



## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

**Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain**

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### First Session

**TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022**

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**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2022**

**Sixty-fourth General Assembly**

**First Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Keith Bain

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

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

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

HON. JOHN A. MADONALD: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Private and Local Bills, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

**Bill No. 112 - Holy Heart Seminary Dissolution Act.**

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

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendments.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

### **TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table, pursuant to Section 27(5) of the Finance Act, the Order in Council 2022-81, dated March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022, detailing the additional appropriations included in the final forecast for fiscal year 2021-22.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table this document. It is an article by *Mouhamad Rachini*, published on CBC on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, under the title “NS gov’t appeal in disabled rights case shows ‘they don’t view us as people,’ advocate says.” This is in consideration of a member’s statement I am going to read later.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, as promised during Estimates on Friday, I offered to table information about the Next Ride Program, electric vehicles and charging stations that are going to be coming aboard. I encourage all MLAs to have a look and we’ll make sure that information is shared with all the caucuses to ensure that everybody has access to the programs that are going to be available to apply for the electric vehicle charging systems.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

### **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

### **GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 223**

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



Whereas we had a tough Fall and Winter with extreme weather conditions from heavy rainfall events to sudden swings in temperature to hurricane-like winds that challenged Nova Scotians and our Public Works road crews; and

Whereas our extreme weather washed out numerous roads and bridges, leaving some communities completely cut off, and washed away salt and sand from our roads, making it challenging to prevent icy conditions; and

Whereas Public Works has more than 2,000 employees who maintain more than 23,000 kilometres of roads and are committed to delivering safe quality roads, highways, and bridges for all Nova Scotians;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the commitment of Public Works road crews, who work tirelessly around the clock to help ensure that our roads are safe for all Nova Scotians.

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 Seniors and Long-term Care.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 224**

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

Whereas Public Safety Canada and the Canadian Red Cross responded to our request for federal assistance in long-term care facilities when COVID was leading to staffing shortages in multiple facilities; and

Whereas the Canadian Red Cross quickly deployed teams of emergency support workers to Roseway Manor, providing companionship to residents and providing support with their daily routines through February and March of this year; and

Whereas these emergency support workers stepped up to help the dedicated continuing care staff across our province, all working tirelessly to provide seniors with the care they deserve;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing the Canadian Red Cross and their teams for supporting long-term care facilities this Spring in Nova Scotia.

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 Health and Wellness.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 225**

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

Whereas when Nova Scotians experience a medical emergency and call 911, EHS medical communications officers are the first point of contact to assess and alert first responders like police, firefighters, and paramedics, who are critical in saving lives; and

Whereas associates at 811 Telecare are an important link in connecting people who call 811 with the appropriate resources, including a registered nurse or with the EHS medical communications centre; and

Whereas EHS medical communications officers and 811 Telecare operators have the skill to respond quickly and with compassion, understanding, and professionalism during an emergency;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize April 10-16, 2022 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week and encourage all of us to learn more about the crucial role that these public safety communications professionals play in our health care system.

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 Fisheries and Aquaculture.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 226**

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

Whereas a link to a new resource mapping tool is available on the Nova Scotia Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture website to support aquaculture operations and future aquaculture development; and

Whereas this user-friendly geographic information system (GIS) tool supports aquaculture decision making and site selection by providing a one-stop shop approach for key information about things such as environmental, land-based infrastructure; and

Whereas the resource mapping tool was developed by the Centre for Marine Applied Research, with funding provided by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the benefits of this resource mapping tool in providing relevant, readily accessible information about the province's infrastructure and support to guide aquaculture decision-making and save aquaculture businesses time and effort.

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. 156 - Entitled an Act Respecting Acadian and Francophone Education. (Ronnie LeBlanc)**

**Bill No. 157 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 300 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Municipal Elections Act, Respecting Permanent Residents. (Claudia Chender)**

**Bill No. 158 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act, Respecting Emergency Alerts. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)**

**Bill No. 159 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 300 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Municipal Elections Act, Respecting Persons Serving a Sentence. (Claudia Chender)**

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

### NOTICES OF MOTION

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### **FOX, TERRY: MARATHON OF HOPE FUNDRAISER - RECOG.**

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, 42 years ago today, Canadian hero Terry Fox dipped his artificial leg into the Atlantic Ocean to begin his Marathon of Hope, a nearly five-month odyssey during which he ran a marathon almost every day in a noble effort to raise money and awareness for cancer research. Terry didn't make it to the Pacific Ocean, ending his journey in northern Ontario after announcing his cancer had returned and spread to his lungs. He passed away in less than a year at the age of 22.

His Marathon of Hope resonated with Canadians and his immense effort paid off. Since 1980, the Terry Fox Run has helped to raise more than \$850 million for cancer research. In addition to raising money and awareness for this important cause, Terry Fox demonstrated to the world that one person can make a significant difference, while showing us all the importance of facing challenges head on.

I ask all members of this House and Nova Scotians to join me in honouring the important legacy of Terry Fox.

[1:15 p.m.]

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

**RCL BRANCH 142 MEMBERS: AWD. RECIPS. - CONGRATS.**

PATRICIA ARAB: I rise today to recognize some members of the Royal Canadian Legion Fairview Branch 142 who were recently honoured with life memberships. Last weekend, the Fairview Legion was finally able to have an awards and honours presentation after being postponed twice due to COVID-19. Nine members received life memberships in recognition of their outstanding service to the Legion.

I'd like to congratulate Murray Austin, Barb Boudreau, John Bowser, Philip Burke, Maurice Hatch, Andy Jeffrey, Neil Landry, Hilda Purcell, and Cyril Slade. In particular, I'd like to highlight Philip Burke, who received not only a life membership but also a pin recognizing his 70 years as a member of the Legion. What a remarkable accomplishment.

I ask that all members of the House join me in congratulating these committed Legionnaires on their life memberships and their service to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

**DISABLED RTS. RULING: PREM. COMMIT. - RECOG.**

GARY BURRILL: I rise today to ask the House to look back to October 6<sup>th</sup>, when Nova Scotia's top court confirmed that people with disabilities had faced discrimination in the province. Earlier, I tabled an article from CBC written by Mouhamad Rachini titled "N.S. gov't appeal in disabled rights case shows 'they don't view us as people,' advocate says." Rachini writes:

"...it wasn't until the Oct. 6 decision by the Court of Appeal that evidence of systemic discrimination was acknowledged. A day after the ruling, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston said his government heard the court's message 'loud and clear.' He added that he didn't believe citizens should have to take the government to court to make them 'do the right thing.'"

I ask the House to join me in recognizing the commitment the Premier made to Nova Scotians with disabilities, and after years of dragging this process through the legal system, the turning point that commitment represented when the head of our government said there will be no appeal.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

**RIVERS END QUILTING: HELP FOR UKR. REFUGEES - RECOG.**

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud Rivers End Quilting in Howie Center, which reached out to their customers and proposed a project to make quilts for the Ukrainian refugees. It's safe to say they responded. So far, they have completed the quilting on well over a dozen quilts using a design by Karen Chase which depicts the country's colours in a large, bright yellow sunflower and blue background.

Rivers End Quilting owner Krista Billard and the quilting community knew they wanted to do something after hearing of the devastating news happening in Ukraine. These quilts will be shipped to the Nova Scotia Branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and then dispersed to families coming to Canada to seek refuge. The quilts are still coming in, as the last day for them to be completed is April 14<sup>th</sup> before they will be taken to Halifax.

I would like to take this time today to praise Rivers End Quilting on this heartfelt message to the refugees of Ukraine, and all their hard work and dedication to this project.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**UTECK ROUNDABOUTS: CROSSWALK LIGHTS - THANKS**

BRAEDON CLARK: In fast-growing residential areas like Bedford South, pedestrian safety is a top concern. Nowhere is this more evident than at the Larry Uteck roundabouts on Highway No. 102. This high-traffic area connects two dense residential neighbourhoods and is a growing source of foot traffic in the area.

Today, I was happy to learn that flashing crosswalk lights will be installed at these roundabouts during the Summer or Fall construction season this year. These lights will make the roundabouts safer for pedestrians and motorists alike, especially during the darker Winter months.

I'd like to thank the many constituents who brought this issue to my attention over the past several months. Similarly to the minister earlier, I'd like to give a big shout-out to the local Public Works staff who have been a real pleasure to work with along the way on this particular issue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**CHRIST CHURCH: HOUSING UNITS - THANKS**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I wanted to rise and say something about two remarkable organizations in my community: Christ Church, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Kyle Wagner, and the Elizabeth Fry Society, under the leadership of their executive director,

Emma Halpern. They have worked tirelessly for years, but particularly since the pandemic, to keep people safe - and more recently to keep people housed.

They have run into barrier after barrier with every level of government for simply trying to keep people safe and housed and offer a warm helping hand to the people who need it most in the community. Most recently, they've taken things into their own hands and created staffed modular housing units that will sit on the property of Christ Church in order to do everything that they can to help the people in our community the most in need.

I'm proud to call them constituents. I'm proud to call them friends and I would like all members of this House to join me in applauding their efforts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

### **HOLY WEEK: TIME OF HEALING - RECOG.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, this week is Holy Week, or Passion Week in the Christian faith.

Followers of Jesus are called to be like Him: sacrificial, humble, selfless, and to live a life of love and forgiving of others. First Corinthians 13 explains what love is. Love is patient, it is kind, and it keeps no record of wrongs - which is awfully hard in this place, we have a high calling - and that it is worth trying. Every day is a new day and the foundation of Christian faith, and the meaning of Easter is a story of forgiveness and love.

This is something to aspire to, knowing we are all human and we all make mistakes, but also knowing that forgiveness overcomes mistakes, that light overcomes darkness, and love is more powerful than hate.

May this Holy Week be a time of healing, forgiveness, and spiritual growth for all those striving to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

### **ANTIG. GAMES: RETURN THIS SUMMER - BEST WISHES**

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with you that the 157<sup>th</sup> Antigonish Highland Games will be returning to our community this Summer. The games will be held from Sunday, July 3, 2022 until Sunday, July 10, 2022.

The Antigonish Highland Society is welcoming everyone to come and take in the well-known events. There will be Scottish Heavy Events, piping and drumming, highland dancing, tug-of-war, the infamous 5-mile road race, and the much-anticipated Highland Games Parade, as well as live entertainment throughout the week.

The Games are a highlight of the Summer for Antigonish residents and visitors. Spectators will not be disappointed by the calibre of talent that will be on display.

I look forward to taking in the events of the longest-running Scottish Highland Games held outside of Scotland. I wish the Antigonish Highland Society success and welcome everyone to Antigonish to take in some of the events.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**ANIMAL SERV. RESCUE CLUB: SPCA FUNDRAISING - RECOG.**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate and recognize a group of amazing students from Coxheath Elementary. The students call themselves the Animal Service Rescue Club. Their goal is to raise funds and/or supplies for the local chapter of the SPCA in our area - a very noble and wonderful goal for these young people to give back to their community.

I think our future is very bright here in Nova Scotia, and in Cape Breton in particular, as these students begin to take on their civic duties of giving back to their community at such a young age. Congratulations and well done to the students, the staff, and the administration of Coxheath Elementary.

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

**SPENCER HOUSE: MTG. PLACE FOR SRS. - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge an incredible community organization in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island: Spencer House. Doreen Fraser and Ida Zifkin opened Spencer House in 1983. For nearly 40 years, they have provided a place for seniors in my constituency, and across Halifax, to congregate, interact, and contribute to their communities.

Spencer House staff and volunteers pivoted a lot during the pandemic to ensure they continue to connect with their community, and offered in-person, online, and drop-by services.

I ask that my fellow members join me in commending the staff and volunteers of Spencer House for what they do for seniors in our community and their impressive resilience.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.



**WAMBOLDT, JAMES L.: 50 YRS. WITH FIRE DEPT. - THANKS**

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Fire Chief James L. Wamboldt for serving as a volunteer firefighter and fire officer for the Conquerall Bank Fire Department for an incredible 50 years.

James has served as fire chief for the last 21 years. Under his watch, the department has seen the addition and renovation of the fire hall, as well as the purchase of two new fire trucks. He's also put a Jaws of Life into service and had a bus converted to a rehab unit. His medical response team is one of the first on the South Shore to provide fire rehab, which provides firefighters with a place for rest and to receive nourishment and medical evaluation.

Working as a volunteer reflects an individual's caring and compassion, says Councillor Martin Bell of the Municipality of Lunenburg. James has served for an astounding 50 years as a volunteer - 21 of which were served as chief. He has led a team of community volunteers who have protected property, saved lives, and fundraised. Our community thanks him.

Please join me in thanking Fire Chief James Wamboldt for his outstanding dedication, commitment, and service.

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

**WILKINS, BEATRICE: PRESERV. HIST. OF AFRICVILLE - THANKS**

LORELEI NICOLL: I rise today to recognize Beatrice Wilkins, a past resident of the former community of Africville and a current resident of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

Beatrice is a co-founding director of the Africville Genealogy Society and serves on the Africville Heritage Trust Museum. Beatrice and her two sisters were known as the West Sisters and grew up singing in the Seaview Baptist Church in Africville.

She still continues the singing tradition, although very reluctantly at times. Most recently, Beatrice contributed to the *In the Africville Kitchen: The Comforts of Home* cookbook. She says she has fond memories of Sunday boiled dinners, and they still mean a lot to her, right down to their savoury aroma all through the house. I believe it filled the community, because the houses were so close together and everybody was having a boiled dinner on Sunday. You could knock on any door and they would let you in, says Wilkins.

I ask members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Beatrice Wilkins for her continued contributions to keeping the history and stories of Africville alive.

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

**HORIZON ACHIEVEMENT CTR.: NEW BLDG. - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize a not-for-profit close to my heart, the Horizon Achievement Centre. Horizon is a vocational training and employment service centre for adults with intellectual disabilities or those facing multiple barriers to employment residing within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

Horizon's mandate is to promote and enhance the independent choice and employability of those they serve. The training and employment opportunities, various on-site and off-site businesses, services, and programs are all designed to enhance intellectual growth, personal achievement, and employment potential.

A new building is slated to open soon. The staff, clients, and friends of Horizon and the community cannot wait to see the new build completed. I would be remiss if I did not mention the late Gordie Gosse and his efforts to secure the land and see this project come to fruition.

We are waiting on pins and needles for this much-needed accessible building, and the ability to provide more services for individuals from across Cape Breton who now face limited opportunities for personal and professional development. Beyond the Horizon, here we come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

**HALL, EVERETT: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

HON. JILL BALSER: Please let us remember the life of Everett Hall, who sadly passed away on March 2, 2022.

As the owner and operator of Scotia Surveys Limited in Digby and Shelburne, Everett served many Nova Scotians across the entire province for 50 years. He was a valued and respected land surveyor who took pride in his profession and businesses.

Everett also volunteered for many organizations in the community such as the Boy Scouts, the Lions Club, and the Digby Fire Department. He was admired by many and a true community hero.

May we in this Legislature show our support for Everett's family by standing with them today from afar. I would like to ask members to recognize Everett Hall's consistent devotion to being an esteemed business owner and generous community member.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Clayton Park West.

[1:30 p.m.]

**MCDONALD, DR. BOB: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: It brings me great sadness to share with the House the passing of Dr. Bob McDonald, who left us this past November.

Those who knew Bob knew him to be a kind soul who always gave back to the community. Bob loved the outdoors, was an avid birder, and enjoyed travel. Many will remember Bob from his tenure at Mount Saint Vincent University, where he was a professor of organic chemistry. Bob was a true family man who absolutely loved being a grandfather.

My thoughts and deepest sympathies go out to his wife, Wendy McDonald, and the rest of his family. I would ask that the House join me in recognizing the incredible contributions of Bob McDonald to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**KARABANOW, DR. JEFF: RESEARCH ON HOUSING - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize the body of work done by Dr. Jeff Karabanow in research along with his impressive work with the homeless youth here in Halifax.

Dr. Karabanow's research has been focused on housing instability and the many effects of it. Most recently, Dr. Karabanow co-authored a report entitled *Homelessness during a pandemic: Learning lessons for disaster preparedness in Nova Scotia* along with his colleagues.

Karabanow says this study describes the events, actions and experiences of being homeless while living through COVID-19 and shows how the pandemic unfortunately amplified the suffering of being homeless, of being stigmatized, dehumanized and experiencing unforgiving and dire consequences of not having a home. He further describes the disaster of homelessness.

I look forward to reading his report in more depth and I encourage my fellow MLAs to do the same. This is certainly an excellent learning opportunity for all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**BROWN, PAULINE & DOUG: VOL. OF YR. AWD. RECIPS. - CONGRATS.**

HON TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge and congratulate Pauline and Doug Brown of Minudie in Cumberland County. Pauline and Doug were chosen as the 2021 Volunteers of the Year by the Minudie Heritage Association, to which they have contributed many hours of service, serving as a role model for the community.

Doug continues to pass on Minudie history of days past and he has served on the board of directors as a representative of the King Seaman Lake Cemetery for 21 years. Both Doug and Pauline serve active roles with the King Seaman Lake Cemetery; Pauline is secretary-treasurer, Doug is property Chair, totalling 31 years in service.

I ask that the House join me in congratulating Pauline and Doug Brown on being chosen as the Volunteers of the Year for the Minudie Heritage Association and thank them for the many years of volunteering, and I invite everyone to Minudie Days this coming Summer.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

**ATL. CAN. BBQ CH'SHIP: SUCC. - RECOG.**

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, after more than a year's delay, the organizers of the Atlantic Canada BBQ Championship were able to hold their first competition last September. This event attracted a dozen teams, all anxious to show off their barbeque ability. On the day, the team were at the site very early preparing the barbeque chicken, pork ribs, pork shoulders, and brisket, while the judges had to be more discriminating about the end products, awarding first prize to the team Ozark BBQ. The rest of us had the opportunity to pick up some great barbeque for supper.

This event was a tremendous success and organizers expect to be able to host a much larger event this summer. I ask that all members join me in congratulating the Atlantic Canada BBQ Championship on the success of their inaugural competition and wish them well organizing this Summer's competition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**SPENCER, NEILL: CBS FUNDRAISER - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, each year at its Honouring Canada's Lifeline event, Canadian Blood Services honours people who volunteer their blood, stem cells, organs and tissues, time, and money. This year a Dartmouth North resident, Neill Spencer, was one of only 38 honourees.

A survivor of leukemia and an avid cyclist, Neill was inspired by Terry Fox to bike 160 kilometres every week for 20 weeks. His efforts, which marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Terry's Marathon of Hope, raised money for Canadian Blood Services. Surpassing his goal of \$1 per kilometre he travelled, Neill raised a total of \$4,299 and was the first financial donor that Canadian Blood Services ever honoured at their Lifeline event.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Neill on the receipt of this honour and thank him so much for contributing to Canada's blood supply.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**JENNER, KAREN: 2021 MOBIUS AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.**

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Karen Jenner of Lakeville for receiving the 2021 Mobius Award for diverting waste from Nova Scotia landfills. The Mobius Awards of Environmental Excellence recognize organizations and individuals who go above and beyond to divert waste from landfills in our province.

On her daily walks, Karen Jenner has collected 23,000 pounds of trash from Kings County beaches since March 2018. She has also launched Nova Scotia Beach Garbage Awareness on social media, which now has over 4,000 followers, where she shares volume, types of litter found, and interesting facts and figures related to beach litter.

Please join me today to recognize Karen Jenner for receiving the 2021 Mobius Award for her dedication and volunteerism in our community and for helping to clean our environment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**RENNEHAN, MANDY: *TRADING UP* TV SERIES - RECOG.**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize Mandy Rennehan. Born and raised in Yarmouth, Mandy has a highly successful career as an entrepreneur, celebrated builder, sought-after public speaker, and champion of the trades industry.

Now she has a television series called *Trading Up*, which will premiere on Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, on HGTV Canada. The series follows Mandy as she renovates three properties in Yarmouth while she also mentors three trades apprentices, giving them the tools to develop their own successful careers.

When asked why she decided to bring the show to Yarmouth, Mandy's response was there's not a place in the world that is more beautiful than Yarmouth. I couldn't agree more.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Yarmouth's Mandy Rennehan on this exciting new project and in thanking her for always being a champion of the trades and her beloved hometown of Yarmouth.

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

**CALHOUN, HAROLD: 100<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday is a tremendous milestone. This is why I rise today in the House to recognize a constituent of mine, Mr. Harold Calhoun. Mr. Calhoun is celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on May 22<sup>nd</sup> this year, and I wish him my most heartfelt congratulations for the occasion.

I ask that my fellow members join me in celebrating Mr. Calhoun's birthday and wish him the very best for the years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**SHARPE, RYAN: WORK FOR PC ASSOC. - RECOG.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, we need to assist our youth to get involved in politics. They have a powerful and educated voice. However, they often don't get the opportunity to be involved in a political environment. Our youth want to be engaged, and it is up to members like ourselves to help make sure that this happens.

Ryan Sharpe, a Saint Francis Xavier University graduate, is presently employed with Sobeys Head Office in Stellarton. He is an intelligent, bright, and inquisitive individual who possesses a great deal of political knowledge and good judgment.

Ryan has been involved in politics for numerous years. He is currently president of the Pictou Centre PC Association and the Central Nova Conservative Association. For the past several years, he has volunteered in the capacity of official agent for several provincial and federal elections.

Ryan displays the qualities that will one day make him a great MLA. Great communication skills, integrity, confidence, and honesty are characteristics he possesses.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

**PUB. HEALTH STAFF: COVID EFFORTS - THANKS**

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, as MLAs we've all relied on the advice of Public Health as we battled the COVID-19 pandemic. I wanted to thank all Public Health staff in

Annapolis and throughout the province for everything they've done these last couple of years.

As a constituency assistant in Kings South throughout 2020, I remember those early days of the pandemic. I remember trying to find clarity amongst the uncertainty, to deliver answers for so many questions, and to offer hope when there was so much fear and anxiety. I reached out to the local Public Health office maybe one too many times, and they were always so helpful.

As MLA, I see Jenny Cram and other Public Health staff in Annapolis continue to help residents navigate throughout the pandemic. I will forever be thankful for everything they've done.

Please join me in commending all Public Health staff in Annapolis and across Nova Scotia for going above and beyond in one of our province's most challenging times.

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

**NAT. DAY OF MOURNING: REM. WORKERS KILLED ON JOB - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark April 28<sup>th</sup>, the National Day of Mourning. We may not be in the House to mark it, so I felt like today would be an appropriate time.

In the CBRM, the Day of Mourning is normally held at the Whitney Pier Legion. On this day, we gather to mourn and remember workers injured and killed on the job. We recommit and reaffirm ourselves to ensure workplace safety. No one should be unsafe in the workplace. We commit ourselves to ensuring workers' rights to know the dangers in their workplace, the right to participate in workplace health and safety activities, and a worker's right to refuse unsafe work.

I support the need for government to have the strictest laws, the best prevention strategies, and the best enforcement of occupational health and safety. I ask the House to join me in marking April 28<sup>th</sup> as the National Day of Mourning.

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

**MABEY, JUSTINE: FIRE BRIGADE CHIEF OFFICER - CONGRATS.**

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a historic milestone in the Village of Bible Hill and congratulate Justine Mabey on becoming the first female chief officer in the 75-year history of the brigade.

Mabey is one of 33 volunteer firefighters at the Bible Hill brigade and one of just four women. As second deputy chief, she will be a top decision-maker within the department, overseeing equipment operations and membership recruitment.

Mabey also works as an LPN at the Colchester-East Hants Health Centre in Truro. Her professional career perfectly complements her role as a firefighter and her desire to help others.

I ask the members of the House to join me in acknowledging a dedicated and confident leader, Second Deputy Chief Justine Mabey.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

**REGAN, NANCY: NEW BOOK PUB. - RECOG.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate a former Bedford resident on writing her first book. My sister-in-law Nancy Regan has written *From Showing Off to Showing Up: An Imposter's Journey from Perfect to Present*. It's currently being printed and it will be available on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. It started off as an advice book on how to get over stage fright that morphed into an intimate memoir and guide to overcoming imposter syndrome, stage fright, and perfectionism to become our authentic selves.

This is a huge achievement for Nancy, and I have to say I'm quite in awe of her for opening up. She was known as "the girl next door" for many, many years in everyone's living room each night, bringing the news. I have no doubt this book will help many people who are struggling with these conditions and I want to congratulate her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**UPSHAW, LESLIE - SPIRITKISSED: HELPING TO HEAL - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize a local entrepreneur, Lezlie Upshaw. Lezlie is the owner and creator of SpiritKissed and also a Level 3 Reiki Master. SpiritKissed is a small business located in Halifax Needham that creates homemade products such as bath soaps, bath salts, bath bombs and smudge sticks. SpiritKissed also sell crystals, crystal jewellery, and offers reiki.

Lezlie started this journey wanting to help people who deal with chronic pain and mental and body stress. Her idea was to help people find their inner peace. SpiritKissed is a wellness and spiritual business that aims to help heal the mind, body, and soul through natural handmade products that help with everyday stresses to the body and mind. I would like all the members to please join me in recognizing and celebrating the success of Lezlie Upshaw through her business SpiritKissed.



THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**DOROTHY MACINTOSH: 2<sup>ND</sup> BOOK PUB. - CONGRATS.**

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate educator, historian, and author, Pictou West resident Mrs. Dorothy MacIntosh for completing her second book, entitled *Life as an Awesome Doormat*. The book is a compilation of her life experiences at or near her home in Lyons Brook, Pictou County. One chapter vividly describes her walk from her home in Lyons Brook to teach at West Pictou District High School and all the seasons and weather conditions she experienced during that time.

She says the title comes from the times in her life when she felt she was walked on like a doormat, but how she sprang back up and persevered. At the age of 88, she is an amazing role model and has already begun work on her third book. Please join me in congratulating Mrs. MacIntosh on the publication of her book *Life as an Awesome Doormat*.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**INT'L CBU STUDENTS: CONTRIB. TO COM. - WELCOME**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, as I travel through Sydney, it's always amazing to see how many international students are now attending our local university, CBU. I can tell you when I started there in my time, I think there were 50 international students, and now I think they're north of 4,000. They bring so much to our community, it's so great to have them within the greater Sydney area, and I rise in my place to welcome all the students who will be starting Spring semester at CBU and thank them for choosing CBRM to be their home while they continue their education.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**EASTER SEALS N.S. GALA: CELEB. OF ESC 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIV. - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on March 24<sup>th</sup> several members of this House attended the Easter Seals Nova Scotia Gala in celebration of Easter Seals Canada's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The event was co-hosted by three-time Paralympic Games medalist Paul Tingley and Easter Seals board member Michelle Mahoney, who rappelled onto the stage - it was very impressive. The soundtrack of the night was provided by Terry Kelly and a highlight of the night was Executive Director Joanne Bernard's interview with young Take PART participants Ben and Elliott.

Here in Nova Scotia, Easter Seals has been supporting people with disabilities for over 90 years. Each year, over 2,700 people benefit from its programs and services, and

this includes the New Leaf Café in Burnside in Dartmouth North, which employs people with disabilities. Hot tip: The cookies at New Leaf Café are delicious and I highly recommend them to all MLAs for their holiday open houses. The cherry balls are the best. I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Easter Seals and in thanking the organization for the important work it does in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**CUMB. TRAGEDY: EMERG. HANDLING ISSUE - RECOG.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, like many members I have stood in this Chamber here to ask questions and highlight issues our constituents are experiencing when it comes to what actually happens when they try to report an emergency and seek help. The fact is, we have 911 calls jumping to other provinces, wasting time while loved ones wait on hold. We have situations where life-saving direction was not always immediately available over the phone.

We have so many levels of red tape that volunteer first responders have to wait for each person to arrive before they can approach an emergency together, even when that emergency is one individual.

We have situations where people wait more than an hour for our valued EHS professionals who have been exhausted by lack of resources and extensive travel. These are things that aren't news to the people of this province in Cumberland County, but they are things everyone would welcome a solution to.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**CHILVERS, SHARON: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Sharon Chilvers of River Bourgeois. She has dedicated countless hours to the Tara Lynne Community Centre and to the local seniors' club. She has ensured that grants are applied for and improvement work has been completed. She is a volunteer who would never ask anyone to do anything she would not do herself. Her neighbours admire her for her long-standing dedication.

I ask members of this House to join me in thanking Sharon for her ongoing contributions to her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

[1:45 p.m.]

**GILLIS, ALEXANDER: 1<sup>ST</sup> BOOK PUB. - RECOG.**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today to recognize Alexander Gillis and his talented, compassionate, and loving granddaughter, Katerina Bakolias. With help from Katerina, Alexander at the age of 92 fulfilled a life-long dream by publishing his first book entitled *Hard Time Soup: An Autobiographical Collection of Short Stories*.

*Hard Time Soup* is a memoir containing a collection of short stories written by Alexander, a former Cape Breton miner in the 1940s. The stories provide an uplifting and unique perspective on Nova Scotia's history during the hungry '30s and wartime '40s. The book follows Alexander through his childhood adventures, his work in the mines, and his reflections on family and life in New Waterford. His stories highlight an array of colourful Cape Breton folks, forgotten histories, and even a few ghost stories.

As we continue to work our way through the pandemic, watch in horror at the atrocities of war unfolding in Ukraine, and struggle with an economic crisis, this timely publication reflects on similar historic tragedies and offers a genuine feeling of hope for the future.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Alexander for his storytelling talents, and to thank Katerina for her generous support to help her grandfather fulfill his dream.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

**CANSO FLYING FIGS. SKATING CLUB: COMP. WINS - CONGRATS.**

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to congratulate the Canso Flying Figures Skating Club on their recent success at the Sackville STAR 1-3 Competition. It has been five years since any skater from this club attended a competition, and this year Bria Horne and Ocean Dunn both took home bronze in their division while Maci Rhynold won the silver ribbon. This competition allowed those skaters to show their skills and receive feedback from the judges which will help them in the future.

These young ladies are role models in their skate club and also assisted their coach, Jennifer Roberts, instructing the CanSkate program, which is 27 participants strong. This program teaches not only figure skaters but hockey players as well.

I ask that the House join me in recognizing Bria Horne, Ocean Dunn, and Maci Rhynold on their accomplishments and wish them luck this month at their next competition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**STAGE PROPHETS: 20 YRS. OF MUS. PRODNS. - CONGRATS.**

HON. KEITH IRVING: 20 years ago, in the basement of a local church, 16 youth wearing tie-dyed shirts were singing their hearts out in a production of *Godspell*. Since then, the Stage Prophets theatrical society has grown and flourished, sharing many magical moments with delighted audiences.

Every Spring for the last several years, Stage Prophets theatrical society, with a cast of over 100 ranging in ages from 1 to 70, have hosted a musical production at the Festival Theatre in Wolfville, often to sold-out audiences.

In celebration of 20 years of Stage Prophets, this year's production will bring to the stage all the favourite music and heartfelt moments from years past in what's sure to be an outstanding production.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Stage Prophets theatrical society on 20 years of community theatre and encourage anyone who will be in the Wolfville area between June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> to grab your tickets for this once-in-a-lifetime presentation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

**MUISE, G./CURRIE, D./WESTLAKE, D.: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

TOM TAGGART: I would like to acknowledge the work done by some of the bravest people I know. On April 19, 2020, Onslow Belmont Fire Chief Greg Muise, Deputy Chief Darrell Currie, and Colchester County EMO Officer Dave Westlake were preparing a comfort centre in support of the residents of Portapique when they came under fire. The terror they experienced in a five-minute time span in which they had resigned to losing their lives was very impactful.

Mr. Speaker, these three men, two of whom were volunteers and one a municipal-provincial employee, responded as they would do on a regular basis to serve their community. It is clear that their lives will be forever impacted. I wish to express on behalf of the House of Assembly our very deep and sincere gratitude to these men.

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

**WILLIAMS, DAVID: ORDER OF RED CROSS IND. - RECOG.**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding community volunteer, and Service Nova Scotia employee, David Williams.

For 15 years, Dave has been a dedicated volunteer for the Canadian Red Cross. He has coordinated responses to natural disasters across the country, including here in Halifax when Hurricane Dorian struck. He also shares his passion for giving back by training the next generation of Red Cross volunteers.

In recognition of his commitment, he was recently inducted into the Order of the Red Cross, a rare honour as membership in the Order is limited to 350 Canadians at any given time. Dave says: “If I have the capacity to do something for someone in need, I should.” He talks about how simple acts of caring can “make things better one person, one family, one community at a time.” These are words that we should all live by.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Dave Williams for his tireless service and congratulate him on being inducted into the Order of the Red Cross.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

**KELLY BEHM, SHANNON: THEATRE CLASSES - RECOG.**

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to community member Shannon Kelly Behm.

Shannon is well-known in our community for her outstanding singing, dancing, acting and theater skills and abilities. Her commitment to local not-for-profit organizations goes beyond giving back to our community. Shannon has also been teaching these amazing skills at the Horizon Recreation Centre. Her musical theatre acting classes are popular and well-loved.

I ask all Members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing Shannon Kelly Behm for all that she does for our community, for recognizing the importance of theatre arts and for sharing her knowledge with adults and children alike.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**CREIGHAN, KAITLYNN: EDUC. JOURNEY - BEST WISHES**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize a great young constituent, Kaitlynn Creighan, who will be off to Ottawa in the Fall to attend Carleton University in the political management master's program. She is also a recipient of the Clayton H. Riddell scholarship award.

Kaitlynn was one of the most dedicated volunteers on my campaign. She knocked on hundreds of doors and did communications. She did so much and then, following the campaign, she volunteered to be my riding association president. I have a suspicion I'm going to have to fill that spot pretty soon.

That's okay because Kaitlynn is continuing her educational journey and I wish her nothing but the best.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

**GOLDHAWK FARM: 1 YR. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.**

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Eastern Shore entrepreneurs Lianne Reeves and her partner Chris Goldhawk of Goldhawk Farm in Moser River.

Recently, Lianne and Chris celebrated one year in business with a well-attended open house. Goldhawk Farm offers delicious baked goods and fresh local eggs to communities along the Eastern Shore. On weekends, Lianne and Chris can be found offering their wares at the New Glasgow and Musquodoboit Harbour Farmers Markets.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating Goldhawk Farm on a successful first year in business during a difficult time and to wish them all the best in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**DAS ROSS, Z./RICHARD, M.: ÉPELLE-MOIS CAN. WINS - CONGRATS.**

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize two Dartmouth East students, Zavier Das Ross from École Bois-Joli and Milène Richard from Ecole du Carrefour, who won the Épelle-Moi Canada, Mes 400 + 10 mots dans un récit .

In our Acadian francophone schools, groups of 14- to 18-year-old students participated in weekly online workshops where a published author guided them on how to write a story. By the end of the workshop, they had written their own stories, which were then entered into a competition and submitted to judges. As winners, Zavier and Milène had their stories published online had their stories published online.

I ask that members of the Legislature join me in congratulating these two young writers for their creativity. I wish them future success in their academic endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**SYD.-RIVERVIEW Y SERV. CLUB: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

FRED TILLEY: I rise today to celebrate the work of the Sydney-Riverview Y Service Club in Coxheath on Westmount Road.

This group of gentlemen does amazing work in our community. I had the wonderful opportunity to attend one of their meetings and have dinner with the group just to hear of the wonderful projects that they do in our community, from adopting families, to helping those in need, to community gardens.

Right now they're embarking on a plan to try to make their location a warming centre during power outages and other weather-related events. This area could really use that facility as a warming centre, and I am supporting them 100 per cent, and hope that we can make this happen.

Without further ado, congratulations and great job to the Riverview Y Club.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Hants East.

**HANTS EAST RURAL HS HOCKEY TEAM: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.**

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I am excited to announce that the Hants East Rural High female hockey team took home the provincial banner on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Hants East was the host of this year's hockey division - two provincials - and they got off to a tough start with a 3-1 loss to Bridgetown. Needing to win the rest of the games, they did just that, with a win over Middleton and Dalbrae to advance to the championship game. Facing Bridgetown again, the Tigers rose to victory with a 2-0 win in a thrilling and close game.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first provincial banner in the history of female hockey at Hants East Rural High and I would like to congratulate all the players, the coaching staff, and the volunteers on this tremendous accomplishment.

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

**MCKAY, MOODY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

LORELEI NICOLL: Today I would like to recognize a long-time Portland Estates and Hills resident who continues to make contributions to his community.

Moody McKay is a retired RCMP officer who has lived in the community since 1997. He was a founding member of the Portland Hills Residents Association's Trails and Parks Committee. He's been very active in preparing trail alignments, negotiating a donation from Home Depot, and planning for distance markers along the trails.

Moody volunteers for the Shriners and the RCMP Veterans Association and was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal for his volunteer contributions. Like other seniors, he and his wife have chosen to downsize within the community rather than

move out of it. The residents of Portland Estates and Hills have certainly benefited from Moody's efforts and his drive to get the job done.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Moody McKay for his tireless interest in his community.

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

**GRADE 8 STUDENTS: 6TH PLACE IN CYBERSTEAM CHALL. - CONGRATS.**

HON. BRIAN WONG: I rise today to recognize Emily Aporta and Annabelle Brozek, Grade 8 students at George P. Vanier Junior High, on their sixth-place finish in the Canada CyberSTEAM Challenge.

One hundred and nineteen teams from across Canada participated in a competition that allowed students to develop innovative solutions to real world problems. Emily and Annabelle's submission was a boat that uses artificial intelligence learning technology to see things around it, to recognize garbage, and grab it out of the water while leaving the fish safe.

Emily and Annabelle also won the Overall Sprint Challenge, having to think quickly on the spot and create solutions. Please join me in congratulating Emily and Annabelle on their innovative ideas and wish them success in their future studies.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

**REYNOLDS, JANICE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

HON. KIM MASLAND: I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge Liverpool resident Janice Reynolds and to recognize her significant contributions to the health community in Queens.

For 44 years, Janice has co-operated a pharmacy, served on numerous community boards, and for the past three years, she has served on the Queens General Hospital Foundation Board of Trustees. As part of the executive building committee, she has contributed and had hands-on involvement in many projects involving expansion and procurement.

Janice and her team also stepped up and organized numerous community COVID-19 vaccination clinics. Janice's can-do attitude makes her an invaluable asset, and she is never far away from a job when it needs to be done.

Please join me as I offer to Janice heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all that she has done and continues to do for her community and the residents of Queens.



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

[2:00 p.m.]

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

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

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **PREM.: COVID CASES RISING - ACTION**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, Omicron continues to apply pressure on our hospitals across the province and on our workers. As of Thursday last week, Nova Scotia Health reported 97.7 per cent of hospital beds across the province occupied and 85 per cent of ICU beds occupied. I'll table that.

Meanwhile, this government is telling Nova Scotians to get back out there. My question for the Premier is: Knowing that our hospitals are at their limits, why does this government insist on pushing a marketing campaign that will only serve to spread more COVID-19 and impact our most vulnerable citizens?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): I thank the member for this important question. Obviously, our health care system has been under incredible stress for a number of years. Certainly, the pandemic has shone a light on some of the pressures that existed for a long time before that, Mr. Speaker. Nova Scotians have been well aware of that as well.

The pandemic is advancing. The virus is changing. We know that if you look across the country, around North America and, quite frankly, around the world, case numbers are up. But our health care workers dig in and they get it done, as they always do.

The stresses on the health care system are front and centre of everything we do. I want to thank those health care workers for continuing to get up and keep Nova Scotians safe every single day.

IAIN RANKIN: Yes, our health care system has been under pressure, but right now we have triple the number of COVID-19 cases per capita than anywhere else in the country. We are characterized as a hot spot and yet we are lagging in booster dose uptake, with just over 60 per cent of Nova Scotians getting their booster shot - yet they are funnelling money into ensuring that people get out and spread COVID-19 more.

In that same report I tabled, the Nova Scotia Health Authority said that acute care beds are now overoccupied, at 102 per cent. My question for the Premier is: What is his government doing - public advertising or anything else - to encourage Nova Scotians to get out and get their booster shot?

THE PREMIER: Of course, in this province we do have high levels of immunity. The member is quite right: The uptake on the third dose is certainly something we would like to see increased. We encourage people to get their booster shots. There's no question about that.

Mr. Speaker, what an awful thing for the member to say, that the government is encouraging people to get out and spread COVID-19. He lost me at that statement. That's a ridiculous thing for any member of this House or any Nova Scotian to say. Of course, this government is not encouraging the spread of COVID-19. It's a serious issue. It's not one to be treated like that on the floor of the Legislature.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm just reiterating the message in his own marketing plan, and then saying what all public health experts have been saying, what epidemiologists have been saying - that it will result in more COVID-19 activities in communities.

In the last session, the Minister of Health and Wellness said, "I'm going to tell you right now: things are going to get better every day under this government" - in health care. I'll table this document. Yet 88,000 Nova Scotians are without primary care now. Seniors are waiting a whole month longer to access long-term care in their communities, and there have been over a dozen province-wide Code Criticals, and the list goes on. We talked about the hospitalizations overflowing.

My question for the Premier is: At what day is it projected that we will see any health care outcome improve under this government?

THE PREMIER: Obviously, Nova Scotians weighed in on how they feel about the state of health care. They know it's bad. We don't need anybody to tell them that. Every single day this government is taking steps to improve the state of health care. That's something that party can't say because when they were in government, every single day they looked the other way. We will not look the other way. We're focused on making sure Nova Scotians stay safe.

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

Order, please. The Leader of the New Democratic Party has the floor.

**PREM. - DIS. COM.: COMMIT. - COMMENT**

GARY BURRILL: On October 7<sup>th</sup> last year, there was real celebration in the community of persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia and those in solidarity with them. The Premier gave his word that the Province would not appeal the court decision where the court ruled that the institutionalization of people in order to access basic services was systemic discrimination. I want to table 17 different accounts of where the Premier gave his word and made this commitment.

However, on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, there was a movement of this sense of celebration to a sense of despair and betrayal when the government announced that they would, in fact, actually be mounting just this appeal. Does the Premier acknowledge that in proceeding with this appeal he has broken his word?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue. We are behind moving people out of institutions. We are behind finding adequate housing for Nova Scotians. We are focused on those things for sure. Our budget shows that. We're not waiting for anything. We're moving forward to support those Nova Scotians.

In terms of the very specific issue on this court case - and I want to assure the member that it is not impeding our progress to solve the underlying problem of housing. The very specific court decision has broad-ranging ramifications that, as a government . . . (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've discussed those ramifications and the reasons quite a number of times. I accept that the Opposition is not willing to listen to the reason. I accept that the Opposition does not want to listen to reason, but I will say this to all of those Nova Scotians: We are moving forward on solving the underlying problems.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, a government's word is not nothing. The trustworthiness of its commitment is not nothing. The reliability of when it offers itself with certainty - that is not nothing. It is one of a government's most valuable and precious assets.

I want to ask the Premier: Does he not recognize what a negative and destructive thing it is for a government to repudiate its own commitments?

THE PREMIER: Here's what I would say: As a government, we're moving very quickly. We're moving very quickly on addressing the issues facing this province. Nova Scotians are finding that refreshing.

What I'm also very frank with Nova Scotians about is that when you move very quickly, sometimes you make a mistake, or you say things a little off. What it takes, Mr. Speaker, and what Nova Scotians are responding to, is having the maturity and the confidence to say we got that wrong. In the case of this situation, I spoke too quickly, but I want to assure Nova Scotians that we are working on the actual issue. But we need to protect the rights of Nova Scotians through the court process on the broad range of issues.

We will do that, but the budget that is before this House - \$13 billion of spending, including the biggest capital spending budget this province has seen - is focusing on the issues.

GARY BURRILL: Part of the responsibility when one recognizes a mistake is to rectify that mistake. This matter goes to the core of the government's makeup. What kind of government and what kind of Premier make a commitment to one of the most vulnerable populations in our whole province and then rescind it and retract it and turn their back on that commitment? Will the Premier rectify this hypocritical betrayal and withdraw the Province's appeal?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there's a lot I could say in response to that, but let me just leave it at this. We've explained our reasons to the member opposite, and for his own political purposes, he won't accept the reasons. That's fine. But on this side of the House, we're focused on people, not politics.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the Leader of the Official Opposition, I'm addressing the word used by the member from the New Democratic Party. The word "hypocritical" is very unparliamentary. I would ask that he withdraw that statement.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of a more precise way to describe the betrayal that has taken place here than the word "hypocritical." I do not withdraw it.

THE SPEAKER: The Speaker has asked you to withdraw the word "hypocritical." I'm asking again that you withdraw that statement.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, what the government has done is a hypocritical betrayal of the disabled population.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. (Interruptions) That's three times now I've asked for order so therefore I'm going to ask the Leader of the New Democratic Party to please leave the Chamber.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

**PREM.: SURGERY WAIT TIMES - EXPLAIN**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, last week the Nova Scotia Health Authority began limiting surgeries at the QEII Health Centre. These are day surgeries, same-day procedures, really important issues that Nova Scotians are struggling with. Some are in pain, on medications, waiting to get their surgery. Now it's kicked down the road even further - years down the road. This government promised to reduce wait times for surgeries to the national average in 18 months. My question to the Premier is simple: In what categories have wait times been reduced?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, home care for sure, but it's a broader question. We understand the impacts on the health care system, and we know the pain and suffering that Nova Scotians are feeling when surgeries are delayed, when procedures are delayed. This is a really difficult time for sure.

We know that we're focused on doing what's possible and we will continue to take the steps that we can take to fix the health care system. Nova Scotians also know we couldn't fix it in eight months. It took eight years to get it to this stage. But undeterred, we are focused. We will be there to support those health care workers. We will be there to support those Nova Scotians. We'll do just the very best we can.

IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about surgeries and the promise that they made to get elected: that they would reduce wait times within 18 months. He has less than a year to achieve that. We have Nova Scotians who are waiting longer in virtually every category - orthopedics, MRIs, and so on down the line. Nova Scotians are in pain waiting for their surgeries and our acute care beds are above occupancy. Our ICU beds are filling up and there's no sign of extending operators like they promised in the campaign. Those promises were a farce to get votes.

Can the Premier name just one category of surgery - not home care - where wait times has improved at all, and is he ready to admit that it has gotten worse in all of them?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, look, we know the impact that the pandemic has had on a number of situations, including delays in surgeries and stuff like this. I'll just circle back to that because I want to tell the member - and I want to assure all members of this House and every Nova Scotian - that we stand with Public Health. We listen to Public Health. Maybe the member can say where he stands?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**DHW: PHYS. SHORTAGE - ADVISE**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Need a Family Practice numbers for April are out and they're staggering. The list now stands at over 88,000 Nova Scotians

waiting for primary care through a family doctor. That is over 13,000 more than when this government took office. When in Opposition, the current Premier claimed there was a health care crisis when there were 65,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor, yet under his watch we see this problem exacerbating itself. When can Nova Scotians start to expect that list of Need a Family Practice to drop?

[2:15 p.m.]

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Certainly, there has been an increase. We've had a number of physicians who have retired. Because there was no previous planning to understand when physicians are retired, we were not in a position to be able to predict that. We have a number of physicians who also are off sick.

We continue to work with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment. They recently had a very successful mission to recruit physicians. We've hired 13 nurse practitioners to support long-term care as well as primary care in the community. We have very targeted approaches. We've created new incentives for physicians because the other ones were not working and will continue to do more until the crisis is averted.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I have to say it's a bit concerning when the party opposite ran as self-proclaimed solutionists, and yet most of the air taken up in this Chamber is to lay blame on previous governments. Is that not a concern to anybody over there? We hear more about what previous governments did than what they're going to do, and I think there's a reason for that.

This government is unable to carry through on the commitments that they made to Nova Scotians: a commitment, as an example, to give doctors a pension to recruit them. Could the Premier please tell the House when he plans on coming through with that commitment to give a pension to a doctor to help with this recruitment issue?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'm so happy to tell the member opposite that currently that program is under development, and we expect that it will be ready by the end of the year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth, on a new question.

### **DHW: DOCTOR RETIREMENTS - PLAN**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I can't wait to see how that program rolls out and how effective it is. I do wish the government well in that, and we'll see how it goes.

Doctors have recently come out saying through Doctors Nova Scotia that the waiting list is only going to get longer as the years go by unless something drastic happens. I'll certainly table those quotes from Doctors Nova Scotia.

There are currently 189 family doctors in our system who are over the age of 65 and expected to retire. To correct the minister, a lot of work actually went into identifying retirees in our system who did help with planning. Can the minister please tell us specifically what solutions she has to deal with this impending problem with large-scale doctor retirements?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: There have been a number of things that are happening. We certainly are looking at the Practice Ready Assessment as an example so that we can more quickly bring internationally trained physicians in and get them patient-facing in a more timely manner.

The new physician incentive programs are very, very competitive and certainly built on the voices of physicians who helped us determine what would be helpful. We have an Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment that has been very, very active. We are working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons. We are working with our partners globally, after a very successful recent mission, as well as our partners in the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

This is going to take time. This plan is built on the voices of health care workers. The ears have certainly perked up on the other side of the House since they've been sitting over there.

ZACH CHURCHILL: My ears and eyes have certainly perked up, because what I've seen from a government that has promised to make health care better every single day is that it has gotten demonstrably worse by every metric that they ran on, from access to primary care to overcapacity in our ICUs to long-term care waits to less reporting when it comes to critical data around COVID-19. I'll say I do question this government's current record on health care, but I do hope they do better moving forward.

Looking at the numbers of physicians who are going to retire, we could be looking at upwards of over 250,000 Nova Scotians being without a primary care provider in the coming years. This government did commit to recruiting 300 new doctors every single year. Can the minister please tell us when Nova Scotians can expect to see that number of 300 come through for them?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, we are very acutely aware. Primary care comes in many forms, so we know that there are also nurse practitioners who can contribute to the primary care and access Nova Scotians. There are pharmacists who can support the frontline care of Nova Scotians. We continue to work with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment, and I'm very confident that we will achieve that number.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Dartmouth North.

### **DHW: HEALTH CARE DELAYS - INFORM**

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. By almost any measure our health care system is bursting at the seams, as we've been just discussing. There were 2,512 surgeries cancelled in January, more than any other time in the last five months. Wait times for cancer care are growing, and 27,000 people across the province are waiting for surgery, more than any other time in the last five years.

Meanwhile, the government has not acted on clear fixes like enabling physician assistants and midwives to practice. The minister has just given some examples of how we could do things, but she has forgotten the physician assistants and midwives.

We've heard the Premier say it's going to get worse before it's going to get better. Will the minister please table the projections of how much worse it's going to get?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: While physician assistants and midwives are an important part of our system, they cannot perform surgery. The week of March 28<sup>th</sup> to April 3<sup>rd</sup>, NSHA completed 1,392 surgeries, which was 92 per cent of the same window in 2019. They also completed 98 per cent of DI volume. We know the system is under strain. They're working hard and we are continuing to ensure that Nova Scotians get the services they need.

SUSAN LEBLANC: A Freedom of Information response received by our caucus reveals that 82,834 people are waiting for diagnostic imaging tests in the province. Even more disturbing is that 4,136 people - roughly one in five people - on the wait-list for an MRI have been waiting for more than a year. Meanwhile, doctors are raising alarms that our health care system is on the brink of collapse and the government's promised plan to fix health care is nowhere to be seen.

Mr. Speaker, if the government has a plan to fix health care, why won't they show it to Nova Scotians?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: To the member's point, there is some aging infrastructure in the health care system. We recently invested a significant amount of money to replace the MRIs that unpredictably break down at times which contributed to the wait-list.

We know that the Central Zone is one of the areas that has continued pressure. There are extended hours to address that wait-list. I know that the system is under pressure, but we will continue to work diligently to address it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.



**DHW: HEALTH CARE WKR. REDEPLOYMENTS - INFORM**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Not only are our health care workers being pushed to the limits with no respite, but these same shortages are also putting health care workers into positions outside of their areas of expertise.

Sandra Mullen, vice-president of the Nova Scotia Government & General Employees Union, says that health care workers are showing up to work in their set field and are being redeployed to emergency rooms or other departments that they are unfamiliar with. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness: What health care workers are being redeployed and what services are being left behind?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, it is not unusual for health care workers to be redeployed. That has been happening for a number of years.

There are basic skills that health care workers have that are similar across all designations. When health care workers are redeployed, they are expected to use those skills in support of patients. What we do is we prioritize urgent and emergency surgeries and things that cannot wait, and we redeploy from other areas.

It's done on an individual facility basis, and it's done in the best interest of patients. It is not unfamiliar; it's been happening for years in the health care system.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, this has been one of the most overwhelming and deadly waves of COVID-19, but it may not be the last. Dr. Strang and other health care professionals have talked about building surge capacity in our health care system so that we are prepared for another wave of COVID-19 or a similar type of outbreak.

My question for the minister: Is this government learning from the consequences of this last wave and has the surge capacity modelling been completed at the NSHA?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to look at the health care worker shortage throughout this province. We know that there is a deep hole that we need to crawl out of. We know that there is absolutely no slack in the system because of previous budgets which were balanced on the backs of health care and the backs of health care workers.

There is early modelling for us to do projections, but I do not have anything for the member at this time.

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

**DHW: SUPP. FOR WEARY NURSES - INFORM**

HON. BEN JESSOME: Last week, we heard from the president of the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union and she indicated that many of our nurses are being told that there are no staff to replace them. We know that their mental and physical health is very important and it's critical that they get a chance to take more than a day or two away from their jobs to spend time with their family. It can be extremely hard and discouraging and it's unfortunate that this is the case.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health and Wellness today is: We all know the impact of the pandemic on our mental health. What is being done to help our nurses alleviate the pressure that they are facing in our health care system?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We do know that the nurses, as well as other health care workers, do need a break. We have been looking at the collective agreements to understand how we can best support nurses so that we can offer vacation as equitably as possible.

Sometimes collective agreements don't allow us to do that, in terms of seniority. We have been working with the union to see if there are some creative ways so that folks across all levels of seniority have an opportunity to get some much-needed time off. We will continue to work with the union and ask members of that union to support one another in order to get people a break.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I do hear that, and I hope that they'll continue to talk more about those things and continue to support them more. By letting Omicron run rampant and having poor safeguards in place throughout our health care system, our burnt-out workforce is becoming more and more weary every passing day.

Again, my question to the minister is: Why must health care workers continue to carry this weight of COVID-19 alone?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I don't feel that health care workers are carrying this alone. I think that all Nova Scotians are carrying this together.

I appreciate that there is concern. We are at a different point in the pandemic. We know that the Omicron variants are more contagious and more easily spread. The time of zero COVID-19 is no longer a possibility for us, and we know that with a highly vaccinated population of people there is a lesser number of people that will have severe disease. What we need to do is pour our resources into those most at risk. We know that those are folks who are older.

We have excellent screening capacity in our PCR testing centres. People are still required to isolate for seven days when they are positive. We continue to have restrictions in high-risk settings, like Nova Scotia Health and the Department of Health and Wellness.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**DHW: VACANT EMERG. MED. POSITIONS - ADDRESS**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, we know that our emergency departments and hospitals have been under unbelievable pressure in the last two years. What makes that pressure even more difficult is staffing vacancies. According to a freedom of information request, there are 18.5 vacant emergency medicine positions in the Central Zone. I'll table that document.

We know that Nova Scotians from across the province come to hospitals like the QEII and the Dartmouth General for their most emergent critical needs.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What is the plan to address the vacant emergency medicine positions in the Central Zone?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, we continue to look at our capacity across the province. There are a number of things that happen. We have some GPs, as an example, who cover emergencies, who want to work in their offices part-time. We continue to work with physicians to ensure that they have the lifestyle they want and that they have opportunities to work not only in their offices but also support emergency rooms.

We also have expanded virtual care. We've looked at other ways that we can divert people who need primary care, not urgent and emergency care, away from the emergency rooms in order to offset some of the congestion.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, to be honest, what we're looking for here is a bit of a plan to see that number go down in the Central Zone. This government ran on a promise to fix health care and since that time they have doubled down, suggesting that health care will get better each and every day that passes by. But each and every day over the past five months, the number of emergency medicine positions that are vacant in the Central Zone has not changed.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: When will this government hire more emergency physicians in the Central Zone?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Through the partnership with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment, as well as the Nova Scotia Health Authority, we continue to hire emergency room physicians every day.

[2:30 p.m.]

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

**LSI: MIN. WAGE INC. INADEQ. - ADMIT**

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, minimum wage workers in Nova Scotia got a rise of 40 cents an hour, but in order to just keep up with the sustained 4.2 per cent cost of living increase, the government would have to raise the minimum wage by at least 55 cents an hour.

Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that when your wages aren't keeping up with inflation, you are actually earning less. My question to the Minister is: Will the minister admit that relative to climbing costs, the 40-cent increase in the minimum wage actually amounts to a cut for thousands of workers in Nova Scotia?

HON. JILL BALSER: I just want to take this time to also acknowledge the work of the Minimum Wage Review Committee. They really took a thoughtful approach to making sure that when we came with that recommendation, there was a balance between the needs of businesses as well as employees. We know that not everyone was happy with this particular outcome, but we do now have a pathway to \$15.

Just to acknowledge that it is a challenging conversation, but it was one that was done with thoughtful intention, considering the sides of business needs as well as employees, and getting to \$15 by 2024 is a really good thing.

KENDRA COOMBES: Of course, the government has to listen to the Minimum Wage Review Committee, but it also has to listen to thousands of Nova Scotians who are telling them that they are barely treading water, and \$15 an hour would have been great a few years ago but it's not anymore. The government also has to listen to the experts who have said that the living wage is actually \$21.30 an hour in Annapolis Valley, \$18.45 in Cape Breton, and \$22.05 in Halifax.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister believes that people should be able to pay their rent and put food on the table, when will she share a path to get to a living wage for all Nova Scotians?

JILL BALSER: This is such an important conversation, and yes, the Minimum Wage Review Committee did exceptional work in bringing forward a recommendation that now shows two increases for this year, as well as a pathway to \$15, but the member's absolutely right.

We're going to continue to listen to Nova Scotians in making sure that their voices are heard when we're considering further recommendations in the future, but getting to

\$15, that pathway to 2024 to get to \$15 is such an important move. Our government is committing to supporting Nova Scotians in other ways, as well, so it's also important for Nova Scotians to know that government's role is to set a fair minimum wage, and we have done that with the recommendation that the committee brought forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**OAMH - RECRUIT. PLAN: DIR. - PROVIDE**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The government's promise to deliver universal mental health care in Nova Scotia seems far-fetched without a specific plan to recruit more mental health professionals. According to a Freedom of Information Request, there are eight vacant psychiatric positions in the Eastern Zone, forcing residents in Cape Breton and surrounding communities to travel for care or forgo treatment entirely, and I'll table that.

The CEO of the Premier's new Office of Healthcare Professionals and Recruitment said that his team will collaborate with the Office of Addictions and Mental Health but is awaiting direction on workforce in recruitment needs. My question to the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health: Have you provided this direction?

HON. BRIAN COMER: I've actually worked with every psychiatrist in Cape Breton before I got into elected office. I've sat across the table from them twice in the last eight weeks, looked them in the eyes. It's going to get better, and there is a plan in place.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: As COVID-19 rages on, mental health needs are going to skyrocket. We are competing with other Canadian provinces for these speciality positions with no comprehensive plan on how to recruit or retain them.

My question to the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health: When will Nova Scotians see a plan for mental health professional recruitment and retention in this province?

BRIAN COMER: I think psychiatrists are an invaluable asset to our province, but so are social workers, so are psychologists, so are registered counselling therapists, peer support workers. Some of the most effective mental health interventions are actually quite cost-effective, but there will be a significant plan in place that will be released in the coming months, for sure.

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

**OAMH: ABBIE LANE DAY HOSP. CLOSURE - EXPLAIN**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: There's been a mental health day hospital at the Abbie J. Lane at the QEII since the early 1980s which offered daily treatment to people with acute mental illness. This program was closed in February of 2022. My question to the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health is: Why was the day program at the Abbie J. Lane facility closed?

BRIAN COMER: I actually had an opportunity to tour the day hospital last week and meet with all the clinicians and staff. It's going very, very well. The program that the member opposite mentioned has actually been relocated and is fully operational at the Marshall Building.

PATRICIA ARAB: In March, this government announced the opening of a new mental health day clinic at the QEII that will "offer day treatments for those in the Halifax area requiring intensive mental health supports" - and I can table that. It's curious that one mental health treatment facility closed in February and the next month, another one opened in the same location. My question to the Minister of Addictions and Mental Health is: Did the minister close the Abbie Lane day treatment program to make room for this new day hospital?

BRIAN COMER: Just to be clear, this day hospital is an addition, not a reduction. The previous service is still fully operational.

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

**OAMH - ABBIE LANE DAY HOSP.: PROVEN RESULTS - RECOG.**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, the day program at the Abbie Lane provided vital treatment that had proven results. My question for the Minister Responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health: Why close a program that demonstrated significant clinical and cost effectiveness at reducing ER visits, wait times, in-patient stays, and addiction services when those are the greatest priority?

HON. BRIAN COMER: Maybe I'm confused with the question. This is the addition of the first day hospital in the province. The other service is still fully operational. In addition to the 10-patient capacity of the new service, it actually should take strain off the system, not add it on.

PATRICIA ARAB: It's actually not not accurate, but that's okay. Having a day hospital at Abbie Lane isn't new. What is new is dismantling highly effective mental health services when Nova Scotians are so desperately in need of them. My question for the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health: What measures are

in place to ensure that treatment offered at the new day hospital is not only efficient but also effective in improving health outcomes in patients?

BRIAN COMER: There's going to be an extensive research review done within three months to determine the effectiveness of the clinical interventions and capacity in Central Zone and elsewhere across the province. I also think it's noteworthy that this is very much on a continuum of care and allows people to go home with their families at night, which actually improves clinical outcomes quite a bit.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Dartmouth North.

### **ECC - LITTER PENALTIES: NOT ENFORCED - EXPLAIN**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. This government campaigned on creating the highest penalties for littering in Canada, up to \$10,000 for repeat offenders. I can table that in case they haven't seen this document. At the same time, we know that the government has just written off the largest environmental fines in the province's history. Aspotogan Developments Limited and Aspotogan Ridge Incorporated filled in a wetland to build a golf course and were convicted of breaking environmental laws, but then the Province failed to collect the more than half a million dollars in fines. I can table that.

Will the minister explain why this government wants to be tough on regular Nova Scotians but let the big developers off easy?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Certainly, with respect to littering, we know it's a major problem in Nova Scotia. That's why Divert N.S. has commissioned a study on that. I have a copy of that study, and I look forward to going through it.

With respect to the fines that the member outlined, those fines were levied but the entities went bankrupt and the amount was deemed uncollectible.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, this government plans to keep its word on litterbug laws, but blue ribbon panels have dropped off the radar. These independent panels of experts were promised for assessment of polarizing industrial developments that the minister deems complex. I can table that - again, if you haven't seen that document.

Last week when directly asked in Estimates, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change failed to explain how these panels will be used and instead spoke about modernizing the environmental assessment process, which is a separate line item in his mandate.

Will the minister tell the House whether independent expert panels are another abandoned election idea, and if not, can he provide us with a single real-world example of where they could be used?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have 28 goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. One of the goals is to review and analyze our environmental assessments by 2024, including looking at the environmental assessments using the lens of equity, Netukulimk, and climate change, and certainly looking at the role of blue ribbon panels as well. All those things are still on the table.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

### **DHW: MAMMOGRAMS STOPPED - EXPLAIN**

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, during Estimates, the Minister of Health and Wellness was very supportive of my question for preventive health. We know that identifying cancer in its earliest stages makes all the difference. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Canadian women and is the second leading cause of death for women. I'll table that.

Screening mammograms or breast X-rays remain the international standard method of screening for early detection of breast cancer. I was shocked to learn that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has paused all mammogram screening and I'd like to know why. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Does the minister know how many breast cancer screenings have been cancelled or postponed?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I don't have that information in front of me, so I would have to verify that. I have not heard that it was stopped, and I can certainly find out what the wait times are.

LORELEI NICOLL: We know that once a cancer diagnosis is confirmed, treatment is swift and it is prioritized amidst the Omicron variant and the delays caused by it. On average, 76 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer every day, except in Nova Scotia because the vital screening tool is not available. My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What is the plan to address the backlog in screening and ensure rapid care?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Until I find out what the situation is directly, I can't say how we would address that. I would like to know the depth of the problem first, so I'll have to look into that and get back to the member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.



**DHW: MAID APPLIC. STATUS - UPDATE**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Last Fall, Mr. Speaker, we also learned this government put on hold its referrals to the Medical Assistance in Dying program. There was a growing wait-list of referrals and a staffing shortage of clinicians to perform the required assessments and procedures. Now waiting any length of time to start the MAID process creates further hardship and stress on families, and a delay can actually result in hundreds of Nova Scotians being denied access to dignified deaths.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: That hold was before Omicron; what is the current situation of MAID applications? Do we have sufficient clinicians to process new cases?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I don't have the statistics in front of me but certainly that program was paused, I believe, for about three weeks in the Fall. It is up and running and my understanding is they have actually added additional resources for clinicians to continue that service in the province.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to hear that from the Minister of Health and Wellness. Nova Scotia is now leading the country with estimated number of COVID-19 cases per person, according to *The New York Times*, so instead of telling Nova Scotians to stay home, our government is telling them to get out there.

We know that as of last Friday, 151 Nova Scotians have died of COVID-19 in this Omicron wave. Government has stopped reporting the ages of the people who actually died with COVID-19. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Since the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care could not answer that question, how many seniors have died of COVID-19 since December 8<sup>th</sup>?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I also read the article today and I asked about the per capita. One of the issues I would like to highlight is that our testing strategy in this province is very different than in other provinces. We allow any number of people to do confirmatory testing. We don't look only at at-risk and across ages. Anybody is able to go get a PCR test, which is a very different approach than in some of the other jurisdictions. That does skew some of the numbers in terms of how we apply apples to apples and oranges to oranges.

In terms of the other question, I will have to go back. I'm wondering what seniors is it? Is it all Nova Scotians or is there a particular group that you wanted?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

[2:45 p.m.]

### **DHW - DOCTOR RECRUITMENT PLAN - EXPLAIN**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, the need for family doctors in the Eastern Zone continues to be a concern. There are over 10,000 Nova Scotians with their names on the Need a Family Practice wait-list, and I'll table that.

Since this government took over, we have seen no change in the vacancies of family doctors in the Eastern Zone. There are still 17 vacancies. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What is the plan to recruit for the vacant positions in Eastern Zone?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to work with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment and the Nova Scotia Health Authority and work very closely with organizations on the ground. Most recently there were just four physicians who were hired in Guysborough, which is part of the Eastern Zone, which we are thrilled to be able to offer.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm looking for a plan with timelines. Nova Scotians were promised a plan when this government took office. Specifically, we've lost a number of doctors in the greater Sydney area. What I'm looking for is a plan to help address those families who are waiting for a doctor in the CBRM. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: How long will the people of the CBRM have to wait for a family doctor under this government?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, currently the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment has a working plan, but they are looking at retirements. They're also looking at panel sizes in order to finalize a number that we are looking toward. Dr. Kevin Orrell, in particular, continues to work with Sydney, CBRM, and the folks at Nova Scotia Health to assess the needs and to fill any vacant positions that we're able to.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **LSI - UKR. IMMIGS.: MSI COVERAGE - COMMIT**

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration. The federal government has created a special immigration stream for Ukrainian newcomers. This means that more people can come more quickly, which is a good thing, but it also means that people will fall through the cracks without any health coverage while they wait for status. Ontario, British Columbia, and Newfoundland and Labrador have all committed to covering the health care needs of Ukrainian newcomers.

Will the government commit to ensuring that every person fleeing the war in Ukraine, no matter their status, will have provincial health coverage in Nova Scotia?

HON. JILL BALSER: Thank you to the member opposite for this really important question. I just want to thank the Ukrainian community here in Nova Scotia who have been working so closely with the department to make sure that when Ukrainians do arrive here, they're safe, they're welcomed, and they're supported with all the resources that they need.

We're working very closely with IRCC because, as everyone here in the House knows, the situation is very fluid, and we have to be able to adapt. As IRCC is making new announcements, the department is ready to act and to support those Ukrainians arriving with MSI when they're applying through the IRCC program.

SUZY HANSEN: People are fleeing unimaginable trauma and, in many cases, have lost everything. The hundreds of people arriving will need access to affordable housing, trauma-informed counselling, and other supports. Organizations like Immigrant Services of Nova Scotia will need more funding to work with new arrivals. Children and teachers will need targeted supports in schools.

Will the minister explain specifically what resources have been put in place to support Ukrainian newcomers when they arrive? I'm glad to hear that health care will be included in that, because we know how important that is.

JILL BALSER: I just want to acknowledge, of course, the great work that the settlement partners do across the province in welcoming all newcomers. Nova Scotia has an important history in being so welcoming.

We know that what's happening in Ukraine is tragic. We have to be responsive. I just want to also acknowledge how many Nova Scotians have opened their arms to say we can help, welcome, and we want to be able to volunteer. We've had businesses also reach out to say they can provide employment opportunities.

Also, in the budget, we are putting money into service providers. That's one thing that I'm really proud of - to make sure that they can continue to do the great work that they've been doing for so long.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

### **DHW - PHYS. NAVIGATORS: FUNDING - COMMIT**

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, to date, the province has refused to provide any funding for community physician navigators located in communities. These positions are critical for the success of doctor recruitment and retention, and are valued by health officials on the ground.

Will the minister reconsider funding or at least partially funding these important positions? Right now, there are about seven at the community level that are key to successfully addressing the challenges of finding and retaining doctors in Nova Scotia.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I will have to confirm with my honourable partner, but my understanding is that through the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, there is funding allocated for community navigators.

KEITH IRVING: There is funding from CCTH, not for staff, but for programming. In fact, Tina Hennigar worked as a community physician navigator in Lunenburg. She was doing remarkable work, but because she lost local funding and got no funding from the Province, she is now working with the Province in the Department of Health and Wellness. Will the minister agree to meet with Ms. Tina Hennigar and learn the value of these positions?

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

We'll take a 10-minute recess and resume again at 3:00 p.m.

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

[3:14 p.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 unto her Majesty.

THE CHAIR: The motion is carried.

[3:16 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Lisa Lachance in the Chair.]

[7:48 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Keith Bain, resumed the Chair.]

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

### **PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 143.

#### **Bill No. 143 - Boat Harbour Act (amended).**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 143, the Boat Harbour Act, be now read a second time.

The Boat Harbour Act is an important piece of legislation that protects the environment and maintains a solemn commitment to Pictou Landing First Nation. The legislation allows the project to clean up Boat Harbour and move forward while protecting Nova Scotian taxpayers.

The amendments we are debating today will clarify and strengthen the protections that prevent any legal claims for damages against the Province consistent with the original intent of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, almost eight years ago, a pipeline carrying waste from the Northern Pulp Mill to the Boat Harbour effluent treatment facility broke, dumping waste water and chemicals into Pictou Landing First Nation. That rupture was one of many environmental problems and complaints associated with the Northern Pulp mill dating back for decades.

Discussions began in 2008 around these serious environmental issues and the need for the mill to find another location to release the effluent. These discussions were not successful. In 2015, to address the concerns, the government of the day passed the Boat Harbour Act giving Northern Pulp an additional 5 years from the enactment of the legislation to come up with a plan to effectively treat and dispose of effluent in an

environmentally safe way before the treatment facility closed. Northern Pulp was to have a new outfall location and all of its environmental approvals were to be in place by January 31, 2020.

As we know, Northern Pulp did not file its original environmental assessment registration until January 2019, which it eventually withdrew in 2021. This came after ending its legal challenges of the Minister of Environment's December 2019 decision to require a full environmental report. The company filed its current Class 2 Environmental Assessment Registration with the Department of Environment and Climate Change in December 2021. That process remains ongoing.

Final terms of reference were released March 14, 2022. As a result of the mill owner's failure to develop an alternate treatment facility by the statutory deadline, the mill closed January 30, 2020, as required by the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the closing of the Boat Harbour treatment facility was a commitment that ended a historic wrong - an example of environmental racism that had gone on for far too long. The Act provided Northern Pulp with additional time to find a new location for the outfall and treatment of the effluent. It also protected the Province from any action brought against it in relation to the early closure of the effluent treatment plant and ensured that no action could be brought against the province for enacting the legislation.

These amendments will further clarify the original intent of the Act. It is to ensure that the language is clear and free of any ambiguity, as required by the courts, so that no action can be sustained against the Province for enacting the legislation. Specifically, Section 4(1) of the Act will be amended to state "no action for damages or other compensation" can be taken by Northern Pulp against the Province.

At the same time, we are also going to repeal Section 4(2). Now that the January 2020 deadline of the Act has passed, protecting the Province from the claim of anticipatory breach of the lease agreement from 2015 to 2020 is now no longer needed. It is being removed to clean up the Act and ensure that the statutory intent to bar all claims for the closure of the mill is clear and unambiguous, as required by the courts.

Mr. Speaker, the Province has an obligation to protect the interests of all Nova Scotians, from both an environmental perspective as well as from financial harm. This legislation today does both. Government remains focused on the future. We continue to move forward with plans to return Boat Harbour to its original state as a tidal estuary - a commitment that the Province made to the people and Pictou Landing First Nation. Thank you and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: It is a pleasure to stand in my place and speak to this bill. On this side of the House, we certainly agree that the environmental protection in Boat Harbour and the cleanup is absolutely critical and important. We certainly know that taxpayers do need to be protected.

I do just want to raise a couple of concerns about the timing of this piece of legislation, considering that there are court proceedings that are ongoing right now. The precedent of having a government change the laws of the province in the midst of a court proceeding, I believe, can be a very dangerous precedent - can perhaps impact the perception of investors, businesses, and industry on our province.

One thing I've heard consistently from business owners, those in various sectors, is that the number one thing they are looking for when it comes to investment and growing business is consistency in approach and fairness to application of laws. I do just want to register this as a concern because the timing of this, in the midst of a court proceeding that is ongoing, can send the wrong message to potential investors and entrepreneurs and those seeking to do business in Nova Scotia: that the rules can change very quickly, under their feet. I do want to take a moment to register that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am pleased to rise and say a very few words about this legislation - very few because we had no bill briefing on this legislation. As far as we know, it may go to the Law Amendments Committee as soon as tomorrow, potentially without any notice to people who may want to have their say on it.

I share the concerns that my colleague brought up around the timing. We are currently engaged in litigation, and so it's very unclear to me what the impact of this bill will in fact be, although we are supportive. All parties in this House supported the Boat Harbour Act and continue to support it and are curious - the explanation given by the minister. I appreciate the detail that he went into in presenting the bill to the House today. However, we were not given the opportunity to speak with department staff, to ask some of the questions that we might have, nor, frankly, were the media.

We continue to have questions. I certainly hope that presenters will have the opportunity to come to the Law Amendments Committee, if they so choose, to speak to this bill. We'll see what comes forward from there.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you to both of the members for their comments. Mr. Speaker, I rise and ask to close debate on Bill No. 143.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 143.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 145.

**Bill No. 145 - Electricity Act (amended).**

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 145 be now read a second time.

It is my pleasure to speak to our amendments to the Electricity Act. From the day we came together for the first time in this House, in this Chamber, in March, we have been consistent in the priorities of this government: to protect ratepayers in Nova Scotia, to transition our province to green energy, and to support Nova Scotians who invest in joining us in the fight against climate change. We promised to ensure protection for solar homeowners and small businesses in the solar industry. We are making good on that promise with these amendments. They will ensure Nova Scotians can generate their own renewable power, such as with solar panels, and gain more control of their energy usage.

We are guaranteeing ratepayers the full right to net-meter without fear of special charges, fees, or rates. Nova Scotia Power will be prohibited from adding such charges. Further, we are guaranteeing ratepayers the right to bring the energy portion of their electricity bill to \$0 annually if they generate all the power they need from renewable sources like solar panels. They will not be penalized for this effort with extra fees. They will only be left with the nominal \$10.83 a month charge.

This is just common sense, and we're putting it to legislation to ensure Nova Scotians who are trying to do the right thing are protected. We're also ensuring that these rights will be transferable. If you buy a home that already has solar panels or another renewable source of electricity, you will be protected.

Homeowners should have access to their own data about their energy use so they can make informed decisions, whether that's turning the thermostat down a notch or investing in energy efficiency tools and technologies. That's why we're requiring Nova Scotia Power to fully implement the Green Button standard. This standard allows



ratepayers to securely download the electricity usage data for their household or businesses. Ratepayers can also connect their data online apps that provide information and suggestions to help them improve their energy efficiency and cut their power bills.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments also simplify the province's Green Choice Program and offer more opportunities for large-scale consumers to use renewable energy. They simplify the community solar program and limit Nova Scotia's Power role in that. The amendments will also ensure more advanced residential installations and all commercial installs will continue to be administered by Nova Scotia Power, but we are substantially reducing the utility's direction in this program administration. These represent less than 5 per cent of all applications.

[8:00 p.m.]

We're cutting the red tape with the existing process as well. The amendments also allow the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables to purchase the output of renewable energy projects, on behalf of all ratepayers, if the original energy customer no longer requires the output.

What does that mean? It means the homeowners and businesses now have more opportunity to choose renewable energy solutions. It means they are protected from unexpected and unfair charges. It means that they will be empowered to help strengthen our renewable energy sector so it can continue providing green jobs while also helping us meet our climate change goals.

Mr. Speaker, the ratepayers and Nova Scotians are important to us. They deserve reliable, affordable, and sustainable power, and we are committed to protect them. The amendments are a step in the right direction. I look forward to speaking more about this as our amendments go through to Law Amendments Committee and I look forward to hearing from the members opposite.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand here today for a few brief comments on Bill No. 145 and proposed amendments. This is good legislation, as it was when we introduced net-metering amendments last year at this time. It will benefit Nova Scotians who are invested in solar and hopefully encourage more people to adopt solar in their homes.

The bill ensures that solar customers have the right to self-generate and additional fees will not be imposed by Nova Scotia Power as they had attempted to do so in the new year. By allowing the right to self-generate, this bill makes net-metering a right for Nova Scotians invested in solar.

I am also pleased to see the consideration of removing the 100-kilowatt cap on commercial properties. I am unsure if this includes multi-unit residences but would encourage the department to do so in their regulatory process.

After the proposed net-metering charges in the new year, I did speak with solar businesses and customers, and discovered that consumer confidence in solar was being tested. Solar customers were hesitant to follow through on their purchase and solar companies were finding it difficult to maintain and hire staff as they weren't sure if the market would be there to support their business. Even months later, installers have reported that industry demand is not fully recovered.

I hope that the amendments introduced will lead to more consumer confidence throughout the province, and throughout the solar industry. I hope that Nova Scotians will invest and have continued rights to self-generate without interference from Nova Scotia Power.

Although wonderful for those invested in solar, I do have concerns that this may not be enough. This bill doesn't yet address the majority of Nova Scotians who are not yet solar customers and are facing a major power hike of 10 per cent over three years. This government has said they will do everything in their power to protect ratepayers and I would like to see more work to help all Nova Scotians who pay power rates to Nova Scotia Power.

With the cost of living rising daily or weekly, a 10 per cent increase to power rates is just not feasible to ask of Nova Scotians right now. People are looking to their government to advocate on behalf of them in this cost of living crisis. I do look forward to learning more about this government's plans to address the 10 per cent power rate increase and how they'll protect more Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Again, I'll echo many of the same points. I think the issue of consumer confidence can't be overstated. When the general rate application was filed by Nova Scotia Power - which then presumably led to these changes in the Act - it's not an exaggeration to say that the industry feared total destruction overnight.

We also spoke with solar consumers and installers who expressed their sentiments. Even prior to that, we were speaking with installers in the Fall who were speaking about lengthy delays with Nova Scotia Power and challenges facing the industry already. There had been a feeling leading up to that general rate application, in fact, that there was sort of a "go slow" on net metering approvals.

Prior to that general rate application, there were sometimes delays of six, eight, ten weeks in getting an approval for installation - whole seasons of work delayed. In fact, I

asked the minister about this in the Fall sitting and the minister's response was that conversations with Nova Scotia Power were ongoing.

We also canvassed the content and existence of those conversations in the House this session. We obtained a FOIPOP that showed that that was the case, and that Nova Scotia Power was in fact regularly updating the minister and the government about "improving the process for solar interconnection." Those were air quotes for Hansard.

We were surprised to hear that Natural Resources and Renewables then said when that general rate application was filed that they had no idea that a system access fee for solar net metering was coming. That strains our power of imagination. It's possible, but if it's true, it certainly casts Nova Scotia Power in a somewhat nefarious light. If it's not true, that's a problem.

If there had been conversations about the desire to impose this system access charge and the net metering, it was also clear that Nova Scotia Power was not swayed by any arguments that the government may have put forward contrary to that initiative. The general rate application was filed, the impact on the industry was immediate, and could have, as I said, been devastating.

Those charges would have imposed a fee of \$960 on an average 10-kilowatt system, and there was an immediate chilling effect. That effect was not entirely resolved, I would say, by the introduction of this bill, because many who are about to install either paused or cancelled, and many are waiting, in fact, until that general rate application comes forward.

Once this bill passes the House - which I assume that it will - that will certainly go a very long way to restoring consumer confidence, but the timing is problematic. If there was a desire to take action on this, I would suggest that it should have been taken earlier. I think it's worth noting how many people actually spoke up. It was wonderful to see the mobilization of people who are committed to a transition to renewal energy, and we know that Nova Scotians are.

I was really struck recently in committee when one of the staff members of the Department of Environment and Climate Change said, we have the highest heat pump uptake, I think, in the country and our costs are low - and one of the reasons is that nobody has to advertise because Nova Scotians want to do it. They want to do the right thing, they want to take advantage of the rebates. I think we saw that with the uproar over the general rate application and what this net metering would have done. Having said all that, the government's action with this legislation is welcome, and we certainly will support that aspect of the bill.

We also do, though, need to note, as my colleague did, the small percentage of Nova Scotians who currently use solar, and the lack of impact that this bill has on power rates, or in fact people's power bills for 95 per cent of Nova Scotians. This suite of

legislation - this one and the next one that we'll be discussing - were introduced as a response, if you will, to the general rate application that was put forward by Nova Scotia Power, but there is a lot that is not responded to.

With those few words I will take my seat for a moment until we come back to the next bill.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Thanks for the comments across the floor. I rise to close debate on Bill No. 145.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 145.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The Minister of Community Services on a point of order.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I do rise on a point of order. Earlier this evening during Estimates for the Department of Community Services, the member for Halifax Atlantic could be clearly heard saying: "She hates me so much. I don't give a shit." He was clearly referring to me. I will table the clip of that exchange for your convenience, Mr. Speaker.

There are two issues I have with the member for Halifax Atlantic's assertions. The first is that it's untrue. While members often disagree in this Legislature, I can assure you that my feelings never rise to the level of hate. For him to say otherwise is a mischaracterization of the truth and an unfair slight on my character.

The second issue I would like to address is the profanity the member used in his bizarre interjection. Only yesterday that same member used an acronym that stands for the same word. Many of you will recall "SOL." While I have no doubt what he said is true, that he does not care what I think of him, his habit of using that profane word is clearly unparliamentary and beneath the standards we should hold ourselves to in this Chamber, as elected officials.

Mr. Speaker, I kindly ask that you consider instructing the member for Halifax Atlantic to retract his offensive comment. I do not hate the member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, during the heated debate my emotions got the best of me. I apologize, and I retract the statement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member standing up and acknowledging the mistake. Often in this Chamber our emotions do get the best of us. But, clearly, again, the number one concern here is that I do not hate the member.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. The point of order has been resolved but it also provides me with an opportunity, as we go forward, for people to try to keep their tongues and their actions in check. There are 55 of us sitting around this Chamber and we should, at least while we're in here, have respect for each other. I would ask you to honour that.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would please call Bill No. 147.

**Bill No. 147 - Public Utilities Act (amended).**

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 147 be now read a second time.

I'm pleased to rise to speak about our amendments to the Public Utilities Act. Nova Scotia Power has an obligation to provide power to Nova Scotians. When they don't do that, we should be looking at a way to hold them accountable. That's why we're making amendments to the Public Utilities Act. These amendments will focus on strengthening performance standards for Nova Scotia Power, increasing both the number and the scope of standards they must meet.

The additional performance standards will keep Nova Scotia Power accountable: greater reliability, better outage response times, improved power quality, environmental performances, and transparency, to name a few. These are the things ratepayers care about and they are the things that we care about too. The performance standards will be included in upcoming regulations. We need these legislative amendments to make those regulations possible.

We are making these changes to ensure ratepayers have reliable, affordable power, to ensure Nova Scotia Power is accountable to its customers, and to ensure we reach our

green energy goals. Furthermore, we're giving ratepayers a voice at the table. We're creating a partnership table with Nova Scotians so Nova Scotians will help determine the performance standards and the related penalties if they are not met. Any recommendations made by this table will be public.

This is an innovative and made-in-Nova-Scotia solution not seen in many other jurisdictions. My department will coordinate the appointment of members who may be local renewable energy developers, energy poverty advocates, people working on programs related to electricity systems, et cetera. My department will also identify key performance metrics and reporting mechanisms, and provide initial support and set-up for this group.

[8:15 p.m.]

Another amendment to the Public Utilities Act also relates to affordability. We're giving non-profit farmers' markets the domestic power rate to lower their electricity bills. Currently, farmers' markets are classified as commercial businesses and therefore charged the expensive demand charges. That is how most commercial power rates get calculated. As a result, many Nova Scotia farmers' markets are facing expensive power bills and some are running the risk of going bankrupt.

Farmers' markets are valuable to all of our communities in Nova Scotia. They provide healthy homegrown produce, contribute to our local economies, and create jobs. They foster a sense of community and give Nova Scotians the opportunity to buy local from farmers and other small businesses. Giving them the domestic power rate is one relatively simple step we can take to support and protect them.

Mr. Speaker, the public dialogue in this province is clear. Affordability is an issue for far too many Nova Scotians. That's why we're looking at how we move forward with our relationship with Nova Scotia Power as a government and as a province. We will lean on the performance standards we'll be setting through these amendments, and we'll be active interveners in Nova Scotia Power's general rate applications, as other groups before the NSUARB. Our priority is to protect ratepayers, and we are standing up for them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to learn that the Minister of DNRR has taken steps with this amendment to make Nova Scotia Power more accountable, ensure their performance standards are met, and offer Nova Scotians a more reliable service.

This Winter, week after week throughout the province, Nova Scotians felt let down by their power utility. They feel powerless because they were powerless for days on end. As the MLA for Annapolis, I have spoken to dozens of constituents who were freezing in their beds, without lights to move around their home, without flushing toilets, and without food because the last they could afford had spoiled in the fridge or freezer.

This story is not new to any of us, and it has become all too familiar. Consider that at the same time, Nova Scotia Power's guaranteeing profit to shareholders at 9.5 per cent. This is absolutely unacceptable. While in the middle of a 10 per cent rate increase request, it's more important now than ever to ensure that ratepayers are receiving the best customer service and reliability as possible. This amendment will directly tie Nova Scotia Power's profits to their performance, a topic on many people's minds right now as they're trying to keep pace with unaffordable power bills while sitting in the dark far too often.

The bill also allows, as the minister mentioned, farmers' markets to pay the domestic electricity rate to help lower their power bills, leading to thousands of dollars in savings and hopefully more stability as they and the farmers continue to grow and supply our local communities with fresh locally grown food.

These amendments suggest that an expert advisory round table will be developed in order to keep Nova Scotia Power accountable to its ratepayers - to Nova Scotians. I ask that the minister ensure that the process used to select these experts be fully transparent. We encourage representation from all backgrounds guiding the stakeholder round table. Let's ensure that the unique and diverse perspectives of all Nova Scotians are at the table.

A stakeholder round table to measure performance is something we can all support. Protecting Nova Scotians' ability to generate their own power is something we can all support. These are strong initiatives, but let's keep going. Let's push further. Let's protect Nova Scotians from rate hikes that they aren't able to afford.

I'm looking forward to hearing from those who attend the Law Amendments Committee. Thank you to the minister and staff for bringing these important amendments forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, as I read this bill, I mostly have questions, and hopefully they'll be answered either in the course of debate or at Law Amendments Committee.

I guess the first thing I would point out is that this government frequently took the former Liberal government to task for introducing bills that would later be filled in with regulations, and I think these amendments are somewhat of this nature. We welcome the bill, if it does in fact move us toward performance-based regulation. I have been advocating for and tabling legislation around performance-based regulatory systems frequently over the last few months, following the lead of the Premier when he was in Opposition.

I think one thing that has become clear with this rate application and the reacting legislation is that we can't continue with the same regulatory system we have. The regulatory system that we have was designed to incentivize building large fossil-fuel and,

in our case, coal infrastructure. I know that for the Cape Bretoners in the Chamber, coal is king. Unfortunately, the king's time is slowly coming to an end and needs to be replaced with other industries that provide good jobs. That transition needs to be incentivized.

The way that we incentivize that as a place with a public regulator is to change our regulatory system. Einstein said something like, we can't solve problems with the same thinking that led to them. I'm paraphrasing.

I think by fiddling at the edges of the way in which the NSUARB functions, we're trying to use the same thinking that we used to get us into the environmental crisis and, frankly, affordability crisis that we're in right now, to get out of it. I don't think it will work.

We know that we must decarbonize as quickly as possible. We must reduce our energy consumption. We must encourage more distributed and community-owned reliable energy and reduce the high cost that people now pay for their power.

We also need to ensure - and I think the member for Annapolis quite clearly spoke about it - that people's power supply is reliable. We don't have a reliable power supply in huge swaths of this province. We need to ensure that people aren't losing their livelihoods in the transition to clean, affordable energy.

When I think about all those things and I look at these bills, I am concerned around the proposed structure because, for one thing, when the Liberals introduced the performance standards that exist for the NSUARB, the PCs in Opposition predicted that the penalties, which have not changed in this Act, would not produce any changes in reliability. Bravo to the government. You were right. It didn't.

We're changing this bill but we're not changing the penalties. If the penalties already aren't working, adding to the list of things that the regulator can be penalized for will logically also probably not work because the penalties haven't changed. Even if that full penalty was given, which I don't think it has been, it's a rounding error in the profit of this company. They could easily pay it as the cost of doing business.

To be more specific, in debates on the Electricity Plan Implementation Act - that was in 2015 - then-leader Jamie Baillie called the penalty "measly and laughable." Our current Premier, and I quote, said, "There will be many cases - I can see many scenarios where it is cheaper to pay the \$1 million - per year, mind you - fine. That could come and go in an instant, and when you're talking about a company of this magnitude, I don't believe that will be a big factor in the decisions they make. The \$1 million fine that the minister is hanging his hat on is not going to be a big factor at that boardroom table." I'll table that.



Many will be looking to see if that cap of \$1 million in penalties per year is removed or made bigger. The government could have done that with this bill, but they have not. They have chosen not to.

That said, I don't actually believe that penalties by themselves, without controlling profit through a system of incentives - incentivizing decarbonization, incentivizing clean energy, incentivizing a just transition, incentivizing actually addressing the issues of people living in energy poverty - I think without that, we're not going to see much change.

We also haven't addressed in this Chamber the rate of return for Nova Scotia Power. We could do that by tying additional profit to meeting targets that we set. Targets that in many cases we have set through EGCCRA, but that we could legislate as targets in a performance-based system.

This would drive, I believe, the changes that Nova Scotians want to see in their power utility. Penalties for not meeting basic standards should be part of the structure, but there's nothing here that would incentivize Nova Scotia Power to pull out all the stops. Performance incentive mechanisms can be designed to reward the utility for meeting targets and exceeding them. There are lots of examples: Hawaii is one.

Ultimately, Nova Scotians know that shareholders should not rake in profits unless our needs and goals are met. I think Nova Scotians have been crystal clear on this issue. Right now there is a profound disconnect between what is good for shareholders of Nova Scotia Power and Emera and what is good for Nova Scotians. Those things are not the same. The things that are good for Nova Scotia Power shareholders with a guaranteed rate of return are not the things that are good for Nova Scotians.

Guess who Nova Scotia Power is responsible to - not us - their shareholders. That's the way it works. That's the way a corporation works. We have to question whether that's the way we want our power utility, that has a monopoly over power in this province, to work. It's not the way I want it to work. We'll see if it's the way that the government thinks it should work.

For the CEO of Emera to be awarded millions in compensation for serving shareholders while over one-third of Nova Scotian households meet the threshold for energy poverty - and I'll table that - is wrong.

This bill, although it has been presented as the solution for protecting ratepayers as Nova Scotia Power proposes to raise their rates by 10 per cent, in fact doesn't address ratepayers particularly at all. Nothing in the energy legislation presented so far by government, as I mentioned in the last bill, makes a dent in that guaranteed rate of return or, indeed, potentially in the rates that Nova Scotians will pay.

We know the government has said they will intervene at the NSUARB. I think all parties intend to do that, so we'll see what that intervention looks like. But by virtue of being a majority government, the government actually has the opportunity to intervene prior to that by changing the regulatory structure. That does not seem to be happening.

The last point I want to make, and this has been canvassed, is that the minister has been saying that these amendments will give Nova Scotians a real voice, and I'll table that. The minister also mentioned that in his opening comments. I would submit that an advisory board is a limited tool to accomplish that goal.

The stakeholder groups mentioned by the minister so far all regularly intervene in NSUARB hearings concerning Nova Scotia Power. We hear from these experts already; we know their opinions. It's not clear that those opinions are going to be given more weight in the form of an advisory panel, although perhaps they will. These groups are critical to creating the foundation of a performance-based system. But will this process genuinely engage and be informed by the public, by communities that have so much to gain by helping to set and weigh the standards for our power utility?

Everyone needs to be at the table to transform our power system. I was encouraged by the minister's words around how he envisioned that panel. I hope that's true, but I would like to see more, and I would like to see those voices being given more strength.

Finally, I will end on a positive note by saying we welcome the amendment recognizing farmers' markets among the category of community grassroots organizations that pay no more than domestic power rates. My colleague, the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, asked about this in the House, and received a thoughtful response and we're very pleased to see it in legislation.

With those comments I will certainly look forward to Law Amendments Committee. Hopefully people will have a few hours' notice when that committee is called, and I will look forward to hearing what they have to say.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

**HON. GREG MORROW:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of Bill No. 147, amending the Public Utilities Act. I'm very pleased to see that this bill supports domestic power rates for farmers' markets.

Nova Scotia has many wonderful farmers' markets, both large and small, that are important parts of their community's social fabric and economic health. Farmers' markets help provide our communities with nutritious, healthy food products that are locally grown or produced, so they support a key mandate that we are committed to, the importance of buying local.

Our farmers' markets give new entrants to the agriculture industry, and independent producers an important means of supplying local food to consumers. Buying locally grown or Nova Scotian-produced foods is good for our health, our economy, and our environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from importing goods. Farmers' markets are places of entrepreneurship for people working in agriculture, places of social engagement, community bonding, and opportunities to meet the dedicated producers who are committed to growing local food and creating local products.

[8:30 p.m.]

Our farmers' markets deserve our support so they can continue to operate and provide our growers and producers a reliable venue to sell their goods. That's why these amendments are important. These changes will help our farmers' markets remain viable so sellers can continue to do business and consumers can continue to enjoy the buying experience they've come to know and expect at the community farmers' markets.

I want to thank the Minister for Natural Resources and Renewables for bringing these amendments forward. Our department supports this effort to reduce electricity costs for farmers' markets just as we support reduced power costs for farmers and producers through energy efficiency enhancements. The Department of Agriculture's collaboration with Efficiency Nova Scotia, known as the agriculture energy partnership, has already significantly helped to reduce energy costs for Nova Scotia producers. The agriculture on-site energy manager has made more than 183 on-site energy assessments, resulting in \$1 million in electricity being saved in agriculture this year.

Energy cost reductions are helpful to our agricultural businesses. With the highest concentration of farmers' markets per capita, it's important that we ensure that these markets can continue to operate sustainably. I urge members of this House to show their support for Bill No. 147.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I thank all the members for their comments on this bill. I think it's very clear that Nova Scotians do want a change in how they receive their power in Nova Scotia. I really don't want to presuppose what the round table's going to entail at the end of this. I certainly appreciate the support on this. I get it. There are different views on how we can get to the same end goal, but I think we share some common goals in the debate here tonight.

The other comment I do want to say is that we've been engaged with different stakeholders that have applied to be interveners at the NSUARB. They were adamant that for the first time in a long time the hearing is going to take place. They certainly want the

NSUARB level to hear their concerns of what has been taking place over the last number of years. We've been very adamant that there are different levers that need to be pulled at different times. At the end of the day, I think it's the concern of everybody in this House, that ratepayers are top of all of our minds.

With that, I'll move closing of debate on Bill No. 147.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 147.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Bill No. 148.

**Bill No. 148 - Mi'kmaw Language Act.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of L'nu Affairs.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I move that Bill No. 148 - An Act to Recognize, Promote, and Support the Revitalization and Reclamation of the Mi'kmaw Language now be read a second time.

I am so pleased to be standing here today before members of this House to talk about our new legislation that will acknowledge Mi'kmaw as Nova Scotia's first language. I would also like to thank the members for their warm reception of this bill that was received when I introduced it last week.

I also would like to take an opportunity to extend my gratitude and thanks to the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member from Timberlea-Prospect, for having these early conversations and doing some of the foundational work, so that when I came in and was privileged to take on this role, there was a lot of work that was already done, and for joining Chief Leroy last week, and Blair. They really, truly appreciated that, so thank you so much.

The show of support by all parties meant a great deal to our Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey representatives, who were on hand virtually to watch the bill that was tabled. It was a historic and emotional day for many Mi'kmaw people. Mi'kmaw language and heritage is woven into the fabric of Nova Scotia, making it stronger and more diverse.

While ensuring that the language continues to exist is important to Mi'kmaw communities and identity, it is also important to our entire province.

Language is an essential part of our cultural identity, and the Mi'kmaw language reflects the culture of the First Peoples of Nova Scotia. Currently, the number of people who can speak the language is in rapid decline and this Act is introduced at a time when the Mi'kmaw language is at risk. The number of children under the age of four learning Mi'kmaw decreased from 44 per cent in 1999 to just 20 per cent in 2013. At the current rate, in 2027, children aged four and younger will not be able to speak the Mi'kmaw language.

Collectively, we need to do what we can to preserve the language. This bill is a step in the right direction. Acknowledging Mi'kmaw as the original language of Nova Scotia aligns with the work we are doing together with the Mi'kmaw to advance reconciliation and to respond to the national inquiry's report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The calls for justice speak to ensuring meaningful access to language, culture, and identity as a foundation for resilience and safety.

Supporting the efforts of the Mi'kmaw to preserve and revitalize the language is the focus of this important, unique legislation. The bill was developed side by side with the Mi'kmaw, and this collaborative approach will continue in the future as we identify and implement a plan to move forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the working group who developed the legislation and those who provided additional support. The members of the working group are: Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey or MK; Office of L'nu Affairs; KMKNO; Mi'kmaw Services Branch, Education and Early Childhood Development; Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq; Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq; Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre; Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage; Assembly of First Nations, Atlantic Regional Chief; and Kji-Keptin, Mi'kmaq Grand Council. Wela'liq.

This legislation will establish a joint committee to create a Mi'kmaw language revitalization strategy. The language committee will be co-chaired by the Province and MK, and include representatives from each of the 13 Mi'kmaw communities and other communities and organizations within Nova Scotia.

The Act will take effect on October 1, 2022. That is Treaty Day in Nova Scotia. What a wonderful way to acknowledge and celebrate the peace and friendship treaties this year.

In the coming months, the committee will start to develop a multi-year plan that sets priorities and includes specific actions to help protect and promote the Mi'kmaw language. This group's work will include putting in place tools to measure and assess

progress on the strategy. Over the longer term, the committee will also periodically review the plan and make any updates that may be required.

As I stand here today, I can't help but think of the words that respected elder Albert Marshall of Eskasoni First Nation shared this week about this historic legislation, and I quote: "Without our language, we cannot pass along what our Elders are really teaching us."

Mi'kmaw language connects us to the past, a shared history that we are learning about now through initiatives like Treaty Education. Through this work, co-led by the Office of L'nu Affairs and our partners at MK, all Nova Scotians have the opportunity to learn who the Mi'kmaq are historically and today. We can also learn the importance of treaties and our treaty relationship as we establish a path of truth and reconciliation and understand what it means to be a treaty person.

Many Mi'kmaq lost their language during the time they attended residential schools, forced to speak English and forbidden to speak their language. Just think about that for a moment. Without this important connection to their language and its history, many residential school survivors lost their sense of identity and belonging with the Mi'kmaq culture.

To all residential school survivors and all Mi'kmaq, I hope our ancestors hear us as we move this legislation forward. I share the view of Chief Leroy Denny, Chair of MK, when he says he hopes the language revitalization strategy we develop here in Nova Scotia and implement together can be a model used nationally.

I look forward to the work we'll be doing together and to our collective future that includes strong relationships and a common interest in building the brightest future for all Nova Scotians. Wela'liq. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, as my role as critic in L'nu Affairs, it is a pleasure to rise. I have no criticism on this bill tonight. I am proud of the minister for bringing this bill forward and I commend her and the staff at L'nu Affairs - especially Deputy Minister Justin Huston, who has worked a lot on this file getting this legislation ready. It was a commitment in the last campaign, and I'm happy to see it continue to proceed. It does follow on the renaming of the department the minister is responsible for - a well overdue change to L'nu Affairs.

I do credit the chiefs that were consulted, of course, but Justin Huston as well for bringing forward the idea that we would look at instead of renaming Aboriginal Affairs to Indigenous Affairs - taking that extra step, recognizing Mi'kmaw and our treaties that we have here in Mi'kma'ki. Of course, L'nu means "the people" in Mi'kmaw, recognizing the

unique language of the Mi'kmaw. That was the first step in recognizing the language institutionally in our province, and the next step to recognizing Mi'kmaw as an original language, I think, is a very positive step and a priority of mine, as I said.

Language is so foundational to any culture, and of course, to First Nations but other cultures in our province. My heritage, the Gaelic language is very important to people, to the Gaels - once an illegal language spoken in our province. You think of the French language as very important to the Acadians, and the assimilation that they had to undergo, and we just tabled legislation that would look at how we protect that language as well.

There is an immediate threat to the Mi'kmaw language and that's why this bill is important. I know the minister referenced some statistics about young Mi'kmaq losing their language. Back in 2013 almost two-thirds of Mi'kmaq could speak Mi'kmaw - sorry, in 1999, it was almost two-thirds, and then in 2013, 14 years later, 24 per cent. That's a significant drop and if this trend were to continue, that would mean the language would be gone forever. So this bill is not just symbolic, it's important. It's one of the most important pieces of legislation so far that this government has put forward, I would dare say, in this session.

We have a bill here that fosters an intense approach to learn the language which will in turn revitalize the culture of Mi'kmaw people in our province. It's a unique language, it's a verb-based language, I learned a little bit about it when we changed the sign at the causeway, when we put the "Welcome to Unama'kik" sign there at Cape Breton and of course Unama'kik doesn't translate literally like Mi'kmaw in other English words, it translates to "the Land of Fog."

It's a very unique language that is verb-based, and these are the types of projects that can only continue and strengthen with legislation like this. I know there are chiefs that the minister is probably already talking to. I know she knows Chief Andrea well, and she's big on getting more signage throughout the province to ensure that we have the Mi'kmaw language represented there.

Getting to know the Elder who was instrumental in advocating for that sign at the causeway was quite an experience. A residential school survivor who lost her language at that school, Elder Ma'git Poulette worked hard to get her language back, and then taught it to her kids. The resilience of the Mi'kmaw people is quite fascinating to keep the language alive.

I'm happy to see the joint committee because it is critical that all of the bands, all 13 bands, have representation from all areas of the province. I do want to single out Chief Leroy, who's been a champion of ensuring that the language continues to be spoken. I know in Mr. Speaker's constituency, Eskasoni has the biggest area of Mi'kmaw people, and the fact they have Mi'kmaw language immersion for Grade Primary all the way to

Grade 4, I think, is a fascinating thing and a testament to what communities can do to keep the language alive.

[8:45 p.m.]

That, together with Treaty Education in schools, which Chief Leroy worked on as well, under his portfolio with Premier McNeil back in 2015-16, was a key piece to keeping us on the leading edge of how we move forward with reconciliation with our First Nations partners.

Certainly, when I was at provincial-federal-territorial tables, a lot of provinces are envious of the relationship that we've had here in our province with the Mi'kmaq. Treaty education is a way that the next generation could be much more educated than even mine on how we deal with our relationship, how we learn about the Honour Song and our peace and friendship treaties.

I'm very proud to stand and see this bill continue to make its way through the House. I look forward to the proclamation day on Treaty Day in October. Again, I commend the minister and this government for bringing this forward.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise tonight to speak about this bill. I'm glad to see this bill come forward. The use of Mi'kmaw as a language is shrinking, as the minister pointed out, but this bill brings us one step closer to supporting the incredible efforts of Mi'kmaq across Nova Scotia, through creative and beautiful methods of reclamation and revitalization.

It's not a challenge just in Nova Scotia. Across Canada in 2006, 21.4 per cent of Aboriginal people could conduct a conversation in an Aboriginal language; by 2016, only 15.6 per cent reported being able to do so. I can table that at some point. I think just to recognize that this is very much a very real issue and a very live issue for people in community.

I know there has been a lot of hard work together and the joint committee moving forward sounds really appropriate. I am still somewhat disappointed not to see the government be clear about a funding commitment to this work, both in its development and ongoing support.

As we know, the planned systemic approach of colonization in Canada targeted the destruction of Indigenous languages. The people who ran residential schools and the bureaucrats making government policies knew that forbidding the use of traditional language would aim at the heart of culture and community.



The TRC final report defines cultural genocide as “the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group,” including the banning of languages. Many folks in the Mi’kmaw community have shared stories about being punished for speaking Mi’kmaw at the Shubenacadie residential school. They also share stories about older students who would meet with other students in the woods and try to teach them simple words of Mi’kmaw to try to keep the language going.

Mi’kmaw poet Rita Joe captured this history and its impact so well in “I Lost My Talk.” I’m not going to read the full poem, but the first stanza:

“I lost my talk  
The talk you took away.  
When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie school.”

And the poem’s conclusion:

“So gently I offer my hand and ask,  
Let me find my talk  
So I can teach you about me.”

Here is why we rarely talk about language as separate from culture. The Mi’kmaw language, as the Leader of the Official Opposition pointed out, tells us different things about the territory of Mi’kma’ki and our life in it. We are slowly starting to see that and starting to adopt Two-Eyed Seeing of research and education, reflecting the need to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of thinking and knowing to fully understand our world here in Mi’kma’ki.

I wanted to share a few examples from other jurisdictions about how they are also supporting Indigenous languages. In Nunavut, in fact, Inuktitut is the original language of 70 per cent of Nunavut’s residents, and two-thirds of the residents report being able to have a conversation in that language.

When you spend time in Nunavut it’s very interesting, because it’s the Elder and the younger generations who can speak Inuktitut. The Elder generations grew up with it and the younger generations have benefited from the language revitalization projects, whereas the middle generation of parents who often lost their language because of a pressure period of colonization in the North in the middle of the 1900s.

Nunavut has four official languages: English, French, Inuktitut, and Inuinnaqtun. All government communications must be available in all four languages. It is quite amazing to see, Mr. Speaker. Having spent time in the Inuit community in Ottawa where Inuktitut is a minority language, to go north and see it being used as the majority language is really inspiring in terms of what we can build in other communities.

The Northwest Territories actually recognizes 11 official languages: Chippewa, Cree, English, French, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey, and Tlicho. Other jurisdictions, like Manitoba, also recognize multiple Aboriginal languages as original languages.

In Manitoba, they just launched two new programs this year to get funding to help increase the number of proficient speakers - and I have that here - and the number of Indigenous language translators in Manitoba. The province will provide \$300,000 in funding for a partnership. One program will focus on language programming and the other will focus on apprenticeship around translators.

In B.C., there are over 34 First Nations languages and 61 dialects. The Government of B.C. has made a number of commitments, most notably the creation of the First People's Cultural Council in 1990. In 2018, the province invested \$50 million over three years for Indigenous language revitalization for the nearly 200 First Nations communities in the province.

We can see that in other jurisdictions there are a lot of examples of how language revitalization has been funded and supported. I hope to hear more about that as we go through. I think this is a really critical part of overcoming a legacy of colonization and racism and ongoing stigma and discrimination.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: It is an honour and a pleasure to speak in support of the Mi'kmaw Language Act. Recognizing the Mi'kmaw language as the original language of the province makes me incredibly proud as a member of this Legislature, as a Nova Scotian, and as a parent.

I am pleased that multiple departments, including mine, will be given a legislated commitment to ensuring this important language is preserved, promoted, and celebrated today and, importantly, for generations to come. I am also incredibly proud to be the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development responsible for public school students in this province and for the role that allows me to play in supporting this legislation.

The Mi'kmaw Language Act will further motivate my department's important work around developing knowledge of the Mi'kmaw culture and language. As minister, I can guarantee that we will do our part to preserve and promote Mi'kmaw language through education.

In May 2021, the Mi'kmaw Services Branch hired its first Mi'kmaw language and culture consultant to strengthen and support the teaching of the Mi'kmaw language in

provincial schools. I am incredibly proud to say that the Mi'kmaw language is currently being taught in three of the seven Regional Centres of Education, including Cape Breton-Victoria, the Strait, and Chignecto-Central.

To extend access to the Mi'kmaw language more broadly, work is currently under way on an online Mi'kmaw high school course for all students. This full credit course will introduce students to Mi'kmaw vocabulary through oral conversations, supported by recorded legends, pronunciations, and interactive games. September 2023 is the anticipated start date.

Our goal is to build on the existing good work, and validate and affirm the importance of the Mi'kmaw language. This is directly aligned with our inclusive education policy, and our commitment to honouring and respecting each student's cultural and linguistic identities and knowledge systems. We recognize the significant role language plays regarding the identity, pride, and spirit of the Mi'kmaq people. These current and our future efforts will support reconciliation.

We continue to be committed to treaty education. Recognizing the language of the Mi'kmaq is a critical step in the promotion of treaty education.

Mr. Speaker, the core of this work will be working together - working with the Mi'kmaq people, and working across departments to support this legislation. As a member of this government, as a representative of the people of Nova Scotia, as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and also as a Nova Scotian, I am proud to be able to speak in support of this legislation - and I am proud to be able to play a role in the implementation of the actions that will flow from it.

I am optimistic that members today will move forward together to embrace the target, spirit, and goals of this bill, and to support this legislation.

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

The honourable Minister of L'nu Affairs.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I extend my gratitude and thanks to the members in the House for their comments and, in particular, my colleague, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. I want to thank the Department of L'nu Affairs for all their support as well.

I look forward to going to the Law Amendments Committee. I will be very pleased to hear from the community. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 148.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 149.

**Bill No. 149 - Financial Measures (2022) Act.**

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: It was kind of a delayed reaction there, Mr. Speaker, but I'll give it my best. I move that Bill No. 149, the Financial Measures (2022) Act, be now read a second time.

We are providing solutions for Nova Scotia's most pressing challenges. A number of those solutions are found within this legislation, the Financial Measures (2022) Act. I'd like to highlight some of the new tax measures and regulations that we are bringing forward in this legislation.

Nova Scotian employers are facing challenges in finding skilled tradespeople and other sectors are experiencing labour shortages. Amending the income tax will enable new regulations to establish a tax refund for Nova Scotians working in designated skilled occupations such as construction.

Mr. Speaker, we hope to attract and retain youth in industries with labour shortages by creating the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades (MOST) program. Starting in the 2022 tax year - this year - MOST will return provincial personal income tax paid on the first \$50,000 of earnings for eligible people under the age of 30 in sectors with labour shortages. This means that when they file their income taxes next Spring, they'll receive a refund of provincial income taxes.

Nova Scotia is embracing population growth that we haven't seen in decades. We've seen housing prices in this province rise upwards of 30 per cent just in the past year. We currently have a little more than just two months of housing inventory on the market, when typically at this time of the year we would see nine to twelve months of housing inventory. Rural employers are facing labour shortages, but they're also facing the challenge of finding housing for people they would hire if those people could find a place to live.

This is affecting the economy in many ways. We are taking steps to make sure that people can afford a place to call home and to be able to build their lives here. Right now, that is proving to be very difficult for many Nova Scotians and many people wanting to move here to become Nova Scotians.

The Non-resident Deed Transfer and Property Taxes Act introduces new tax measures for non-resident homeowners. These taxes are measures that may make housing more available and attainable for Nova Scotia residents. The Non-Resident Property Tax is \$2 per \$100 of assessed value.

[9:00 p.m.]

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that municipalities will not have to collect these tax revenues. I will also state that we are making sure that if property owners owe any taxes, municipalities will be able to recoup taxes owing to themselves first.

When developing this policy, we wanted to make sure we protected Nova Scotian residents from unintended consequences. There will be exemptions. When non-resident-owned housing is rented out to someone residing in Nova Scotia for a period of 12 months or longer, the new property taxes will not apply.

When a property has multiple owners, an exemption from this tax is provided if 50 per cent or more of the owners are Nova Scotian residents. Properties that are not classified as residential, with three or fewer dwelling units, including commercial properties, will not be subject to the measures.

We're also enabling a Provincial Deed Transfer Tax of 5 per cent for property purchased by non-residents of Nova Scotia beginning April 1, 2022. All residents of Nova Scotia who purchase residential properties are exempt from the Provincial Deed Transfer Tax.

If you plan to move to Nova Scotia to live here and purchase a property or home, there is an exemption from the Provincial Deed Property Tax. The individual would typically be expected to move here within six months. Non-resident taxation is not a new concept. Similar measures are found in other provinces including New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Minor amendments are being made to clarify the Members' Retiring Allowances Act to align with the federal Income Tax Act. We're also amending the Canadian Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act to broaden appointment powers for Nova Scotia.

We are creating a Children's Sports and Arts Tax Credit by amending the Income Tax Act. Through this tax credit, parents will be able to offset the costs of their child's registration in sports and arts programs. This refundable tax credit of \$500 covers

supervised athletic, artistic, cultural, recreation, and development activities. Families with children, youth under the age of 19 are encouraged to claim this credit when they prepare their 2022 taxes next Spring. I note that this is a refundable tax credit, and that means even if people do not have any taxes owing, they will still benefit financially with a refund in the amount that they are eligible for.

We live in a province of opportunity. With this legislation, we are taking action to meet the needs of a growing, more sustainable, and prosperous province.

THE CHAIR: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: For the benefit of the members in the House who are newer to the Chamber, the FMA typically provides legislative authority to implement measures that have financial consequences in the budget. We were very clear in our response back after we heard the budget that not enough is being done to help Nova Scotians facing a cost of living crisis at this time. We noted their lack of signature programs, ones that were campaigned upon: the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee, the Nova Scotia Loyal Program.

I will say that there's the MOST Program, which will help you if you're in the trades and you're under 30, but for us, what remains are some singular concerns that unless you have children, there's not a lot in this budget. My comments will be limited to just a few areas of what's in the FMA (2022). Some of what is in this bill is, in fact, housekeeping in nature: making changes that CRA asked for, et cetera.

We do like the section in the bill that provides for change to the Income Tax Act to provide for a Children's Sports and Arts Tax Credit. It's excellent that it's a refundable tax credit, but as we have pointed out, our concern remains that for many families, putting money out first and then getting it back later is simply impossible for some families, particularly now as they're facing a cost of living crisis.

For many families, things that many of us took for granted - music lessons, some of us didn't like it so much, and we had to go play the piano over and over and over again, but those are important programs. We think it's good that there is this possibility of getting some of that money back, even if you don't pay on your taxes. However, again, for families of limited means, it means waiting for that money back for a full year.

Then we come to the non-resident Deed Transfer and Property Tax Act. We understand the impetus behind why these changes are here. It's driven by concerns about rising cost of property and the difficulty residents are having in buying properties. We agree that this is a concern.

I have to say that for many areas of the province, this proposal, this measure in the budget, really came as a bombshell in some areas. In some places it's broadly popular, but

not everywhere. You'll probably hear from some more of my colleagues who will have more to say about what they're hearing.

Our offices are hearing from people who are deeply concerned. In some cases, they may once have been Nova Scotians but like so many people, they had to go down the road to get a job. There was a lack of opportunity here in Nova Scotia. For many of them, they may have purchased a property because they wanted to come back when they retire. Now they're going to have to make some choices. Some of them bought Summer homes and would come and spend two, three, four months a year with their families.

When I read through the letters of the expats who have gone elsewhere and who have either inherited property or bought property to come back to now or in the future, what I'm actually hearing is that they're hurt. They thought they were Nova Scotians - maybe they weren't paying income tax and gosh, we would like them to - but some of them are deeply hurt. They feel that they've been made to feel like they're other, that they're not part of us anymore. I will just leave that there for the minister to consider.

We don't know what the effect of this is going to be. What we haven't heard is what studies were done that convinced the government that this was the right way to go. I could be convinced of this, but we don't know where this idea came from. Maybe it's from neighbouring provinces, and maybe they think it was a success, but we haven't heard that information come out from the minister yet. I would love to hear what was the genesis of this - how did this happen? Why were they convinced that this would produce enough properties to make a difference?

I'm really serious. I'm not being sarcastic. I really want to know, where did this come from? How did this happen? What do they think is going to happen with these properties?

We're hearing from communities that really count on those Summer residents to come in and spend a lot of money, upgrade their properties, and things like that. There is concern about that. We also know that we've heard from municipalities that say they were not consulted about this plan. They would actually like any increase to go to their coffers and not to ours.

With those few remarks, I'm going to leave my comments. I think I may have some colleagues who may be able to share some of what they're hearing in their communities. I thank the minister for listening.

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

**LISA LACHANCE:** I rise tonight to speak to several elements in the Financial Measures Act of 2022.

First of all, I'm concerned not to see major investment in affordable, non-market housing either in the budget or in this bill. The new non-resident tax revenue is not earmarked for spending on affordable housing. I think the concern is in the details. I think the government's claim that it will have a positive impact on the housing market is at best unknown and at worst dubious.

First of all, it really is the details that matter. Like so many of you, I've received, I've been copied on many letters and emails with feedback from folks who will be affected by this and who are dismayed by this rapid, no-warning, new cost that they'll have to face. Like the member for Bedford Basin talked about, in a lot of cases, these are folks who have kept the connection to Nova Scotia and are sad to consider that they may need to financially let that connection go.

I'm also really concerned. I don't understand what analysis has been done about what kind of housing this will miraculously free up. I know that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board was on *Information Morning* today and was asked a very similar question. and, in fact, really didn't have an answer. We don't know what kind of housing this is going to free up. On one hand, I don't understand how this is actually going to be implemented.

The other question is that if we don't know what's going to be freed up, then it's hard to trust in the income generation model. I know that the Minister of Housing yesterday at Estimates talked about the major investments the government has made in health care and said the only way we will pay for all of this is if the city grows, if the province grows. I hope it happens.

I'm concerned about a Financial Measures (2022) Act that's founded on hope and faith but I guess it's also founded on compassion, so I'll give the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board some time to answer some of these questions.

In terms of some other details I think are really important, I understand that municipalities will not be tasked with collecting this tax but it's not clear to me where the entity that collects the tax will sit: Will it be at the Department of Finance and Treasury Board? Perhaps the minister can speak to the plans around that.

I think we're also concerned that tax credits are not an effective or equitable social policy tool, like others have said. Of course, they disproportionately benefit higher-income households and households who can afford to pay up front. I note that the Children's Sports and Arts Refundable Tax Credit is, in fact, refundable. However, if this was actually founded on a principle around equitable access to physical education and arts, I think there's a few things that would be happening.

First of all, there actually would have been some consultations with organizations that do provide recreation and art support, so everyone from Recreation Nova Scotia to



Inclusion Nova Scotia to others to talk about what this really means to get young people active. I think we also need to think about whether this funding will be better spent actually providing core sustainable funding to community organizations to provide programs in communities that get kids out.

I had the pleasure in Cape Breton of visiting the Boys and Girls Club in Whitney Pier, which has always been long held as an amazing example of an organization that gets young people into activities, into communities and keeps them there through their life span. As someone growing up, I did not have music lessons, I did not join any sports teams - there was no money for that.

Not only that, I don't think it was a pathway that I ever saw myself in. It wasn't that I sat there longing for piano lessons when we couldn't afford them, it's like no one in my family took music lessons, nobody in my family played sports, people didn't do outside activities. If you don't have supportive community organizations drawing young people out, they don't just magically show up for piano lessons.

I think to echo in terms of things that we don't see that were part of the platform, we were told the platform is the plan for recovery, the platform is the plan for health care, and we don't see things in here. We don't see the Nova Scotia Loyal program, we don't see the Better Pay Cheque Guarantee, I don't see the funding for mental health that was to provide universal access. I know I've been told to have faith. I'm still sticking with that faith - I just can't find the money anywhere.

Again, I think at one point the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board talked about magical things happening over in the corner of the NDP and I think this inspired the creation of this budget and this FMA. Because there are lots of things that we just hope are going to happen and we're going to have to have faith that they're going to happen. Or really, the numbers aren't going to run and that's not even to start into the fact that there's no real response to the cost of living crisis that Nova Scotians are facing.

I just wanted to say I think we all - there's a little bit of chitchat - I think we all just received a notice that Law Amendments Committee has been called for tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. and I understand that I don't think the Financial Measures (2022) Act is going, which is good but you know, you hear time and time again, we want to consult, we want to hear what people think. The Minister of Community Services just talked about the Mi'kmaw Language Act. We're looking forward to the Committee on Law Amendments but if it's tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m., who's going to show up? It is now 9:14 p.m.

Are people going to be advising themselves of the fact that they can show up and talk about different bills now? At 9:14 p.m.? I think this is completely unacceptable that we're doing Second Reading on critical bills that are - I know the ministers on the other side are proud of these bills, but we're doing Second Reading now and you're sending them to Law Amendments Committee in the morning.

I can tell you what the Law Amendments Committee order sheet is going to look like. It's going to look like No. 143, the Boat Harbour Act, an Act to Amend, no representation. It's going to look like Bill No. 145, there might be one representation. Bill No. 145, the Electricity Act, an Act to Amend - again, really important work and there will be no representation. The Public Utilities Act, no representation. The Mi'kmaw Languages Act, no representation, and I don't know if we're going to keep on going.

I just really need to call that out because this is really not - you are not really seeking input from Nova Scotians if you do it like this.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Certainly, I am not comfortable supporting the Financial Measures (202) Act as it is currently presented. It is a budget that the government certainly is not shy at vocalizing their pride over, despite the fact that the increase in health care spending is less than the previous government's increase in health care spending, despite the fact that many of their commitments and promises are not reflected in this.

While there are a lot of areas I would like to critique about this bill and the budget, I do want to focus my comments tonight on what I think is a very unfair and unreasonable tax grab on non-resident Nova Scotians who own homes here. As Bill Black stated in his op-ed, this essentially represents a tripling of property tax for those who have properties here in Nova Scotia and live in other provinces.

First of all, my major problem with it is that I don't think this is going to do anything to address or fix the housing challenge that we have here in Nova Scotia. If the strategy is to tax out and push out all the non-resident homeowners, still looking at the nature of those properties, I don't think these are properties that are going to then be swallowed up in the housing market and purchased by those who need housing.

I do think there will be a disproportionately negative impact on rural communities, where there are a lot of Summer homes for family members of Nova Scotians, for fellow Nova Scotians who live elsewhere and want to come home, and even the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said in the media that it remains to be seen whether this will have an impact on housing supply or help fix the housing challenge that we have here.

The minister also said tonight that this is very similar to other tax measures that are in place in P.E.I. and Ontario. I think it's important to note that the difference between what is being proposed here and P.E.I. is significant. Where the P.E.I. tax is 0.5 per cent, this tax is \$2 per \$100. This is to go into the general revenues of the government. Certainly, it's not similar to the Ontario model, where they only tax out-of-country non-residents, not fellow Canadian citizens.

The number one problem with this is that I don't think it fixes anything. It is a major tax grab from people who have invested in our province, who come here and support our communities, particularly in the Summertime.

I also think this is sending the wrong message to people. We benefited greatly over the last two years, where the world and many other jurisdictions in Canada were looking at Nova Scotia as the place to be. That's back when we weren't number one in COVID-19 cases and spread of COVID-19 in the country. It's back when we were leading the charge in lower numbers, when we took our responsibility to protect our hospitals and citizens from this disease, I think, more seriously. We benefited from this investment and this influx of attention and interest in our province.

Of course, we've always prided ourselves on being welcoming to people in this province, have we not? You come to Nova Scotia, there's open arms that welcome you. You are embraced in our communities. This hospitality is something that certainly I've heard many members of the opposite party talk about. It's certainly something that we say. Yet we have a government here that is certainly penalizing people for investment in our province and for purchasing property and homes here, many of whom are coming here to enjoy the lovely things that we enjoy here, and many of whom are also coming to be close to their families, their kids, or their parents.

These are people who certainly contribute greatly in a number of ways to our communities, particularly in rural Nova Scotia. I get the political calculus here. Why not tax more the people who can't vote here? That, I believe, is the political calculus. We're not going to be harmed by this politically because these folks are not voters here, they're not residents. I will remind the government that I do believe this is going to impact domestic business, like realtors, who have been doing really well these last couple of years but don't always do well. This is certainly going to impact their business model and how well they're able to do.

It's certainly going to impact family members who want to stay more closely connected with loved ones who own property here. I think it's also important to recognize that these are fellow Nova Scotians, as my colleague the member for Bedford Basin mentioned earlier. We're all very proud of Mattea Roach, who's doing really well on *Jeopardy!* right now. She lives in Toronto, but we recognize her in this House as a fellow Nova Scotian. We all supported the member for Bedford South when he moved in his member's statement to talk about her. Do we want to punish Mattea Roach if she wants to purchase a Summer cottage here in Nova Scotia, and tax her three times more than her neighbours? Is that a fair thing to do?

I don't think so. I don't think it's fair, I don't think it helps fix the situation. I'm also worried about some of the comments that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board made, I believe, on CBC Radio, where he mentioned that some of these properties are dark half the year. Okay, sure. What about snowbirds, Nova Scotians who go down south for

the Winter? Their properties also don't have the lights on for parts of the year. Are they next? Are they going to be taxed next, to be targeted by this government?

Again, I really think this is something that needs further consideration. I certainly don't support it. It doesn't fix anything. It creates a lot of harm. It sends the wrong message to the rest of the country and the world about who we are and what we want to do here and who we want to attract. I certainly hope that the government reconsiders this aspect, in particular, of this Financial Measures Bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I want to rise and speak to something about housing that isn't in the Financial Measures (2022) Act, but maybe ought to be, and that has to do with Airbnbs.

A number of people have raised this issue that, rather than the approach to taxing housing that has come forward in this budget, we might ought to have focused on Airbnbs. There is a bill on the floor of the House about Airbnbs, but I would submit that it does nothing to impact housing supply. We may want to understand where the Airbnbs are in our province. That makes sense, but people who rent out a room in their home were left out of the original amendment to the legislation, the Tourism Accommodation Act, for a reason. We supported it.

It's even more true now. That's because, who can afford to buy a house in Nova Scotia right now? Nobody. If you're lucky enough to be able to buy a house, and you need to support yourself by renting out a room, that's fine with us. I think that makes sense. What's much more challenging and deleterious to our housing supply across the province are, essentially, ghost hotels set up by people who buy properties and then immediately convert them into Airbnb rentals. This is happening across the province. My guess is that this is a huge number of the properties that are changing hands right now.

There are registration fees. They've been waived for COVID-19. I would suggest that that's curious to me. I don't know why, if you're running rental properties at this point, which we know are still being rented and which impact our housing supply directly, you wouldn't at least charge those nominal rental fees. Further, what we raised when those amendments to the Tourist Accommodations Act first came in is that there's no enforcement.

In fact, we actually still don't know where all those ghost hotels are because no one's checking up on it. Mr. Speaker. I just want to flag that. We will also speak to that bill when it comes forward, which I don't think is going to be tonight. If we're talking about action on housing, this is the missing piece.

I know that the government wants to say that they are bringing legislation about Airbnbs, but with respect, that legislation while arguably necessary doesn't in fact impact the housing market. This bill is purporting to impact that housing market.

Further, I would say that a number of the legislative pieces that have come forward connected to the Financial Measures (2022) Act and connected to the budget that are carrying out the government's program in the budget rely on this notion of consultation - we've spoken to people, we will speak to people.

I want to again reiterate my colleague's point that as of tonight, the legislation coming forward - people have less than 12 hours if they want to opine on our energy system, if they want to opine on our official languages, if they want to talk about the Boat Harbour Act and what may be a massive financial liability for Nova Scotia taxpayers.

This government is giving them less than 12 hours to even register. Nobody will come forward. It's, in fact, a muzzling of the public and a refusal to allow the public to have their say on these bills.

I don't know if there's a reason that the government wants to do that with these particular bills - if it's just sloppy housekeeping. I don't know what it is. I think that it is a true, true subversion of democracy and I'm very upset to see it happen.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I had no intentions of standing to make a comment on this bill tonight. The comments, in particular from the member for Yarmouth about the damage that this was going to do to rural Nova Scotia, have kind of motivated me to speak here.

I've spent the last 30 years trying to grow my rural community and other rural communities in Colchester North. During that time, there were a tremendous number of vacant homes around. Most of them are owned by people who don't live there or maybe live there two months of the year or maybe don't even live in the house. Maybe next year they'll be here for a couple of months and maybe two years later. They own the house, and they don't really care. It's not costing them much for taxes, in their financial situation.

Those houses sat vacant while our rural communities sort of stagnated. Today is a different story. Our rural communities are growing. We desperately need those residences in rural communities. This bill, in short, will force those people to either rent those homes, which would be fine with me, or sell the homes to full-time residents.

I think that probably one of the major intentions of this bill was to sort of protect against foreign investors who were using real estate in Canada as a place to park their money. In my opinion, as a former realtor and as a municipal counsellor and someone who

has worked long and hard to grow their rural community, this bill is right for rural Nova Scotia.

[9:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to speak to the bill tonight. I was going to try to bring my thoughts together a little bit more.

I am thinking that it's perhaps important to get a couple of extra thoughts on the table before we go to Law Amendments Committee - which, hopefully, we've got a typo there and there's not an error, that we're actually going to Law Amendments Committee tomorrow. I think that would be a tragedy with respect to democracy.

The points I want to make about this bill are about democracy. There's a concept in which wars have been fought, and that's about no taxation without representation. No taxation without representation. There was a civil war fought over that issue when the British Commonwealth were taxing colonists and they had no say in that taxation.

This is effectively what this bill is doing. It's one thing about foreign investment, but this is taxing other Canadians who have actually no say - in fact, we've got to get busy, because they only have 12 hours to even get one little word in edgewise on this. This is an abuse of power by the government (Interruption). It's not on tomorrow? Thank you. That's helpful.

THE CHAIR: Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable member for Kings South has the floor.

KEITH IRVING: Thank you. I want you to think about that reach that the government is taking to tax people who do not have a say in how this government collects that tax, how much that tax is, and how that is spent. It does not seem fundamentally democratic in this country.

When I think about this country and I think about democracy, I think about the graveyards in Flanders Fields. I think about Vimy Ridge. Vimy Ridge Day was on Saturday. We had Newfoundlanders and Canadians from all provinces fight for democracy, fight for this country, and what is on those gravestones is one maple leaf. One maple leaf - that we are all Canadian.

Those Newfoundlanders, the 85<sup>th</sup> Nova Scotia Highlanders, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry - Canadians from across the country fought for democracy. They fought side by side. They died together, and now we're living in a country where the person

in Amherst does not have the same rights as the person in Sackville, New Brunswick. It seems fundamentally wrong to me.

We've talked about the Nova Scotians who have been forced by a stagnant economy in Nova Scotia - and we would welcome them back to buy derelict homes and fix them up and create a Summer spot. We wanted them then. We wanted their investment then. But now we're going through a period - we don't know how long it is, perhaps a few years - in which we now are saying, "No, we don't want you. We don't want you in our community going to the hardware store, buying your groceries, supporting the local arts organization. Go away now. We don't need you now. The economy's booming."

There's no evidence that this government has presented that this is going to create any more housing available to Nova Scotians. The only thing that we do know is that it's a tax grab of \$81 million. That's all we know.

We are now standing and telling the rest of Canada, you're different than us and we want your money if you want to enjoy a little bit of Summer in Nova Scotia. It does not seem right, it does not seem Nova Scotian, and it does not seem Canadian.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'll just add a couple of comments. I appreciate hearing from all the other members in the House on the Financial Measures (2022) Act. I have been hearing from a lot of residents of Cumberland North, not just the non-residents, but very concerned about the new, non-resident property tax.

It's hard for us here in Nova Scotia. We see ourselves as welcoming, loving, to our province and this new tax has really sent, I believe, the wrong message to the rest of the Canadians who own property here.

I understand the concern. I've seen different documentaries about money laundering. It's more on the West Coast of Canada, the concern about foreign nationals investing their money here and holding our properties hostage. I would not want to see that in any way. I know we have a huge need for increasing housing supply.

I do hope that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board will consider some of the comments that were spoken tonight. I will add that in Cumberland County there's a little over 2,100 non-resident properties. Most of them are cottage owners and most of those cottages are not Winterized, so even if they were sold, there would have to be a lot of money invested in them to actually allow someone to live there 12 months of the year. Because they are not Winterized, they wouldn't be able to rent them out for 12 months of the year, due to the severity of our Winters.

I think there are a lot of people who are from Cumberland County who have moved away, and they come home every Summer to be with family who still live in Cumberland County. Many of the cottages are very modest. I know there are probably a lot of non-residential property owners around the province who have million-dollar mansions but in Cumberland County a lot of the properties are not. A lot of them are very humble. The people who own them are very proud. They are small, they're humble and it means a lot for these people to come home and spend time with their families in the Summer.

My concern, too, is that people will find ways around it and that they'll simply sign over their very humble cottage to a family member to avoid paying the tax. I am concerned about the projections if the government will actually realize that type of revenue.

The last comment I'll make on this is I know everyone in the House has heard me talk a lot about the incredible strain on the people in our border community, due to the two years during the pandemic and the border restrictions. We spent two years of having interprovincial barriers put up. Many compared it to the Berlin Wall. It was unbelievable what happened during the pandemic, and we don't want to see anything that restricts and continues to put up walls and barriers between us and our neighbours. If anything, I feel like we need to be doing everything we can to remove these barriers and remove these walls.

The fact is that many of the cottage owners in Cumberland County literally live 10, 15 minutes away, just like many of our people living in Cumberland County have cottages in Baie Verte and Port Elgin and Murray River and Cap-Pelé in New Brunswick, again 10 or 15 minutes away. If New Brunswick started charging this kind of tax, the anger that people in Cumberland County would feel - and I know what that's like because many of the people were not allowed into our province, five minutes away, during these unbelievable restrictive border restrictions that often made absolutely no sense to anyone, other than just smoke and mirrors for the people of Nova Scotia.

I hope the minister will consider the message that we're sending to our neighbours, many literally just a few minutes away, living in New Brunswick. We share - there's more - I know money's important, we need to pay our bills, but we also need to consider other factors, that we have family just minutes away, but on the other side of the interprovincial border. We have family that live in Ontario or Québec, and we want them all to feel welcome to come home to Nova Scotia.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I'd like to thank the members for their comments. We certainly appreciate hearing their thoughts. I will provide some feedback, in no particular order.



The members have raised the cost of living, and especially for those who are vulnerable to the impacts of inflation right now. I just want to highlight again, before this bill and before the budget was even introduced, over \$13 million in investment for those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of inflation. That was done before the budget, before this legislation. I think about the Seniors Care Grant, which is not found in this Act because it's already been created; it's already been budgeted for. Something we did last Fall - we started it last Fall.

I think about the Nova Scotia Child Benefit increase for those at lowest income levels, up to \$1,275 per child. And I want to acknowledge the member's concern about using a tax credit. What I would also say is that that augments other programs that exist. I think about the KidSport Nova Scotia program, which is an excellent program which helps people who cannot afford to put their children in sports to be able to do that - in many cases free of charge. That is something the provincial government contributes to, KidSport. It's a wonderful program, it's one I have certainly promoted in my own constituency.

This tax credit is refundable. Everybody who files taxes can get it if they have a child who's eligible. That will be something that we know will be appreciated, but I want to remind members that that's not the only tool the government has to support families who don't have the funds to join in to organized sport. I would note that there is no arts organization in the province right now like KidSport, so that is something that can be looked at as well.

I heard a comment about investment in the health budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're significantly investing. That is the centrepiece of this budget. That's what this budget is about: significant investments in health care.

The non-resident taxes: I heard a number of comments opposite. I heard one that almost sounded a bit like they could be convinced it was a good idea, but they wanted to know what was the genesis behind it? I would say this is not a new thing. Prince Edward Island has had a non-resident tax for many, many years. They are a province with lots of coastline, much like our province. We're much larger in size, but there's tremendous demand for property in this province right now, and we're mindful of Nova Scotians and whom they're competing with right now.

I even think of during the election campaign, I was at The Farmer's Daughter Country Market in Whycocomagh and this nice, shiny, white Cadillac Escalade came up with Ontario plates and they told me they had purchased a bunch of properties in the area for short-term rentals, and they were wondering if they could get some COVID-19 support money to support them at the time.

I didn't take long. I extracted myself from the conversation because I was there for my constituents - it was during the election - but it struck me. It's strange that in a case like

that, we have people around home looking for places to live, and here were people coming in and buying - snapping up properties, taking them off the market.

It's certainly helpful for the tourism industry, but you could see the conflict that it creates. While good for the economy in one way, also taking away from the economy in that there are many businesses that are trying to find people, but those people have nowhere to live in those areas if they were to take a job with that employer.

[9:45 p.m.]

It is a measure that I know is attracting negative attention, but we're trying to look out for Nova Scotians. We're elected to represent them and, as I say, it's not something new. Prince Edward Island has had a non-resident tax for many years. There are many factors that impact housing supply. I'm not going to get up and say this is the one solution that's going to fix it all. The members have questioned the financial numbers. The truth is that we don't have a database yet that can tell us exactly how much we can raise.

Until that's built - which it will be built over the course of a couple of years - we can only provide an estimate. It's something that's never been done before. We don't have a database right now. The professionals at the Department of Finance and Treasury Board have put their minds together to come up with what they believe is an accurate number based on consultation with groups that would be aware of who owns what in this province in terms of properties. That's the basis we put forward here.

We're doing it on a best effort basis. Once that database is built, we'll know exactly how many non-resident properties there are and what kinds of tax revenue they'll generate.

I think what I would say too is that members have said there are things missing in the Financial Measures (2022) Act. At the end of the day, we can't do everything at once. We've been in office now, since we've been sworn in, just a little over seven months. What I would say is that this budget is focused on health care. Some of the measures in this legislation help with generating new revenues that will support that, and will support things like affordable housing and investments we've already made.

I think of \$35 million made last Fall. I think of \$15 million made in this budget to support housing initiatives to help increase the supply of housing. We aim, and we have time, and we will work to continue to make improvements, and to put ideas forth to solve all the challenges that Nova Scotians are facing.

I will close with this comment. I know the member opposite has talked about democracy and representation for people who are taxed. But two points: One, this Financial Measures (2022) Act is actually not on the docket tomorrow for the Committee on Law Amendments, so people do have days here to work with, which is typical for bills through the years. (Interruption)

Well, it's typical from what I've seen over the years, Mr. Speaker. A bill goes through second reading. Immediately, people are aware that it's going to the Committee on Law Amendments. It's not going anywhere else. That's the process of the House.

So it's going there, and it's not going there tomorrow. People will have a few days to become aware. I would say with the issue of non-resident property taxation, there are a lot of people aware of it right now. I just want to assure members that there's nothing untoward here. That is not going forward tomorrow at the Committee on Law Amendments, but it will be going forward in a few days time.

One point to close. One Opposition member had talked about democracy and questioned that. I would point out that under the last Liberal Government, we had an entire year without representative government while other legislatures across the country sat for periods of 20-some days to 80-some days. If you look at Parliament in Ottawa and provincial legislatures, our Legislature sat for about 10 minutes, and the purpose was to shut the place down for the year. There was no representation - not even elected members.

Forget about a Committee on Law Amendments meeting to give the public a chance to speak on a bill - Nova Scotians' elected representatives were not allowed to sit for an entire year. Is it any wonder that the government's popularity numbers went up? There was nobody holding them to account because nobody could. That was the decision of the previous Liberal government. We would never do such a thing. We actually believe in democracy.

With that, I now rise and will move to close debate on Bill No. 149.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 149.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

[9:51 p.m. The House resolved into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds in the Chair.]

[10:36 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds assumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise and meet again . . . (Interruption)

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

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Bills has met and considered the following bills:

**Bill No. 123 - the Liquor Control Act (amended).**

**Bill No. 124 - the Public Trustee Act (amended).**

**Bill No. 126 - the Nova Scotia Wine Authority Act.**

**Bill No. 129 - the Motor Carrier Act (amended).**

**Bill No. 131 - the Powers of Attorney Act (amended).**

**Bill No. 134 - the Motor Vehicle Act (amended).**

**Bill No. 137 - the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended).**

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

without amendments, and the Chair has been instructed to recommend these bills to the favourable consideration of the House.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise and meet again on Wednesday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Tomorrow is Opposition Day so I will ask the Opposition House Leader to call their business. I would like to note that after their agenda, we will move directly into debate on Budget Estimates.

As we already know - information for the members - the Law Amendments process will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. to see Bills No. 143, 145, 147, and 148.

THE SPEAKER: The Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: After Daily Routine and Question Period, for debate on Opposition Day we will be calling Bill No. 110, the Nova Scotia Housing Corporation Act; and Bill No. 156, the Acadian and Francophone Education Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Wednesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until April 13<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 10:38 p.m.]

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**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 227**

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas the birth of a child is a momentous event and marks the beginning of a very satisfying journey down a long road where the rewards far outnumber the challenges; and

Whereas “A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities.” author Eda J. LeShan wrote; and

Whereas on April 9th Natasha Warner and Devin Whynot welcomed their son Lincoln Richard Mark Whynot into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Natasha and Devin on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more years as happy parents.