



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022

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HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

2:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable 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 bill:

Bill No. 185 - House of Assembly Act

And the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendment.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill 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 Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 380

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Monsieur le président, à une date ultérieure je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que l'histoire de la province de la Nouvelle-Écosse et celle des acadiens et des acadiennes sont intimement liées, et qu'il est de notre devoir de ne pas oublier le Grand dérangement de 1755 à 1763, qui a vu plus de 10 000 acadiens et acadiennes embarqués de force sur des navires afin de les déporter hors de la Nouvelle-Écosse; et

Attendu que lors de cette déportation beaucoup de familles ont été déchirées, et on estime à plusieurs milliers le nombre d'acadiens et d'acadiennes morts en détention, d'épidémie, de malnutrition, ou à cause des naufrages; et

Attendu que la date du 28 juillet est reconnue chaque année en tant que journée de commémoration du Grand dérangement depuis une proclamation royale en 2003;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi et à toutes les communautés acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse pour se souvenir de cette tragédie et pour reconnaître également la résilience des acadiens et des acadiennes.

Monsieur le président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas the history of the Province of Nova Scotia and that of the Acadians are intimately linked, and it is our duty not to forget the Great Upheaval from 1755 to 1763, which saw more than 10,000 Acadians forced onto ships and deported from Nova Scotia; and

Whereas during these deportations, many families were torn apart, and it is estimated that several thousand Acadians died while in custody from epidemics, malnutrition, or due to shipwrecks; and

Whereas the date of July 28th is recognized each year as a day of commemoration of the Great Upheaval since a royal proclamation in 2003;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me and all Acadian communities in Nova Scotia in remembering this tragedy and also recognizing the resilience of Acadians.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for 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. 193 - Entitled an Act to Expand Energy-efficient Programming.
(Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 194 - Entitled an Act to Ban Electrical Service Disconnections During a Cost-of-Living Crisis. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 195 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act, to Ensure the Needs of the Patient Come First. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the House, in the West Gallery I have with us today two very important people to the members of Sackville-Uniacke that I represent. First, my constituency assistant and lifelong friend, Regan Oliver, whom I'd ask to stand. With Regan today is our Summer student who is working in our office, Ms. Ally Parks. I'd ask Ally to stand as well.

I ask members to give them a round of applause. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, and we indeed welcome all visitors to the Legislature.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic on an introduction.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Unfortunately my CA won't come here, Mr. Speaker. But I would like to make an introduction.

In the West Gallery, I'd like to introduce Emily Fisher. Emily is an MBA student who's currently working out of my office. Hopefully she'll stick around for a long time. Her role is extremely important, as she helps make everything run and makes me look good. Thank you, Emily, and welcome here. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Again, welcome to the Legislature. You certainly have your work cut out for you. (Laughter)

The honourable House Leader of the Official Opposition.

THE SPEAKER: GRANDDAUGHTER - BIRTH CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: We're in Members' Statements, correct, Mr. Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I didn't have one prepared, and then I went on Facebook this morning and I saw that the Speaker of the Legislature is a new granddad again. (Applause)

If you ever want to go on Facebook during a stressful day, I always suggest going onto the Speaker's Facebook page because it's probably one of the most positive places you can find information - not only about his job, but about his family. I always love that you always have the buildup to the excitement, whether it's the Maple Leafs in the playoffs - but this is more important.

On behalf of all of us and our caucus, and on behalf of Stephanie and myself and the family, we want to congratulate you on the new addition of your granddaughter to your family. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Thank you.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

HOLLETT, KAI: LORAN SCHOLARSHIP RECIP. - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize an outstanding constituent of Dartmouth South, Kai Hollett. Kai graduated from Dartmouth High this year and was the recipient of the prestigious Loran Scholarship.

At only 18, Kai is a community leader. He was co-president of his student council, a volunteer teacher's assistant for the Halifax Japanese School, and president of the Junior Achievement business Coastal Bracelets. Kai is smart, compassionate, and kind, and cares deeply about his community. Dartmouth will miss him dearly, but I know he'll flourish at McGill in the Fall. I hope to see him back home sooner rather than later.

Please join me in congratulating Kai Hollett on his incredible achievements and in wishing him every success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: Before we continue with Statements By Members, can I get the unanimous consent of the House to go back to Notices of Motion?

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

RESOLUTION NO. 381

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

Whereas the health care system in all provinces across Canada is struggling; and

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified pre-existing fractures in our long-neglected health systems; and

Whereas the federal government now funds only 22 per cent of health care costs in the provinces, which has contributed to the system's decline; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's Premier joined Canada's premiers in Victoria earlier this month to discuss the state of health care across the country and the challenges that each province faces;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House call on the Prime Minister to recognize the urgency of the situation and meet with the premiers to increase funding for health care through the Canada Health Transfer so that the Province has stable funding to deliver health care to Nova Scotians.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

ORGANIZERS: RECYCLE YOUR CYCLE PROJECT - THANKS

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Today I rise to thank the organizing team of the Recycle Your Cycle project. The Rotary Club of Sackville and Area, along with Sportwheels Sports Excellence, partnered with The Salvation Army and Junk Works Halifax to organize Recycle Your Cycle, an event that provided ride-ready cycles to families in need, including new immigrant and refugee families within the community.

One hundred fifty ride-ready cycles with 100 new helmets were given out during the event. Not only will the recipients have fun with their new cycles, but this will encourage physical activity as well. Without the help of those who donated cycles, this event would not have happened.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking the organizing team who helped to make the Recycle Your Cycle event such a success.

[2:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ORGANIZERS: RYAN GRAVES HOCKEY SCHOOL - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: During the week of July 4th to 8th, the Ryan Graves Hockey School took place at Mariners Centre in Yarmouth. Yarmouth's Ryan Graves, who plays in the NHL for the New Jersey Devils, began hosting the hockey school in 2019. This gave Yarmouth County players and their families the elite-level hockey camp experience while eliminating the travelling costs involved with attending such hockey camps.

This year's camp was even bigger and better, and included a large group of hockey instructors, group leaders, off-ice trainers, and volunteers. The feedback from the 2022 Ryan Graves Hockey School was amazing, with participants saying it was the experience of a lifetime which they will never forget, and that they cannot wait for next year's camp.

I ask this House to join me in thanking the NHL's Ryan Graves for always remembering and giving back to his hometown of Yarmouth, and the amazing group that helped organize and run this year's Ryan Graves Hockey School.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EMANCIP. DAY: PROM. OF AFRIC. N.S. HISTORY - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Emancipation Day is the day when the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 became law across the British Empire, including Canada, on August 1, 1834. On this day, the practice of slavery officially ended for millions of African people and their descendants in Canada and around the world.

On March 24, 2021, members of Parliament unanimously voted to designate August 1st as Emancipation Day in Canada, and on April 13, 2021, the Province of Nova Scotia followed the federal declaration by officially introducing legislation to annually recognize August 1st as Emancipation Day, the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, in Nova Scotia.

Emancipation Day is an opportunity to learn more about the history of African Nova Scotian people and the communities they come from, and to continue to address and eradicate systemic anti-Black racism. This day will also allow us, as a community, to reflect and acknowledge our shared experiences and history of the enslavement of people of African descent in Canada. Celebrating Emancipation Day will also provide us with an opportunity to maintain ongoing meaningful dialogue around race relations and inclusive society. Most importantly, that day should allow every citizen to begin to take action.

I would like to ask all members of this house to join in the celebrations of this day and take action on eradicating systemic anti-Black racism for everyone. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: I would kindly ask that members try to keep their Member Statements close to the one-minute mark. I might allow a second or two, but I recognize the member for Colchester North.

FULTON, BETTY: 90TH BIRTHDAY - CONGRATS.

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a long-standing resident of Bass River, Mrs. Betty Fulton, who celebrated her 90th birthday on June 15th.

Betty was born in the same little Bass River house as her mother, and still lives there today. In 1953, she married Reg Fulton, now widowed, and together, they were blessed with four children, seven grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

When Reg and Betty first married, they briefly resided in Ontario before moving back to Nova Scotia, where Reg joined his father to run the Bass River Garage, which they did for many years.

Betty's hobbies include quilting and swimming in the bay between June to October. Although it has been a few years, she used to participate in the New Year's polar dip with her grandchildren. Celebrating Thanksgiving at the camp and Christmas at her home are family traditions that are still carried on today.

Being 90, however, has not slowed Betty down one bit. She is still very active, mows her lawn on her ride-on and tinkers in her yard, although she will accept her family's help with whipper snipping or putting in wood for the Winter.

I ask all members of the House of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Ms. Betty Fulton on her 90th birthday, and I am wishing her many more to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

CORBETT, JOHN & SUSAN: HOSTING UKRAINIAN FAMILY - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Today I want to recognize John and Susan Corbett. They are long-time volunteers in the community. They live in Brookside, but they certainly volunteer across the constituency. This Summer, they actually took in a Ukrainian family. I was able to meet this family. Denys, Teona, and Natalia Denuszia arrived in Nova Scotia from a small town in western Ukraine.

Denys is a bright young man who loves volleyball and is focused on solving Rubik's Cubes. He is looking forward to returning to school in the Fall. Teona is three and is a talkative, young, busy girl. Their mother, Natalia, is a former English teacher, and she is excited to be in Canada and looking forward to settling her young family in Nova Scotia, but they certainly miss their dad back home.

I'd like the members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in thanking John and Susan for their hospitality to provide a safe and comforting home while assisting this family to adjust to a new country, culture, and language.

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

MI'KMAW NATIVE FRIENDSHIP CTR.: HEALTH CTR. OPENING - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: I'd like to take a moment today to recognize the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre for an incredible new initiative. This month, they opened the new Wije'winen Health Centre.

The addition of an Indigenous urban health centre in Halifax is a huge milestone for both health care in Nova Scotia and the Indigenous community. Indigenous community members now have access to culturally appropriate medical services that are integrated with a wide range of wellness programs.

This commitment to Indigenous health resulted in the recruitment of Dr. Brent Young to come to work in Nova Scotia as the clinical lead, and he is also the academic director for Indigenous Health and assistant professor on the Faculty of Medicine at Dalhousie University. They have received other expressions of interest from Indigenous medical professionals who want to come to Nova Scotia. It's a good news story, but the next hurdle is sustainable funding. The health centre is currently financed solely from a grant from the National Association of Friendship Centres and needs further support to keep going.

I ask that my colleagues in the House congratulate the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre and Dr. Young for this incredible new initiative.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, I'm going to kindly ask - that's three in a row that have exceeded one minute, so please try your best.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

STAN ROGERS FOLK FESTIVAL: 25TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise again to recognize the Stan Rogers Folk Festival. This past weekend, the festival returned to Canso to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

Since its beginning, Stanfest has brought more than 800 performers to Canso in the last 25 years and brought even more visitors to the area to enjoy a weekend of music and celebration. Its organizers, volunteers, and board of directors have worked hard to bring this festival back after bad weather and COVID-19. In the words of Stan, they rise again to overcome the challenges and work together as a community to bring this much-loved event back.

I ask the members to join me in congratulating the Stan Rogers Folk Festival on 25 years in Canso.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

FRONTLINE WORKERS: NEED FOR PAY RAISE - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Frontline workers are the backbone of our communities, our families, and our province. Most frontline workers make minimum wage or very little above it. With the current cost of living and skyrocketing inflation, \$15 an hour is the very least we could do for those hard-working individuals.

We celebrated these Nova Scotians during the pandemic, so the very least we can do for those people is provide them with the means to survive. Yesterday, we heard that this government will not increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour until 2024, two years too late. I call on this government to show their appreciation and pass a \$15-an-hour bill this session.

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

HOUSING CRISIS: REAL EMERG. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to bring attention to yet another emergency affecting the residents of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier and many Nova Scotians: the housing crisis.

The wait-list for housing in Cape Breton is long. The priority list is 1.2 years, and two years for general applicants. However, in Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, the people contacting my office seem to be in immediate need of affordable housing. I have individuals who can no longer afford to rent privately and can no longer afford to live in their homes. I have individuals who received notices that the landowner has decided to sell the homes and they must leave.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is that there is little to no affordable housing in Cape Breton to meet the demand. We have people living in tents in Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier and in downtown Sydney. The lack of affordable housing is the real emergency.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

BOUCHARD, MAURA STONE: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Today I would like to acknowledge the career of Maura Stone Bouchard, originally from St. Peters and now living in Arichat.

Maura walked through the doors of the Richmond Villa Nursing Home 47 years ago. Maura began her career working as a personal care worker. In the 1990s, she moved to working in the recreation department. There Moira was one of the driving forces behind having residents with Alzheimer's help assist in the Villa's kitchen.

In 2006, a new Richmond Villa opened, and Maura became the physio aide. This past April, Maura retired after years of service.

On behalf of the staff and residents of Richmond Villa and myself, please help me in wishing Maura a happy retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HODDER, MELDA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I rise in the House today to acknowledge Melda Hodder. Melda has been a resident of Lake Echo for over 35 years. Her passion in supporting, promoting, and serving community has been tireless. She is an active leader at St. David's United Church. Her committee work involves fundraising, the Lake Echo Community Food Bank, and support for Phoenix Youth Programs.

Melda is a founding member at the Lake Echo Lioness Club. She has served in all executive positions and serves on the medical assistant committee to support children in our communities. Melda is a retired elementary school teacher. She is a wife, mother of two adult children, and a very proud grandmother.

I would like to ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Melda Hodder as an outstanding leader in her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

ADHANOM, JONATHAN: GYM TIME ADVOCATE - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: A couple of weeks ago, I received a most welcome and thoughtful e-mail from Jonathan Adhanom, a Grade 4 student at Westmount Elementary in Halifax.

Jonathan's point was very straightforward. Elementary students in Nova Scotia, he wrote, don't have adequate allocated gym time. He pointed out to his MLA in his email that the federal government's recommendation is for elementary students to have one hour of physical activity a day, which he compared then to the one hour per whole week that students get in gym.

The mega-importance of physical activity to every facet of health and well-being is a subject that has been a lot on the public mind, especially during COVID-19. Jonathan is to be commended for bringing this issue to the attention of his MLA, and it's certainly an issue deserving of being brought to the attention of this House.

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

ZINCK, COLLEEN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember Chester resident and beloved community member Colleen Zinck. Colleen Zinck passed away on April 5, 2022. Her family and the Village of Chester will miss her for her kindness and her caring heart.

On behalf of the people of Chester-St. Margaret's, I want to extend condolences to her and her loved ones. Colleen loved to teach children and she did this through her work at Chester Kiddie Academy and through her volunteer work at her church and in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in honouring the life of Colleen Zinck.

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

MCGAUGHEY, SR. MARGARET: 100TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I rise today to extend my best wishes to Sister Margaret McGaughey, who celebrated her 100th birthday on July 20th. Born in Bonshaw, PEI in 1922 and growing up in a farming family, she learned early the strong work ethic that has characterized her life.

Margaret wanted to be a nurse but when she took her vows in 1943, the Sisters of Charity needed a teacher, so that she became, spending three years in Dorchester, Massachusetts.

She loved all the kids that she worked with, but her favourite mission was at Aberdeen School in Cape Breton. After teaching for 38 years, she retired from St. Stephen's School in Halifax and returned to her first love, nursing, where she served as a

volunteer in nursing homes and hospitals for over 21 years. Sister Margaret considered it her greatest privilege to work in the palliative care unit, and even after she moved to Caritas Residence, she continued in this mission.

I ask that all the members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Sister Margaret a very happy birthday. Sister Margaret, may this year ahead be very truly blessed.

[2:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUMMER THEATRE: VARIOUS PRODNS. - BEST WISHES

SUSAN LEBLANC: I rise today to pay tribute to all of the summer theatre that is happening across the province. The Highland Arts Theatre in Sydney, the Ship's Company Theatre in Parrsboro, Shakespeare By The Sea in Halifax, and Festival Antigonish Summer Theatre in Antigonish are just a few of the companies that will benefit their communities, both culturally and financially, by offering outstanding performances in these Summer months.

I also want to make special mention of some artists from Dartmouth North who will be performing on stages around the province and even a little further afield this Summer. Ryan Rogerson and Jeff Schwater will all be appearing at Two Planks and a Passion Theatre in Ross Creek. Mary Fay Coady will be at Theatre Baddeck this Summer - check her out, Mr. Speaker. Hilary Adams is having her debut at the Stratford Festival in Ontario. Even my own family - Sébastien, Françoise, and Aimée Labelle - are appearing and helping to create the River Clyde Pageant in New Glasgow, P.E.I.

Mr. Speaker, Augusto Boal said, "Theatre is the art of looking at ourselves." I want to wish all theatre-makers across our province a wonderful season and, as the saying goes, many broken legs to you all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

DOOKS, TASHA: WAGGING TAILS BAKERY - WELCOME

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome and congratulate a new business owner, Tasha Dooks, originally from South Woodside. Tasha began her business, Wagging Tails Bakery, in Eastern Passage in February. Tasha's dog Daisy was a rescue dog and, wanting the best for her, she began making wholesome homemade treats so that she would know what good ingredients tasted like.

These treats are available in other Eastern Passage shops, like Hen and Goose Pet Supply at Fishermen's Cove, where you can get peanut butter, banana, and kelp bites, or

blueberry peanut butter bites, and other treats like the treat bags provided to Passage Paws at their open house.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating Tasha with her new business, Wagging Tails Bakery.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

MUNN, ALEX: TERRY FOX HUMANITARIAN AWD. - CONGRATS.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Alex Munn, a recent graduate of Charles P. Allen High School in Bedford South for being a 2022 recipient of the Terry Fox Humanitarian Award. This award is given to young humanitarians who have worked tirelessly to channel the same values and goals that Terry Fox held, be it a passion for helping those in need or demonstrating perseverance in the face of adversity.

Despite managing Type 1 diabetes from the age of four and the challenges that come with it, Alex has persevered and used his experiences to help others, raising awareness about Type 1 diabetes through his volunteer work with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, serving as a peer mentor, and volunteering within the community.

Congratulations, Alex, on receiving the Terry Fox Humanitarian Award this year. Wishing you all the best as you attend the University of New Brunswick, pursuing a degree in kinesiology.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

COUSIN'S RESTAURANT: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: Family restaurants can be cornerstones of a community or street. They often sell snacks, newspapers, and some other common items you would normally get from a corner store, as in the case with Cousin's Restaurant.

In 1964, the Kanellakos family opened a modest snack bar located in Halifax's north end, housed in a building with Andy's Grocery. After gaining the neighbourhood's trust with homestyle Greek and Canadian dishes decades ago, Cousin's Restaurant is now considered a Halifax food staple.

Today they continue to serve classic Canadian and traditional Greek food that has delighted customers for generations. They are located on the corner of Lady Hammond Road and Robie Street. They have been servicing the community for over 58 years and are enjoyed by many members of the north end community and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the members to congratulate Cousin's Restaurant and wish the Kanellakos family great success in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

PARAMEDICS: EFFORTS DURING CRISIS - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I stand to thank paramedics in the Nova Scotia Legislature. The paramedics have been our health care heroes throughout the pandemic and continue to be heroes post-pandemic.

Paramedics working in Cumberland North, in Cumberland County, and throughout Nova Scotia are working through very challenging times. Many are feeling helpless as shifts go unfilled and the ones who are left to work are often being pulled from their own communities, leaving them in great, great stress.

Today I stand to thank each and every paramedic for their service during these very challenging times. I am hopeful they will start to receive the help they want, the help they need, and the help they deserve.

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

MOMBOURQUETTE, MARY PAT: MINERS MUS. LDRSHP. - RECOG.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Mary Pat Mombourquette for her dedication towards preserving and sharing the rich coal-mining history of Cape Breton in her role as Director of the Cape Breton Miners Museum. Under her leadership, the Cape Breton Miners Museum has come to thrive, with people from around the world coming to Glace Bay to hear our stories.

Cape Breton has faced adversity, but our people have endured despite the struggles. This adversity has bred a strong people with a rich, vibrant culture and history. It's important that our stories are remembered, lest we forget the struggles that made us.

With leaders like Mary Pat Mombourquette preserving the stories of our ancestors, the rich history of Cape Breton will be shared for generations to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

NORTHSIDE-WESTMOUNT COM.: EVENTS - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's a very busy time in the community of Northside-Westmount. Just last week, we finished up the 2022 Canadian Senior Little League Championships. I'm so proud to say that the team from Cape Breton - which included four

players from Amherst and players from all over Cape Breton - finished second in Canada behind the team from Quebec. Job well done.

There are three other important events that are happening, the second one being the Heritage Festival happening this weekend in the town of Sydney Mines. From August 17th to 20th, we will have the Cape Breton Farmers Exhibition taking place in North Sydney. Then on August 27th, the Northside Boys Annual Custom Car Show and Family Fun Day will take place, also in the town of Sydney Mines.

Congratulations to all those involved, and well done for your community.

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

AGNS: CREATIVITY & COM.-BLDG. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia would not be the way we know it today without fine arts. This is why I'm proud to rise in the Chamber to talk about a community hub in my constituency: the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is the largest art museum in Atlantic Canada, and has been a true anchor in my neighbourhood. During the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the gallery pivoted and curated video lessons from their Studio from Home program, which let families immerse themselves in the creative process from the safety of their own homes.

This Summer, we can see the return of camps and hear the laughter of children as they create just across the street from this House. Such programs are what make the gallery accessible to everyone, and also allows local artists to spread their talent even further in ways they couldn't otherwise.

I ask my fellow members join me in recognizing the world of creativity and community-building that the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia makes possible.

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

MCMILLAN, MIRANDA: RECRUITED BY MTL. CDNS. - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 32-year-old Miranda McMillan of Bible Hill, who recently was hired by the Montreal Canadiens as a hockey data analyst. Miranda started playing hockey at the age of eight. She also played five seasons with the Dalhousie Tigers where she completed her Bachelor of Science with a combined honours in Mathematics & Statistics.

After her playing days, Miranda started coaching and refereeing. She coached the U18 AAA female team in Halifax for four years, and officiated at a high level of hockey, including two U Sports female national championships. With her love of the game combined with her playing, coaching, and educational experiences, this has provided her with a unique opportunity to work with the data team at Kinduct Technologies that led to the National Hockey League.

I would like to congratulate Miranda on her hard work and dedication to her sport and wish her great success with the Montreal Canadiens.

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

ESTABROOKS, JEN: SOLES IN MOTION - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: I rise to my feet today to speak about the importance of proper footwear and healthy feet, and to highlight how Jen Estabrooks and her team at Soles in Motion love what they do. They measure and take scans of your feet on their 3D scanner, which they have named Albert. They also monitor your gait, and then will fit you with the best footwear suited for your specific needs. Soles in Motion offers expertise in athletic and casual footwear, fittings, custom, and off-the-shelf bracing, orthotic products, medical devices, and compression therapy.

Properly fitted footwear is essential to keeping your feet healthy and happy. Soles in Motion on Baker Drive in Dartmouth will keep you and your feet happy and keep you in motion.

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

LAMBERT TODD DAYS COMM.: EVENTS ORG'N - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Reserve Mines Lambert Todd Days Committee. The committee and community organizations put on fun filled events, such as the kickoff party in the park and the pancake breakfast. There were many activities and events for people to enjoy after two long years away.

I want to thank the Lambert Todd Days committee for a wonderful time, and I am excited for next year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

LUN. YACHT CLUB: 75TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I rise today to congratulate the Lunenburg Yacht Club on its 75th anniversary.

The Lunenburg Yacht Club provides easy access to some of the best cruising waters in North America. They offer a family-oriented, welcoming approach to all programming, which includes learn-to-sail programs, an Able Sail program, and a rowing club.

The Lunenburg Yacht Club has also successfully hosted many national and international regattas over the last 75 years, including the World Youth Sailing Championship and the Sonar World Championship. This Summer, the club is co-hosting the 2022 Opti National Regatta. Nearly 150 young sailors from across the country will come sail in the waters of our beautiful province.

It is a true honour, Mr. Speaker, to have this opportunity to congratulate the Lunenburg Yacht Club on 75 years. Fair winds to all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

BOWER, GREG: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: Earlier this year, Greg Bower retired from coaching at Middleton Regional High School after 35 years. Greg coached boys' and girls' soccer and basketball at the junior and senior high levels, as well as cross country and track and field. He was head coach for an amazing 1,400 games over his career. He also served as the school's athletic director from 2001 to 2016. Greg retired from coaching with nine provincial championships, four provincial silver medals, and seven provincial bronze medals. Overall, his teams won approximately 75 per cent of the games they played.

In addition to coaching school sports, Greg also coached Summer soccer, winning three provincial Tier 2 titles, was president of the Middleton Tennis Association, and organized the Middleton girls Spring basketball league.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Greg Bower on an exceptional coaching career and in thanking him for the positive impact he has made on so many young lives.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

AGNS PROJECT: POSTPONEMENT - DISAPPOINTMENT

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to register my deep disappointment in the announcement made yesterday that the new Art Gallery of Nova Scotia building project has been postponed indefinitely. Regarding this decision, the Premier said now is not the time.

While I recognize that costs of supplies and supply chain difficulties are making building or renovating anything more difficult and more expensive, and acknowledge that maybe the project budget should be re-examined, I worry about the Premier's words.

What does he mean by now is not the time? Does he mean it's not the time for projects that will develop the economy and put hundreds of people to work in clean and green jobs? Does he mean that projects that will attract thousands and thousands of tourism dollars to our province each year - that it's not the time for those? Does he mean that it's not the time for projects that, by their very nature - that is housing artistic work and providing a space for cultural expression, exchange, discussion, and innovation - make our community a better place to live?

We need to stop considering art and culture as fringe and "other than." We need a hospital, yes. We need roads, we need schools, and we need a world-class art gallery.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

CLARKE, HUDSON: DRAFTED TO MJHL - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN COMER: I rise today to congratulate Hudson Clarke of Port Caledonia from Cape Breton, who just had his name called at the Maritime Q League entry draft for the Halifax Mooseheads. When the time came, Clarke was the first Cape Bretoner to be taken off the board in the Junior A draft, number 15 overall, by the Miramichi Timberwolves.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Hudson, and Robin and Cherie. He's one of the many good hockey players to come out of the village, so to speak, in the last number of decades. I'm very proud of him and his family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HEALTH CARE EMERGENCIES: COM. RESPONSES - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: As we are here in this House for a so-called emergency that could have been averted by two phone calls to the Opposition Leaders, I thought I would share some reasons the Premier might have called us back for actual emergencies.

All Summer long, we have been hearing about health care emergencies: the Halifax Infirmary and the IWK telling people they're above capacity; people lining up with lawn chairs at the Cobequid, knowing if they don't get in there early, they won't get in there at all; hospitals in some rural areas shut, not for a day here or there but for weeks at a time; 100,000 Nova Scotians, 10 per cent of our population, without doctors, and that's nearly 50 per cent more than when they took over a year ago - they fixed it worse; growing wait-lists for surgeries and procedures; and more.

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our conversations here in the House are provoking responses from people in our communities. I am getting inundated with emails from people who are concerned about the treatment they have received or not received here when they go to hospital.

[2:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MACLEAN'S STRAWBERRIES: LAST YEAR OF OPER. - RECOG.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I rise today to recognize MacLean's Strawberries for providing locally grown strawberries to Pictou County residents for over 52 years. Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, and the 2022 strawberry season will be the last year of operation for MacLean's Strawberries.

Over the years, the MacLeans have focused mainly on strawberries, pumpkins in the Fall, and their maple syrup operation: Dalhousie Maple Products. While this hard-working family will no longer be selling strawberries, they plan to expand their pumpkin patch and their maple syrup production.

While I am sad that MacLean's strawberries will no longer be available, I am excited by the planned expansion of the pumpkin patches in the Fall and the maple syrup production. Their Dalhousie Maple products can be found every Saturday at the New Glasgow Farmers Market.

I ask the members to join me in wishing the MacLean family well in their future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

SINGH, A./DALAL, V./KUMAR, L.: LIFE-SAVING ACTIONS - THANKS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place to do a member's statement about three international students who saved a mother and a newborn baby in the last couple of days in Cape Breton. These international students, all from India - I have their names from the article.

Ajay Singh, Vikram Dalal, and Lovepreet Kumar, were at the beach one day, and all of a sudden heard the shouts of a mother whose car rolled into the lake. There was a newborn baby in the car. They acted quickly. One of them even indicated they didn't know how to swim, and they ended up saving the baby and getting both the mother and the child to shore.

This happened in the last couple of days, and I rise in my place to thank them. The quote they had in the article was from one of the students, saying, “It’s God’s gift that we got a chance to save someone’s life.”

I rise in my place today to recognize those three international students who study at Cape Breton University, and thank them for their quick actions in making sure both the mother and child are safe today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS: SERVICE - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I stand to say thank you to the doctors, the nurses, the paramedics, to all of our health care professionals throughout Cumberland North, Cumberland County, and all of Nova Scotia. They have all gotten through a pandemic but are now facing an even worse health care crisis in working conditions that they never thought possible.

For many of the nurses and the doctors and paramedics, knowing that there’s nobody to respond to emergencies within 90 minutes of their own home, knowing that there aren’t enough nurses to keep units open - and one day last week there were literally no ICU beds in the entire province of Nova Scotia - it causes our health care professionals to question patients’ safety, but also their own safety working as medical professionals in these conditions.

Today, I say thank you to them for not giving up. I commit, along with others, to continue to work on making improvements in this important health care system.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

SMITH, MARK: SOFTBALL COACHING CAREER - THANKS

HON. PAT DUNN: I rise today to recognize a talented softball coach. Mark Smith began coaching the Canadian men’s team in 1996 and served as head coach from 2000 to 2009.

In 2009, Mark became head coach of Canada’s national women’s team, leading them to a gold medal at the 2013 Pan Am Games, and three bronze medals at the World Softball Championship. In 2017, he was named High Performance Director for the women’s national team program with Softball Canada. Mark concluded his successful coaching career by leading Canada’s women’s softball team to their first-ever medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

I invite all members to join me in thanking Mark for his dedication to softball and his representation of Nova Scotians on the international stage as a coach.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MCPHEE, MARLEY: PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize Marley McPhee of Timberlea, a Grade 5 student at École Beaubassin. Canadian Parents for French Nova Scotia held their annual Concours d'art oratoire at the Mount on May 7.

Concours d'art oratoire is Canada's largest annual French-language public speaking competition, with over 100,000 students participating. Concours d'art oratoire allows Canadian Parents for French to sponsor an activity where students from across the province express themselves and are recognized for their talents in French public speaking.

For teachers, it's an opportunity to incorporate public speaking into their curriculum so that all students benefit from the use of research, writing, and presentation skills. Students pick a topic that interests them, do research, write a speech that they practise with their friends and families, and then deliver their speech to the class.

Marley McPhee of Timberlea had a speech called "Pourquoi j'écris." Marley had previously presented her speech to her teacher and class and was chosen to represent their class, 5MB, in the schoolwide competition. Despite being sick, Marley delivered her speech virtually from home and earned second place and a chance to compete at the provincial Concours at the Mount. Marley faced intense competition and delivered her speech confidently, which earned her first place in the category 5/6 Francophone.

I'd like the members of the House to join me in congratulating Marley on this special achievement. Félicitations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BUSINESS BUDDIES: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a group from Dartmouth East that calls themselves the Business Buddies.

In 2019, during the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, sisters Gabrielle and Julia MacDonald and neighbours Rene Gionet and Matteo Tagliapietra witnessed the destruction that the hurricane left behind, so they wanted to help. They decided to donate to the Red Cross and went to work right away. They baked cookies for an entire afternoon, packaged them, and ventured around the neighbourhood selling them. The group has since expanded

to eight members and has organized bottle drives, collected food for Feed Nova Scotia, and made and sold all kinds of dog toys and treats for the SPCA.

I ask that all members of the Legislature join me in thanking the Business Buddies for the compassionate efforts they took to support their community in a time of need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

FINDLAY, MARCELO “CELO”: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: On July 20, 2022, Marcelo “Celo” Findlay passed away at the young age of 17. Marcelo was known for his work ethic, his kindness, and being the rock of his family. Thoughts go out to his mom, Sandra; his siblings; his loving partner, Olivia Sampson; and his newborn, Izayah Marcelo Kash Findlay.

You see, Mr. Speaker, Marcelo had just become a new dad. I wanted to put this on the public record for his family, but most importantly, for Izayah. Your dad was very special.

Rest in peace, Marcelo - a life well-lived and -loved.

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

BEZANSON, KIM: RECIP. OF STUDENT SUPPORT AWD. - CONGRATS

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an educator who embodies the theme of the most recent Education Week, Cultural Responsiveness: Meeting Students Where They Are.

Kim Bezanson is an Educational Program Assistant at the Musquodoboit Valley Education Centre. She was the deserving recipient of a Student Support Award for her skillful ways of cultivating relationships with the students she supports and within the school as a whole. Her colleagues say that she shines brightest when supporting students who have experienced trauma by capitalizing on their strengths as a means to buoy up their esteem to face many challenges with perseverance.

I wish to thank Kim Bezanson for her compassion and dedication and to congratulate her on receiving this well-deserved award.

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

DICKINSON, DR. JOËL: NEW MSVU PRES. - WELCOME

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, on May 3rd, Dr. Joël Dickinson was named as the next president and vice-chancellor of Mount Saint Vincent University in Fairview Clayton Park.

Dr. Dickinson is an accomplished academic administrator as the past Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Laurentian University. She has previously taught at the University of New Brunswick and Mount Allison University, and I am very excited to welcome her to our Mount community and the Fairview Clayton Park community. Throughout her career, Dr. Dickinson has focused on the impacts of decisions on students as well as meaningful collaboration with faculty and staff colleagues. I know that her commitment to excellence will ensure that the Mount will continue to be a university of choice for students near and far.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the House join me in welcoming Joël, her wife Carla, and their pups Charlie and George, as they settle into their new life in Fairview Clayton Park.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

ZWICKER, MALLORY - PLAN A DANCE CTR.: 5TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mallory Zwicker, the owner, artistic director, and dance teacher of Plan A Dance Centre, a recreation and competitive dance studio with 100-plus students that celebrated its fifth anniversary in May. The studio opened in Bridgewater in 2017 and expanded to Liverpool in 2018. Mallory's talent can be seen through her choreography, which has been performed and recognized across North America, and through her dancers, who have moved on to begin careers in the fine arts.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Mallory Zwicker for sharing her love of dance and empowering our youth to believe in themselves and follow their dreams.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

PECK, AARON: POP UP CINEMA SCREENINGS - THANKS

BRAEDON CLARK: Today I'd like to congratulate and recognize small business owner and local high school teacher Aaron Peck for bringing lots of joy and delicious treats to constituents in both Bedford South and Bedford Basin through his company Pop Up Cinema.

Pop Up Cinema is an outdoor movie exhibition specializing in community film screenings. They carry a selection of inflatable screens to create the ultimate film atmosphere and hold a licence to street-vend at beautiful DeWolf Park on Bedford Basin in Bedford, serving family friendly snacks for all to enjoy. Whether it's a free outdoor movie screening or a delicious, dipped cheesecake, Pop Up Cinema never fails to bring people together for a night out at the park.

Thank you, Aaron, for bringing lots of fun and happiness to the people of Bedford. I wish you and your business every success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle,

ORGANIZERS: ABUPTIC FESTIVAL - RECOG.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the community spirit of my constituents as they celebrate this year's Argyle Abuptic Festival. The Argyle Abuptic Festival is an annual event taking place in Argyle for the past 35 years. A lot of planning goes into this festival each year. This year's schedule includes events for all ages, from a kids' craft time, golf scramble, a community bus tour, a fish fry, and, if the weather cooperates, fireworks. The Legend of Abuptic Award is presented annually to someone who has been a big part of the community and festivals in the past. Congratulations to this year's recipients, Yolande and Laurie Donaldson.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the organizers, volunteers, and participants, and wish the festival many more years of success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRIENDS OF CORY KEEPING: FUNDRAISING EFFORTS - RECOG.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today just to congratulate a group of people in Cape Breton who came together in a time of need for one of our community members, Cory Keeping, who is well-known in our community as a strong volunteer, a strong community person, and an amazing musician. He is currently the bass player for the Matt Minglewood band, and Cory's having a tough time right now.

Bruce Guthro, a well-known musician, put together a crew - just a talented crew - of musicians to come and help raise money for Cory, and I was able to attend that event. It was just an amazing, amazing evening of music and friendship, and I want to congratulate and thank that group for doing that for Cory.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

BROWNING JOHNSON, KATHY-ANN: EDUC. EFFORTS - RECOG.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Kathy-Ann Browning-Johnson of Kentville for her many achievements as a Nova Scotia educator opening doors for Black students.

Kathy-Ann Browning-Johnson taught at Annapolis East Elementary School for three years prior to becoming an educator in the Annapolis Valley. She has participated in some leading-edge programs supporting students of African descent, including her work as a literacy and numeracy teacher for African Nova Scotia students. Kathy-Ann is creative and imaginative, assisting students to grow and work to their full potential. She is a passionate educator about human rights, who leads by example with kindness and respect.

Please join me today to recognize Kathy-Ann Browning-Johnson for her hard work, dedication, and passion for her students.

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

COMPANION ANIMAL HOSPITAL: SERV. TO PETS - THANKS

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, today, I stand to recognize Companion Animal Hospital who has been serving the pets and residents of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth and surrounding areas since 1996. Their facility and services assist in routine preventive care for pets from youth into their golden years.

They strive to deliver the most up-to-date treatment for our fur babies in their positive and outgoing environment. On-site lab services are available, including a digital radiograph machine which allows them to quickly send X-Rays to radiologists and referrals to surgeons for additional insight. Their surgical team are professional in both elective and non-elective procedures.

I want to thank Dr. Don Slaunwhite and the team at Companion Animal Hospital for looking forward to serving you - they're all looking forward to serving you and your fluffy, scaled, and feathered friends, both big and small. I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking them for being such a vital part of our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JULIAN, KEITH: INDIG. EDUC. EFFORTS - RECOG.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Shubenacadie resident Keith Julian.

Keith has been instrumental in providing Indigenous education to the community. Summer of 2021, he founded Sipekne'katik Culture and History Teachings. Twice a week, the group gathers by the Shubenacadie River to offer presentations on various aspects of Indigenous culture, ranging from dances, ceremonies, regalia, and more.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of the members of this house to join me in thanking Keith for sharing such important knowledge with the community. I look forward to attending more presentations again.

[3:00 p.m.]

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is 3:00 p.m. and we will stop at 3:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: N.S. POWER RATE HIKE - PREVENT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this is the second time we have been in this Legislature since Nova Scotia Power's proposed rate hike and this is the second time this government has failed to do anything to stop them. The government is more concerned about the optics of their own salary increases in the cost of living crisis but it has failed to do anything to stop Nova Scotia Power from increasing power rates for Nova Scotians at a very precarious time.

My question to the Premier is: Why has he failed to stop Nova Scotia Power's rate hike?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): I am not aware of any rate increase in Nova Scotia. I am aware that there is a potential general rate increase application which will be heard in the Fall and if it were to succeed through that process would be enacted, I believe, in January. The minister may have some further details.

Power rates have not gone up and I think this is the continuing theme of the Opposition where everything is fear-based, negative-based, trying to scare Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians know that power rates have not increased. There is a contemplated increase, a hopeful increase, but time will tell where that goes, Mr. Speaker.

ZACH CHURCHILL: As a former minister, I remember a government that took proactive steps to stop Nova Scotia Power from increasing rates through legislation, much like this government could have taken proactive steps before calling an emergency session to deal with salary increases.

Mr. Speaker, a mere four months ago the Premier stood in this House and said that the ratepayers are his top priority and he will act swiftly to protect the ratepayers at every opportunity. I'll table that. This is now the Premier's second opportunity to proactively protect ratepayers and live up to his own words.

My question to the Premier is: Will he use this emergency session of the Legislature to stop Nova Scotia Power's proposed rate hike?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the words were true then, and they are true now. The ratepayers are the only thing that I am concerned about in this equation, certainly in Nova Scotia.

The member's insinuation that the rates have gone up is a continuing theme from the member where things are misrepresented and mischaracterized and it's really unfortunate because in this province things are going very well. I know the Opposition members want Nova Scotians to be afraid. They want to create this illusion that things are going poorly. They're trying to create this narrative that just doesn't exist.

I will assure Nova Scotians and the ratepayers of this province that they are my number one concern and I will protect them and time will show that.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, to say that inflationary pressures are not real for people, to say that the challenges in our health care system are not real and to speak about these issues as fearmongering, I think, is totally ridiculous and out of touch with the experiences that people are having right now.

Mr. Speaker, in the last sitting the Premier said, "I will be taking every step I can to protect the ratepayers of this province." I'll table that as well. Yet the Premier has done nothing to be proactive on this and Nova Scotians are still on the hook, potentially, for this 10 per cent rate hike that's going to happen in the midst of a cost of living crisis.

The Premier might think this is a laughing matter. I assure him that Nova Scotians who are already worried about paying their bills and their bank accounts and their school supplies and food for their families and their medications do not find this funny.

Does the Premier expect Nova Scotians to believe that he has taken every step possible to prevent this rate hike from happening?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, this would be a hard concept for the member to grasp, but I'm going to give him a chance: We actually do what we say we're going to do on this side of the House.

The member will recall, and Nova Scotians will recall, just last week when the member was creating all this fear and every single day he was in the news about leaders' compensation. But when it came time for the rubber to hit the road, one leader in this House - not three, not two - one leader in this House did what they said they were going to do and that is address the leaders' compensation.

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

PREM.: HIRING OF FRIENDS - EXPLAIN

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday . . . (Interruption)

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Yesterday when the Premier and I were having an exchange about his hiring of personal friends, he said, and I quote, "I have a lot of friends in Nova Scotia, and I pick the very best people based on my surveillance of the landscape." When the Premier surveilled the landscape, did he notice that regular people across the province are finding themselves unable to put gas in their fuel tanks, fill their grocery carts, or pay their power bills?

THE PREMIER: I spend every day all day talking to Nova Scotians from one end of this province to the other, and I feel the impacts of inflation - very real on them. I'm very in tune with the pressures that Nova Scotians are under. Nova Scotians are also very honest with me about how they feel about what's possible, what we should be doing, and what the challenges are.

You know what they're most open and honest about? About how optimistic they are to have a government that is looking down the road - five and 10 years down the road - and taking this province on a path to what is really possible to support Nova Scotians. That's the Nova Scotia they want. That's the government they want, and they seem very pleased that they have it.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Last year, Tom Hickey, the new head of Invest Nova Scotia, donated \$2,250 to the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Party. His family donated another \$3,750. Wayne Crawley, the new head of Build Nova Scotia, donated \$1,000 to the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Party a year earlier.

I would like to ask the Premier why he seems more focused on finding jobs for his political donors than helping regular Nova Scotians.

THE PREMIER: Just a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. Number one, it's ridiculous to insinuate that I had to find a job for two of the busiest, most successful business people in this province.

If we could keep it real for just a couple minutes, these are interim appointments. They have already hit the ground running trying to get things set up. We're looking for full-time, permanent CEOs. They're there on an interim basis helping their province, stepping up for their province. I encourage the members opposite, if they want to be part of the longer term, to put some names forward for permanent CEOs. We'll certainly engage in that.

The reality is, from my business career, from my job as Premier and later, I have interacted with a lot of business people. I know a lot of business people. If I had to exclude people from opportunities for standing up to support this province just because I know them, just because they're my friend, it would be a very small pool.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Picking your friends and excluding people are two different things. I look forward to hearing at a later date when the interim appointment for the Nova Scotia Health Authority CEO is going to expire.

In 2016, when calling for an emergency meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to investigate hiring practices, the now-Premier, then-Opposition member, said, "Nova Scotians expect public servants to be hired based on merit in a fair and transparent manner." I will table that.

In a letter to the editor from the same year titled Move Past Pork Barrel Politics, the now-Premier wrote, "I keep waiting for" the Premier "to move past petty political moves like the partisan hirings . . . and get on with running the province." I'll table that.

Now it appears that the Premier thinks that his personal friends deserve to make \$1,500 a day while many Nova Scotians don't deserve to make \$15 an hour. Nova Scotians do expect public servants to be hired based on merit. Can the Premier explain why he's changed his tune?

THE PREMIER: My tune rarely changes and certainly hasn't changed here. The reality is we're running a government for the people of Nova Scotia. You know what Nova Scotians ask me? They said, Premier, please sort out the mess of 12 years of NDP and Liberal governments. Please sort out the mess. (Interruptions)

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

THE PREMIER: Please till the ground and plant those seeds, Mr. Premier. Please water them and grow this province for what's possible, and that's exactly what we're doing. Members opposite can take runs at successful Nova Scotians and smear them merely because they're successful, but we're not interested in that. We're only interested in running the province forward in an optimistic way. That's what Nova Scotians expect.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

NRR: N.S. POWER RATE HIKE - PREVENT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, if the Treasury Board's documents and the government's own budget are to be believed, we're heading towards a recession. We're heading towards more labour shortages. We're heading towards a health care system where fewer people have access to primary care. We're potentially headed to a situation where, on top of all these pressures, Nova Scotians are going to experience a rate hike in their power.

Historically, any overearnings from Nova Scotia Power were returned back into the wallets of Nova Scotians. Now Nova Scotia Power is requesting to keep 50 per cent of overearnings, and I'll table that. They are taking money out of Nova Scotians' pockets to put into their own. Knowing that on top of this, ratepayers are also facing a 10 per cent rate hike, will the Premier finally stand up to Nova Scotia Power, proactively, to prevent this from happening?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Thank you very much . . . (Interruption) It's the prerogative of the government who answers the questions. I asked many questions of the previous Premier and never got an answer. I got ministers. I'm standing here as a minister of the . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. There's a lot of chatter going on. Please respect each other.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NSUARB process hasn't started. We're doing exactly what we were asked in the last session on many, many bills: doing consultation with stakeholders. When it came to the energy bill, they didn't want us to do consultation last session. They just wanted us to put things in action without actually going out and talking with those stakeholders. Those stakeholders are telling this government the NSUARB hasn't been opened up in 10 years. They want a chance to make their statements to the NSUARB as well with the general rate application. This government is allowing Nova Scotians to speak.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, is the minister actually suggesting we need to consult with Nova Scotians on whether they want to have a 10 per cent rate hike or not? Let's get serious.

The previous government took preventive measures to ensure that this never even got to the NSUARB, and rates were stabilized in this province under previous ministers, like the member for Sydney-Membertou, for eight years. Now this province is facing a rate hike and this government is now sitting on their hands in addressing it, or waiting to be reactive with it. They knew this was going to happen.

An internal government memo revealed that the Premier and his caucus were aware nearly two months prior to the Spring House session that over half of Nova Scotia Power's rate application was directly tied to increasing their profit, and I'll table that. Yet they stood in this Legislature, as they do again today, delivering words but no action.

My question to the Premier, and I hope he has the courage to answer: Knowing what they knew then and what is true now, will the Premier prevent this rate hike from happening?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: I want to remind the members opposite of a bill that hit the floor of this House in 2015 to expand the solar industry. We all remember this. We all remember we're going to break the monopoly. Let's remember, in January, this government said what we were going to do. We protected the solar industry - not like 2015, when that government, Mr. Speaker, heard from Nova Scotia Power and they reduced what they were going to do to the solar industry, almost killing it at that point.

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

NRR: POWER RATE HIKE - PREVENT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I do love that this government is now hiding behind the NSUARB. We've got evidence in this session that they can disregard entirely the opinions of independent agencies and panels. Yet when it comes to this situation, they hide behind the NSUARB.

If the NSUARB approves Nova Scotia Power's 10 per cent rate hike, will the Premier do the same and call an emergency session to kill the hike, which would be in the best interests of Nova Scotians, who are already facing a cost of living crisis?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: On this side of the House, we respect process. We didn't shut down the legislative process for a whole year, Mr. Speaker. We're allowing the legislative process to go through, the same way we're allowing the NSUARB process to go through. Last session, we did some changes to some acts to do with energy. As the minister, I stood here - I did not say that we were finished with this. We were allowing things to roll out. We have different levers to pull at different times. Stay tuned.

[3:15 p.m.]

ZACH CHURCHILL: Nova Scotians are already experiencing the cost of living crisis in their lives. They're experiencing the financial pressure every single day. They would really appreciate some proactive measures to stop this rate hike from happening. Yet we have a government here today that just says, well, wait and see, wait and see.

This government knew about this two months into their mandate and have done nothing to this date. They are leaving Nova Scotians in the lurch, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier: Will the Premier proactively stand up in this session, this emergency session of the Legislature, and stop this rate hike from happening? Please.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: I am very proud of the progress that we've made as government so far. We're striving: 80 per cent renewables by 2030, on our grid system. We're going to do that with 350 megawatts of power, and we'll hear the Opposition say that they want to take credit for it.

The fact of the matter is we signed it when we got into government. That's just it. Solar power, we protect it - 80 per cent renewables on the grid to greener energy, creating green jobs in Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker. All I can say is we have different levers to pull at different times, no different from any other government that has been in this position. Stay tuned.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW - CUMB. REG. HEALTH CTR.: TIMELINE - INFORM

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: The people of Cumberland North who need dialysis have to travel to Moncton and have had to do so for years. Our doctors and nurses who work in our emergency department are working in an unsafe emergency department. Because of both these things, the former Premier made an announcement for an expansion of the emergency room at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre and a new, 12-bed, permanent dialysis unit at Cumberland Regional. That was in December 2020.

There are rumours that someone has asked for delays in these projects. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Public Works for confirmation of a timeline, an exact timeline of when construction is to begin and to end, and so far I haven't gotten that.

My question to the Premier is: Can he provide a timeline for the people of Cumberland North and Cumberland County and surrounding area?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I really am not clear on where the rumours would be coming from, but I can assure the member that, first of all, there is a temporary, six-bed or six-station renal dialysis unit that will be at the hospital in her area. The space

is existing and will need to be renovated in order for that to be accommodated. You can expect that those will be available at some point in the Fall.

In regard to the second part of your question, there is a feasibility study to understand exactly what is required in that space. There is no timeline, other than to say that we do know there are permanent seats that have been previously announced. Those have not been clawed back.

I would encourage the member to seek information from me directly, rather than rumours, just to avoid this situation in the future.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I thought it was fine to ask the Minister of Public Works. It's hard to know where the infrastructure and redevelopment projects are being managed from. I thought they were through Public Works.

It is very concerning. The sources that told me that there were delays purposely being put on the expansion of our emergency department, as well as the 12-bed dialysis unit. Unless I can receive something in writing that shows a timeline - because I was told back in January that everything was on track. I am being told now that there are delays and that they are coming from the very top.

I am asking on behalf of the people of Cumberland North - that is my job, to represent the people of Cumberland North. I want something in writing for them, showing that this project is on track and on schedule, and when it will begin and when it will end.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: First of all, the temporary renal dialysis unit that will accommodate those folks is going to open this Fall. The other pieces of that, there has been no timeline. The feasibility study persists. We are happy to discuss that with you, but there is no pullback on that project. That project is proceeding.

We actually want to work with communities, with the residents in the area, to make sure we understand what the needs are because when we do renovations they are going to be a generation project. We know that there is definitely going to be a permanent dialysis unit there. We know that there are renovations, but that continues to be investigated by the Department of Health and Wellness.

Part of the renovation delay at this point was because there was an unexpected flood in the hospital which has actually distracted folks from the work that is happening, but that is back on track.

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

FTB: COST OF LIVING CRISIS - MESSAGE

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Every day, people are getting crushed under the increasing cost of living. Gas and groceries are two things we hear about from people every day. I received a call from an individual who relies on their car for work, and who is having to take from their grocery budget just so they can put gas in their car to do their job. These are the people who are trying to work and provide for their families, but they can't make ends meet right now.

In a time of historic inflation and a cost of living crisis, what is the Premier's message to the single parent who needs to steal from their food budget just to put gas in their car so they can work?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: It's a very serious situation, what people are facing right now, and I think particularly about people who are on fixed incomes, people who are retired, people who are working and may be in situations with dependants depending on them, and Mr. Speaker, this government is always listening for ideas and suggestions. We have put measures forth before the budget to help people at the lowest income levels. We have many new programs. There was another announcement today for support for seniors who are going to have heating needs this Winter. We are always thinking about ways we can help.

KENDRA COOMBES: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad they're thinking, but I don't see any action happening.

This individual is a public servant. They work to provide services to people in Cape Breton. This government has used this emergency session to announce the hiring of the Premier's personal friends and donors to jobs that pay \$1,500 a day, and up to \$18,000 a month, but they have offered nothing to people working to provide services to our communities. People need real support. They need more money in their pockets now, not some credit at tax time.

When will this government stop using their power to reward the Premier's personal friends and start helping everyday people who are struggling to put gas in their cars so they can put food on their tables?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the drama that's dripping from that voice. No credit for all of the things that we've been offering to Nova Scotians.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I rise on a point of personal privilege. I don't think it's at all appropriate to characterize the nature or voice or emotion of a member.

THE SPEAKER: I would ask that the member bring it forward after Question Period. You can't stand on a point of order during Question Period.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board - and I'm going to give you about another 15 seconds or so because the clock ran out.

ALLAN MACMASTER: There have been all kinds of measures this government has brought forth. The Opposition doesn't have to give us any credit. They can say what they want, but I can tell you there are members over here who are very concerned about what we're seeing. This is a compassionate government, and that is why we took measures before the budget this year and in the budget, and just today, another action taken for this very purpose of helping people dealing with the cost of living.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FTB - GAS PRICES: RELIEF - ACTION

FRED TILLEY: Driving the cost of living crisis is soaring gas prices - pun intended. The cost of a litre of gasoline has increased by over 60 per cent in the past year, and I will table that. This is leaving Nova Scotians with tough decisions about putting food on the table, or gas in the car to get to work.

Mr. Speaker, this government talks about having a compassionate budget, it talks about having empathy, all of those things, but with prices so high, people struggling so much, we provided an opportunity - an idea - for the government to cut motive fuel tax. When can Nova Scotians expect to get some relief at the pumps from this government?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Fuel is certainly one of the things that's driving costs, not just for transportation, but it's also driving the cost of things like food. We've seen significant increases. The world has seen significant increases. While things started back in December, we saw a significant change as soon as Russia invaded Ukraine. That's affected every part of the world.

The amount of money the member is suggesting, honestly, I don't think Nova Scotians would notice the difference at the pumps that it would make. We see fluctuations in fuel. We saw Alberta do it. Alberta certainly has more ability to do it, given that they make money as the price of oil goes up. We also see in Alberta that they're starting to discover that the amount of money that was taken off has suddenly disappeared.

FRED TILLEY: I agree that the world is facing these problems, but I also agree that other provinces are doing things to help at the pumps.

For months now, the Premier has been teasing Nova Scotians that some relief at the gas pumps will come. On March 8th, he said, "Everything is on the table." He told Nova

Scotians that he understands the pressure that high gas prices are putting them under, and that his government is looking at different options. I'll table that. Four months later, on June 29th, the Premier repeated himself, saying: We are always considering the options, and certainly the gas tax is something in particular that we are looking at. I will table that.

My question for the Premier: How long will he look at cutting gas tax before he actually does it?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the member has put forth an idea. We put forth another idea today for heating costs. We know that 40 per cent of Nova Scotians heat with furnace oil. Some of them don't drive. Some of them don't have cars, but they heat with oil. This Winter they'll have an extra \$250 to help them with the costs of fuel.

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

FTB: GAS PRICE RELIEF - DELAY

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, while the Premier has been "looking into" providing relief at the gas pump, other Premiers across the country have acted by cutting gas taxes and costs at the pump. Premiers Ford, Kenney, and Furey have all taken action, while our Premier is merely looking into it. My question for the Premier, because these are premiers who've made these decisions, not the ministers of finance: While he waits, does he realize that Nova Scotians are being charged more and more at the pumps?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you I watch the price of oil daily. We are all filling up our tanks travelling to the city here. We're certainly aware of fuel prices and the fluctuations.

I wonder if the member realizes, as the point I just made in the answer to the previous question, that some of these provinces have a lot more ability than Nova Scotia does. Does Newfoundland and Labrador have oil and gas? I think they do. Newfoundland and Labrador was actually a have-not province in terms of equalization until their oil and gas lifted them well above it. Maybe the members on the other side don't realize that other provinces do actually have more capacity at times like this.

PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, what I do realize is that the Premier and this government's lack of action demonstrates a trend. While other provinces are providing solutions by cutting costs at the pump, the checkout counter, the power bills, rent payments, this Premier and this government are choosing to do nothing to address the cost of living crisis in this province.

My question for the Premier: Why does he not believe that Nova Scotians deserve any cost of living support from their government?

[3:30 p.m.]

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we do. We have done all kinds of things, but the Opposition just tries to say that we haven't. They can keep saying that in the hopes that maybe someone will believe them.

The reality is we increased the Nova Scotia Child Benefit in the budget. We created the Seniors Care Grant. Just today, we increased it by another \$250 to support people this Winter. We have rent supplements. There is a rent cap in place in this province and significant investments in foster care for families who are supporting children.

The Opposition can say all of these things, but maybe I can get up and list some more the next time they ask a question.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

ECC: CAP AND TRADE PROGRAM - FUTURE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, you've got to think about the people who don't qualify for those programs. That's the problem.

We know that the cap and trade agreement expires this December, an agreement that has saved Nova Scotians around ten cents per litre at the pump - and I will table that. On March 25th the Minister of Environment and Climate Change stated that no decisions have been made with respect to the next phase of cap and trade - and I will table that.

It has been four months, surely enough time for the minister to have the important conversations that need to take place. Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change update the House on what decisions have been made regarding the future of our cap and trade program?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It is a very important question. No final decisions have been made. The government in Nova Scotia continues to evaluate the options before us, those options being cap and trade, the federal carbon tax, and a hybrid which would be a federal carbon tax, and performance standards on industry. However, I want to take this opportunity to inform the House that I have, a few weeks ago, sent a letter to Ottawa to express our concerns with a federal carbon tax.

Given the issues we are seeing with affordability and given that the Premier has made affordability a top priority to this government, in that letter I indicated to the federal government that we don't believe a federal carbon tax is appropriate. There are many tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and that federal carbon tax is one, but given the global inflation we are seeing, we don't feel a federal carbon tax is appropriate.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Forgive me for my confusion, but if it seems like the government is all over the place on this. It is good to get an update from the minister. In the last sitting, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said they were considering all options, including the carbon tax. Then the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board let it slip that the carbon tax is coming to Nova Scotia within the next year. Then, just a few weeks ago, department staff said all options are being explored again.

I would like to ask the Premier: Can the Premier end the confusion and tell Nova Scotians that they are paying a carbon tax in 2023 - yes or no?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Again, evaluations are still ongoing. No final decisions have been made, but let me be clear: We sent a letter to Ottawa clearly expressing our concerns of what the federal backstop could do to the price of gasoline in a time of global inflation, in a time where all jurisdictions are experiencing major price spikes.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker - look, we know that there are many ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Nova Scotia has unbelievable potential to continue to lead in the clean sustainable sector. We have unbelievable resources when it comes to the Bay of Fundy, when it comes to offshore wind development, and these are the things we want to work with Ottawa to develop.

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

FTB: ONLINE GAMBLING - ANALYSIS

LISA LACHANCE: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. In November of last year, our office made a Freedom of Information request that showed from the time the government took office until November 2021, there are no records of correspondence, reports, notes, or even memos on online gambling at the Office of Addictions and Mental Health - and I will table that.

Since then, online gambling has been launched and the minister has told the media that there was extensive back and forth between himself and the Minister of Addictions and Mental Health. I would like to ask the minister: Will he table the analysis that resulted from those extensive discussions?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you I have great respect for my colleague the Minister for Addictions and Mental Health and I can tell you the first thought in my mind when we considered iCasino - I think that is what the member is referring to - is that the minister and the people whom he is looking out for in this province, I don't think - I mean, if there was written consultation, I guess it would have shown up in the FOIPOP.

What I can tell you is that we had meetings about it, we discussed it and concerns that were had, and things we should be aware of, and I can't provide something to you that was never put in writing, but I can tell you that's what took place.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the minister to review meeting notes to see if there's anything that could be provided if those discussions have taken place.

When the minister launched online gambling last week, there was little that he expressed as confidence in the decision. He said, we're not trying to really promote it, and I'll table that. Perhaps that's because he knows online gambling is addictive and can cause financial ruin, and that it's out of touch to promote gambling when many people don't know how they're going to be able to cover the basics of gas, food, power, and rent.

Wouldn't the minister agree that what people really need is not more ways to gamble, but rather, direct immediate support?

ALLAN MACMASTER: I do appreciate the member's comments. I honestly believe we're on the same page, in my opinion. This was not something we wanted to promote. The reality is that there are over 2,000 online gaming sites. It exists without us. There may be ways we can help to identify Nova Scotians who we don't even know right now are struggling because they're gambling on some of those 2,000 sites that are out there.

The world is the way it is. The internet is the way it is. There's no censorship. We can't block those sites. I even think the Province of Quebec tried to block sites from outside of their province, and that was challenged in court. They lost, and they weren't able to do it. The reality is that it exists without us. With us having a presence, we have an opportunity to offer it with supports in place for people who could have problems with it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

ECC: INCREASE IN POWER RATES - ACTION

CARMAN KERR: The cap and trade system has saved Nova Scotians more than 10 cents a litre at the pump. It has saved 7 per cent on electricity rates, and I can table that. With a 60 per cent jump in the price of fuel over the year, 71 per cent in heating oil - and I can table that - coupled with a looming 10 per cent power increase, Nova Scotians need to know what the plan is to control fuel and power costs.

My question for the Premier or Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: Why is his government not acting more urgently to stop increased rates?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Look, affordability and ensuring the best interest of Nova Scotians, and ensuring we have long-term solutions to support Nova Scotians in the

affordability issues that we're seeing - it's top priority to this government. That's why we are evaluating all our options.

We have been clear with Ottawa that, given some of the biggest global inflation we have seen since the late 1970s, we don't feel it's an appropriate time for a federal backstop to even be considered. I want this House to know, as the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has outlined, we are taking long-term steps to deal with affordability issues. It is what's driving this government. It's what's driving this Premier. I can assure Nova Scotians that affordability is top of mind.

CARMAN KERR: I certainly appreciate long-term vision, but at the same time, taking immediate action as well. Small businesses are struggling. Workers are struggling. Farmers, I know, are struggling. Seniors are struggling. Most people I speak to in Annapolis are struggling. They're not seeing relief at the pump. They won't see relief when they get their power bills in the near future. I do appreciate the top-up on the heating fund, but like the member for Sydney-Membertou mentioned, a lot of Nova Scotians don't qualify for these programs. What immediate action on top of this is government willing to take to help Nova Scotians shoulder these extra costs?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: As a government, we're looking at all of those long-term solutions. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board just outlined a number of them. We just announced today a new stream for the Seniors Care Grant. We're looking at many things that are great possibilities that are long term, that will offer those long-term supports.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, as our work continues on carbon pricing, we're looking at all our options. I have been clear with Ottawa, we don't believe as a government that a federal carbon tax would be appropriate. I encourage my Liberal colleagues across the hall to join us in that call to Ottawa to let them know that we don't believe a federal carbon tax is appropriate for Nova Scotia given these inflationary times.

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

FTB: HST REVENUE - AMOUNT

LORELEI NICOLL: We know that with the rapid increase in gas prices, over 60 per cent this year, the government will receive a massive windfall in HST revenue. My question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: How much is the government expecting to make in revenue from HST?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we will know more when we do our first quarterly update that will come in the next couple of months. The numbers are lagging, so it takes a bit of time. I can indicate to the member the advice that's been given to me is there is not likely going to be a windfall, and for a couple of reasons. On the HST side, people have only so much money to spend. If they are spending more on fuel, they are

likely spending less somewhere else and, as a result, the change in revenue to the government is there is likely no or little change.

In terms of the excise tax, it's not a per cent base, it's a cent per litre. So if there's no change in the volume of fuel sold, we're not making a windfall there either.

LORELEI NICOLL: I thank the minister for that explanation, but I just wondered why he would not use HST at this time. As I've shared with him before, there have been many economic ups and downs over my lifetime, and one thing is for certain - when gas prices go up, it's reflected in everything, including food, but those prices in food never go back down.

I just wondered, what could you do at this point in time to help alleviate the issue at the pump? I mean, it's not just a coined phrase, saying everyone is having a hard time putting gas in their car. What can we actually do right now as an option, and creatively?

ALLAN MACMASTER: I guess there are different ways. A person could take the HST off fuel and give money back that way or, like one of the things we announced today, we provide an amount for people who are going to likely be facing higher fuel costs this Winter.

I'll put a question back to the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. If we ever did take the HST off, would they ever ask us to put it back on?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

FTB: SMALL BUS. STRUGGLING - RELIEF

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, the latest Canadian Federation of Independent Business data show that over 75 per cent of businesses surveyed list fuel and energy costs as their primary concern. Diesel is nearly \$2 per litre, with gas not far behind. This is severely impacting businesses' productivity amidst the cost of living.

My question to the Premier: With so many small businesses struggling with the cost of fuel, why hasn't this government provided any relief?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I would point again to the federal government. They have not taken such a measure either. In fact, I think we've heard the Prime Minister discourage implementing such measures.

One of the challenges we're all facing is inflation. A lot of it is driven by the cost of fuel. We know that the central bank, the Bank of Canada, is raising interest rates to try to fight that. I hope they are successful. Nobody wants to be paying more on their mortgage payments. The pain we are all enduring now, let us hope that the central bank is successful

because that is the way you fight inflation. If governments start creating more demand for things like fuel, that can make inflation worse.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I thank the minister and I appreciate that this is a few times now that we've heard about the federal government. One of the things in politics that we need to do better at is collaborate.

As a former small business owner, speaking to the issues which I asked originally, doing business in Nova Scotia needs to be affordable. A disturbing trend has emerged early on in this government that completely demonstrates the lack of supporting small businesses, which, quite frankly, are the backbone of our economy. Eighty per cent of businesses believe the Premier is failing to understand the costs they are facing. I'll table that. The longer Premier Houston turns his back on the affordability crisis, the longer and deeper the consequences.

My question to the Premier: When will the Premier step up and help our small businesses?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I can think of a couple of new initiatives. I think about Nova Scotia Loyal. This is a very creative way of encouraging Nova Scotians to buy local in ways that are trade-compliant, which is essential. I know that a lot of that work is still happening now, still under development, but that is something that could have a transformational impact on Nova Scotia businesses.

I also think of MOST. I know there are a lot of business struggling to find labour, especially in the skilled trades. Now there's a tremendous incentive. People under the age of 30 now have the provincial income tax forgiven on the first \$50,000 each year.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable member for Dartmouth North, I just want to remind people that people across the floor are not to be recognized by their proper name.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: HEAT IMPACT ON HEALTH CARE - PLAN

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Premier. Medical appointments can be uncomfortable at the best of times, but patients in Nova Scotia now face a new challenge when receiving care: extreme heat. This was the case for Murdock Hawley - and I'll table his story - who reported that extreme heat at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney left him, in his words, "lying on a chair, soaking, wringing wet," while receiving dialysis. The problem: a broken air conditioner took weeks to fix.

What is this government's plan to address the impacts of extreme heat on our health care system?

[3:45 p.m.]

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I was made aware of that situation with regard to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital. I know that they are undertaking repairs. It's not as simple as the air conditioning that we would all use in our homes. It's not as simple as that. I know that that work has been under way.

We continue to work with patients, ensuring that they're hydrated, that there are fans in place. There are a number of different tools that folks use when there isn't air conditioning. I know the staff are very attentive to the patients to make sure that they are caring for their needs.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Our health care system must prepare now for extreme heat events. A recent article from the *New England Journal of Medicine* - and I'll table that - concluded that as extreme heat events increase in frequency and scale, which they are projected to do for at least the next 30 years, health care systems need to be ready for the increase in illnesses resulting from extreme heat. Taking this evidence into account, this government's climate risk assessment is long overdue.

We have begun to see the impacts of climate change in British Columbia and throughout Europe where people have died or been hit hard by the heat. We're seeing it now in Nova Scotia. We are starting to see the impacts here. Climate change is a public health issue. When will this government address it as such?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: I want to thank the honourable member for the very important question. Under the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, we are bound by this year, by December 31st, to issue the Climate Risk Assessment. That assessment is going to outline the gradual changes that we're seeing in Nova Scotia, but also talk about the extreme events we're seeing as well, and the impact it's having on our society and our economy.

Absolutely, this is an issue of great importance to Nova Scotians. Last week, we issued the EGCCRA annual report. In that report, it outlines what we've done thus far to deal with climate change, to deal with sustainable prosperity, and I believe it's in your mailboxes as well. It's a good read.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

AGRIC.: STRUGGLING FARMERS - SUPPORT

CARMAN KERR: Farmers are worried about the future of their industry. Costs in the last six months have skyrocketed with necessities such as diesel costing more than they did last year. Tim Marsh, president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, stated his concern, saying, and I quote, “I imagine there’ll be less farmers by next year.” I will table that.

On a good day, farming is tough business. I grew up on a farm. My family are farmers. My question for the minister is: Why is there no immediate targeted support given to our farmers struggling today?

HON. GREG MORROW: We've announced a number of programs through the last number of months: the Limestone Trucking Assistance Program, the Blueberry Pollination Expansion Program, we have loan deferral programs for the Farm Loan Board. All of these make a difference to farmers in the field.

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

The honourable member for Dartmouth North on a point of privilege.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Earlier in Question Period, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board commented on the “drama dripping from the voice” of the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier. This comment was wholly inappropriate and offensive.

When a person - a woman member - uses her voice to bring a question forward on behalf of her constituents, she should have the right to be heard without having her voice characterized in any way. “Dramatic,” “hysterical”: There are many other words like this, and they have a long history of excluding women from conversations.

The minister’s behaviour is tantamount to dismissing the member’s words - or her voice - as not worthy to be answered. It is silencing. It is offensive. It is endemic of the patriarchal environment of this Chamber and our society.

Though the comments were not directed at me, Mr. Speaker, I feel this very deeply. I have been silenced many times throughout my career and in my life - my voice characterized in negative ways many times. I have taken it because, usually, there is no choice. But in this Chamber, it should not be allowed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to rule on this matter and rule the minister’s comments out of order and ask the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to apologize to the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier for his comments.

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I can't say I agree with some of the comments that were just made. The member is basically suggesting that I'm a certain kind of person because of maybe the way I look, or my sex, and I'm using that. This has got nothing to do with that.

There are comments back and forth in this House all the time, Mr. Speaker. But I will say this: I will apologize to the member. Why? Because it was not a respectful comment, no matter who it was made to, no matter who it was made by. That's the way I look at the world. So I will apologize to the member.

I know that she's very sincere in representing her constituents. I also know there are a lot of people out there who are struggling right now. I certainly don't want to make light of what they're facing.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I appreciate the minister's apology, but I will also say that, in my comments, I think it was very clear that I was not characterizing the minister in any way. I was simply talking about the words he used to characterize the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier. I have not suggested anything other than his words were inappropriate.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The question that was asked during the point of privilege was that the minister apologize to the member. The minister has done that, so we will not proceed any further on that point of privilege.

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I have to stand on a point of order on some language I think was unparliamentary during Question Period.

The Leader of the Official Opposition referred to the Premier in a question, to the suggestion "if he has the courage." Mr. Speaker, I think that is unparliamentary. I ask the member to retract his comment.

THE SPEAKER: After the word was said, I did check the words that were here that are unparliamentary, and "courage" is not one of the words that's unparliamentary.

We're going to take a 10-minute recess. I ask everybody to come back at 4:05 p.m.

[3:54 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:09 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The member for Halifax Needham on an introduction.

SUZY HANSEN: I would like to draw members' attention. In this part of the gallery, I have my children Sakylo, Syvaya, Sage, and Sijora. They're all joining me today because their brother kind of left. Thank you for coming. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 185 was reported back from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments earlier today. Under the Rules, it cannot be considered by the Committee of the Whole House on Bills before tomorrow without unanimous consent. I request unanimous consent to be permitted to call Bill No. 185 at Committee of the Whole House on Bills today.

THE SPEAKER: There is a request for unanimous consent.

Is it agreed?

I hear a No.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise and meet again on Friday, July 29th, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., when government business will include Committee of the Whole House on Bill No. 185.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn until we meet again tomorrow. The hours are 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 4:11 p.m.]