



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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

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

First Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
RESIGNATION OF CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER:	
The Speaker	2311
PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES:	
Law Amendments Committee,	
Hon. B. Johns	2312
Law Amendments Committee,	
Hon. B. Johns	2313
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 228, Shub. Radio Comm. Ctr.: Dispatch Servs. - Recog.,	
Hon. C. LeBlanc	2313
Vote - Affirmative.....	2314
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 160, An Act to Establish a Seniors Advocate,	
G. Burrill	2314
No. 161, An Act to Establish a Tax Credit for Clean Hydrogen Energy,	
Hon. I. Rankin.....	2314
No. 162, An Act to Amend Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2011, the Public	

Procurement Act, Respecting Transparency in Public-private Partnerships, S. Leblanc.....	2314
No. 163, An Act Respecting Appointments to the Provincial Court and the Family Court, Hon. I. Rankin.....	2314
No. 164, An Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 1996, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Respecting Mental Health, K. Coombes.....	2314
No. 165, An Act to Repeal or Amend Various Statutes Respecting Labour Relations, K. Coombes.....	2314
No. 166, An Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1992, the Emergency “911” Act, E. Smith-McCrossin	2314
No. 167, An Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act, Respecting a State of Emergency, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2314
NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 229, 2SLGBTQ+ Com.: Action Plan Needed - Recog., L. Lachance.....	2315
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Grondin, Clarence: Death of - Tribute Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	2316
Sicheran, Rianna: Constit. Office Work - Recog., R. DiCostanzo	2316
The Pilates Barre: 3 rd Yr. of Op. - Congrats., S. Hansen	2316
Voluns.: Bldg. Outdoor Rinks - Congrats., Hon. B. Wong	2317
Provo, Kardeisha: Short Film on N. Preston - Recog., A. Simmonds.....	2317
IWK Child Life Team: Med. Proc. Prep. - Recog., L. Lachance.....	2318
Barkhouse, Harold: 85 th Birthday - Best Wishes, D. Ritcey	2318
Jaume, R./Gerard, A.-P.: Boulodrome Opening - Recog., R. LeBlanc	2319
Well Engineered: Housing Projs. - Thanks, S. Leblanc	2320
Ullock, Sharon: Com. Serv. - Thanks, M. Sheehy-Richard	2320
Hopkins, Ritchie: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	2321
BEC Bears: Ch’ship. Win - Congrats., K. Coombes.....	2321
Canc. Awar. Mo.: Screening Import. - Recog., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2322
Milford & Dist. Vol. Fire Dept.: 80 th Anniv. - Congrats., John A. MacDonald	2322
Elliott, Sharon: Sr. Safety Prom. - Thanks,	

C. Kerr.....	2322
Culligan, Mark: Work on Housing - Recog., S. Hansen	2323
Peggy's Cove Fest. Of the Arts: Celeb. Art - Recog., D. Barkhouse.....	2323
Atkinson, Suzanne: 10 th Novel Pub. - Congrats., Hon. K. Regan.....	2324
Ronald McDonald House: Supp. for Families - Recog., L. Lachance.....	2324
Sack. Bus. Assoc.: Sack. Snow Days Fest. - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	2325
Gordon, Matthew: Clothing Drive Org. - Recog., Hon. I. Rankin.....	2325
Blue Heron Farm: Food Bank Dons. - Thanks., K. Coombes.....	2326
Graves, Rob: Com. Serv. - Thanks, C. Palmer.....	2327
Fredette, Hormidas: 105 th Birthday - Best Wishes, Hon. K. Irving.....	2327
ABSW: Work During Pandemic - Recog., S. Leblanc	2327
Margarit, Sebastian & Brenna: Malagash Cidery - Recog., E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2328
Guidry, Noah: Snow Shovelling - Recog., Hon. B. Adams.....	2328
Allano's Cater. Serv.: Many Yrs. of Serv. - Thanks, A. Duale	2329
Crawford, Jack: 1 st Book Pub. - Congrats., L. Harrison	2329
Hfx. Port Workers: Hard Work - Thanks, Hon. B. Maguire	2329
Edwards, Al: Retirement - Best Wishes, Hon. B. Comer	2330
Sandy Lake-Sack. Riv. Reg'l. Park Coal.: Hab. Prot. - Recog., B. Clark.....	2330
Doiron, Jo-Anne: Female Coach of Yr. Awd. - Congrats., Hon. M. Thompson.....	2330
O'Hara, Phil: Death of - Tribute, L. Nicoll	2331
Hebb's Cross & Bridg. Vol. Fire Depts.: Com. Spirit - Thanks, Hon. B. Druhan.....	2331
St. F.X. Grads.: Eng. Pgm. Grad. - Congrats., F. Tilley.....	2332
Dupuis, Al: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon. J. Balsler.....	2332
Chamberlain, A./Bennett, D.: CA Work - Thanks,	

R. DiCostanzo	2333
Cecchetto, Julia: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. J. Lohr	2333
Eye World: Optician Servs. - Recog., L. Nicoll	2334
Campbell, Ian & Kathy: Camp. Work - Thanks, Hon. P. Dunn.....	2334
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 458, Prem.: RCMP Contract Review - Inform, Hon. I. Rankin.....	2335
No. 459, Prem.: Climate Plan Funding - Explain, G. Burrill	2336
No. 460, DOJ - RCMP in Muns.: Inc. Costs - Explain, C. Kerr.....	2338
No. 461, DOJ: Victim Serv. Consult. Plans - Explain, L. Nicoll	2338
No. 462, DOJ: Legal Aid Funding - Explain, Hon. B. Maguire	2339
No. 463, DAE - Univ. St. Anne Fac.: Mtg. Req. - Honour, L. Lachance.....	2340
No. 464, EMO - Emerg. Alerts: Wrong Info. - Prevent, A. Simmonds.....	2341
No. 465, DOJ - Gun Violence: Prev. Plan - Commit, A. Simmonds.....	2342
No. 466, DOJ - Mass Cas. Comm.: Interf. Concerns - Discuss, Hon. K. Regan.....	2344
No. 467, OEARI - Letter to Prem.: No Resp. - Explain, S. Hansen	2345
No. 468, DOJ: Access to Info. Legsn. - Details, F. Tilley.....	2346
No. 469, DOJ: Med. Health Info. Threat - Concern, Hon. B. Jessome.....	2347
No. 470, EMO: 911 Misdirected Calls - Address, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	2347
No. 471, DOJ: FOIPOP Legsn. Comm. - Update, B. Clark	2348
No. 472, DHW - NSHA Lead. Team: Account. - Address, R. DiCostanzo	2350
No. 473, DHW - NSHA Lead. Team: Black Rep. - Address, A. Simmonds.....	2351
POINT OF ORDER, C. Chender	2352
OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 156, Acadian and Francophone Education Act R. LeBlanc	2353
L. Lachance.....	2356

Hon. C. LeBlanc	2359
T. Boudreau.....	2363
Hon. I. Rankin.....	2365
S. Leblanc	2368
Hon. T. Halman.....	2369
No. 110, Nova Scotia Housing Corporation Act	
L. Nicoll	2370
S. Hansen	2371
John A. MacDonald	2373
B. Clark.....	2374
Hon. B. Jessome.....	2375
ADJOURNMENT:	
MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):	
Gov't. (N.S.): Indoor Mask Req. and Vacc. Booster - Promote,	
Hon. I. Rankin.....	2376
C. Chender	2379
C. Palmer.....	2382
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:	
ON MOTION FOR SUPPLY:	
K. Coombes.....	2385
S. Hansen	2388
S. Leblanc	2392
HOUSE RECESSED AT 5:40 P.M.	2396
HOUSE RESOLVED INTO CW ON SUPPLY AT 5:55 P.M.	2396
HOUSE RECONVENED AT 10:05 P.M.	2396
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Thur., April 14 th at 10:06 p.m.....	2397
NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):	
Res. 230, Merry, Tanya & Catlin: Daughter - Birth Congrats.,	
Hon. K. Masland.....	2398



HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 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. Before we start the daily routine, I want to bring everyone's attention to a letter that was received at the Speaker's Office on April 11th that I'll read some excerpts from. The letter says:

Dear Mr. Speaker,

Please accept this letter as official notice of my retirement, effective June 1, 2022, from the position of Chief Electoral Officer for the Province of Nova Scotia.

It has been a privilege to be part of the Elections Nova Scotia team for the last 14 years. The professionalism and dedication of the ENS staff and the work they do is truly something I am proud of. I feel I am leaving ENS in a strong position to continue to be an innovative leader amongst electoral management bodies in Canada.

I am also grateful for the wise counsel of the Chair and members of the Election Commission and appreciate the supportive working relationships I have experienced with the registered political parties. I have been honoured to serve Nova Scotia since 2012 as the CEO and wholeheartedly thank the members of the House of Assembly for their trust and confidence in me.

Yours truly,
Richard Temporale,
Chief Electoral Officer

On your behalf, I want to congratulate Mr. Temporale on his retirement and thank him for his years of service and to wish him the very best. (Applause)

Also, before we start, the subject matter for late debate has been chosen and it was submitted by the honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect:

Whereas the Nova Scotia government has stated we are transitioning to personal responsibility for their COVID response while medical health experts continue to recommend wearing masks and getting vaccinated to protect themselves, their communities, and the health care system;

Therefore be it resolved that the Province of Nova Scotia consider reinstating the mask requirements for indoor public places until the end of April and start to encourage Nova Scotians to get their booster shot of vaccine to mitigate more severe impacts to our health care system.

That will take place at the moment of interruption.

We will now begin the daily routine

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

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

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

Bill No. 148 - Mi'kmaw Language Act.

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

Further, Mr. Speaker, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 145 - Electricity Act (amended).

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, with certain amendments.

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

RESOLUTION NO. 228

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

Whereas National Public Safety Telecommunications Week is April 10th to 16th;
and

Whereas the Department of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services is home to the Public Safety and Field Communications Division; and

Whereas the division includes the Shubenacadie Radio Communication Centre, which provides a critical service to provincial government departments and many other public safety organizations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in recognizing Shubie Radio, the entire Public Safety and Field Communications team, and all the province's telecommunicators, who provide such valued mission-critical dispatch services to our first responders and public service employees in the field.

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. 160 - Entitled an Act to Establish a Seniors Advocate. (Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 161 - Entitled an Act to Establish a Tax Credit for Clean Hydrogen Energy. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

Bill No. 162 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2011, the Public Procurement Act, Respecting Transparency in Public-private Partnerships. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 163 - Entitled an Act Respecting Appointments to the Provincial Court and the Family Court. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

Bill No. 164 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 1996, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Respecting Mental Health. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 165 - Entitled an Act to Repeal or Amend Various Statutes Respecting Labour Relations. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 166 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1992, the Emergency "911" Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 167 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act, Respecting a State of Emergency. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

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

[1:15 p.m.]

RESOLUTION NO. 229

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

Whereas the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Nova Scotia is a diverse, vibrant, all-ages community of communities, leading and contributing to Nova Scotia across all sectors; and

Whereas over the past 30 years the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Nova Scotia has fought to enforce and advance the social, political, and economic rights guaranteed by governments and Legislatures to all individuals and communities; and

Whereas the 2SLGBTQ+ community nevertheless continues to face marginalization and discrimination in accessing provincial government services; and

Whereas the House of Assembly and the Government of Nova Scotia are constitutionally obligated to ensure that every Nova Scotian is equal before and under the law, and that every Nova Scotian enjoys the same substantive protection and benefits; and

Whereas the composition and portfolios of ministers of the Executive Council may be altered at any time as a matter of prerogative in response to the needs of Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the current government's first Speech from the Throne and first budget are both silent on 2SLGBTQ+ issues;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly acknowledge with renewed commitment the need to engage with the 2SLGBTQ+ community to actively assess opportunities and to secure access to services; and

Be it further resolved that the Government of Nova Scotia appoint a minister to Executive Council who shall be responsible for the 2SLGBTQ+ community and who shall be expressly mandated to develop a 2SLGBTQ+ action plan for Nova Scotia. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

GRONDIN, CLARENCE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I rise today to acknowledge the passing of a neighbour, friend, and community leader, Mr. Clarence Grondin. Though born in Halifax, Clary long ago made his way to Riverport, where he became a force and a fixture of community life.

He was a scallop fisherman, a commercial diver, a small engine mechanic, and more recently a water dowsing. He was a comedian at heart, though a man of few words, and for 24 years he served as the fire chief of the volunteer fire department.

When I moved from Lunenburg to Bayport - all that way - 30 years ago, he and his wife Dorothy were the very first people to welcome me. My deepest condolences to Dorothy, their son Kevin, their extended family, and the entire community that mourns him.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

SICHERAN, RIANNA: CONSTIT. OFFICE WORK - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to recognize and thank Rianna Sicheran, who is currently completing her Halifax West IB co-op placement hours at my office. Rianna is a bright and smart young woman who has a keen interest in politics and law. She has shown such enthusiasm and initiative with the work that goes on in our office.

I'm so pleased that the House has been in session during her placement, because she has had the opportunity to learn about budget and the legislative process and the House proceedings. In fact, Rianna has gone above and beyond in the work she has produced, and I wouldn't be surprised if we will see her sitting in the Legislature one day.

I would ask that the House join me in recognizing Rianna for her wonderful support that she has given to our constituency office, and I wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

THE PILATES BARRE: 3RD YR. OF OP. - CONGRATS

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to congratulate The Pilates Barre on their 3rd year in operation. Located on Hennessey Street in Halifax Needham, owner and operator Erika Ferguson founded The Pilates Barre with small classes in mind to offer a community feel. Having started just before the COVID-19 pandemic, Erika had to quickly shift to an online presence to keep her small business afloat. She also advocated not only for her business, but other small businesses in the neighbourhood.

Self-care and intentional movement are part of the method taught at this small and bright studio. Erika also offers workshops and teacher training and is a skilled instructor, offering deep insights into the body through her own journey with scoliosis.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the members join me in congratulating Erika Ferguson and The Pilates Barre staff on their third successful year and wish them many more years too of business and wellness.

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

VOLUNS.: BLDG. OUTDOOR RINKS - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN WONG: It is because of the generosity of many volunteers that members of our communities were able to enjoy fun outdoor physical activity with their friends and families.

Two volunteer groups, one from Grand Lake and the other from Waverley, each took on the huge challenge to build and provide outdoor rinks for their communities. From planning to fundraising to building and maintaining the rink, many volunteers are needed.

I would like to thank all those community members who volunteered their time and talent to support these projects. It is wonderful to see families, friends, and neighbours enjoy the outdoors with such a fun Winter activity.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating both groups on their hard work and their support for our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

PROVO, KARDEISHA: SHORT FILM ON N. PRESTON - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge Kardeisha Provo, a proud resident of North Preston.

Kardeisha is using her videos and the internet to share what she loves about her community with her friends, family, and anyone else who wants to watch. "Everything in my life came from my environment and I want to share that," she says as she wades through teenage life growing up in North Preston. She chronicles her friends, family, and thoughts on this.

Kardeisha hopes sharing her own life experiences and lessons will help influence other teens. She says, "I want to be real, like real-life things are not so filtered." Kardeisha Provo is setting out to change the perception and stereotypes people have about her beloved community, North Preston.

Provo is one of the five Halifax filmmakers selected as part of the mentorship program Being Black in Canada. The free program is presented by Netflix and is the largest mentorship program of its kind.

I'd like to ask this House to honour and congratulate Kardeisha Provo on being part of *North Preston: The Untold Story*. She's using her passion for film to bring the complex realities the people living in North Preston face in this world daily.

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

IWK CHILD LIFE TEAM: MED. PROC. PREP. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Accessing medical services in a hospital setting can be difficult and frightening for anyone. For children, especially those with complex and chronic health concerns, frequent visits can be challenging.

The Child Life Team at the IWK is made up of child life specialists, a therapeutic clown, and a music therapist. Through therapeutic clay and distraction techniques, the Child Life Team helps prepare patients and their families for medical examinations or procedures.

My children always look forward to doing programs with Buddington or Nana Margie, the two therapeutic clowns, or spending time with the therapy dog. My daughter said that the IWK playroom was "the best place in town." The outdoor play area allowed our family to spend time together during long stays. They assisted with pre-operative planning, and they met us for regular blood draws.

Mr. Speaker, let's all recognize the enormous contributions of the Child Life Team at the IWK Health Centre.

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

BARKHOUSE, HAROLD: 85TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

DAVE RITCEY: It is my pleasure to rise today to wish happy birthday to a tireless community and passionate sports volunteer, Mr. Harold Barkhouse. Harold is recognized in Truro as being "the voice of the Bearcats".

From his career as an on-ice official for many games throughout Nova Scotia, he later transitioned to timekeeper, statistician, and announcer for some of the most memorable hockey games played in Truro and Brookfield over the last 30-plus years, including the 1998 Allan Cup Canadian Championship.

Not only does Harold continue to do announcing and stats on weekends for the Truro Major U15 Bearcats, Sea Cougars, and the Truro Junior A Bearcats, he also is an active community volunteer.

But his most cherished role and what he values most is his family, as a loving husband to Helen, a father and role model to Sandra, Eileen, and Dale, and a grandfather to his seven grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of the House to join me in wishing my good friend and a true gentleman, Harold Barkhouse, a happy 85th birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

JAUME, R./GÉRARD, A.-P.: BOULODROME OPENING - RECOG.

LEBLANC, RONNIE : Le 25 septembre dernier, la municipalité de Clare et le Club de pétanque Boule acadienne ont invité le public à l'inauguration du nouveau Boulodrome, la piste de pétanque situé au parc municipal Joseph-et-Marie-Dugas à l'Anse-des-Belliveau. Cette piste relève de l'initiative de Rolland Jaume, le président du club, et Alain-Philippe Gérard, une initiative fondée sur leur conviction qu'une piste de pétanque serait un ajout formidable dans notre communauté.

La pétanque, un sport qui se joue dans 110 pays, est une activité pour tous les âges et une belle activité familiale. Grâce à l'achèvement du Boulodrome, nos gens ont maintenant l'occasion de découvrir la raison de la popularité de ce sport.

Monsieur le Président, je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour reconnaître les efforts de Rolland Jaume et Alain-Philippe Gérard, de tels efforts ayant un impact le plus positif dans nos communautés.

On September 25 of last year, the Municipality of Clare and the Club de pétanque la Boule acadienne invited the public to the grand opening of the recently completed Boulodrome at the Joseph-et-Marie-Dugas Municipal Park in Belliveaus Cove. This pétanque court was the initiative of Rolland Jaume, the president of the Club de pétanque Boule acadienne and Alain-Philippe Gérard, who believed a site to play pétanque would be a terrific addition to the area.

A sport currently played in 110 countries, it's fun for all ages and a great family activity. Now the residents of Clare and our visitors can go to the park and discover why this is such a popular sport.

I ask that all members join me in recognizing the efforts of individuals, as well as those of Rolland Jaume and Alain-Philippe Gérard that ended up adding so much to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

WELL ENGINEERED: HOUSING PROJS. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: I rise today to recognize a Burnside business that has harnessed its skills and expertise to respond to this province's housing and homelessness crisis.

Well Engineered, a manufacturing company specializing in civil construction, is responsible for some high-profile emergency housing projects in this city and province. These include the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth's Winter shelters and the Elizabeth Fry Society and Christ Church modular homes installed just last week.

Well Engineered also recently donated two specifically crafted metal boxes to the city to store food for the occupants of Meagher Park, better known as the People's Park. Well Engineered's involvement in these important projects is driven by the idea that each and every person deserves to have their basic needs met regardless of their background or situation - in other words, that housing is a human right.

I ask the House to join me in thanking Well Engineered owner and senior engineer Stephen Robertson and the whole staff team for their commitment to our unhoused neighbours and making this province a better and kinder place.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

ULLOCK, SHARON: COM. SERV. - THANKS

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: It is my true pleasure to rise today to recognize Sharon Ullock of Windsor. Sharon is an excellent example of what community volunteerism looks like. Although retired, she certainly has not slowed down.

Sharon was quick to step in and help at my constituency office when I was newly elected to help get things up and running. To this day, we can call on her, and she is more than happy to lend an ear, a hand, or advice, and greets everyone she meets with her quick wit and her contagious smile.

Not only does she help the office when needed, but she was also keen to volunteer and train new volunteers to help with the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program to help serve our constituents. She also volunteers, along with her husband Harry, with our Junior B hockey team, the Valley Maple Leafs.

Whatever the need, big or small, Sharon is quick to help and look for solutions. Very few people in our community would not know her name or know her kindness. I ask

that all members join me in thanking Sharon for not only being a friend but also a community leader and an all-around great person.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HOPKINS, RITCHIE: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: After nearly 46 years, Yarmouth's Ritchie Hopkins has pumped gas for the last time at D.K. Muise Motors.

Ritchie was the last surviving, longest-serving employee of this beloved gas station, which opened in 1955 and was later owned by generations of the Murphy family before Kerry and Daniel Muise took it over as D.K. Muise Motors 12 years ago.

Ritchie began working there in 1976. Although he also had other jobs during the years, he says working at the garage was his favourite job always, thanks to the customers, his employers, and the social bonds he made there. Ritchie's best memories of working at the garage are of all the customers over the years. We know all of those customers loved him right back.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Yarmouth's Ritchie Hopkins for 46 years of superior customer service, hard work, kindness, and friendship, and wish him good health and happiness in the future.

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

BEC BEARS: CH'SHIP. WIN - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: It's time for my sports report. I rise today to congratulate the Breton Education Centre Bears for their win this past weekend. BEC not only hosted the School Sport Nova Scotia Division 2 Boys Basketball event but also picked up a championship title in the process. The boys downed the Amherst Vikings 84-40 Sunday afternoon to win the gold medal at the BEC gym in New Waterford.

I also congratulate the BEC girls on a fantastic season. Although they did not win gold in Cole Harbour over the weekend, the BEC Division 2 girls team had an amazing season. Second place is nothing to be ashamed of and should be celebrated.

Congratulations to all on this successful season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

[1:30 p.m.]

CANC. AWAR. MO.: SCREENING IMPORT. - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: April is Cancer Awareness Month, and I'm sure each one of us here in the House of Assembly has been affected deeply by this terrible and often tragic disease. As a five-year-old child, I lost my mother to cancer. At the time, I didn't know what the cause of death was until my grandmother sat me down a few years later to explain that she had a mole that changed, that grew and started to bleed, and it was too late once she got it looked into.

As a mother of a 16-year-old son with cancer, I have known the anguish of worry that it could take him from me. That same son won Male Athlete of the Year last year from Mount Saint Vincent University. We know cancer can be beaten. We have seen it. I have witnessed it myself.

We should never give up on looking for a cure. I encourage each one of us to make sure we're getting our early screening tests done and always be on the lookout for cancer early.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

MILFORD & DIST. VOL. FIRE DEPT.: 80TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, after a fire burned down a general store in 1942, the residents of Milford decided to organize their own fire department - and 2022 marks the 80th year of its existence.

The Milford and District Volunteer Fire Department currently has nearly 20 member volunteers and has been instrumental in keeping the community safe. They not only provide aid in their own area but have given countless hours of assistance outside of their district.

I would like to congratulate all of the firefighters who have donated their time and talent to the Milford and District Volunteer Fire Department over the last 80 years, and for their dedication and devotion to ensuring fire safety for our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

ELLIOTT, SHARON: SR. SAFETY PROM. - THANKS

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, since 1996, older adults in Annapolis County have benefited greatly from the exceptional efforts of our Senior Safety Program coordinator, Sharon Elliott.

The Senior Safety Program offers a broad range of helpful safety programming designed to promote the well-being, independence, and safety of seniors. The program began in Annapolis, and Sharon was the first coordinator in the province. Through her work, Sharon has positively impacted the lives of seniors in our community in so many ways, including helping them obtain housing, leave abusive situations, avoid scams, access social programs, navigate the justice system, obtain eyeglasses and hearing aids, and connect to mental health supports. We frequently hear stories of her great work from folks who visit my office in Annapolis.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Sharon Elliott for her passionate and tireless work as a champion for older adults in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

CULLIGAN, MARK: WORK ON HOUSING - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mark Culligan, a community worker with Dalhousie Legal Aid. He has been researching and speaking about the housing crisis, especially as it pertains to rentals, since he came on board in 2019. Speaking out about loopholes in residential tenancy law, including illegal rent increases and evictions, Mark has become a trusted voice and a resource for our constituency office in Halifax Needham. Mark has delivered presentations on the state of housing in Nova Scotia, including statistics on the dramatic rise in case numbers of those in need of help through Dalhousie Legal Aid.

I would like all the members here in this House to please join me in recognizing the important work that is being done by Mark Culligan and the students working with him at Dalhousie Legal Aid.

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

PEGGY'S COVE FEST. OF THE ARTS: CELEB. ART - RECOG.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, since 2011, the Peggy's Cove Festival of the Arts has brought together artists, tourists, and the community to Celebrate Art, which is their slogan for this year's festival.

Between July 8th and 17th, there will be an outdoor painting event with over 40 local and international artists whose art will be sold at the festival. It will also include a children's art tent and a studio tour. The studio tour will include over 70 studio artists, galleries, and art groups welcoming visitors through their doors.

This is a unique opportunity to meet and interact with painters, potters, sculptors, wood and glass workers, and jewellery artists at work in their studio.

I would like to encourage the members of the Legislature to join me in Peggy's Cove to celebrate art at this year's festival.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

ATKINSON, SUZANNE: 10TH NOVEL PUB. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give a shoutout to the founder of the Bedford Authors Group. Suzanne Atkinson has just published her 10th novel. This is a huge achievement. Suzanne's latest is called *Fictional Truth* and it's in the cozy mystery genre. I have to admit I had not heard of this genre before, but it turns out that I am a devotee of them.

Cozy mysteries tend to feature an amateur sleuth and the action takes place in a socially intimate setting - think Agatha Christie's Ms. Marple or Jessica Fletcher from *Murder, She Wrote*. Cozy mysteries have been growing in popularity in recent years - think about streaming services like BritBox and Acorn, you see a lot of them on there. This is Suzanne's fourth novel to feature her protagonist Stella Kirk.

I want to congratulate her and assure her that I will be curling up with a Stella Kirk mystery this Summer.

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

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE: SUPP. FOR FAMILIES - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge Ronald McDonald House. The Ronald McDonald House charity provides a home away from home for families with sick children. One of these homes is located right here in my constituency, near the IWK.

Staff and volunteers provide meals and support in the IWK, as well as overnight accommodations to families who are from out of town.

The Halifax location is celebrating over 40 years of incredible work in supporting families. They help about 600 families each year, but they also have had to turn away about 400 families each year in recent times. More Room for Love is the campaign for a new site that will open in 2023, and will enable them to serve an additional 400 families each year.

I ask that my colleagues in this House join with me in recognizing the role of Ronald McDonald House in keeping families safe, happy and together during difficult times.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

SACK. BUS. ASSOC.: SACK. SNOW DAYS FEST. - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the staff of the Sackville Business Association, along with the organizing team of the Sackville Snow Days Festival.

The 8th annual Sackville Snow Days Festival was held from February 18 to 21, and once again during the COVID-19 pandemic was able to find safe ways to bring the community together to celebrate and bring fun to the Winter season.

I'd like to ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Sackville Business Association, along with the countless community groups, organizations, businesses, volunteers, and sponsors who continue to support the Sackville Snow Days Festival each year. Without their commitment and hard work, this Winter fun weekend would not be possible.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

GORDON, MATTHEW: CLOTHING DRIVE ORG. - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Matthew Gordon. Matthew's life changed forever when his father, Ken, was killed in a highway traffic accident. Matthew was only 10 at the time.

Weeks after his death, Matthew asked his mother what they would do with his father's clothing that was just sitting in bags. Together, Matthew and Lorna decided that it would be a fitting tribute to donate Ken's clothing to the Salvation Army and organize a clothing drive to honour Ken. The Salvation Army was selected for a special reason: Ken, who struggled with alcoholism, was able to overcome his addiction through the help, support, and guidance of the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army provided a safe and comfortable place for Ken to recover, where he was not negatively judged.

Over the years, Matthew's annual clothing drive has been an enormous success and has helped hundreds of men get new clothes, get job interviews, and succeed in getting jobs. To celebrate and mark Ken's 59th birthday this past January, Matthew at the age of 15 started a non-profit named the Ken Gordon Society to help homeless men in our communities and keep Ken's memory alive.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Matthew for his generosity and compassion to help others during exceedingly difficult and challenging times in their life.

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

BLUE HERON FARM: FOOD BANK DONS. - THANKS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, Leonard and Monique Vassallo of Blue Heron Farm in Gardiner Mines - their farm stretches over an acre and now produces over 50 varieties of vegetables. Blue Heron Farm mainly sells to the Cape Breton Farmers' Market and the Cape Breton Food Hub. However, anything left unsold as well as anything they have in excess is donated to the Glace Bay Food Bank. They've been partnered with the food bank for about eight years now and, since the farm began in 2013, it's an arrangement that is going strong.

The Vassallos estimate that their farm has sent between \$10,000 to \$20,000 in produce to the Glace Bay Food Bank each year. Vassallo said his favourite part about donating produce is seeing the food bank's clients waiting for him when he gets there.

Food insecurity is on the rise, and I want to thank Leonard and Monique for donating fresh produce to the food banks that don't often receive it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

GRAVES, ROB: COM. SERV. - THANKS

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to rise today to recognize Rob Graves from Aylesford, one of Kings West greatest volunteers, as well as a very successful businessperson.

Rob's list of community work is extensive. he is known as a "get things done guy," not only in Annapolis Valley but all over Nova Scotia. He currently chairs the provincial Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, runs and coaches the Kingston/Greenwood Minor Baseball organization, and assists in training youth in Aikido.

Rob is always willing to help out for any charitable event that pops up, including donating food from his Harvey's Restaurant & Swiss Chalet. He's also a very successful real estate broker in the Annapolis Valley. He just currently helped my daughter and her fiancé acquire their first home.

Busy people get things done and on top of everything Rob commits to, I was so thankful he agreed to manage my campaign in the last provincial election. He excels at leading teams and his leadership played a huge role in our victory last August, as well as in our transition in the months afterwards. I'll be forever grateful to Rob for his commitment to me and my family.

Please join me in thanking a valued entrepreneur, community leader and my amazing friend, Rob Graves, for everything he does to enrich the lives of everyone who knows him.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

FREDETTE, HORMIDAS: 105TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, this member's statement is pretty special, and I'm honoured to deliver it and share it with the House.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary Nova Scotian who has a unique perspective on our country, because he is one of the few remaining veterans of the Second World War Battle of Hong Kong.

Early this week on April 11th, Mr. Hormidas Fredette of New Minas celebrated his 105th birthday. Hormidas was held in a Japanese prisoner of war camp for nearly four years. Canadians have learned what extraordinary courage and resilience and brotherhood it took to survive being a prisoner of war. Undoubtedly, this experience contributed to the stubbornness that his son Brian, with whom he lives, attributes to his long life.

It's always an honour and a privilege to meet constituents who embody the word "valour" and to recognize the courage and bravery asked of them in serving our country.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Hormidas Fredette on celebrating his 105th birthday and his remarkable service to Canada. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ABSW: WORK DURING PANDEMIC - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I was very happy when the Association of Black Social Workers moved into their new offices on Victoria Road right in the heart of Dartmouth North. The Nova Scotia chapter of the ABSW, a volunteer charitable group made up of Black social workers and human service workers, was founded in 1979.

Throughout the pandemic, the ABSW has worked with the Health Association of African Canadians to keep community up to date by organizing town halls and distributing a province-wide newsletter.

ABSW and HAAC also co-organize mass vaccine clinics keeping people safe and contributing greatly to the province's vaccine efforts. In my constituency office, we've also referred many constituents to the ABSW's toll-free COVID-19 number, which provides support to members of the Black and African Nova Scotian community impacted by the stress of the pandemic or just life in general.

I ask the House to join me in expressing appreciation and gratitude for the good work of the Association of Black Social Workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The member for Cumberland North.

MARGARIT, SEBASTIAN & BRENNA: MALAGASH CIDERY - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Dr. Sebastian Margarit and his wife Brenna of Malagash, who run the Malagash Cidery at Vista Bella Farm. Sebastian and Brenna have been running the cidery since April 2017 and have owned the farm since 2012. Sebastian has years of experience in apple orchards around the world and is proud to bring his authentic and natural cider to Nova Scotia.

They are both pillars of our community and do great things beyond their incredible home-grown business. Food security and local food is so important for our province, and their expertise should be inspiring for us all. Brenna is also a skilled and devoted social worker; Sebastian is VP of Informatics and Agronomy at NutriAg.

Together they have bettered our area, and through hard work and creativity, I encourage all people to stop by over the coming months at the Malagash Cidery and see and taste for yourselves.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

GUIDRY, NOAH: SNOW SHOVELLING - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to eight-year-old Noah Guidry for his acts of kindness and dedication to his community and for helping others in need.

A local business has been the grateful recipient of Noah's no-cost shovelling. All Winter long, Noah shovelled the designated handicapped parking space along with their ramp. Proud parents Perry and Deesha are hoping Noah will continue helping to give back to the community they cherish.

I ask all Members of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing Noah Guidry, who at a young age has chosen kindness and compassion and a sense of giving back to those in need. We look forward to your continued support, Noah.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALLANO'S CATER. SERV.: MANY YRS. OF SERV. - THANKS

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Allano's Catering Service, a world-class restaurant serving up both traditional and modern Filipino dishes. Whether you are looking for a meal for one or a meal for 50, Allano's can deliver - from fish belly to breaded chicken to a cassava cake for dessert. I wish to thank Allano's for their many years of service and for helping to bring Filipino culture to Nova Scotia one bite at a time.

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

CRAWFORD, JACK: 1ST BOOK PUB. - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I want to share the incredible story of how Jack Crawford from Hilden became a self-published author at the age of 12.

Jack enjoys writing and discovered that it was a great guise for seeming to be doing homework. Although he faced a bit of trouble when his parents discovered he wasn't handing in assignments, he also managed to complete his first book, titled *The Tales of Nalor*. Unbeknownst to his parents, he reached out to two publishers, one of whom got back in touch with Jack. After confirming legitimacy, the publishing process and fundraising process began, and nearly all 250 copies of the first print have been sold and Jack would like to see a local publisher pick up the book.

This is a heart-warming tale and I wish to congratulate Jack on this remarkable accomplishment.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HFX. PORT WORKERS: HARD WORK - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize some of the unsung heroes of the last two years, all the men and women working at the Port of Halifax. Their hard work and long hours helped keep the food on our shelves, clothes on our backs, and the resources that we need the most. While we were all safe and warm in our homes, the members of the ILA worked in the rain, snow, and cold. They missed time with their families and loved ones. Thank you to all the unsung heroes of the ILA and all of you at the Port of Halifax.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

EDWARDS, AL: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. BRIAN COMER: I rise today to congratulate Al Edwards from Port Caledonia, Cape Breton, who logged off his last shift in March after 33 years of service as a paramedic.

Edwards was a senior operations paramedic for 12 years and served as a preceptor for primary care paramedic students. He also received the EMS Exemplary Service Medal and is particularly proud of serving on the original committee that laid the foundation for the EHS Operations' Peer and Family Support Services team. When asked what he will miss the most about this job, he said it would be probably everything about it, including his paramedic colleagues, his patients, and the friendships he has made with his fellow first responders.

I would like to take this time, Mr. Speaker, to wish Al Edwards all the best in his retirement and thank him for all his hard work and dedication to our island as an outstanding paramedic.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

SANDY LAKE-SACK. RIV. REG'L PARK COAL.: HAB. PROT. - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: Today I rise to recognize the dedicated volunteers and members of the Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition. This group is committed to the preservation and protection of over 2,000 acres of wildlife and aquatic habitat surrounding Sandy Lake and the Sackville River and its watershed.

This beautiful area supports over 100 species of wildlife and stands of old growth Acadian forest and is an important wildlife connector to the Chebucto Peninsula. The Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition is rightly concerned about the impact of the proposed Sandy Lake Special Planning Area on the unique environment of the area.

I ask all members of the House to recognize the Sandy Lake-Sackville River Regional Park Coalition for their efforts and advocacy to protect our remaining wild places.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

DOIRON, JO-ANNE: FEMALE COACH OF YR. AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Jo-Anne Doiron, who was recently named Female Coach of the Year at the Special Olympics Nova Scotia 28th Inspired Awards & Auction.

Special Olympics Nova Scotia is committed to enriching the lives of Nova Scotians with intellectual disabilities through sport. Their vision is that sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all over the world.

Jo-Anne has been volunteering as a coach for the Eastern Highland region for almost 24 years. Jo-Anne gives of her time and skills to athletes in our community, she encourages and supports the athletes she coaches, and she always plays a very special role in their lives.

Thank you, Jo-Anne, and all those involved in Special Olympics Nova Scotia who promote inclusion, dignity, and respect while supporting the Special Olympic athletes.

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

O'HARA, PHIL: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I ask that you don't rush me through this, because it's a life well lived. I'm honoured to stand today to remember a beloved family man and friend who sadly passed away on February 16, 2022.

Phil O'Hara grew up in Halifax and lived in HRM his whole life. He was married to his wife Janet for 43 years and is survived by Janet and their five adult children. Phil was a family man, a friend, and a mentor to many adopted young people.

A regular donor to Canada Blood Services, Phil made 343 blood donations. Every donation saves about eight lives. It's a selfless act of genuine caring for your fellow human beings. This was who Phil was.

Diagnosed with cancer in December 2019, Phil leaned on his faith and focused on living life to the fullest with dignity, courage, humour, and grace over the last two years. In his final message to his many friends and his family, he wrote, "I leave with the satisfaction that I had the good fortune to live a charmed life filled with love during every waking moment."

I ask that the members of the House of Assembly join me in acknowledging Phil O'Hara for a life well lived.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HEBB'S CROSS & BRIDG. VOL. FIRE DEPTS.: COM. SPIRIT - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Hebb's Cross and Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Departments. Engine 4, a 1996 Volvo pumper truck that

served and protected the community of Bridgewater proudly for years, was deemed surplus and donated in January to the Hebb's Cross Fire Department for a new lease on life.

In March, Hebb's Cross Fire Department paid this kindness forward by donating Tanker 2, a 1,200-gallon diesel tanker, for a most generous pay-it-forward gift to the Big Tancook Island Emergency Association to strengthen its firefighting equipment fleet, where Tanker 2 will now experience "island life."

Deputy Fire Chief Sheldon MacLeod says, "Hebb's Cross is grateful for the generosity of the Town of Bridgewater and for the opportunity to keep a Maritime-built truck in service for years to come. And it was in that spirit of gratitude that we are proud to pay it forward to support the community on Big Tancook Island."

I would ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking the Hebb's Cross and Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Departments and the Town of Bridgewater for their community spirit.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

ST. F.X. GRADS.: ENG. PGM. GRAD. - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the achievement of four young women in our community. Katie MacLennan, Jillian Ivey, Ainslie MacDonald, and Breagh MacNeil, four graduates of Memorial High School, will be graduating this May with their Engineering Diploma from St. Francis Xavier University.

All four will be attending Dalhousie University to complete their engineering degree in the Fall to finish engineering - two in mechanical engineering, one in chemical, and one in electrical.

I think this is a wonderful achievement and I want to congratulate these four young women on their engineering future. I think the House should congratulate them on their success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

DUPUIS, AL: COM. SERV. - RECOG.,

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a selfless individual. His name is Al Dupuis. Al has had a full journey in the music industry and now spends countless hours volunteering his talent to numerous community events and fundraisers.

During the first part of the pandemic, when many individuals were staying home to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Al performed on his front porch every Sunday afternoon

for his neighbors. This small performance provided connection and helped everyone to take their minds off the many stressors of the pandemic. Also, before Al retired from teaching, he would often perform concerts for all of his students.

I ask that members of this Legislature acknowledge Al Dupuis, his continuous generosity, and his great musical talent. Our communities would not be the same if it weren't for selfless volunteers like Al.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CHAMBERLAIN, A./BENNETT, D.: CA WORK - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank my two part-time CAs. Both are sharing the job - Alxys Chamberlain and Dylan Bennett. I'm blessed to have them both.

Alxys has many skills and an incredible knowledge of this Legislature. She has been a CA, she has been an EA, and she has been the backbone of my office.

I also want to thank all the CAs. We wouldn't be able to do our jobs here without them. We start them early in the morning at 8:00 or 8:30 to do all the e-mails. They are incredible and dedicated.

I have so much respect for our CAs and their work and especially Alxys and Dylan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

CECCHETTO, JULIA: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Julia Cecchetto on her retirement from the Kentville Police Force, where she served as the Chief of Police for four years.

Chief Cecchetto is celebrated as the first woman to lead a police department in our province. Her top accomplishments as the Kentville Police Chief include increasing diversity, the institution of an employee assistance program, and building relationships in and with the community.

Please join me today to recognize and thank Chief Julia Cecchetto for her dedication and service to her community as she retires from the Kentville Police Force.

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

EYE WORLD: OPTICIAN SERVS. - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize an outstanding local family business in our community.

Eye World has been serving residents of Dartmouth for over 41 years. Their first home was located at Mic Mac Mall. Now Eye World is found on Baker Drive in Dartmouth.

Greg Dickens, the owner and dispensing optician, has always been interested in the optical field since he was a young child. He is a third-generation optician. His late grandfather Donald Dickens, father Ray Dickens, and his mother Catherine Dickens were all opticians with Eye World.

Greg started working out of high school, had an optical lab, and then went on to take optical dispensing courses. Greg finished at the top of his class, earning the Donald R. Dickens Memorial Award named after his grandfather.

Greg has been working for his family's business since 1985. The Dickens's family-run business has prided itself over the years on consistently offering professional and personal service.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing a family-owned local business, Eye World, and the Dickens family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

CAMPBELL, IAN & KATHY: CAMP. WORK - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, we all have our good friends through life and they play a very important part through both the good times and those not so good. Ian and Kathy Campbell are two such people that I am lucky enough to call friends.

All members in this House of Assembly can attest to the hard work that goes into being a campaign manager when we are out there knocking on doors during the election. The countless hours of organization, phone calls, election signs, duty rosters, food preparations, and the list goes on and on, only to be followed by cleanup and storage for the next time. The job is one of countless hours of total commitment during this hectic five-week period.

I'd like to take this time to thank both Ian and Kathy Campbell for being an incredible team, along with Ian's brother Allister Campbell, for managing my campaigns of 2017 and the 2021 in Pictou Centre. With their unending support, the office ran like a clock and as we know the results of those elections were successful for us. You can't keep a good team down.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

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

The honorable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: RCMP CONTRACT REVIEW - INFORM

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Nova Scotia's contract with the RCMP runs until 2032. There are regular reviews that are built into that agreement for a reason. In order to be sure that the cost of policing is worth the service that we are receiving, regular reviews are extremely important. I want to ask the Premier: Can he tell us if there will be a review or if there is a review under way under his government?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): I'm sure the Minister of Justice can give a more fulsome answer on the specific status of the situation. Obviously, we all remember the incredible tragedy that took place in Portapique, and Nova Scotians know that the Mass Casualty Commission is going through a process now. Certainly, they'll have some findings and no doubt some recommendations. I think it will be important and incumbent really upon the Province to receive those and assess those.

I'm sure the minister would have some more information on that. I would just say to the member that we understand how important this ongoing evaluation is. We certainly know that the work of the commission is really important work as well.

IAIN RANKIN: We are very eagerly awaiting the results of the Mass Casualty Commission. They're continuing to come out, and a lot of the public information is out there. They'll have an interim report in May.

A Freedom of Information request that we received says that a committee of Department of Justice staff, i.e., public safety, finance, legal, and policy, be established as an initial step to examine options to pursue a comprehensive review of policing in Nova Scotia, and present findings by the end of February 2021. That was over a year ago.

Given the additional \$20 million of cost that we know about for the RCMP, and multiple municipalities expressing concerns about affordability of the current model, there is no need to wait to have this review start. What is the reason to stall this critical work?

THE PREMIER: I'm not exactly sure of that, but it sounds like the recommendation was that the committee be put together while the member was Premier. I'm not sure if the member had a specific reason for not acting on that at the time, but I just want to assure the member that we take this very seriously. We know there are a lot of moving parts, but there's nothing more important to this government than the health and safety of Nova Scotians. This is a critical issue and we'll be ready to move forward on it at the appropriate time.

IAIN RANKIN: We did start that work. What I'm trying to figure out is if that work has stalled or if it's an excuse to wait until the end of the inquiry, because it's not just the inquiry and the findings coming out of it that are the impetus for the review. There are cost associations and a lot more that we're concerned about with the operations of the RCMP.

Reviews do take a significant amount of time. There is no reason why work shouldn't be continuing as it started under the prior government. With the preliminary findings coming out next month, can the Premier acknowledge that waiting until the commission is finished is wasting critical time?

THE PREMIER: I wouldn't say that waiting until you have all the information is a waste of time at all. I think that probably highlights a key difference between the former government and this government. We like to do the job properly when we do the job. If we need all the information, we will certainly wait for all the information, and use the time and energy to make sure we have the appropriate information. That's the way we approach this. That's how you come up with real solutions to real problems.

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

PREM.: CLIMATE PLAN FUNDING - EXPLAIN

GARY BURRILL: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its landmark sixth report, *Climate Change 2022*, six weeks ago. It incorporates the work of 270 authors from 67 countries. It concludes that the world faces unavoidable multiple climate hazards over the next two decades with global warning of 1.5 degrees. This is the situation in which the current budget provides no new funding for the climate plan that's slated to be released this Spring.

Will the Premier explain how he thinks his government is responding appropriately to the climate emergency with a climate plan that has no increase in funding?

THE PREMIER: We're very proud of the work the minister is doing. Obviously, we know the legislation that went before this House, passed this House back in the Fall. It was incredibly significant legislation.

I'll just point out to the member that it's really important that we think of proper context when we have these discussions. If there is no new money - and I don't know, we'd have to debate that - but even if that were to be true, that doesn't mean no money. It could very well be that there's sufficient money in the budget already and we didn't need to increase it. That's a more detailed discussion that I'd be happy to have with the member if he was actually interested in having a discussion like that.

GARY BURRILL: We are actually interested in the absence of an increase, Mr. Speaker. The Chair of the IPCC says this report is a dire warning about the consequences of inaction. Half measures are no longer an option, and that's true. Yet, it is also true that the government has brought forward a budget in which funding this year for the Department of Environment and Climate Change is actually less than it was a year before.

I want to ask the Premier: Why is his government not bringing forward a level of climate change investment that actually corresponds to the level of the threat that is before us?

THE PREMIER: I actually reject the entire premise of the question. We know there were staffing realignments, a bit of reorganization. It's not as simple as looking at the bottom line and comparing, because there are other moving parts to these things. If the member needs to know anything about our commitment to protecting the planet, he need only revisit the legislation that passed in this House in the Fall. That shows our commitment.

GARY BURRILL: Many of us would have heard a media interview with a man named Stan Peach in Port Morien last week. With coastal erosion, Mr. Peach's family home is closer to the edge of the cliff every year. It's now about 15 feet from falling into the ocean, and Mr. Peach speaks in the interview about how frightened he is about this.

The IPCC report is not just an academic study. It is a call to action to protect the people of Nova Scotia who are, like the Peach family in many ways, with our province perched on the edge of a catastrophic climate cliff. Will the Premier explain what solutions this budget is concretely providing and offering to a province on the edge of terrifying impacts from the point of view of climate change?

THE PREMIER: I'd be happy to walk the member through the legislation that went through this House. I think it speaks to a lot of the concerns, but it also speaks to the fact that we have to develop a fulsome strategy. I know the minister and his team are working on that.

We're very focused on this issue, and I would just go back one more time, just for the sake of absolute clarity. We tabled the most aggressive, ambitious environmental legislation that has been tabled in the country. We're proud of that legislation. We're

focused on that legislation, and we are committed to that legislation because on this side of the House, we do what we say we're going to do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DOJ - RCMP IN MUNS.: INC. COSTS - EXPLAIN

CARMAN KERR: The Minister of Justice confirmed in March that municipalities who are already struggling financially are going to see an average rise in RCMP policing costs at 11 per cent this year. I'll table that.

Is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing working with municipalities to help them cover these increased costs?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, we are well aware in the Department of Justice of the increased costs. I have recognized that publicly. We are reaching out with our policing partners across the province to try to mitigate and find some solutions to that, some of which have been discussed here and some that we're continuing to look at as we move forward.

CARMAN KERR: I want to thank the Minister of Justice for that. According to the Department of Justice, municipalities are responsible for paying 70 per cent of RCMP service while the federal government pays 30 per cent. This is directly impacting many of our rural communities, who are often spending a significant amount of their budget on policing. I've talked to the Minister of Justice about this concerning the town of Middleton.

With municipalities struggling to provide these services, can the Minister of Justice tell the House what his discussions have been, in detail, with municipalities on trying to help them with this file?

BRAD JOHNS: One thing that I will note for members in this House is I want to extend to the municipalities across this province. They are taking initiatives - many of them recognizing the increased cost of RCMP. Many of them have come towards our department asking for other solutions. We do have a number of municipalities across the province that are looking at joining police forces together to try to get better bang for their dollar. So far, any of the municipalities that have come forward to the Department of Justice requesting that, we've told them to go forward and been positive with that.

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

DOJ: VICTIM SERV. CONSULT. PLANS - EXPLAIN

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, we know that women continue to be the predominant victims of sexual violence in Nova Scotia. The Minister of Justice has been

given a mandate to amend the Victims' Rights and Services Act, and define the term "respect" when testifying about sexual violence and enshrine the right of a victim of sexual violence to legal representation. Advocates have been calling for consultation with survivors and frontline service partners on what respect looks like. Can the Minister of Justice explain to the House why there is no consultation plan in place to engage with these groups?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Of course, everybody deserves respect. Of course, this being Sexual Assault and Violence Month - all survivors of sexual assault deserve to be treated with the utmost respect.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, the experience of respect will mean different things to different people. If you're a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, Mi'kmaw, Black or African Nova Scotian, newcomer or identify with another racialized community, your experience with and in the justice system is definitely different. What collaboration and work has been done to engage equity-seeking groups in the definition of respect?

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, thank you again to the member for the question. Recognizing that there are many people with many different backgrounds who come forward with sexual assault, this is a discussion that we have had in the department to ensure that we diversify.

I fundamentally have said that if I was assaulted, I don't know how comfortable I would be talking to a female about that assault. I suggested that any survivors of assault should have the right to be able to talk to somebody whom they are comfortable with - whether that be somebody from their own sexual orientation or community or anything else.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

DOJ: LEGAL AID FUNDING - EXPLAIN

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, we know that not all victims have the financial means to access justice. This is why Nova Scotia Legal Aid is vital. It's concerning though, knowing the backlog that exists, that this government did not make any significant investments in Legal Aid. Why were there no new significant investments in Legal Aid in this budget?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, there is currently funding through the Sexual Offence Legal Representation Program (SOLR). When we did a review, there seemed to be adequate funding. We've also hired an additional prosecutor who is aligned and trained in sexual assault as well.

[2:15 p.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, the truth is his department's budget went up 6 per cent and the Legal Aid budget was frozen, and there is a massive backlog of people waiting.

We've been talking about the cost of living crisis in this House and, yes, even Legal Aid costs are going up. Legal Aid Certificates, the means by which Nova Scotians living on low income can access affordable legal counsel, have not increased and now more Nova Scotians are opting for self-representation.

This is unacceptable and creates a gap for those on low income to access justice. My question for the minister: What steps are being taken to ensure that all Nova Scotians have access to legal representation?

BRAD JOHNS: Of course, there is a program currently where anyone who comes forward for legal aid is entitled to four hours of legal advice, survivors when they come forward. So that's where we are.

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

DAE - UNIV. ST. ANNE FAC.: MTG. REQ. - HONOUR

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Advanced Education. Faculty members and librarians have been on strike for six weeks at Université Sainte-Anne fighting for pay equity with English institutions and a rebalancing of their workload. The association has asked for a meeting with the Premier, the Minister of Advanced Education, and the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration to share their concerns, but the government has refused to meet with them.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister meet with the faculty at Université Sainte-Anne?

HON. BRIAN WONG: Students are absolutely at the core of everything that we do. It breaks my heart that there are 300 students where their education is in jeopardy right now. I strongly encourage both sides to get back to the table. There are items on the table.

There is a mediator who was appointed through the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration as of yesterday. I strongly encourage both sides to get back to the table in the best interests of 300 students.

It's our only francophone university in Nova Scotia, and those students need to get back out there because we need them in our workforce for our government to achieve our mandates of getting students through university and working in Nova Scotia.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the government finally appointed a mediator six weeks into the strike. It is unfortunate that the government was so much slower to act here than with the strike at Acadia University. While the government drags its heels, students and staff are concerned that the semester will be lost.

The faculty association is calling for binding arbitration without conditions so that they can get back to work teaching students and conducting world-class research. The government can do more to help them get back to the classroom.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister encourage the university to accept binding arbitration without conditions, and help students and staff have a chance at saving the semester?

BRIAN WONG: It's my understanding a conciliator was appointed several weeks ago, had been working with both sides on an ongoing basis, had presented options to both sides on an ongoing basis. As of yesterday, a new mediator was appointed. I strongly encourage both sides to get back to the table and negotiate this contract out so students can get back and finish their education.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

EMO - EMERG. ALERTS: WRONG INFO. - PREVENT

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I was deeply concerned about the events which took place this past weekend in my community, and the official communications about it.

An emergency alert was issued and information was incorrect. The alert claimed that there were two shootings, one in East Preston and one in North Preston. Mr. Speaker, there were no shots fired in North Preston. Further communications over the period referenced Bell Park Academic and Bell Road, which are, in fact, in the community of Lake Echo, not East Preston.

Timely and accurate information is important in fluid situations such as this. My question for the Minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office is: What checks are in place to ensure that any information shared through emergency alerts is correct?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for the question. First of all, I'd like to express my concern. No one wants to see an emergency alert have to be issued. For the families and all those involved in that, it is a very tragic event. We want all of that to work out right.

What I can say about the Emergency Management Office is that a year ago, the right or the ability was given to the RCMP across the province and to the Halifax Regional

Police Department to issue emergency alerts independent of communication with our office. I don't have that information with me but I assume that would have originated from the Halifax Regional Police department directly. Our office wouldn't have been involved in how that was done. Certainly, we are very interested in every emergency alert issued in the province. We track them. We will review them.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I would suggest again that diligence should be exercised on accurate information, so I thank the minister for that. Just to be clear, the communities that I'm speaking of are RCMP territory, not Halifax Regional. So if the information is then given by the RCMP, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

The fact that there was a process where emergency alerts were inaccurate and incorrect caused trauma, anxiety, and much confusion within communities. Although the minister and I have spoken before, I'll ask the Minister of Justice: Is he willing and interested in meeting with me and the communities that were impacted about the proper processes and best communication moving forward when dealing with emergency alerts?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Although the specifics that the member raises are to the community she represents, I would say that the issue itself is a broader issue. As the previous minister spoke about, the ability to issue emergency alerts was granted to the RCMP and HRP about a year ago. I have reached out to them to request some information to find out why the miscommunication in the area.

What I will say is although I recognize the anxiety that it can cause in a community, I would much prefer that an organization put an alert out to ensure people are safe than to have the tragedy that occurred back in April 2020.

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

DOJ - GUN VIOLENCE: PREV. PLAN - COMMIT

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, violence and gun violence and death is increasing in this province - not in one community, but in the entire province. Let's just be clear and not speak in the abstract about gun violence. What I'm talking about is gun violence and the increase of innocent lives that are being killed and are dying by avoidable causes.

The families that I'm hearing this from - and survivors, and community, and experts - are telling us the same thing, that the doctor leading Nova Scotia's trauma team has suggested that these trends are not predictable and that we need to do more to understand them.

This is not new news. Over the past year, gun violence in Halifax has doubled: 62 shootings in 2021 . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I have brought this to the government's attention several times. My question is for the Minister of Justice. The minister knows that we have been asking - I have been asking - for a review since I took this seat, so on behalf of all Nova Scotians, I would like to ask the minister what the plan is to address gun violence in this province.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Thank you once again to the member for Preston on this very important question about a very significant issue that's taking place. I certainly agree with the member. This is not to any one community; in fact, this is not to any one province. We see an increase in gun violence across the country, unfortunately. It's something that all policing agencies across Canada are dealing with currently. I recently had a federal-provincial-territorial meeting with other justice ministers from across Canada. It's something that all, unfortunately, are facing.

Certainly my heart goes out to any of those people who are victims of gun violence. It's senseless, and . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I would like to acknowledge the Attorney General and minister for the Province of Nova Scotia, not Canada. We know that illegal firearms are making their way into this province. They can be either stolen from legal gun owners or bought through straw purchases.

There's a clear responsibility for other departments - federal and municipal - but from leadership, we all can expect and should expect that there is more being done, that we're working across government departments and levels of government, including the Canadian Forces, Transport Canada, DFO, RCMP, HRP, regional and Amherst regional and other municipalities.

My question for the minister is: What work is under way to better understand and tackle the issue of illegal gun ownership in this province?

BRAD JOHNS: Once again the member is correct. There are a number of players that are involved in this - federally, municipally, provincially. What we have been doing is reaching out to our policing partners. I do have a meeting coming up with chiefs across this province, and certainly gun violence will be one of those topics.

I recently wrote a priority letter to H Division of the RCMP highlighting some of the priorities that I see from our office and gun violence was certainly on the top of that list.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DOJ: MASS CAS. COMM.: INTERF. CONCERNS - DISCUSS

HON. KELLY REGAN: Last sitting, after a series of questions posed by the member for Preston and the member for Dartmouth South about policing and the Mass Casualty Commission, the Minister of Justice said to reporters: “What I find really frustrating today is the Opposition trying to drive an agenda that may impact that inquiry.” Then he was asked by a reporter, “Do you have concerns about the inquiry’s ability to do its job, by what is being said in the Legislature?” The minister responded, “I do.” I’ll table that.

Does the minister still believe that public comments about the Mass Casualty Commission will impact the independence of the inquiry?

BRAD JOHNS: What I will say is that now that the Mass Casualty Commission has entered into the phase where it is doing public consultation and members can log on and watch live the proceedings there, I think there’s less chance of rumours and speculation than was previously going on.

I think it has been shown that a number of the conspiracies or theories that were floating around have been addressed through that process and are becoming more clear. I am less concerned about people having a discussion today than I was six months ago.

KELLY REGAN: Interesting that the Minister of Justice would actually suggest there were conspiracy theories coming from this side of the House. I think we know when his opinion changed about public comments, because on February 22nd of this year the Premier released a statement pertaining to the Mass Casualty Commission and I am going to table that. The reason the Premier told reporters he issued his statement as a bit of an exclamation point is because he was growing anxious about how the inquiry would be conducted.

My question for the Minister of Justice is: He was concerned about public comments interfering with the procedures in October, so he must have been concerned about the interference by the Premier in February, correct?

BRAD JOHNS: I believe, as I said previously, as more information is becoming public and clear for the public on what is and isn’t true, what has and hasn’t happened, I’m less concerned about comments that are being made. I think those comments are being addressed through the commission.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

[2:30 p.m.]

OEARI - LETTER TO PREM.: NO RESP. - EXPLAIN

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Patterson Law, representing generations of Africville residents, issued a notice on Monday saying it had not received any response to an open letter sent February 8th to the Premier over the destruction of Africville between 1963 and 1970.

The families rightly point out that the forced removal of my community from Africville was a calculated harm in the name of progress that resulted in a degradation of community and economic opportunity that has carried forward over the following three generations.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is: Why hasn't the Premier responded to these families?

HON. PAT DUNN: There's no question that the destruction of Africville is probably one of the most unpleasant and alarming chapters in the province's history. Halifax began the process of making amends in approximately 2010 and as a province, we are committed to addressing and eliminating systemic racism.

SUZY HANSEN: Although I respect what the minister has just said, the community needs to hear from the Premier, so I was hoping that he could answer this particular question.

I also raised the question of reparations for African Nova Scotians during the all-party committee on equity and anti-racism, but I was told that it was not an appropriate place for that conversation. We know that in order to rectify centuries of injustice, we are going to have to put resources behind our good intentions. This is why it is particularly alarming to me that there's no funding in the budget to implement the strategy to address racism and hate.

If the Premier is committed to repairing government's relationship with African Nova Scotian communities, why won't the Premier fund the work?

PAT DUNN: The municipality should definitely be involved in any conversations about Africville going forward. All three levels should definitely be involved in it, including the province and the feds. We are very open to having those conversations going forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DOJ: ACCESS TO INFO. LEGSN. - DETAILS

FRED TILLEY: A few moments ago, we heard the Premier say on this side of the House, we do what we say we're going to do. Unfortunately, that's not always the case.

The Better Pay Cheque Guarantee is one example, but I have another one. When speaking with reporters, the Premier said, "We're going to work with the Privacy Commissioner to make sure that the proper authority is there so that Nova Scotians have access to the information that they rightly should have access to." That will be tabled.

A few months later, when a reporter asked the Premier why no legislation had been tabled during the past Fall session, he said: "I just haven't focused on it, to be honest, and maybe that's my fault." I'll table that as well.

We're a few weeks into the Spring session and still no legislation. My question to the Premier is: Is this another fault of the Premier, or when can we expect this legislation to be presented?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I'd like to thank the member for the question. As I believe I said in this House before, initially we thought granting order-making power was going to be a simple procedure. We were contacted, my office, relatively soon in this mandate by the Privacy Commissioner, Tricia Ralph. In that letter, the Commissioner expressed her concerns around a very outdated legislation that dates back over 20 years, and made a request that we look at the entire Act. That's where we're going at the moment.

FRED TILLEY: The Premier promised Nova Scotians that this would be a priority, and it has been clear over and over that politicians should be held accountable for their promises. For the Premier: Why is this government unprepared to table legislation to give the Privacy Commissioner order-making authority?

BRAD JOHNS: I guess the member is saying that we're not providing order-making power to that office. That's not what the government is saying. What the government is saying is that it's going to be a bit of a bigger job than what we initially thought. We want to ensure that we fix legislation that is outdated.

I raised this yesterday during the budget debates. Twenty years ago, few people had cell phones, there wasn't the cloud, none of those technologies. So much has changed over the last 20 years and that legislation really needs to be updated to ensure that it can work properly.

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

DOJ: MED. HEALTH INFO. THREAT - CONCERN

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of Justice, please. Does the Minister of Justice consider the staff within the Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner to be experts in the field?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Yes.

BEN JESSOME: We got an answer to a question there, Mr. Speaker. I asked this question because during a recent Law Amendments Committee meeting, we heard that no effort was made by this government to consult with said office on any legislation for this House session despite a bill before the House directly impacting Nova Scotians' private medical information - an issue that's specifically addressed by their office on a daily basis.

Is the Minister of Justice concerned that this government is failing to consult with this office, jeopardizing the privacy of Nova Scotians' medical health information?

BRAD JOHNS: No.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

EMO: 911 MISDIRECTED CALLS - ADDRESS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, when someone is experiencing an emergency, whether it's a house fire, a medical emergency, a car accident, or if they've been a victim of crime, it's often terrifying and very stressful. Nova Scotians in many areas of our province have also discovered another added stressor.

In certain communities, it is very common that the towers that the calls ping off will misdirect the 911 calls to P.E.I. or New Brunswick. I've heard several accounts of this happening in my constituency alone. These are lost minutes in times of emergency.

My question to the Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management is: Can the minister table for the members of this House the number of 911 calls that have been transferred back to our province from either New Brunswick or P.E.I.?

HON. JOHN LOHR: We had an opportunity in Estimates to drill down into this, and it was cut short. I do appreciate the question. I have flagged it to the Emergency Measures Office. I don't have that information with me right now. I will check and see if that information is available. If it is available, I will certainly - if there are privacy concerns - there may be that with the information - but if possible, I'm certainly willing to make the member aware of what that's about.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: If the information's not available, my recommendation would be that they start tracking that information. We're not looking for names. We're not looking for any type of information that would be confidential. We'd be looking for how often this is happening.

In some of these situations, people are having chest pain. Other times, it's a house fire. In some situations, it was an added 10 to 12 minutes to redirect to the proper dispatch before any emergency personnel could even be made aware. We've also been hearing about terrifying and sometimes tragic experiences where families wait for our understaffed emergency health care providers, so this issue of misdirecting 911 calls just adds another flaw.

My question to the minister is: What steps has the minister taken to address this issue, and can the minister provide a timeline so that this does not continue to impact people struggling with emergencies in this province?

JOHN LOHR: I would like to agree that when someone calls 911, they need help immediately. It's a heart-stopping moment in anyone's life to have done that. I've done it on a couple of occasions. I know exactly what it feels like. We're very concerned.

There are various elements to the member's question. There is probably a federal element here with the CRTC and with the actual phone carriers, to get the call in the right place. There's an element there. There are a lot of different elements.

I can tell the member that the work is in progress right now to upgrade 911, which has a target. It's a pretty massive job for us to upgrade to the federal standards for 2025, so that when you do call 911 you will also be able to possibly send video or pictures. There is extensive work being done right now to modernize 911. It will take a little bit of time to get it done but I will try to get that information for the member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DOJ: FOIPOP LEGSN. COMM. - UPDATE

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, just one week after last August's election, the PC Party put out a statement that read, "It is the intention of the premier-designate and his new government to complete a full review of our FOIPOP legislation that would see the commissioner being an independent officer of the legislature. This will be on the agenda during our fall session." I'll table that.

Well, it wasn't on the agenda in the Fall. Unless something here changes dramatically, it won't be on the agenda in the Spring, either. So I would like to ask the Minister of Justice: What degree of consultation has he undertaken with the Privacy Commissioner on updates to the Act?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Once again, as I said when we came in, we did receive a - I believe it was a two-or-three page letter from the commissioner requesting that we do a thorough review of FOIPOP legislation, which we are looking at doing.

It became very apparent very quickly on that the impacts have a lot more to do with just government under that legislation and that authority. It actually impacts over 250 different organizations across the province: universities, schools, school boards, government, municipalities. We want to do it, but we want to make sure that we do it right.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer from the minister. As he said, I'd rather see it done right than done quickly, so I won't argue with him on that.

A briefing note released November 24th as part of a FOIPOP application for the Minister of Justice's transition binder implies that an independent committee could be formed to review the legislation in the FOIPOP and make recommendations. But that work could take between six months to a year to complete and then present a final report. This briefing for the minister was prepared and ready as early as August 27, 2021. I'll table that as well.

Can the minister update the House on the status of this committee and when we might actually see the bill be introduced into the House?

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat ironic that all the questions that are coming up here today directed at FOIPOP - particularly from members directly across who just had eight years in government to fix the issues that the former FOIPOP officer raised but their government decided to ignore. Our government has committed that we are doing a review. I've stood up here in the House today, as well as previously, and said that it needs to be a fulsome review and we're moving forward with doing that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South on a new question.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that I had absolutely nothing to do or had any power with the FOIPOP Act, so let's be serious here. Two separate FOIPOP requests made by our office for the logbooks of visitors to government departments and the Premier's Office had many of the visitors' names redacted. Most of these redactions were made to hide the names of individuals representing businesses and lobby groups, including instances when they were there expressly to meet with the minister or the Premier.

The federal government makes a point to release similar information when requested and the Privacy Commissioner has referenced that it is within reason to release the names of individuals acting in a professional capacity.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: Does the minister believe it should be the practice that individuals meeting on behalf of businesses and lobby groups be identified in documents when they're meeting with our highest officials?

[2:45 p.m.]

BRAD JOHNS: Fundamentally, of course I do. I believe that 100 per cent. What I will say is I will note that the same issue was raised previously in this House, about three years ago, when the Premier at that time was meeting, I believe with the former Prime Minister, but that wasn't recognized. So thank you.

BRAEDON CLARK: I'm glad to hear that the minister is 100 per cent in agreement with this, so I would ask him: To make a change of this type wouldn't require legislation, so would the minister commit to issuing a directive to departments across government - including the Premier's office - to ensure that the names of individuals who are meeting with the Premier and other ministers in a professional lobby capacity are known to all Nova Scotians?

BRAD JOHNS: I will commit to having a discussion with staff and getting back to the member.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DHW - NSHA LEAD. TEAM: ACCOUNTABILITY - ADDRESS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Under the previous governor's model of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the CEO and its board members were accountable to the public. The board itself was composed of Nova Scotians representing diverse communities across the province. The AGM was open to the public, and minutes and meeting reports of the board were put on the NSHA website. However, under the new Premier's new hand-picked leadership team, we are seeing no transparency at all.

My question for the Premier: Who is his hand-picked leadership four-person team accountable to, and who do they answer to - is it the public, or is it just the Premier?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Premier - er, Mr. Speaker. (Laughter)

THE SPEAKER: Same thing.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: It's been a long week. Foreshadow, foreshadow, yeah.

Mr. Speaker, what I would say to the member is that I think myself and the leadership team are accountable to all Nova Scotians, first and foremost, around health

care. Some of these issues were raised in Public Accounts Committee the other day. We were really happy to hear and get that feedback, and it's something that we are considering.

We are looking at a number of different ways in which we can get feedback from local communities, and how we report back in a meaningful way to folks. That information's ongoing, and we're very committed to figuring how best to do that. The AGM will continue, as far as I know, as it has in years past.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I hope so, and I hope all the information will be on the website as well.

The PC platform stated that we know that health care deteriorated when the government removed local decision-makers from local communities. My question is for the Premier: How has the Premier's hand-picked four-person health leadership team, centred in Halifax boardrooms, improved local decision-making?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I can't wait to answer that question. As someone who has been in health care for 30 years, this is the most visible and attainable group of individuals that we've had - we have - in terms of leadership.

We have toured this province - we have been all over. We talked directly to frontline health care workers, we are visible in hospitals, we are visible in the community. We are working with teams and community to get feedback directly from health care workers, which is something that had never been afforded me as a health care worker over the last number of years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DHW - NSHA LEAD. TEAM: BLACK REPRES. - ADDRESS

ANGELA SIMMONDS: In December, the Premier dismissed the most diverse Nova Scotia Health Authority board in the history of this province. Dr. Dryden was the first Black member appointed to the board. She is highly qualified as the James R. Johnson Chair in Black Canadian Studies and is also an associate professor. She brought a unique and valuable voice to the board and was dismissed.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier: How are the voices of Black and African Nova Scotians represented as the Premier hand-picked the four-person health leadership team?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to work with community. We do know that we have to do a better job in term of representation, in terms of building relationships in community, and I think moving forward, part of the way that we move forward has to be figured out and unfolded. We're working very hard with leaders in a

diverse group of communities, we've done a number of stakeholder groups to understand how best we can meet the needs of diverse communities in this province.

I would say that that work continues. We're also speaking with frontline health care workers as well to understand their lived experience, and we're also working interdepartmentally to understand the historic voices in this province and how we can best represent their needs in health care.

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

The honourable member for Dartmouth South on a point of order.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier in Question Period, the member for Bedford Basin put to the Minister of Justice questions that had previously been asked by myself and my colleague, the member for Preston, about a police review, in fact, and the minister's response at the time, which was that he was concerned that it would interfere with the Mass Casualty Commission.

When the minister was asked if he was still concerned, his response was that he was no longer concerned about rumours and conspiracy theories. The only proper inference from that was to imply that I and the member for Preston were bringing rumours and conspiracy theories to the floor of this House.

I would submit that was unparliamentary. I would ask the minister to either clarify that comment or retract it and apologize.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, when I addressed - I would clarify I was not looking at any members in this House. I was addressing to the Chair and I did not specify any members in this House. However, if the member feels that there were comments that were directed at her, I certainly apologize. They were meant in generalization and not taken to any of the individuals in the House.

THE SPEAKER: With that, we will now take a 10-minute recess. We will be back at 3:02 p.m. for Opposition Business.

[2:51 p.m. The House recessed.]

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

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

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

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 156.

Bill No. 156 - Acadian and Francophone Education Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today to speak on Bill No. 156 for the first reading on a bill that I am very passionate about. It calls upon one of the very reasons that inspired me to run to be a member of this Legislature in the first place. I stand here today to speak to a bill respecting Acadian and Francophone education that I believe is the very best way and absolutely necessary to ensure that Acadian culture and French language still exists in the province 100 years from now.

Monsieur le Président, j'aimerais dire que parce que cette loi est extrêmement importante pour la communauté acadienne et francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse, c'est important pour l'ensemble du CSAP et j'aimerais dire que c'est important pour moi d'une manière personnelle. Je me souviens clairement parce que les parents dans la circonscription de Clare et d'autres régions acadiennes se sont organisés en pensant qu'ils devraient avoir un système d'éducation en français. Ils l'avaient poursuivi à la cour et ils avaient gagné.

Je me souviens aussi que la communauté était vraiment divisée et il y avait beaucoup de peur que ça va mettre les anglais contre les français. Et honnêtement, j'ai mes propres concerns. Mais c'est sûr qu'on prend un grand pas de l'avant - moi, j'étais à l'école en anglais. La seule chose que j'avais qui était en français, c'était le cours de français. Et regarde, ma fille Mattea et tous ses amis et les enfants de travers qu'on passe à travers du CSAP - ma fille est maintenant à l'Université Sainte-Anne en train de prendre un bac en éducation pour enseigner le français. Et je connais des gens qui sont devenus médecins, qui sont devenus avocats.

Ils ont pu desservir leurs communautés dans leur propre langue. Le but de cette loi ici pour moi c'est que je veux faire sûre que les enfants de mes enfants ont la même

opportunité que ma fille a eue, puis point manquer cette opportunité-là comme moi de dire le monde de ma génération a des insécurités linguistiques et des insécurités quand ça vient à écrire. C'est extrêmement important et j'ai vu l'importance du CSAP et l'éducation en français.

Mr. Speaker, I will repeat this as closely as I can. This bill is very important for the Acadian and Francophone community of Nova Scotia. It's very important for the CSAP and the entirety of that organization and it's very important for me personally.

I remember when the parents from my community and parents from other Acadian communities came together, they wanted to have the opportunity to be educated in French and they decided to fight that battle. They went to court and they won. In doing so, I remember that the community was quite divided at the time. I was on municipal council for a term and there was concern that the English and the French would feel a division. I had those same concerns, to be honest.

If you move forward and look at where we are today: My schooling was at an English school and my only French course was French. I look at my daughter, who went through the CSAP school, who is at Université Sainte-Anne, and who is learning to be a French teacher. I see kids from all across going into law school and medical school, then coming back to communities and serving their communities in French. They have an opportunity. I want to make sure that every child in Nova Scotia who wants to learn French from an Acadian community can have that opportunity.

People from my generation, having not had that same opportunity, we do have linguistic insecurity. It's a challenge to write in French. When I see the young people like my daughter are very comfortable and very confident, I can't emphasize enough how important the CSAP is to these communities. I just wanted to put that on the floor as how I felt personally.

What does this bill do, Mr. Speaker? First, it modernizes the legal framework applicable to CSAP and fills a glaring and increasingly embarrassing gap in the laws of Nova Scotia. That update is necessary because the education system was reformed in 2018 but at the time there was no plan for the CSAP. The reform was limited to the English language instruction and French immersion instruction.

Section 23 requires more than a carbon copy of the way English language schools operate. French immersion instruction is not at all like French-first instruction. What CSAP does is offer French-first language instruction and that's different.

Secondly, and most importantly, this bill updates the legal framework applicable to the CSAP, so it complies with Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That's the section that requires that this Legislature to develop a legal framework that allows Acadians and francophones in this province to fully manage and control the CSAP.

[3:15 p.m.]

Nova Scotia has a positive duty to act with respect to French-first education. That is not currently the case, and it has never fully been the case. This needs to be fixed. Stillness on the legislative front is not an option and creates liabilities on the government.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not very partisan. Nova Scotia has been governed by Liberals, Progressive Conservatives, and NDP governments. In all that time, the education framework has been contrary to Section 23. This is a collective responsibility for all parties in this House. It is therefore my sincere hope that there will be a corresponding desire to solve that problem.

Those who know me know I'm not a lawyer. That's pretty obvious, I think. (Laughter) This is a sizeable bill - 105 pages. It's truly a result of broad efforts made by the Acadians and francophones across the province who have worked on this project for many years. It's the result of detailed, rigorous, and broad consultation of experts in French language instruction. A team of experienced senior legislative drafters have been, over the years, collaborating with our Chief Legislative Council all vetted by the former Supreme Court of Canada judges lending their legal expertise.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank a few key people. Je veux prendre cette opportunité de reconnaître le travail et l'effort de quelque personnes extrêmement clefs. Marcel Cottreau, le président du CSAP, the Chair of CSAP; Michel Collette, current superintendent; Michel Comeau, former superintendent, who has done a lot of work on this file. I'd like to recognize the staff and the teachers at the CSAP.

Special thanks to Gordon Hebb and his team for their work, and for having collaborated closely with three legislative drafters who produced this bill that I am very proud of: John Mark Keyes, Lionel Levert, and Elise Shissler.

Mr. Speaker, this province's Acadians and francophones want the best for Nova Scotia and contribute tirelessly to the province's economy, cultural vibrancy, and diversity. Nova Scotia's Acadians and francophones have been very patient for decades now. They have trusted that this Legislature would get around to passing the bill that they need to ensure that the French language is more vibrant in Nova Scotia than it is today.

That patience has run out. This is obvious from the outpouring of support that I have heard and read in the last 24 hours - support that I am also reading from Nova Scotians elsewhere in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you can hear, but there are people outside of this Legislature on a weekday afternoon. That itself is a telling sign of the interest in this issue.

Let me be clear: Sometimes in this House it is difficult to get away from politics and partisanship. A large number of Acadians and francophones watching today do not see

the politics of this situation. They only see an opportunity to protect and preserve their culture and heritage, and an opportunity for all members of this House - despite which side of the House they sit on - to come together today to move forward on a one-of-a-kind bill.

What everyone watching has in common is a love of the French language, the Acadian culture, and this province. They have set aside their political affiliations to make it very clear to everyone in this House that Section 23 needs to be fully implemented and that we can't wait any longer.

I stand before the government genuinely asking that they take time to seriously consider adopting this bill to protect the Acadian and francophone culture in this province for years to come. Supporting this bill would be supporting more than 6,500 Acadian and francophone students across this province.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Ça me donne énormément de plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui afin de donner notre appui à ce projet de loi. En tant que canadien francophone, j'ai vécu l'expérience de plusieurs acadiens. J'ai commencé en français, j'ai continué en anglais, j'ai presque perdu mon français. Mais avec la chance de travailler en français, j'ai eu la chance de récupérer ma capacité linguistique.

I'll also do a quick translation. I'm thrilled to rise today and talk about this bill. I, as a French Canadian, also have shared a bit of this experience where the lack of access to education in French meant that I actually lost a lot of my first language, and had to wait until I was working in French to really learn it again.

I also think this is a really appropriate time to be considering this question of language and culture, particularly the day after we considered the Mi'kmaw language bill. We all spoke. I think we all share a conviction that language is at the heart of community and that language has to be throughout the lifespan.

I think this is a really important recognition that there are other communities for whom language has been taken away or discouraged, and that part of our responsibility is to make sure that language comes back through education and then throughout the lifespan.

I grew up with my aunt and my cousins talking to me about their Acadian history and their culture. I certainly heard - they took it with good humour, the experiences that the Acadian community had been through.

When I first started working with the Nova Scotia provincial government, it was really a chance to dig deep into the context around the loss of language and culture for Acadians in Nova Scotia. I think the member for Clare spoke very eloquently about this. I remember being really devastated to understand this concept of linguistic insecurity. Not

only did people not have access to education in French, but actually it was discouraged - people felt badly, people were ashamed of their language. I think we have a collective responsibility to overcome that history of discrimination, which of course, beyond education, resulted often in limited economic opportunities and really created a challenging scenario for communities across Nova Scotia.

I think, through this bill and others, it's important to reaffirm that the French language has been spoken in Nova Scotia for more than 400 years and has formed an important part of our history and culture. It must remain an integral part of our future as well.

I think we need to collectively recommit to minority languages, and that we must work diligently to promote and preserve Acadian and francophone language and culture. As we have spoken about with the Mi'kmaw languages bill, and as we're speaking out today, a thriving French-language school system is a key tool in preserving Acadian language and culture.

Also, based on my experience working in the province on this issue, I also know there's a great need for French-language services across the board. We urge the government to continue to work with Acadian people, communities, and organizations to ensure that francophones in this province can access government services in the language of their choice.

As the member for Clare also commented on, education in Nova Scotia has been through many significant changes in recent years. I think we all want to make sure that students are at the centre of decision-making and are the beneficiaries of the decision-making we do. While we in this corner of the House have been concerned about the impact of centralized decision-making, we really feel that democratic, local decision-making structures with diverse representation are the best way to build education systems that serve communities. Certainly, I understand the process by which this bill was developed reflects that.

Maintaining CSAP was also really important in being able to provide that capacity to work with community to develop this bill. We're glad that CSAP is still in place to advocate for schools and students. One of the reasons our caucus did not support the dissolution of the English-language school boards is because it removed a level of transparency, public accountability, and community connection from decision-making in education.

I think there are just a couple of points that I would put forward for consideration in the bill. One of the things that I've been concerned about, and many of us have been concerned about for years, is inclusive education. As a province, we've recommitted to an inclusive education approach. I think it would be wonderful to enhance both the recognition of that question and those issues in the bill, but also then to make sure that

services and resources are adequately funded so that young people in CSAP schools can benefit from inclusive education.

I think since being a parent in Nova Scotia, I've seen all too quickly - particularly in CSAP schools and in French immersion schools - the moment that someone has a learning disability, the recommendation is often to pull them out of that. I think that is such a disservice to everyone - to the students, to their families, to the continuation of French as a language of community here in Nova Scotia.

The other piece that I just wanted to call attention to is enhancing the recognition of the diversity of francophone communities. My constituency, Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, is a great example. We have folks from all over the world who are francophone who come to Nova Scotia and who enrich the community that's here. So how can we best build on people who come to Nova Scotia who are francophone, and how can we best serve their families and communities?

We also really want to recognize - and this is something I learned a lot about in the work that I did with the provincial government and know to be true now - the challenges facing Acadian communities as rural communities and the challenge of providing access to services in scattered rural communities.

As a student of public administration, I understand that is a major challenge for government, but it's also one that we have to overcome. I think we also have a lot more tools than we've had in past times to overcome those challenges.

I think about Acadian seniors who, in fact, lose the ability to speak English as they age, and they want to be treated with care and dignity in their language as they get older.

There are a few other things I wanted to point out that I think are important if we think about revitalizing Acadian language and supporting Acadian communities: access to affordable, high-speed internet across the province; restoring the mandate for rural and regional economic development to the Department of Economic Development; creating a tax credit for seasonal businesses that want to extend their season; and supporting arts and cultural organizations across the province.

I will conclude by saying that there is no doubt the Nova Scotia Government must respect the rights of Acadians and francophones of Nova Scotia to French first-language primary and secondary education of the same quality that is offered in anglophone centres for education. Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been reinforced numerous times by the courts of Nova Scotia and even the Supreme Court of Canada. The government must take all legal and constitutional obligations very seriously.

We urge the government to work in close co-operation with CSAP and other stakeholders to ensure that the provincial education systems respond to the needs of Acadian and francophone students in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Je vais livrer mes commentaires en anglais puis en français. I'm going to try to cover off in French and in English. I want to deliver my remarks in French first.

Monsieur le président, l'éducation en français est une matière d'importance à l'Acadie et la francophonie de la Nouvelle-Écosse. L'occasion d'avoir une éducation de qualité en français qui assure le développement linguistique et l'épanouissement de nos communautés francophones et acadiens de la province est important.

J'aimerais féliciter le membre de Clare pour avoir déposé son premier projet de loi. Peut-être c'est dommage qu'il ne faisait pas partie de l'ancien gouvernement au cours des derniers quelques années pour avoir déposé le projet de loi à ces temps-là.

Il faut que j'avoue qu'il y eu du travail accompli par l'ancien gouvernement Libéral sur ce dossier. Cependant, ce travail n'a pas mené à des résultats livrés à cette Assemblée, n'a pas mené à un projet de loi déposé ici en Chambre par un des deux ministres de l'Éducation et de l'Éducation de la petite enfance Libéraux précédents.

Ma question pour la partie Libéral aujourd'hui, c'est : Qu'est-ce qui a changé depuis qu'ils sont maintenant en opposition qu'on voit finalement leur rétraction d'un projet de loi?

Tous cela étant dit, je suis fier qu'on puisse avoir ce débat ici dans l'Assemblée. Ça nous permet de présenter des faits et de partager mes expériences personnelles et parler de l'Acadie ici en Nouvelle-Écosse.

Ce dossier existe depuis 2018. Pendant quatre ans, il y a quelques semaines, ça fait l'anniversaire que ce dossier existe dans les mains du ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Éducation de la petite enfance, maintenant dans les mains de la ministre de l'Éducation et de l'Éducation de la petite enfance. Suite au rapport Glaze, suite à l'abolition des conseils scolaires élus en Nouvelle-Écosse, tout ceci fait par l'ancien gouvernement Libéral, et d'une promesse fait en 2018, une promesse par l'ancien premier ministre et l'ancien ministre de l'Éducation et de l'Éducation de la petite enfance qui verra une nouvelle loi pour le CSAP.

J'ai passé - j'ai vécu dans le système scolaire du CSAP. J'imagine possiblement le seul membre de cette Assemblée qui a vécu de la maternelle à la deuxième, possiblement le premier membre de l'Assemblée qui a vécu ça.

[3:30 p.m.]

Par la suite, j'ai poursuivi mes études à l'Université Sainte-Anne en français, ce dont je suis très fier. Parmi les décisions de plusieurs autres avant moi et plusieurs autres qui le continuent, comme le membre de Clare a mentionné, cela démontre notre fierté d'être acadien. Cela démontre ma fierté et la fierté d'autres de notre langue, la fierté de notre peuple, la fierté de qui nous sommes et d'où nous venons; la reconnaissance de ce que nos ancêtres ont vécu, la persécution, la mort, la faim, la séparation de familles, la déportation - tout cela basé sur notre langue.

Je reconnais le progrès et les réussites au cours des derniers décennies, Monsieur le président, et la rétroaction prise pour le bénéfice de la communauté acadienne et francophone de notre province. Je note les actions prises par la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse afin de protéger les circonscriptions acadiennes de notre province.

Je reconnais et je partage et j'imagine que je partage les sentiments du membre de Clare et d'autres francophones et d'autres francophiles ici dans cette Chambre, les sentiments de ceux et celles qui ont lutté pendant plusieurs années, qui ont peur de perdre notre belle langue, nos dialectes, nos régionalismes - de Par-en-Bas à Chéticamp et tous les coins entre - de perdre notre culture, de perdre notre identité, d'oublier notre histoire.

Monsieur le président, est-ce que je suis concerné à l'égard de l'éducation en français ici en Nouvelle-Écosse? Oui. Ça impacte ma région, ça impacte ma famille, ça impacte les résidents de Argyle, ça impacte la province entière, la communauté francophone et acadienne entière de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Ça impacte les futures générations de cette province.

Je suis également concerné des impacts de l'assimilation vivant en milieu minoritaire. Ça a été mentionné par ma collègue des néo-démocrates à l'égard des services en français. Je suis très fier comme ministre des Affaires acadiennes et de la francophonie de mener une modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français, qui a été déposée par mon prédécesseur, Chris d'Entremont, en 2004. C'est une modernisation qu'on travaille étroitement avec la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Doit-on avoir des modifications législatives? Oui. Est-ce que notre gouvernement a réussi cela pendant ses premiers six mois de notre mandat, un mandat très ciblé? Non. Je vous rappelle, que l'ancien gouvernement, pendant plus de trois ans, n'a pas réussi non plus. Nous avons dû naviguer une vague de cette pandémie, ce qui a certainement pris du temps et des ressources du ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Éducation de la petite enfance, mais notre engagement au CSAP reste le même.

Ce projet de loi, c'est un grand projet de loi, comme l'a mentionné ma collègue de Clare - 105 pages dans les deux langues officielles de notre pays. Avant de poursuivre avec des modifications, c'est très prudent que le ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Éducation de

la petite enfance puisse avoir une analyse et compréhension concrète du texte en français et en anglais, et je suis d'accord que n'importe quelle modification au projet de loi mené dans cette Chambre doit être conforme à la Charte.

Je pense que la patience du CSAP sur ce dossier est devenu très, très mince. C'est compréhensif. Ce dossier existe depuis plus de quatre ans. J'espère avec le peu de patience qui reste que notre gouvernement peut encore s'engager avec le CSAP et continuer le dialogue sur ce dossier comme l'on a indiqué au cours de cette session, qu'on s'attend notre rencontre au mois prochain.

Je me suis rencontré avec le CSAP très tôt dans mon mandat. La ministre s'est rencontrée avec le CSAP dans son mandat. Ensemble on a discuté de ce projet de loi, de cette question, de cette matière, et on s'engage toujours d'avoir ces rencontres menées afin que nous avançons sur ce dossier.

Notre gouvernement est prêt à travailler avec le CSAP. Notre engagement de nous rencontrons en mai, d'avoir un dialogue véritable demeure. C'est l'approche que l'ancien gouvernement a pris, d'avoir le dialogue avec le CSAP. Monsieur le président, c'est l'approche que nous allons suivre comme gouvernement.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit more than halfway through, so I'm going to try to speed it up en anglais.

The subject matter of quality French-language education in Nova Scotia is important for both the Acadian and francophone communities of our province. It ensures the development and the support and the growth of our Acadian and francophone communities from one end of the province to the other. I do want to congratulate my colleague from Clare for tabling his first bill, and perhaps it's unfortunate that he wasn't a member of the previous government to have tabled it at the time when they were in government.

I have to agree that there has been some work done on this subject matter by the previous government. However, that work did not lead to results in this Chamber, and it did not lead to a bill being presented by either of the two Ministers of Education at the time. My question for the Liberal Party now is what has changed with this file now that they're in Opposition to when they were in government?

I'm happy that we can have this debate in this Chamber today. It allows me to outline some of the facts that perhaps the members opposite don't want to hear, but it also allows me the time to talk about Acadie in Nova Scotia. This dossier has been on the books, it's been on the Minister of Education's, now our Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development's, desks since 2018 following the Glaze Report, following the dissolution of elected school boards in our province, and a promise by the former premier and the former Education Minister.

I lived and breathed the CSAP system. I went through Primary to Grade 12, probably the only member in this House who has done that, perhaps the first member in this House who has done that. After that, I went to further my studies in French at Université Saint-Anne. This action and that of others, Mr. Speaker . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Argyle has the floor.

COLTON LEBLANC: This decision that I made and that of many others in our province that even the member for Clare noted demonstrates our pride in being Acadian, our pride in our French language, our pride in our history, and the pride of who we are and where we come from and a recognition of our ancestors who have gone through a lot: persecution, starvation, death, separation of families, deportation, all on the principle of a language.

I want to recognize the progress that has been made and the actions taken over the last number of decades. I cite the Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia and their fight to protect the Acadian constituencies in our province. I recognize and I share with the member for Clare and perhaps other francophones and francophiles of this Chamber the sentiment of those who have fought and continue to fight, who are afraid of losing their language, our dialects, our regionalisms from Par-en-Bas in my constituency all the way to Chéticamp. To lose our culture, to lose our identity, to forget our history.

Am I concerned with education in French in our province? Yes, but I'm also concerned regarding the impacts of assimilation living in a minority status. That's why I'm very proud as Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie to be working collaboratively with the Acadian Federation to see to the modernization of the French Language Services Act that was originally tabled by my colleague and my predecessor, Chris d'Entremont, in 2004.

With the couple of minutes remaining, do we need to see legislative changes? Yes. Has our government accomplished that in its first seven months of government? No. I have to admit that neither did the previous government in three and a half years.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Argyle has the floor.

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, we have to remember, and it's been pointed out on the floor of this Legislature, that we're still living in a pandemic, and we have to deal. The minister and her staff had to deal with a wave that has probably - and I can't speak for the minister - diverted some of the resources and time to that important file.

This is a very important and large document - 100 pages - in both official languages. To move ahead with amendments, I think it's prudent for the department to go through a comprehensive analysis to continue the dialogue with the CSAP. I agree that any amendments to any act have to be responsive to the Charter.

I know the CSAP's patience is running thin. I can assure them that our engagement - my personal engagement - to work on this file remains. The approach from the previous government is to work, and it's the same for ours, in collaboration with the CSAP. That's something that I look forward to doing in May, to have a true dialogue.

I say all of this as a proud Acadian. Je dis tout ceci comme un fier acadien. Vive l'Acadie. Merci beaucoup. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The rules say that no member shall speak more than 15 minutes. That's the rule of the House.

The honourable member for Richmond.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: As a new MLA here, getting to speak on a bill that - I represent an Acadian constituency. There are three Acadian constituencies that were brought back to this Legislature this year. I happen to represent one of them. The member for Clare and the member for Argyle both spoke very eloquently both in English and in French. You'll see, Mr. Speaker, that I'm standing here as an Acadian representative speaking in just English.

It's an interesting thing, representing an Acadian constituency and not being able to speak French. I spent many days at doors knocking on Acadian doorsteps, having conversations in French or in English, trying my best.

Just to give a little bit of history of where I came from that I don't speak French. Before I got to Grade Primary, my parents tried to enrol me in French school. The way it worked in Richmond at the time is if you had enough children who could enrol - you needed 10 students to enrol in French Immersion to actually have that opportunity. The year before me, my cousin, who is a year older than I was, was fortunate. There were 10 students whose parents enrolled them in French immersion, and they had a French immersion class.

In my situation, there were nine of us, nine students who were registered for French immersion. Unfortunately, that was not enough. Because of that, I was not able to be taught in the language of my ancestors.

With that being said, there were times where I did get spoken French to. Many people in Acadian communities would know that we spoke a bit of *franglais*. In my grandparents' house, both my grandmother and my grandfather would speak French to me. I would listen in French but speak back in English, not confident in my ability to speak that language.

I was fortunate, as a student in Richmond, that I was able to take a French course, one class a day in French, and I quite enjoyed it. When you got to high school, after Grade 8 you did not have to take French, you could actually stop, but I continued, and I did it all

the way through Grade 9 to Grade 12. That enabled me to learn a little bit of French and be a little bit confident with it, but Grade 12 was a long time ago for me and unfortunately - maybe not as long as for you, Mr. Speaker, I saw you chuckling at me. With that being said, it was something that I didn't necessarily take with me.

[3:45 p.m.]

Then in my role here as an MLA, it's a struggle sometimes to try to make sure that I can reach out to my constituents in the best way that I can. I want to talk a little bit about my campaign and making my way around the communities, because there are a number of different communities in Richmond that have an Acadian tradition.

I grew up in Louisdale, that's one of them. Much of Isle Madame, whether it's Arichat, Petit-de-Grat, Little Anse, all French communities. River Bourgeois and L'Ardoise - going door to door, I would tell you 70 to 75 per cent of the people probably were similar to me in that they didn't have a strong background in French and spoke English and it was fine. The other 25 per cent would have had a French background but used English as their first language.

I recognize the importance of making sure that the Acadian language is kept vibrant and it's important for us to ensure that the language and the culture of the Acadian people is continued. So much so that, in fact, when I was knocking door to door and I had the privilege of the now-Premier come with me door to door, we actually visited somebody whom I respect. She was a vice-principal of mine when I was in high school and is a former president of the CSAP.

We sat down in her living room, the Premier and I, and we talked about the Act and we talked about the inability to get that moved forward over the last six years and the disappointment from that resident about that.

The Premier listened very intently, and they had a very great dialogue about the importance of the Acadian traditions and the Acadian community and the Acadian culture and the language and what that Act meant to that resident of ours. I will tell you that the Premier came away with a better sense of knowledge of the importance of having the Acadian language be continued and carried forward.

Mr. Speaker, I've tried to do my best as an MLA representing an Acadian riding to hear the concerns and the issues. I've met with several members of the CSAP school board, the representatives in my region, and had conversations about the importance of language and culture and where they want to see the school board go. They know where my allegiance stands, and the importance. I want to make sure that we do this right and that this type of engagement is done appropriately.

As the representative for Richmond, I've sat down and had conversations with both the Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie and with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to talk about the concerns that I've heard. Certainly the reception has always been we want to make sure that we do this right, that we do what's best for the Acadians in our region and in our province, and with that, I feel very strongly that we have their best interests at heart. The minister and I have talked about wanting to continue the dialogue with the CSAP and make sure that we do this right.

I'm a new MLA, I don't know how these things necessarily work, but I can tell you getting a phone call an hour before yesterday's session, being notified that this was going on was kind of disappointing. I'm always open for dialogue, I'm always open to hear what others have to say, and it's one of these things where it's important that I think we all work together to make sure that we're doing the best for Nova Scotia - in this case, the best for the Acadian people who live here in our province.

I think there's an opportunity here, and I'm looking forward to seeing how our Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, work with the CSAP to do better for all of us. With those few words, I'll take my seat, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join the debate on this very important bill. I'm very proud of my colleague, the member for Clare, for bringing forward this bill to protect the French minority language in the province of Nova Scotia. I must say, if the members are surprised, they should know that we campaigned on this in the election campaign and of course, the Liberal Party is going to continue to advocate for the things that we campaigned on in the last election, whether in government or in Opposition.

So I rise as an MLA, as the Leader of the Liberal Party, as a francophile - I don't have Acadian ancestry myself, my daughter actually does, but I was a past president of APF, l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. I was very proud to represent our province, Nouvelle-Écosse, in a number of important meetings globally, and I will continue to speak out in favour of protecting French language moving forward. I'll continue to advocate for the commitments that I made no matter what side of the House that I'm on.

I want to say that there was tremendous work that has gone on in my time as Premier and the two previous Ministers of Education and Early Childhood Development since the Glaze Report to the extent that we actually formed a committee when I was Premier. I set up a committee immediately to work tirelessly closely with the CSAP to understand the challenges in bringing forward this legislation. It's largely the result of work conducted between 2018 and 2021. In particular, in May of 2021, the working group was established to get this legislation over the finish line.

Over many hours spread over two months, the following people met and discussed seriously and frankly with 16 policy proposals: Lisa Courtney-Mercer, from my office; the member for Sydney-Membertou was part of that, then Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development; the deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development - I believe he's still in the position, and should be able to continue this important work; the executive director of that department; our former colleague Lena Diab, then Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie, and her deputy minister as well as her executive director; and the Chair of CSAP, and the superintendent of the CSAP.

It was very important work, and we continued to ensure that we were having that ready for the next sitting. I had roughly the amount of time that that government had to get the bill over the finish line to bring it to the House.

I want to talk about what this bill does. It implements those 16 policy proposals discussed at length in 2021 by two government departments and the CSAP to reform French first language education and bring it into compliance with the Constitution of Canada. This bill ensures that provincial norms and standards in education are respected and ensures that leaders and experts in French first language education are consulted when the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development drafts regulations or policies that affect it. This bill will guarantee collaboration, inclusivity, and equity in education.

The bill is in French and English because it is destined for, and will be used by, Acadians and francophones who work exclusively in French. This is not new in Nova Scotia. We have other legislation that is officially adopted in both languages. What's also important is what this bill does not do, because that should help ensure all the members in the Legislature take it into consideration before they take a stand on this bill.

I will note that the member for Clare tried to call a vote on this bill, and the government decided to filibuster to block the vote. That is, in my view, a de facto show of non-support for this legislation.

First, this bill would not transform Nova Scotia into a bilingual province. I know some in the public service claim that it would be the result of this bill, and that is simply unsubstantiated. Second, this bill maintains all oversight powers required by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the government to do what it must do, ultimately to oversee all education in the province and have the ability to intervene directly as needed to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all students in the province.

This bill will operate in parallel to the Education Act adopted in 2018, which governs English-language and French immersion education. Such a parallel legislative framework is what the CSAP, Acadians and francophones tell us they need as a tool to ensure substantive equivalence in education.

When I was in government, the public service claimed it was not possible to have two acts overseeing education, one for English and immersion instruction and one for French first language education. To dispel the concerns of the public service, the CSAP sought advice of three external legal experts.

First, Jack Major, formerly a judge of the Supreme Court of Canada appointed by Brian Mulroney. Jack Major is from Alberta and does not even speak French. His conclusion is that what the CSAP wants is doable and indeed something which it is entitled to - and I'll table that legal opinion for the benefit of the members.

Second, Stephen Goudge, formerly of the Court of Appeal of Ontario, a very experienced and tremendously well-regarded unilingual anglophone Bay Street lawyer. He came to the same conclusion - I'll table that.

Third, Marshall Rothstein came to the same conclusion as well. Who is Marshall Rothstein? He is a unilingual jurist from Manitoba whom Stephen Harper appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada - I know there must be some Stephen Harper fans on the opposite side. I'll table that opinion.

La Nouvelle-Écosse doit non seulement rattraper le temps perdu, mais aussi devenir chef de file au Canada en matière de protection et de promotion de l'éducation des acadiens et de francophones. Nous avons une obligation constitutionnelle d'offrir une éducation qui est véritablement équivalent, une éducation qui permet aux élèves d'atteindre le même résultat mais au nécessaire par une voie différente.

Nova Scotia has an opportunity not only to fill a gap, but also to become a leader in Canada on the protection and promotion of Acadian and francophone education. We have a constitutional obligation to offer all students an education that is substantially equivalent, that allows them to achieve the same results, but where necessary, by different means.

What was tabled yesterday is legislation that will allow Nova Scotia and this Legislature to fulfill its constitutional obligations, legislation that will ensure the province and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial to have the tools needed to meet the specific needs of Acadian and francophone students and their families.

I think I've demonstrated that there is no legal reason for this bill not to be adopted - no reason to filibuster the bill, to allow this to advance to the next reading, to Law Amendments Committee. I'm sure the government would like to hear from some of the Acadians who are outside who want to see a vote on this bill. There's no good or principal policy reason for this bill not to be adopted.

The CSAP wants us to adopt this bill. Acadians and francophones want us to adopt this bill. I want to thank some of my colleagues in the Legislature who want to adopt this bill.

[4:00 p.m.]

Ceci est un moment historique pour la Nouvelle-Écosse This is a historic moment for Nova Scotia. I'd ask the members opposite to allow this to come to a vote, and that they vote their conscience.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you to my colleague, the member for Clare, with whom I share a name - I'm not allowed to say it - and thank you to my colleague, the member for Argyle, with whom I share a name.

My name is not Acadian. There were a couple of Leblancs who came from France, and some of them went to Ontario and most of them stayed here. I will say that I do share a little bit of that family history of being ashamed of language. My father, who's 87 - when he went to school - he grew up in a small francophone town in northern Ontario - he didn't speak any English. He got to school on his first day and the teacher asked him a question in English, which he couldn't answer - and so he was strapped. He ran away from the school, and he didn't return for an entire year. It's a heartbreaking story, but it's one that I think is very common in our country.

I will say very quickly that when my children were born, my francophone mother-in-law from Montréal was very concerned about their language education and us living in Nova Scotia. My partner is from Quebec. From Day 1, my children have been spoken to in both languages at home. It's very important to me that they're speaking French, because we didn't really speak French in my family very much, possibly because of my father's experience.

My mother-in-law was very concerned. We said, "The kids will go to French school. They'll go to the Acadian school," and she said, "Well, it's French immersion," and we're like, "No, it's not French immersion. It's actually French-first school." "But no, it's just French immersion."

It took her a long time to understand that we actually had an option for francophones in Nova Scotia. She was quite surprised, and now that she can have full conversations with her grandchildren, she trusts us that it's a good education that they're getting.

I just wanted to share that, because it is very important that we have French-first options for francophones in Nova Scotia, whether they are Acadian or francophones from other parts of the world. When we're talking about immigration, it's important that

francophones from around the world have an option for their children to be educated fully in French.

I want to thank my colleague from Clare for bringing this to the floor of the House. I want to thank the CSAP as well, and all the people who are working so hard to educate our children. I hope this bill does go forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Monsieur le Président, je vais remercier le député de Clare pour cette conversation aujourd'hui. Je sais que les acadiens/acadiennes sont un peuple très fier.

Mr. Speaker, I know how proud the Acadians of Nova Scotia are. I know how important this conversation is to the protection, promotion, and proliferation of the French language and culture here in Nova Scotia.

Listening attentively to those here in this Chamber, we need to acknowledge that in Nova Scotia, in Canada, the forces of assimilation historically in this country have been unfortunately extremely powerful. Provinces historically in this country have used their public policy against linguistic minorities, in particular Acadians, and in particular franco-Ontarians. The history books are crystal clear on that.

I can recall speaking to my grand-mère, a very proud Acadian from northern New Brunswick, a Turbide originally from Îles de la Madeleine but settled in Bay du Vin - Yvonne Durelle, a very famous Acadian some may be familiar with.

I remember her telling me that the greatest tragedy in her life was not passing on the French language to her children. I remember her telling me also, "the greatest thing you could do is make sure you marry yourself a good French Acadian woman." I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I certainly did.

The bonds of the French language and culture carry on in my children because of that family connection, but also the protection and promotion of French in this province is facilitated by the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. Just listening to the member for Clare, I've certainly heard those stories. I couldn't imagine what it would have been like to have grown up having to go to a school system that on purpose was attempting to disconnect you from your roots, from your family traditions. Anyone familiar with the Acadians of Nova Scotia knows how strong those bonds are. They know how strong those roots are - rooted in 1775, rooted in the world that existed before le Grand Dérangement.

When we talk about the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, we're not just talking about a very strong, distinct education entity in this province, we are talking about an entity, Mr. Speaker . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time for debate on second reading of Bill No. 156 has expired.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 110.

Bill No. 110 - Nova Scotia Housing Corporation Act.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, it is all about being recognized today. I am happy to stand today to speak on Bill No. 110. Nova Scotia, as we've heard many times, is in a housing crisis - and it's true. We were in one yesterday, we are in one today, and we will continue to be in one for many days to come if the government doesn't act swiftly on a number of actions required to remove us from this situation.

In my time as a regional councillor, I was known to often say I like a plan and I like sticking to it. In May 2021, the Affordable Housing Commission released a final report - a plan - outlining a list of actions necessary to get our province out of a housing crisis. The actions were thoroughly researched by the commission, categorized by timelines including short-term, mid-term, and long-term.

When appointed as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the minister accepted this responsibility in his mandate letter: to work with the Housing Commission to implement the recommendations of the 2021 Affordable Housing Commission report. The first recommendation in this commission report is to establish an arms-length, independent provincial housing entity - a recommendation that is considered short-term and should be completed by the end of this year.

The Affordable Housing Commission report has made it very clear that the calls to action are in a specific order for obvious reasons. The success of the future recommendations will be reliant on the very first recommendation, which is the establishment of an arms-length, independent provincial housing entity.

So here we are, nearly halfway into 2022 and there's been no word from this government on the creation of this independent housing entity. Because of this inaction to get this plan off the page of the Affordable Housing Commission report, I introduced a bill to address the first recommendation of the Affordable Housing Commission report to ensure that Nova Scotia stays on track with tackling the existing housing crisis.

Because of this housing crisis, this province cannot afford any more delays in housing decisions. Housing Nova Scotia is not equipped to address the current crisis facing

our province, and the mandate needs of the Affordable Housing Commission. From the Affordable Housing Commission report, it is quoted, “Housing Nova Scotia ... faces a number of structural challenges. The public housing operating model is unsustainable and provincial funding for housing is not structured to enable long-term strategic planning.”

The only way to get out of this housing crisis is through long-term strategic planning. We must think forward and not just for today. Your creation of an independent housing entity will surely be a lengthy and detailed process. Each passing day that this government fails to introduce legislation mandating this is an additional day that Nova Scotians are struggling in a housing crisis.

The bill being debated today has been modelled after the success of British Columbia’s independent housing entity, a jurisdiction that has moved housing to an independent, business-focused operation that collaborates with both private and non-profit developers.

This government seems supportive of the idea of assigning entities - or should I say task forces - to have the authority to make timely decisions on housing. An independent housing entity would allow for an organization to have the sole focus on the housing crisis throughout this province and work wonders in making sure that support is easy to navigate for those looking.

The housing system in this province, as we know, is complicated. When individuals are seeking supports for affordable housing, they often feel discouraged by the red tape, paperwork, and bureaucracy associated with wanting to learn more information or to find support. An independent housing entity would simplify these complicated processes and would serve as a one-stop shop for housing needs in this province, encouraging more people to get the help they so desperately need.

I encourage this government to support this bill, a bill that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is mandated to complete as per his mandate letter.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: As I’ve said many times before, our NDP caucus has been focused on the need for affordable, accessible housing for quite some time.

In fact, in 2013 it was an NDP government that introduced the province’s first housing strategy. That strategy proposed the development of Housing Nova Scotia, which was intended to build a new and better housing portfolio with the primary goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing for Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, imagine where we would be if the work to grow our supply of affordable housing had started when we had suggested it 10 years ago. Imagine if the

Bloomfield development hadn't been abandoned by the Liberal government. We'd have 400 new homes on the peninsula with at least 40 per cent of them affordably priced and all built to the highest environmental standard. Instead, we had eight years of rent supplements and now this Opposition bill that looks an awful lot like part of the strategy that the NDP handed the Liberals in 2013. I suppose we can all agree that the best Liberal policies are the ones they take from the NDP.

We agree with the spirit of this bill: that government needs to have clear, measurable goals around the investments being made in housing. Government has a responsibility to make sure that when they are spending public money that it's creating affordable, accessible, safe housing that meets the needs of people in our communities.

These investments have to help build sustainable, healthy neighbourhoods. The cost of doing nothing is not sustainable. Year after year, governments have spent millions on emergency hotel stays for people without housing instead of really fixing the housing crisis.

Investing in affordable, accessible housing is like investing in other assets like roads and hospitals. These are things that are publicly owned that provide value to the community. This is a better approach than giving money to private developers for time-limited affordability.

Public housing and non-market housing include co-ops, where a group of people together own the property and take pride in their communities and in their homes. The rents are often much lower than in landlord-owned buildings.

It includes non-profit organizations and charities that are able to provide housing when they have the funding and support from the government to do this work. We have seen how useful this could be, especially during the pandemic. We need to make sure that we fund them properly.

Publicly owned housing exists in major cities throughout the world. We just need to do a better job of managing the need for public housing and dealing with the current wait-list for families and seniors who need housing support. There are organizations ready to do this work. We just need to support them and be bold and, as we hear often, innovative, and just get the work done.

Thirty-six new affordable housing units will be complete in New Glasgow this Summer. The Nova Scotia Co-operative Council, an economic development agency owned by co-ops and credit unions in the province, announced that it bought the Tara Inn on East River Road in New Glasgow. The Province could be helping non-profits and other agencies to do this kind of work.

With rents increasing and the costs of buying a home moving out of reach, too many people are spending more than they can afford to keep a roof over their heads. The NDP

recognizes that housing is a right and profit is not. We need the government to listen - truly listen.

[4:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak regarding this bill. Everyone in Nova Scotia is in 100 per cent agreement that the housing crisis has reached a critical point. Our province is growing at an amazing rate - I found out this morning 1,007,802 people, which has caused the housing prices and rents to skyrocket.

Most Nova Scotians are worried, as I am, if our children will ever be able to afford their own home. Affordability is an issue for all Nova Scotians, those who want to rent or buy. Our government fully supports the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission recommendations. We are continuing to make progress on this very important work. However, the work is not finished. It needs to be completed before we consider changes to the organization and its structure.

We have been working closely at the current structure and delivering housing programs and services. We have been investing and working with our partners on a number of fronts to create more affordable housing units, address barriers, strengthen the community housing sector, and improve the housing supply. This takes time.

Last Fall we announced \$35 million for a housing plan, support for housing affordability for Nova Scotia across the province. Last October, we changed the maximum allowable purchase price for the program so people buying a house up to \$300,000 in the Halifax area or \$200,000 outside of Halifax could qualify.

In November we announced \$6.4 million for affordable housing units in Kentville, Lantz, and the Halifax area. We also announced over \$400,000 to help five community housing groups as well. In March we designated nine special planning areas, up to 22,000 new units possible in these areas. This will shave months, if not years, off the approval time.

For those who rent, we've announced \$22 million for 272 new affordable units in the Mount Hope area of Dartmouth, at 60 to 80 per cent of market rent. Also, 550 new rent supplements in the budget, which means over 5,000 rent supplements each month.

Down payment assistance programs are available for household incomes of less than \$75,000. People can borrow between \$10,000 and \$15,000 to help with their down payment. There's more money in this budget for the Down Payment Assistance Program which brings it to a total of \$4.2 million. This allows more long-term supports for first-time home buyers.

Recently we announced \$916,000 in grants to 22 non-profit community housing organizations across the province to build capacity for the work ahead. This government has taken a comprehensive approach to this housing crisis and it's more important to consider the whole context and implications of any decision that we're making.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to speak here today for just a few minutes on Bill No. 110. As all members are aware, I'm sure, the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission issued 17 recommendations in its report and Recommendation No. 1 - I don't want to speak for the commission but I would assume the first recommendation is probably the most important in their view - is to establish an arm's length independent provincial housing entity, which is what this bill does that my colleague from Cole Harbour-Dartmouth introduced.

When we look at the issue of housing, which we've all been talking about ad nauseum during this sitting and the Fall sitting with good reason, it's incredibly complicated, it's incredibly detailed. No one disputes that, but there are certain steps and a pathway to make a difference that has been laid out. We don't need to reinvent the wheel to get things moving on this. As I said, the first recommendation is to establish this independent entity which we hear a lot from the government side on the housing file about speed and movement and getting things done.

I don't dispute the importance of that point but I think the government has moved quickly on some aspects of this: establishing the task force, putting forward these planning areas, establishing a Joint Regional Transportation Authority, for example, on the transportation file. But on this issue, which is something that is on the desk, I'm holding it in my hand here - the Affordable Housing Commission, and the top recommendations. No interest, at least thus far, on moving on this particular recommendation, which is a bit odd.

As members may know, Housing Nova Scotia, which would be succeeded by this new housing entity, is responsible for about 11,500 rental properties across Nova Scotia, so 20,000 people or so living in these units across the province and many more who need assistance as we know on the housing file. I've heard many members like the minister and, I believe, the member for Hants East as well talking about the Down Payment Assistance Program that's available for the province.

I really don't mean to disparage, but it's \$300,000 here in HRM. I forget the exact number, maybe \$200,000 outside of HRM, which is just not anywhere close to do enough. The other day I saw a house in Dartmouth which I think sold for \$120,000 two or three years ago - it sold for \$350,000. So \$300,000 is an exceedingly small percentage of any sales that are happening in HRM and \$200,000 is a very small percentage of sales that are happening outside of HRM. These programs may exist on paper, but they're not delivering the results, I think, that are needed.

Again, I think that sometimes we get so caught up in who introduces what and who wants to take credit for what that we lose sight of what ideas are non-partisan across the board. Again, this Affordable Housing Commission put forward its recommendations with representations from across the board - developers, housing advocates. It was not a Liberal Housing Commission or a PC Housing Commission - it was a Nova Scotian Housing Commission.

There are 17 recommendations, as I said, and if you look through them, many of them flow directly from this first recommendation. If the first recommendation is not implemented, then many of the others will not, either. I think that would be a shame if a lot of these recommendations died on the vine as it were.

Again, I am in full support of this legislation. I want to congratulate the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for bringing it forward and I hope that government members will give it the consideration it deserves.

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: I don't know exactly how this works, but I guess that's a wrap for this bill. I move to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 110.

THE SPEAKER: We will take a very short recess.

[4:23 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:27 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, that concludes Opposition business for the day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent to the House to move into move into late debate.

THE SPEAKER: There is a request for unanimous consent of the House to move into late debate.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Just to clarify the record, once late debate is over, we'll go back into Government Business. As long as everybody is clear on that for now.

We've reached the moment of interruption. The topic for the late debate, as submitted by the honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect, is:

“Whereas the Nova Scotia government has stated we are transitioning to personal responsibility for their COVID response, while medical health experts continue to recommend wearing masks and getting vaccinated to protect themselves, their communities, and the health care system;

Therefore be it resolved the Province of Nova Scotia consider reinstating the mask requirements for indoor public places until the end of April and start to encourage Nova Scotians to get their booster shot of vaccine to mitigate more severe impacts to our health care system.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

GOV'T (N.S.): INDOOR MASK REQ. AND VACC. BOOSTER - PROMOTE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The purpose of calling the debate on the government's COVID-19 response or lack thereof, according to some experts, is to help augment the voices of medical health experts, infectious disease specialists, and others who have science backgrounds who have been consistent throughout every wave of the pandemic on what tools Nova Scotians should be using to keep themselves and their families and communities safe.

We had been a leader early on in the pandemic in a number of ways by working very closely with Public Health and posting regular briefings where you had the opportunity for the leader of the government, the Premier, in unison with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Strang, fielding questions and giving updates. Some of them were mundane during the valleys of the wave coming down where there were fewer cases to report.

I continued when I was Premier to host these briefings throughout my whole tenure two times a week to ensure that Nova Scotians had the confidence that we were on top of it and that we were continuously consistent with Public Health in giving advice to Nova

Scotians and ready to answer any questions as they relate to tools that Nova Scotians need, virus activity in their communities.

Those were the days where Nova Scotia was considered a leader in our response to the pandemic, in our country and internationally. I think it's a testament to how many people are actually moving to our province, as we were described as a beacon of safety for people to be here and move here, in some cases. We saw an unprecedented amount of people coming here during the previous waves of the pandemic. It was said we were a leader, and recently there was a statement that "Long a pandemic leader, Nova Scotia is now a COVID-19 hotspot", and I'll table that.

That's because of the change in caseloads that we have, more than triple the national average of cases in our communities now, and that's just the number of COVID-19 cases that we're aware of from PCR testing. We had been the leader in testing all along, asymptomatic testing, identifying cases early so that we could try to truncate the amount of spread in communities. We were early adopters of masks, much earlier than other places in the country, even when there was some disagreement on whether they would be effective or not in limiting spread. I think it's pretty conclusive, the ability to contain the virus in communities, especially in indoor places, when you wear masks.

What I'm asking for, to get to the point, is for the government to consider what Public Health has continued to recommend, their own Chief Medical Officer of Health continues to recommend: wearing masks. What our infectious disease specialists are saying, what the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, Theresa Tam, has recently said, and she actually explicitly said, despite what provinces are saying to do: continue to wear your mask and get your booster shot.

We haven't heard very much from the government in terms of the importance of getting your vaccine booster shot. We went from being a leader in the country for the first and second doses under Liberal governments - over 90 per cent uptake - to now, 63 per cent roughly of people who have gotten their booster. Those are things that protect people, especially from serious disease, and ultimately, potentially death.

That's why it's so important to listen to people like Theresa Tam, to listen to people like Dr. Lisa Barrett, Dr. Paul Bonnar, Dr. Ian Davis, Dr. Melanie Di Quinzio, Dr. Todd Hatchette, Dr. Lynn Johnston, Dr. Christopher Lata, Dr. Glenn Patriquin, Dr. Mark Robbins, and Dr. Kris Srivatsa. These are people who are all united, all independent medical health experts, infectious disease specialists, mostly, who have said: Why not continue to have masks in place, at least for the duration of the respiratory season?

In the debate, I asked for until the end of April and to re-evaluate in two weeks. When I mentioned that to some of the doctors I spoke to, they said we're actually now looking at the end of May, but we'll take it if, at least, they can consider bringing them back for the end of April.

We have yet today to have heard a reason of why not, Mr. Speaker. They listened to the pediatric division of IWK when they had to backtrack on their position on masking in schools, and the second backtrack to extend the masking requirements in schools. For some reason, they take credence from recommendations from one discipline, which is offensive to the other disciplines that deal with age groups beyond children and infants, especially when it's known that the most prevalence of spread is among the ages of between 20 and 30, especially when we have even private schools that are going without masks.

I think the most challenging thing for Nova Scotians to try to figure out is why government is saying one thing and why all of these medical health experts are saying another. That's the reason why we want to continue to talk about it in this House, to ensure that we are at least giving a stronger voice to those who know a lot more about this virus than we do in this House.

The Minister of Health and Wellness had said - I caught the word that she used - we're going into an "endemic." I think a lot of experts take exception to using that word so early in the pandemic.

There's great risk in saying that we're heading to an endemic phase. I'll quote some. Right now, many places across Canada are moving to the idea of living with the virus, making it sound that the virus is now in an endemic phase, which it's not. We are still really in a pandemic and it's worldwide.

It's problematic when we have a defeatist attitude that this so-called mild disease is just like a cold or a flu. We hear this and government with their messaging doesn't help argue the point that is being made by people that it is just a cold.

I'll quote another expert because this isn't coming from me. A cold doesn't increase your risk of having heart disease; a cold doesn't increase your risk of a blood clot three to six months after infection; a cold doesn't increase your risk of diabetes - and even if it's really mild, COVID-19 does increase those risks. Dr. Cécile Tremblay, also an infectious disease specialist, out of the Université de Montréal - and I'll table those comments.

Really the biggest challenge is in communications. They saw fit to use public money to get people to start going out there and start visiting businesses. We all want to see businesses succeed, but we want to do it in a way that they're safe and we keep our communities safe and those who are most vulnerable. It does come down to tolerance.

As Lisa Barrett and a lot of others have said, these deaths are preventable. When I was Premier, any time I made a decision - some of them very challenging - I always made it with the view that one death is too many, that every single life was valuable. Why can we not look at ways to help protect people by wearing masks so that we can prevent ICU visits and people suffering, and ultimately deaths?

Every single life is valuable. Some say I was too strict with COVID-19 measures while I was Premier. I don't regret any of those decisions. (Applause) I don't regret, in the third wave, getting through that with strict measures.

We got through that wave in record time, in one month, while places like Ontario and Manitoba tinkered back and forth. They were actually in a relative state of lockdown for almost a whole year, so I don't regret clamping down for that short month to get things under control and stamp out the disease and protect the most vulnerable. (Applause)

Some say that I may have lost the election because I was too strict with these measures and I didn't listen to the people that the government is obviously listening to who don't want to wear masks or get vaccinated. I can say that if I lost the election for that, I don't regret it still to this day. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature.

Like many of us, I suspect, I have been getting calls from many physicians, epidemiologists, and scientists who simultaneously feel they have an ethical duty to speak about the policy decisions that the government is making and express a feeling of being muzzled by the structure of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. It's against that backdrop that I will make these comments and that I will encourage the government in their policy decisions to again start to rely on the advice of health care professionals.

We, I think, had a rare distinction in Nova Scotia of being among the best in North America at managing COVID-19. As anyone in this House will tell you, I rarely agreed with Premier McNeil, but because he made the choice early to listen to Public Health and to take advantage of the expertise at his disposal and to act according to their directions, we fared incredibly well. I want to be clear - we fared very well not because our restrictions were harsh; we fared well because our restrictions were smart. (Applause)

I think it's really important to note that seemingly as soon as the government stopped listening to Public Health and there has become what appears from the outside - and I'm only on the outside, I'm not in any of these conversations - to be a notable schism between Public Health advice and policy decisions, which I think as my colleague alluded to, could only be based on polling.

It's true: people want COVID-19 to be over. We all want COVID-19 to be over. But as soon as there became a Delta, a gap between Public Health advice and policy-making, we've seen our cases rise, so much in fact that we are now distinguished as being among one of the worst jurisdictions in North America. That should be concerning to everyone.

When I say one of the worst, what does that mean? That means that almost every day, Nova Scotians are dying of COVID-19, Nova Scotians who don't need to die of COVID-19. Nova Scotians are catching this disease and they are having very severe outcomes - death, severe illness, loss of employment, inability to work, loss of livelihood. All of this has not only real-world and ultimate impacts, but also financial consequences, I would argue.

I want to say that the way we prevented this in the past, and the way that we could prevent this, isn't a black-and-white thing, it's not a zero-sum game, it's not we press the panic button and lock down, or we just let people live their lives. This is the narrative that we have been hearing from the Premier and it's very disturbing because it actually simplifies an issue that is not simple.

I again want to stress that with small interventions - and I will say I appreciate the government's decision to extend the mask mandate in schools. I think that was smart; I think that was based on science. I've got three kids in public school. I'm not worried about the public health impacts of them wearing masks for another month. I think it is far outweighed by the positive health impacts.

Wearing masks, being thoughtful about your social circle, all of the things that we've learned to do, that's not panic, that's not a lockdown. That's common sense and that's keeping each other safe.

I think that what I'm trying to point to is that we are seeing extraordinarily contradictory messaging from leadership. I think the key to our success was that we had this unified voice that although sometimes - obviously we all take issue with various things, but we trusted the voice of leadership throughout the pandemic, and that trust is eroding. That's partly a global phenomenon around conspiracy theories and whatever else, but we have a choice to either go into that flow or not.

I think we hear "Keep your circle small," then we see an ad campaign that says to get back out there, and we hear that you should wear a mask when you are indoors, in public situations, and then we hear that if it's comfortable for you, wear a mask. Then we hear that Nova Scotians have the tools they need, but we don't have the tools we need, we don't have the data we need to understand our level of risk.

Again, credit where credit is due: We're pleased that the government reinstated the temporary Paid Sick Leave program. It's not enough but it's a start. Before that we didn't even have the opportunity to stay home, which we were being told to do.

I think it's really important again to emphasize the impact on our health care system. We have hundreds and hundreds of NSHA employees off right across the system - those are staff. We were told yesterday that the solution is overstaffing, which doesn't make any sense to me, but maybe someone else can figure that out. We've got tens of

thousands of people waiting for delayed surgeries, and those are only the surgeries that were scheduled. There are thousands and thousands and thousands more surgeries that need to happen that weren't even scheduled because diagnostics is so backed up.

[4:45 p.m.]

Our health care system is on the brink. I think any assertion to the contrary is just not accurate, based on what I've been hearing. I think what's happening is we're hearing this acquiescence, or this narrative that this is where we are, it's going to become endemic - this is how it is across the country. You know what? This is how it is across the country, but the rest of the country actually suffered greater disease, higher death counts and more lockdowns than we did - because we did it our own way. We did it in a Nova Scotian way. We kept everyone's health and well-being at the forefront, and we made it a collective conversation.

By really emphasizing the notion that we were all in this together - I would submit that members of this House did this, the government did this, health leadership did this - we were successful.

I think that the current challenge that we find ourselves in - the skyrocketing COVID-19 cases that we see, the deaths we see every day, severe illness that people are experiencing in Nova Scotia - is directly attributable to this shift from an idea of we're all in it together, I participate in these public health restrictions so that you can be safe. That's not the story anymore.

Now it's a private story. It's well, if you feel comfortable wearing a mask, wear a mask. If you think you need a mask to be safe, you wear a mask. If you're more comfortable in a smaller group, you be in the smaller group. But that's not why we make these choices.

The only way through this is together and the only way through this is to have a sense of collective responsibility, and for our government to model a narrative of collective responsibility. How they do that - that's the job of Public Health. Do that by following Public Health's instructions and do the ad campaign to support the health advice that we get. Don't do an ad campaign of people clinking forks. I don't even know what that's about. There's a picture of people clinking food on each other's forks. Anyway, it's not how I eat, but maybe other people.

I think all of that is like "Get back out there." Should we? That's not what we're hearing. That's not what we're hearing from the physicians my colleague listed. That's not what we're hearing, in fact, from Dr. Strang. So who are we hearing it from? Why aren't we amplifying the messages of Public Health so that we can keep the most vulnerable among us safe? Again, we don't have the tools we need and there are many people who, number one, maybe can't follow the data that's being released, but number two, don't have

control over their health. They're immunocompromised, they live in marginalized communities - there are all kinds of reasons.

I just want to close by saying that it is my view that the government has a responsibility to keep the people of this province healthy, safe, and thriving. This government ran on health care and that is the right topic, but they have inexplicably decided to abandon it in this case, and I don't know why. I would encourage them to come back to a notion of simple caring and compassionate actions that can keep us all safe. If they do that, we will rally around them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, I've been asked to just raise my voice so you can hear me a little bit. I'll do that.

I just want to begin by making a couple of observations. I'm new to this House over the last number of months but the first observation I think we can all agree on is COVID-19 is not over. We understand that on this side of the House. But another thing that we recognize and we acknowledge is that we have faith in Nova Scotians. We have faith in Nova Scotians to do the right thing.

Just over two years ago, COVID-19 came on the scene and what began was a relationship between Public Health, Dr. Strang, and the Premier at the time. Very soon, Nova Scotians got to trust that relationship between the Premier and Public Health and Dr. Strang. We don't need a history lesson of all the things that have gone on in the different waves, but I do want to commend previous governments for how they've handled the pandemic over the years. But there's no doubt about it, that while the pandemic is not over, we do need to shift into a state of living with COVID-19.

I know my colleagues across the aisle say we shouldn't be saying those things, but maybe in different parts of the province people feel a little different. I don't receive as many calls, maybe, as the members opposite for keeping restrictions on, but I can say that Nova Scotians should assume that COVID-19 is still present and it's still out there. One of the reasons why we seem to be having a lot of cases now is because, number one, we test a lot here in Nova Scotia. I think the thing that's important for us to remember is that we don't need a daily tracking number to know where COVID-19 is. We know where COVID-19 is. It's present in our society. It's present.

We've been told by previous governments to follow science. There's no doubt about it. This government has accepted that role that was previously put out there and taken precedence. It has worked with Dr. Strang, and has worked with Public Health.

I'll just go back to the Fall. This government is the government that instituted mandates to have a vaccination policy for non-essential items and non-essential activity.

This government put in a vaccine mandate on provincial employees. This government continues to work well and work hard with Dr. Strang to present for Nova Scotians all the mitigation strategies that they know they need to do.

We know we need to wash our hands. We know we need to social distance. We know we need to mask if we need to be out there. Government doesn't need to be telling people what to do anymore. We're at a phase in this pandemic. Many call it endemic. My friend across the aisle has quoted experts as saying it's still a pandemic. I would say that we appreciate the fact that some people in our province right now are still afraid of COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, any reopening and any lifting of restrictions that our government did was going to be too fast for some and be too slow for others.

I believe that the people of Nova Scotia have a lot of trust in this government and have a lot of trust in our Premier. I believe that, because I meet with people all the time in my constituency, and they say, we really appreciate the things that your Premier has done through COVID-19. They know that we have continued to work with Public Health. They know that we continue to do the right thing and allow Nova Scotians to make their own decisions. We don't need a government to tell people what to do.

We're already looking after vulnerable people in our society with our restrictions and with our mandates. We've kept mandates on high-risk and high-immunocompromised areas with seniors and health care facilities. We continue to make sure that our children are safe in public schools. We've kept mask mandates on in schools. I believe that this government really is paying attention. We are doing what Nova Scotians really want at this point in time.

I don't know what feedback my honourable friends are getting in their different constituencies, but I can tell you that this government is receiving very high marks for the handling of the pandemic in my constituency.

I would like to say that Public Health does continue to strongly recommend mask use as one of several Public Health measures. We know that it's effective in community transmission. This means that individuals can choose to wear a mask, but it's no longer necessary for the government to make it legal or not. Public Health remains committed to balancing the risks associated with COVID-19 against the unintended consequences associated with public health restrictions.

We know that COVID-19 is still here. We know that COVID-19 is present in our community, but it's time that we allow individuals in communities to decide their own risk tolerance.

I know from a few events that I've been at in my own constituency over the last few weeks, people are just happy to be out in public again. They're happy to see each other. They're happy to be in each other's presence again.

I just want to go back to say that this government does work with Dr. Strang. I know they've quoted some other specialists and other people, but at times in the past when other people have quoted other scientists or other doctors, it was dismissed because Dr. Strang knew something different.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my friends across the aisle, when Dr. Strang - I want to just quote from a CBC news article the other day. Dr. Strang is quoted as saying, "I hope that most people adopt masking, especially during the Winter months. All the things that have shown to be protective against COVID, they protect against other respiratory viruses. But using strong restrictions and things with all their economic and mental health impacts, they're always short-term, extreme measures. They cannot be part of living with a virus. We have to adopt other measures without those restrictions that help decrease the impact. And the impact is really about more severe disease. Who is at increased risk for severe disease or death?"

Dr. Strang says that by using strong restrictions and things with all their economic and mental health impacts, they are always short-term. I'd like to ask my friends across the aisle: When did you stop listening to Dr. Strang? I'd like to table that report now. When did my friends stop listening to Dr. Strang?

I would like to emphasize again that Nova Scotians have placed a lot of trust in this government. As someone who is new in this House, obviously everything is political - I understand, we are in the political business. I have to say that sometimes - one thing that people have told me is that they are very frustrated when COVID-19 is made political. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Kings West has the floor.

CHRIS PALMER: I would just like to say again that this government is well-trusted by the people of this province. They trust this Premier. They trust his team, and they trust Dr. Strang. Dr. Strang and our Premier are working closely together, and they are going to continue to do that for the people of this province.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when people are out there, they know that we have their back. When it comes to COVID-19, we will continue to do what is best for the people of Nova Scotia. We have faith in them, they have faith in us. We're going to do it together.

THE SPEAKER: I wish to thank all the members who participated in this evening's debate. It was quite interesting to sometimes listen to things going across the floor.

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 Supply.

[5:00 p.m.]

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, this Spring session appears to be, and rightfully so, focused on affordability and the cost of living. The cost of living is rising across the province, and it permeates every aspect of our lives.

When the pandemic began, more than 41,000 children in Nova Scotia were living in poverty. We had the highest rate of child poverty in Atlantic Canada. This is the reason why I was dismayed and shocked that there was nothing in the budget to adequately address this blunt fact.

I know this government is going to say the numbers of child poverty have gone down, but the numbers are not real. By not real I mean that they are COVID-19 numbers, with one-time payments and COVID-19 funding increases. They are not permanent and therefore cannot provide us with an accurate picture of poverty in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. So I feel like we need to stop using the numbers that things such as the extra money for the Canadian Child Tax Benefit or CERB, because as I said, they're one-time, maybe two-time-offs, but they're not here to stay. They're not permanent.

What we need to do is develop a comprehensive, robust poverty eradication plan that incorporates an outcome-based framework that includes targets and timelines that are embedded in legislation. We need a robust social safety net that is evidence-based, employs an intersectional lens, and incorporates principles of universality, decolonization, social inclusion, and good, well-paying jobs.

I appreciate the increase in the ESIA rates, and I do give credit where credit is due, but the reality is that 100 per cent of families who rely on government support as their only source of income live deep in poverty and will continue to do so. The increase is necessary, but it fails to tie ESIA rates into any livable standards for the future.

The government needs to reform the Employment Support & Income Assistance program, incorporating the principles of social inclusion and respect for human dignity. The level must include the regular cost of living increases, taking into account inflation, and including housing and food.

I'm going to go on to something that's near and dear to my heart: Having a disability should not equal poverty. People with disabilities have a higher cost of living because they face costs other individuals may never have to consider, as do their families, if it is a child

with a disability. In order to enjoy and be in community, individuals with disabilities require equity, not equality. They need equity.

The government must take into consideration the cost of essentials that would allow for individuals with a disability to be in community. Some may require mobility aids such as wheelchairs, technological aids, and accessible housing, to name a few. These added expenses can often force people living with disabilities to make extremely hard choices. Their families are often required to make extremely hard choices about what they can and cannot afford for themselves or for their child.

Housing options are limited due to a lack of accessible, affordable housing options in our province. There are very few truly accessible housing options in Nova Scotia. When crafting a budget, these realities must be taken into consideration.

We must recognize the serious impact the rising cost of living has on seniors and individuals on fixed income in our province. This is evident in my riding of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier. Many seniors are unable to afford basic food items and nutritious food. Being unable to afford nutritious food can cause severe health problems. This issue has only intensified as home oil prices have increased, and the proposed rate hike by Nova Scotia Power is another concern for seniors. If they cannot already afford food and they cannot already afford the oil prices, how can they possibly afford a huge hike in power rates, Mr. Speaker?

For thousands of seniors and retirees who live in Cape Breton and have fixed incomes, these increases mean they have less money for other things beyond the necessities. As I've said before, even the necessities are taking a backseat.

I've heard of seniors - and I've said this many times on the floor of this Chamber - who can't afford hearing aids, eyeglasses, and dental care. I spoke with many health professionals who say that proper, good health care begins in the mouth. If you cannot afford dental care, how can your health outcomes be anything else but poor?

Most seniors can't even afford the upkeep of their homes. They can't afford to fix things that are broken within their homes, and we know what happens when something gets broken. Oftentimes, the roof has a little leak. That little leak becomes a huge leak. I have had seniors who are living, and I mean this quite literally, with many holes in their roofs and when the rain comes in, they have buckets upon buckets upon buckets trying to catch that water. They can't afford the upkeep of their homes.

I've heard of seniors who space out their medications because they aren't able to afford to take them every day. Again, Mr. Speaker, all of these can and have led to poor health outcomes and hospital stays. When we talk about our health care system, let's talk about the preventive things that we can do to ensure that people don't end up in the hospital.

It is often assumed that working full-time is a pathway out of poverty. However, there are plenty of people who work at or around the minimum wage in Nova Scotia who would beg to differ. Working Nova Scotians make up a majority of the food-insecure households. These are people who are working and yet they make up 60 per cent of the food-insecure households.

Improving the earned income levels is essential for ending poverty. Although stable employment helps to reduce poverty, it does not solve the problem. Nova Scotians had been struggling prior to COVID-19 and therefore it cannot be used as an excuse. The pandemic and the inflation, through all that struggle, has become worse. We need to move to a \$15 minimum wage immediately. We needed to do it last year. We needed to do it the year before, and the year before that, Mr. Speaker.

As of right now, \$15 is a moot point. It is not worth it right now. We need to work toward implementing a living wage. I say that it's a moot point because at the moment, a living wage is actually \$21.30 an hour in the Annapolis Valley, \$18.45 an hour in Cape Breton, and \$22.05 an hour in Halifax. Therefore, to wait for a \$15 minimum wage in 2024 is too late. It's already out of date in 2022. Nova Scotians need a raise and they need it now.

I'm going to move on to housing costs and the lack of affordable housing. The cost of housing and the lack of affordable housing has increased significantly. People in my community cannot find affordable housing. There has not been a month this past year that I have not written anywhere between two to six letters a month - maybe even within two weeks of each other - when a year ago I had only written one or two letters a month for recommendations for housing. In December, I was told that even chronic vacancies were no longer vacant.

There are too many Nova Scotians looking for affordable housing, but there doesn't seem to be any plans in the budget for affordable public housing. I hear from constituents who can no longer afford to stay in their homes due to the increase in housing costs, and the number on that wait-list that's growing at the moment. Costs are too high. Costs are so high that some people can no longer afford to actually live in their homes. That's what's happening here in Nova Scotia.

I cannot talk about the cost of living without discussing the impact rising costs have on thousands of post-secondary students in Nova Scotia. Post-secondary students are dealing with increasing costs to everything from food, housing, power, tuition, book fees, only to name a few. Some of the costs are causing students stress. Over the last nine years or so, post-secondary education has become increasingly unaffordable for many Nova Scotians.

When I was in university, there was a tuition freeze. I could afford my undergraduate degree. Although many people walked out with debt, they didn't walk out

with the huge, mortgage-sized debts that they're walking out with now, now that the tuition freeze has been gone for - how many years? Since 2014 or so?

When students come to Nova Scotia for post-secondary education, our hope is that they will stay and build a life in Nova Scotia after graduation. However, as student debt continues to rise and become unmanageable, we may see fewer students being able to stay in Nova Scotia, and many may have to end their studies before their program is completed because they cannot afford the costs. We need post-secondary education that is affordable and accessible. However, I'm not seeing anything in the budget to help all students in post-secondary education.

One-off payments are just that - one-off payments, piecemeal programs that are no longer working. They are gap fillers, but they do not really address the systemic issues facing Nova Scotians. As great as food banks are and as amazing as the individuals who run them are, they are not grocery stores. Food hampers and baskets are not grocery stores. People deserve to have enough money to live. I don't just mean enough money to survive, but enough money to thrive.

As I've said in this House before, people need bread and roses. Bread and roses, Mr. Speaker. That is what people need. We need a budget that makes life more affordable for all Nova Scotians, eliminates poverty, and raises all boats.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I was really excited to have this opportunity to say a few words because I don't always get to say my piece. I stand today to talk about a few things - it may be many for all of you - but I've learned during my first full session in this House, so I'm really excited and I'm happy to be here.

I was excited for my first time to be here amongst all of my fellow MLAs, hearing what I thought our intent was, to speak the truth to our experiences in our own ridings, yet hoping to add to legislation presented here in this House to reflect all Nova Scotians. My mindset, as many of you may already know, is to work together collaboratively, putting forward some feedback and thoughts - even amendments on pieces of legislation - with the hope and intent of building a better bill for all of us that is reflective of all Nova Scotians.

As my first week, or first few days, came in, I was happy and proud. I felt like we had done some good work, and I'd inserted my knowledge and expertise on my community, on education with diversity and equity, arts and culture, and all of those wonderful things. I was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, feeling very optimistic but in the end being let down. But I'm glad that it happened early on, because now I can build up to this next step.

[5:15 p.m.]

Then we get into Estimates and my thought of Estimates was: I am going to get some information, I'm going to find out some things, I'm going to really know what's going on in the departments.

We were talking about how we've had long days and nights, hearing some complaints about being away from kids - I complained myself - and family, as if only one party or person in this experience, in this House has experienced a separation from their families.

I mean whether we have to travel or not, which some of us do, we are all present in this House. We are all here together, away from our families, away from our friends, away from our kids, so we're separate. I just want to make this point: we need to remember who chooses the hours, because we, on this side, don't get to choose hours. If there was a set time, I might look different, but I'm just saying.

Back to Estimates. With many questions that get unanswered, even misdirected, to still in the end have no more info than when I started, when I asked the questions, I was wondering more and more about the many plans from all of these departments that are supposedly put in place that we just have no idea about what they are and how much it costs and where the funding is for that.

My hope is to be able to work with and learn more about how we can build better bills that are reflective of all Nova Scotians. But going through these motions in the House, bills being rushed through with many concerns from community, experts, councillors, mayors, academics, doctors, executive directors, professionals, lawyers - and I could go on and on about the many concerns of a number of the bills that have been put forward.

I will say that many of these people have spent decades of their lives on the work behind many of the pieces that this government has put forward, seeing it rushed through Law Amendments Committee, given no time or preparation or consideration for other people's work - it was really interesting to see that and I think we need to really put that in perspective when we move forward in the next little bit.

Hearing all of the wonderful responses from ministers and the Premier about how they are listening to people in this province - we heard this a number of times from a number of statements from members, in health care, labour, education, the unhoused, marginalized communities, African Nova Scotians, those in the justice system, small businesses - I think you guys get the idea. I don't have to keep going on and on.

This government continues to say they are listening, yet I get emails and calls from many of your constituents about racism, health care, paramedics, CCAs, education and how they haven't heard from many of you, because most haven't had a response from any

of your CAs or your SAs, or whatever you want to call them. Even a response would be acceptable.

Maybe using the word “listening” is probably not the best word to use - I’m just saying. I want to go back because I have a few notes, because there are lots of things that have been said. I want us all to remember here in this House that we have our own mind, we are singular people in here and we can decide for ourselves. Our voice matters, and we need to be mindful of our decisions, each of us.

As well, it’s okay to be wrong. It’s okay to say sorry. It’s okay to say you just don’t know, because it’s okay. We are all human beings here and we don’t all have to have the answers. That’s why we have departments, and we have experts, and we have people who we can pull from who give us that information. Remember that, because our power is in our voices and our decisions are our words that people will remember forever.

Just remember, no one is perfect. It’s okay to be humble, because sometimes when you’re humble you’ve got to sit down. Since I’m talking about words and using our words properly and it’s okay to have our feelings behind that, I also want to talk about a few words.

Collaboration is a word that is said across the board by many of us in here and I just kind of want to reiterate that collaboration is the action of working with someone to produce something. An example of a good collaboration, which all of us in this House can agree with - the example of how good collaboration works is the Mi’kmaw Language Act. Collective work over time, with respect to the community and people - and you’re actually listening. That, and you’re going to work together. That is collaborative. Good job, we can pat our backs for that one, right? Because you know it’s a good clap, well done.

But I also want to say, when a bill is presented - and this is just a little piece that I said because it was just brought up and this is just me thinking - when a bill is presented by an opposite member, it needs work, rightfully it should. It needs to go through a process, absolutely. It needs to go through the Committee on Law Amendments - I’m learning stuff as I go, right, being in here? It needs to go through Law Amendments, all that stuff. Democracy, wonderful stuff.

Then I notice when this particular government puts forward a bill with no consultation, it needs work. It’s very broad and you actually have constructive criticism by experts and constructive feedback to help the bill because that’s what we want to do. We in this House want to create bills and pieces of legislation that are going to be effective and helpful for all Nova Scotians.

When we get this, it doesn’t seem to be the same as when it’s by the opposite. I know this is hard to swallow but I don’t like it when we don’t - we’re not always going to agree and that’s okay because we can agree to disagree. But I feel I like when the thing’s

presented in front of us, like I said, we go back to the “it’s okay not to know, it’s okay to be wrong, it’s okay”. It’s okay to ask for help because those things are really important.

I’m speaking in this way because this is how I facilitate young people in order for them to grasp some of these things that are coming forward. Just think about these things. I talked about good collaboration. I heard compassionate government - feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others. I think we all have that in us, right? We all have that feeling of compassion. (Interruption) Yes, you do, member, yes you do. Which is what I feel should be at the forefront of everything. I feel it in all our members when they talk about how passionate they are in their role in their communities and in the work that they’re doing, but I really wish we could do it collaboratively and actually be a compassionate government.

I spoke to it many times - I would refer to the PC government as selectively compassionate. Lots of work to do, not impossible. Like I said, some of us need to work on it, but we need to have an understanding that this work is hard. This work is hard for all of us, but it needs to get done and it needs to be done for everyday Nova Scotians, all of us. We’re going to have to really suck it back, have discussions and good debates because this is what we do, having these conversations. Like I said, some people are naturally compassionate, some people have to work at it.

Which brings me to being mindful of people’s experiences, knowledge, lives, their struggles. I know that for some of us this may be more humbling than others, but we can’t use words like listening, understanding, compassionate, and collaborative if we truly are not being mindful of even trying to be aware of the experiences of all Nova Scotians. I say “lastly,” but this isn’t it. That isn’t lastly.

Mr. Speaker, I know that everyone in here knows that I speak not for myself but for the people I serve, particularly my community. I have had an opportunity and I understand that, and I represent my community in many facets in my own life, hence why I’m extremely passionate here in this House. I don’t know if you know this, but historically Black people never had a seat at the table. We never had a voice. We were silenced many, many times. When I speak, I am speaking because I feel it’s necessary and I have a right to, and I don’t just speak for myself. I take it very seriously when I stand here.

Although we may not always agree with how this process is handled here in this House, I would encourage everyone in here to cast their votes or voices in such a way that you should feel good about your decision at the end of the day. We all represent our ridings and we all should have an awareness of how best we can serve them. Also remember to think about what we put forward and how our decisions affect our areas throughout Nova Scotia.

I am very optimistic. If you spoke to anyone outside of here and asked who’s Suzy Hansen, I’m telling you right now they’re going to tell you, oh, little Suzy, oh, she’s great,

she's so happy, blah, blah, blah. They'll say that because that is me. I'm very optimistic. I see the light at the end of tunnel. I'm optimistic for the future of our democracy and doing the best work here in the House. With all of the words that are used consistently, I just wanted to let guys know that we need to remind ourselves of what they really mean and how words are powerful and how our voices matter.

Like I said earlier, I struggled with this a little bit because I was back and forth, but I want to make sure that we do the best work, and I say "we" because we are all members of the Legislative Assembly. We are not just one entity. We are a group of people who are supposed to be collaboratively working for the good of all Nova Scotians within our ridings.

Many bills on this table are similar. This is my thought process. Many of these bills on the table are similar. We should put all of our party differences - put the party to the side - and we should be working collaboratively to figure out what's the best way to look at the bill in order for it to be the best bill for all Nova Scotians. That is exactly what our job is: to be able to put something forward that is going to be effective, that's going to be long-standing, that's going to be sustainable, that's going to be protected.

All of those pieces are exactly what our job is, and we have to remember that no matter what side puts something forward. We have to think in our head, how can we better this? How can we make changes? What is it missing? Not, that's not bad, but we don't want that. No, let's take that off the table.

We need to start thinking - this is it right here. If we had 10 bills on the table, all of us should be sitting there going, okay, this is justice, this is education, this is health care. How can we collectively work on that? Let's get the expertise in. That's the thought process.

I just want to leave that in your hands, but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the time that you've given me, and I hope that we can look forward to collaboratively working together and consulting with each other to bring back the best bills in this House with that particular approach.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Now for something completely different. I'm so happy to be part of a caucus with so many diverse voices. Am I in trouble? Do you want me to sit down so someone else can go? (Interruption) Okay.

I wanted to make some focused comments today about the budget to do with reproductive health care. Over the last several weeks, we've spent a long time looking at the budget and examining the Estimates. In the NDP, we also have been getting back a lot of FOIPOP requests about the state of health care in our province. Just yesterday the

Standing Committee on Health met and discussed sexual health and reproductive health in Nova Scotia.

I would like to, as I said, make some comments about reproductive health - that is, health care around things like cervixes, uteruses, ovaries, and fallopian tubes, and all of the hormones and bodily functions that relate to these organs.

If I want to make generalities, I would say that mostly what I'm talking about affects cisgender women - that is, women who were assigned female at birth and who identify as women. That's an issue. The underfunding, the lack of attention, and lack of understanding to these issues, I would argue, is a form of gender discrimination.

Also, what I'm talking about, it also affects trans men and gender-fluid or non-binary people. For these folks, this is an even deeper issue, because their access to queer or trans-friendly health care may be much more difficult. Many don't have the confidence in our health care system or the health professionals that they encounter that they'd be able to work with them to offer them the care that they need.

I've been thinking about women's health - or reproductive health - for quite a long time, and I want to go through the ages. I'm going to start with period poverty. Period poverty is a real thing, and I would expect that it will get worse as the cost of living continues to increase, and all products are becoming harder to afford. Menstrual products are expensive, and there are many people who menstruate who simply can't afford the products they need.

We in this House have the ability to address this issue and mandate that all public buildings provide menstrual products in all washrooms, not just for employees in those buildings, and that all workplaces provide menstrual products in workplace washrooms in the same way that washrooms are outfitted with toilet paper and hand soap.

It's easy to do and it's not expensive, but the impact would be huge for folks who live in poverty and are often trying to figure out how to stretch their dollars. It's also huge for people who menstruate who forget their tampons, or don't realize their period is going to start, or whatever. I'll get to that in a little while, in just a second.

The next thing I want to talk about is access to birth control and contraceptives. In Nova Scotia, there are significant barriers to accessing free birth control. Contraceptives are basic preventive health care that should be free and easy to obtain. We heard from experts yesterday at Health Committee that there needs to be choice in contraception so that people who need it can get what's right for them.

The June 2019 final report of the Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare established by the Government of Canada pointed out that approximately 20 per cent of Canadians have inadequate drug coverage or no coverage at

all. The direct cost of unintended pregnancies has been estimated at \$320 million per year, and that's in Canada, and we know that there is a proven link between income, age, and use of contraceptives, indicating an affordability challenge, particularly for young people.

[5:30 p.m.]

There are multitudes of organizations advocating for access to free contraceptives. The Canadian Paediatric Society, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Canadian Association of Midwives, National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, Canadian Medical Association, and the Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists of Canada. That's pretty heavy-hitting experts saying that we need free birth control in Canada, in Nova Scotia.

Speaking of birth control, let's go to the other side of that issue, which is fertility. The tax credit that this government has brought in this session is good. I would never, ever say that it wasn't good. There are so many people who have contacted me, both as Health spokesperson for the NDP, but also as a constituency MLA, who are struggling so much to be able to conceive a baby and to carry a baby. That is expensive stuff.

I have here just a bit of the menu of the Atlantic Assisted Reproductive Therapies Clinic: initial assessment, \$200. Okay. You're experiencing infertility problems, maybe you can scrounge up \$200 for an initial assessment. Sperm functional analysis - I'm going to say some words that might make people squirm - \$295. Then we get into the actual treatments. Therapeutic donor insemination - that's when you don't need any help except for inseminating, putting sperm, donor sperm, in you, \$950. (Interruption) Turkey baster. The sperm is very expensive to obtain.

I have a friend who just bought sperm online last night, \$4,000 for three vials of sperm. I said, how much does that get you? Three vials is three tries. Three tries at insemination, \$4,000. No one's covering that cost in any way, shape, or form. Then we get into the more complicated things. IVF, \$8,100 to try, not including the drugs. IVF with ICSI and anonymous donor sperm, \$10,000. There's something that's \$13,000.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. There's quite a bit of chatter around the Chamber.

SUSAN LEBLANC: You get my point. It's extremely expensive, and a tax credit is great, but it's only going to be great for the people who can afford that astronomical cost in the first place. You'd have to do a second mortgage on a house if you're lucky enough to own a house at the age that you're trying to have a baby. You'd have to take out a massive line of credit or, better idea, let's make fertility treatments insurable services under MSI so people who need help to have, conceive, or carry a child can walk in and get the help in the same way that they could get their leg put in a cast if they broke their leg.

It only makes sense, especially in a province that is trying to double its population in whatever it is, 40 years, by 2060. Two million people. Well, here's an idea: help people

have babies. All the other things are important, too. Immigration, of course - blah, blah, blah, blah, blah - but yes. Let's not put barriers in front of people to have children.

Then I want to talk a little bit about the inner parts, the parts that are carrying babies or making babies, and the people who are suffering from chronic pain, chronic pelvic pain and endometriosis.

In this budget there is no new money to address endometriosis or chronic pelvic pain. I just want to tell you a little bit about what that is. Endometriosis is a gynecological condition that affects approximately one million people in Canada - one in 10 women and unmeasured numbers of transgender and gender-non-conforming people.

Common symptoms include severe menstrual pain, chronic pelvic pain, infertility. There's neither a definitive cause nor a known cure for endometriosis. Symptoms are managed using a combination of medical and surgical care and despite the burden of endometriosis, awareness of the condition is low because of menstrual stigma and taboo.

I'm going to say this: menstruation. We have to be able to say these words and not worry about the stigma. The reason that so much of this health care has been overlooked for so many years is because it belongs to, mostly, women or people who menstruate, people who have uteruses. It's a problem.

I also want to talk about midwives. Based on a meta-analysis of data from 13 studies involving a total of 16,000 women, researchers from King's College in London, and a bunch of other universities in the U.K., recommend midwifery care as the gold standard for low-risk pregnancy.

Maternity care that involves a midwife as the main care provider leads to several positive outcomes with no adverse affects for both mothers and babies. In several countries like the U.K. and Australia, midwives represent the main providers of care for women during pregnancy, labour, and birth.

When midwives were the main providers of care during pregnancy, women were less likely to give birth prematurely or lose their babies before 24 weeks of gestation.

Women were reported to be happier with the care they received, had fewer epidurals, fewer assisted births, fewer episiotomies, or surgical incisions, to reduce the risk of a tear. Based on these results, the researchers concluded that all women should be offered midwife-led continuity of care unless they have serious medical or obstetric complications.

Midwives are not primary care providers, but they are maternal care providers. Their presence would greatly relieve the pressure on many primary care providers; family doctors who follow pregnancies and deliver babies.

The minister said the other day that midwives can't do surgery. That's true, I guess. I actually didn't know that but I believe her. The fact is is that there would be fewer surgeries if we had more midwives, because there would be fewer C-sections happening. It's a fact. It's completely proven.

We feel in the NDP that there needs to be a major investment in expanding the midwife program. We need to have 80 midwives practicing in Nova Scotia in all areas of the province so anyone who wants access to a midwife can have one. Think about that upstream; that is upstream health care.

Lastly, I want to speak in my last three minutes about menopause. Another dirty word. There's lots of taboo about menopause or perimenopause. The reason I want to talk about this is because I am personally experiencing perimenopause. (Applause) Thank you so much. It's awesome. It's really exciting.

Seriously, this is an important part of reproductive health care. I don't know much about it yet because I am just sort of getting into it, but I do know that I have been prescribed antidepressants because of it and they help. I'll say it loud and proud, that that is something that has happened to me over the last two years. I don't want to push them on anyone, but I would say don't be afraid of them.

I want to demystify reproductive health care around menopause. I'm going to look more into it and I'm going to talk more about it in the next four years until the next election. Maybe I'll have a chance after that.

I will leave it there for today. It is my job to bring to light issues with this budget and with policy in general. I would say that based on all of the things that I've brought up today, we need significant attention and investment in reproductive health in Nova Scotia. This budget doesn't hit the mark. Let's be better. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Well that was quite the lesson in the female anatomy. (Laughter)

The motion to resolve into the Committee of the Whole House on Supply is now carried.

We'll briefly recess for 15 minutes.

[The House recessed at 5:40 p.m.]

[5:55 p.m. The House resolved itself into a CW on Supply with Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds in the Chair.]

[10:05 p.m. CW on Supply rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Lisa Lachance assumed the Chair.]

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That is government business for the day. I move that the House do not rise to meet again on Thursday, April 14th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Business will include second reading of Bills No. 154 and 155. Bills to be considered by the Committee of the Whole House on Bills will be Bills No. 143, 145, 147, and 148. Time permitting, bills for third reading will include Bills No. 123, 124, 126, 129, 131, 134, 137, and 138.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Thursday, April 14th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on April 14th.

[The House rose at 10:06 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 230**

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 Edna J. Leshan wrote; and

Whereas on April 9, 2022, Tanya and Catlin Merry welcomed their daughter Briar Jannelle Merry into the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Tanya and Catlin on this miraculous event in their lives and wish them many more happy years as parents.