandchildren deserve to learn self-reliance and to ensure that we can feed ourselves for more than simply four days, which is currently the situation. Globalization is changing, and countries like ours can no longer rely on other countries to feed us. Supply chains must be strengthened and examined to reduce our own risk. Also a reduction in taxes so that people can keep more of their hard-earned money and paycheques.

We must invest more in education - which we didn't see in this budget - as this is the best way to invest in a strong future. This means increased and consistent investment in all universities - every single university - including our small universities like Mount Saint Vincent, like NSCAD, and increased investment in NSCC, our community colleges. Removing tuition costs for all Nova Scotians could transform the future of our province.

It's time to shift from crisis management to a strategy that makes economic expansion and productivity top priorities. I believe that Nova Scotia should have this mindset. In a recent *Globe and Mail* article that I have already tabled on economic challenges, the Royal Bank of Canada chief executive Dave McKay says "what we're hoping to see in the budget is a shift in ideology from tax-and-spend, which does not create a sustainable growth, to an incentive to take risks, and innovate, and grow and solve problems."

An estimated budget that spends \$13.3 billion must be evaluated, efficiencies found and keep expenses from growing year after year. How will the Premier and his government measure and evaluate the performance of this budget to know that Nova Scotians are getting value for their money? Will each department have key performance indicators? Who will oversee the evaluation and provide accountability?

I have received some feedback on the budget since it was tabled last week, mainly from non-resident property owners who have been blindsided by this new non-resident property tax. In Cumberland County alone, there are an estimated 2,450 residential properties. Most are cottages that are not insulated and can be used only in the warm Summer months, so renting them to increase housing supply is not possible.

Many people are angry and no longer feel welcome here in Nova Scotia. I really don't think that's the message we want to send as a government to the rest of the world. On February 4th, I submitted a pre-budget submission to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to clearly articulate the needs of the people I represent in Cumberland North. Historically, Cumberland County has been forgotten by past governments. The feeling by most is that Nova Scotia starts at the Cobequid Pass.

We have an opportunity to change that now. My colleague from Cumberland South and I are both so happy that the tolls separating Cumberland County from the rest of Nova Scotia have been removed for us and our businesses. Our hospitals in Pugwash and Amherst are seeing needed investment in construction. The protection of the Chignecto Isthmus, increased housing supply, health care management improvements and investments in roads and local food are among many of the top priorities for the people of Cumberland North.

We also need a veterans' medical clinic and we need to address the gaps in our justice system and in how many of our victims of sexual assault and domestic violence are being treated.

Pre-Confederation, the Maritimes Region was prosperous. It's time to invest in a collaborative spirit and approach with our fellow Maritime and Atlantic neighbours. It's time to change our region from being the poor cousin to once again being the wealthiest region in Canada. Let's do it. We can build a future for our children and our grandchildren and that's what they deserve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the member for Cumberland North. I appreciate her comments. I actually will end up repeating some of the great points she made. I'll also give some of my time to one of my colleagues as well.

I want to start on a positive note - and why not? This is a \$13 billion budget, as we've heard many times. Of course, when you're spending \$13 billion there's going to be a whole lot of that that is good spending, that's going to have a positive impact on people's lives across Nova Scotia. Whether it's hospitals, major work at the CBRM, major work at the QEII and beyond, schools across the province, new schools - in my riding in particular we are very excited about that - highways, countless community grants to organizations all across the province that are working on rinks and gyms and helping our kids and doing all kinds of fantastic work. Without a doubt, as with any government regardless of political stripe, there's a lot to commend in a budget of this size and scale.

I do want to highlight a little bit some of the issues that the member for Cumberland North was talking about on the fiscal side, which perhaps are less sexy than other parts of the budget but are really important.

In the Solutions for Healthcare document, there is a column here about the four-year fiscal plan. I will repeat a bit of what my colleague said: Net debt for the year that just passed, the fiscal year, was \$16.8 billion. Four years from now, in 2025-2026, projected \$22.8 billion. That's \$6 billion in four years. I'll do some quick math. I think that's about \$1.5 billion per year that we're just tacking on to our overall debt situation, which is really not something we should be comfortable with. I think the issue around fiscal sustainability

is one that often gets overshadowed. People might say, well, what's the big deal? Every government runs deficits. No governments have been debt-free since the 19th century, perhaps.

The issue is, if you look at the line items, the Province spent \$676 million on debt-servicing costs last year, which is more than the operating budget of the Department of Public Works, for example. That is a massive amount of money that could be used for a whole host of really positive things.

In particular, if you're not so interested in the net debt situation, the debt-to-GDP ratio is moving in the wrong direction quickly: 33.5 per cent this fiscal year that just ended, moving up to 40 per cent by 2025-2026. Again, that potentially has a whole host of implications around credit ratings, interest rates, cost of money - all of those things are negative if your debt-to-GDP continues to rise to unsustainable levels. Perhaps 40 per cent isn't quite there. I'm not an economist. But we're getting closer and closer, and again, we're moving in the wrong direction in a global system and in a global economy that I think is quite tenuous.

I do think the economic foundations of the Province are maybe not a house of cards, but they are shakier, I think, than we would like to admit. I think the government needs to be very serious about that issue as the years go forward. As a Progressive Conservative government, I would hope, and I would expect, that fiscal sustainability and all of those issues are important to it. As years go by, we'll be taking a very close look at that issue as it evolves over the term of this government.

I've talked a lot, as well, about housing this session. It's a crisis, as the minister has mentioned, and I agree with him on that. In particular, there are housing issues across the spectrum, of course, but I worry very much about the potential hollowing out of the middle class of our society, which in many ways has been the engine of economic growth and sustainability over the past 70 or 80 years.

We don't want to see a situation like we see in other Western countries - the United States, for example - where there's more and more wealth inequality and the top 1 per cent have more and the bottom 1 per cent have less, and everybody else in the middle is struggling as well. If people aren't able to get into houses at a reasonable age, that is their primary source of wealth at the end of their lives, especially when we have fewer people working in jobs that pay pensions, and good pensions.

I continue to worry about that. Maybe that's just the stage of life I'm in and the age that I'm at, but I think it's a huge issue. We have not seen anything like this in our province for several decades. It's one of those things - and we're very bad as human beings, not just as governments, at anticipating things that are somewhat invisible. I think that's the lesson of climate change for decades: We can't see it, necessarily, on a day-to-day basis, so it's easy to ignore it.

This is the same issue. If somebody buys a house at the age of 40 instead of 35, or is never able to, that is not an obvious thing that's going to be headlines in the newspaper tomorrow. But 40 or 50 years down the line, when that person is nearing the end of their life and they want to pass on some wealth to their children or their grandchildren, and they don't own a home, that probably isn't going to happen. That perpetuates a cycle that can trickle down for many decades to come.

[11:30 a.m.]

I saw very little in this budget to help with that issue. We saw some in the federal budget yesterday, which is good, but I think the Province can do more on this front. We've discussed some practical solutions that would make a difference. Rather than punitive taxes, as the member for Cumberland North mentioned, on non-resident home buyers - who knows if that will have the impact that's desired? I have my doubts.

In other provinces, they've moved that tax up 15 to 20 per cent, and honestly, it hasn't slowed things down too much. I'm worried that that will not have the effect that the government is hoping for. You're raising \$80 million through those new taxes. I think some of that money should be reinvested in a way that can really help people who are struggling every day to deal with home ownership.

I saw a poll yesterday suggesting that nine out of 10 - 90 per cent - of people surveyed who are looking to buy a home have given up. Nine out of 10. That's a shocking number, and it's a dispiriting number. It's across Canada. That was the issue across Canada. It's rare to see that. It's rare for people to say, I've given up on something. People are resilient, and so for people to say to a complete stranger on the phone that they have given up on buying a house is really sad.

To that point, very quickly, the government has talked about doubling the population by 2060, which I think is a noble goal. It would be, of course, a rate that we've never even come close to. It took hundreds of years to get to one million and we want to move to double that in 40 years or less.

Again, that is 25,000 or so people per year, which is very difficult to achieve. I don't know if you've ever done that, at least in recent years. The big impact is once those 25,000 people arrive, what do they do? What jobs do they have? Are there roads for them to drive on? Are there schools for their kids to go to? Are there doctors for them to see when they get sick? Are there hospitals for them to go to when they get really sick? Is there a paramedic to pick them up? Where do they live?

All of these things are incredibly complicated. I'm not suggesting that they're easy to fix, but if we say that we want to bring this number of people in, a million people over 38 years, all of those questions need to be drilled down in a big, big way. It can be easy to

say these things when governments operate in four-year cycles. We can say we'll get that done in 35 years, when I'm sure all of us will be gone from this Chamber.

I do think governments of all stripes succeeding beyond this one, as well, do have an obligation to plan out that issue, put money in to make sure that the unintended consequences of that positive thing, which is population growth, do not overwhelm the good side of that coin. (Applause)

That's all I wanted to say. As I said at the top, there are a lot of good things in this budget, as there are in any budget. I think there are issues bubbling below the surface of our economy and our finances and our province. For the good of the province, I hope they don't get out of control, but I am very concerned about it and will continue to bring those issues forward over the next three-plus years.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and give my time to my colleague. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I don't have anything prepared today, but I listened with interest to my three colleagues who spoke before me.

I just wanted to say something, which I will say at the beginning, not based on economic theory or any kind of particular ideology, but just from my observation over the last five years in this job. What I've heard over the last couple of speakers was a concern about spending and a concern about debt. I fear that often that conversation becomes incredibly abstracted.

I just want to insert some real world thinking about that, not in defence of the government's spending or in critique of the government's spending. I have some critiques and I have some things that are good, but what I want to say is this notion of being fiscally responsible, living within our means or taxing and spending - nothing in politics or in life is that simple.

We often talk about numbers as though they're abstract, but, of course, they're not abstract. What are we spending on? In one breath, I heard the member say that we shouldn't live beyond our means, but university should be free. You can't do both of those things. A government can't make university tuition free and pay for that in the same fiscal year. It's probably not possible. Maybe it is, I don't know. I'm not an economist. I doubt it.

Similarly, I think we can't talk about a housing crisis and the need for appropriate infrastructure and wanting to accommodate people and, again, be able to pay for those kinds of massive investments in a fiscal year. I'm not attributing those talking points to my colleagues, but this is what gets me thinking.

If I think about someone in their 20s and 30s, we often extoll the virtues and importance of home ownership in Canada and Nova Scotia. We're talking about whether home ownership is out of reach and nine out of 10 people that want to - to me, it's really about living in a home. It's not so much home ownership.

If we say that home ownership is the important thing, then if my kid, when they graduate from high school says, "Mom, I have this job, and I'm saving up and I'm going to buy a boat. I've got \$15,000 saved. I'm going to buy a boat," unless they were a competitive sailor, I would probably say that that does not seem like a great idea. I would probably say, "Why don't you save up for a home or why don't you save up for something that has value that will continue to benefit your life?" But if they say they're saving that money for a down payment, then I would probably think that was good.

A dollar is a dollar is a dollar, but it's really different depending on what we spend it on. I think fiscal responsibility, when we're talking about that, what we're really talking about is smart investments. What I have said for the last two years, which I still really believe, is that there is a great amount of opportunity in this pandemic. I think my colleague for Dartmouth North really illustrated that in a very lovely way in her remarks earlier. We do really have the opportunity for bold ideas. Those can come from within government and those can come from outside of government, but this is why we talk about wanting to have some very comprehensive view of how we go forward from here.

We are in a place where, in general, we support the idea of government spending on the things that we need. We've heard this government acknowledge that we're in a housing crisis - great. We've heard this government say that they want to fix the health care crisis - great. Spending on those things is necessary, but it's not sufficient. The question is, how do we spend on those things? I think there are lots of examples where we just have missed opportunities in this budget.

I would agree with my colleague for Bedford South. I similarly apparently am going to have 10,000 more constituents in a few years if the government's plans go through. I'm not asking for another boundary review, but I would like a couple more schools and I would like some more buses, and I would like to know that they're going to have doctors, and I'm not hearing anything about that. I'm just not hearing it. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development's getting up and filibustering my colleagues when they ask about school construction. I just don't hear about it. I hope and expect that the departments are working hard on those things, but we don't see it in the budget, and we don't hear about it.

Similarly, when we hear things like the tax credit for tradespeople under 30, that's excellent. I know that there are many tradespeople who'll appreciate that, and that's an area where we really need labour force development and we need more people. Do you know where else we need more people? We need more ECEs. We need more nurses. Those are also the caring economy to which my colleague referred. I think if we had a more

comprehensive look at what the opportunities are as we rebuild our economy and we address the crises in front of us, we could make some more bold investments.

I'll just echo some of the other points that my colleague made. I want to underline this, because I think it's really important. My colleague for Dartmouth North joked earlier in the session that she's the one who's passionate about the arts. I would argue that actually everyone in this Chamber is passionate about the arts, but not everyone in this Chamber understands what it means to have a thriving arts sector.

The investment in the film industry is wonderful and welcome, and we will clap every time you mention it - we really will, it's great - but there is no increase in operating funds for arts organizations in this province in this budget. That is a massive, massive issue. All of those arts organizations that we rely upon - when we talk about the ephemeral thing that makes Nova Scotia magic, it's actually not ephemera. It's humans who are working really hard to produce the kind of cultural assets that we love so much, and we are not giving them what they need to do that.

That's just one example, but I think that there are many, many more. I would just suggest, again, as we have been saying for a couple of years: Please take the opportunity to expand the voices at the table as you think about these programs. Efficiency is another one, as my colleague said. I think we can talk about greenhouse gas reductions. We think EGCCRA is a great first step. We really look forward to the climate plan. Spring's almost sprung, so hopefully it's coming soon. We saw the daffodils peeking out of the soil yesterday.

I do think that we need to really embrace the opportunities. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity right now with this moment we find ourselves in - hopefully towards the downswing of a global pandemic - and in need of rebuilding a lot of things: our health care infrastructure, a lot of our education infrastructure, and other things.

We also have a once-in-a-lifetime responsibility. I've heard a lot this session about the debt that we will leave for our children. I haven't heard a lot about the planet that we will leave for our children. This isn't hyperbole. If we had this conversation five years ago, I guarantee that 20 of you would be rolling your eyes at me, but now we don't roll our eyes anymore when we talk about that.

We know from the global scientific consensus that we don't have time - that we've already missed our opportunity to stop global warming to 1.5 degrees. We've missed it. The world that my children grow up in will be dramatically different from the world that we grew up in, no matter what, if we do nothing.

I just want to close by really inviting my colleagues to expand the voices at the table, expand your idea of what is possible in this budget. We have an opportunity, and we have a responsibility, and we're the people who have to make the decisions. Whether we

think we're the right people, whether I think you're the right people, doesn't matter. It's us. We're here. There's a lot that we can do.

Speaking for myself, I will say I will support the parts of the government's budget that I think are positive, and I will fight the parts that I think are insufficient. I ask you to remain open to really genuinely meeting the moment that we're in. I'm always available to help.

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

We'll briefly recess for 15 minutes.

[11:42 a.m. The House recessed.]

[12:10 p.m. The House resolved into a CW on Supply with Rafah DiCostanzo in the Chair.]

[4:30 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened with Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds in the Chair.]

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

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, I know this will disappoint those who are left here on a Friday afternoon, but this does conclude government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Monday, April 11th between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Business will include the continuation of the Committee of the Whole on Supply to deal with Budget Estimates. For members' information, the Law Amendments Committee will meet between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to consider Bill Nos. 124, 123, 126, 134, 129, 131, 137, and 138.

Thank you. Drive safe. Everyone have a great weekend.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Monday, April 11th between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House stands adjourned until Monday, April 11th.

[The House rose at 4:32 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 215**

By: Hon. Jill S. Balsler (Digby-Annapolis)

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

Whereas this week of April 3rd- 9th is Adult Learners' Week, and Nova Scotians are marking the outstanding achievements of adult learners at events throughout the province; and

Whereas literacy skills increase confidence and open doors to the rewarding education and employment opportunities our province has to offer; and

Whereas the Government of Nova Scotia is committed to helping Nova Scotians reach their full potential by supporting the development and delivery of adult literacy programs;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing and celebrating Adult Learners' Week and encouraging all Nova Scotians to celebrate the value of literacy as the foundation to lifelong learning.

RESOLUTION NO. 216

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas Aerobics First has been serving customers for over 40 years; and

Whereas Aerobics First has continually given back to the wider community through the fit-it-forward program and donations to local charities; and

Whereas Aerobics First rightly enjoys a broad reputation for attentive service to the individual needs of these who come there;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Aerobics First on their many years as a Quinpool landmark and wish them every continuing success as Nova Scotia pulls forward beyond the last very difficult two years.

RESOLUTION NO. 217

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the Ardmore Tea Room has been an anchor of Quinpool Road for over 60 years; and

Whereas the Ardmore recently received the Best Breakfast and Best Diner Gold award, and the Best Brunch Silver award from The Coast's Best of Halifax awards; and

Whereas these awards are accurate reflections of the Ardmore's terrific food and fare, in the best tradition of the Nova Scotia diner;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Ardmore Tea Room on all their recent recognitions and wish them every continuing success as Nova Scotia pulls beyond the last very difficult two years.

RESOLUTION NO. 218

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas the Cheeky Neighbour Diner has been open on Quinpool since 2019; and

Whereas the Cheeky Neighbour Diner recently received the Bronze awards for both Best Brunch and Best Diner at The Coast's Best of Halifax Awards; and

Whereas the Cheeky Neighbour has managed to build a loyal fanbase in the midst of the challenges of being a new business during a pandemic;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Cheeky Neighbour Diner on these well-deserved recognitions and wish them every continuing success as Nova Scotia continues to pull out from the last difficult two years.

RESOLUTION NO. 219

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas Dilly Dally Eats won the Silver awards for both Best Cafe and Best Coffee at the Coast's Best of Halifax Awards; and

Whereas through their to-go windows on Vernon and Quinpool, Dilly Dally has found innovative ways to keep their staff and customers safe throughout the pandemic; and

Whereas the staff at Dilly Dally are known far and wide for their kind and welcoming nature;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dilly Dally on these well-deserved recognitions and wish them all the best as Nova Scotia moves beyond the experience of the past two years.

RESOLUTION NO. 220

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas Morris East has been nominated as a finalist for Business of the Year at the Halifax Business Awards; and

Whereas Morris East's Vernon Street location was awarded Silver in the category of Best Pizza Pie at the Coast's Best of Halifax awards; and

Whereas Morris East serves delicious food and provides excellent customer service and has become a welcome addition to the Quinpool/Vernon landscape;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Morris East on their continued success and accolades and wish them all the best as Nova Scotia pulls forward beyond the last very difficult two years.