



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2022

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HALIFAX, TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

3:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 383

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

Whereas climate change is real, and the Nova Scotia government has taken ambitious and concrete steps to reduce the impact of climate change by passing the most aggressive environmental goals in the country, the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act; and

Whereas targets set by the Nova Scotia government will mean that 80 per cent of Nova Scotia's energy will be supplied by renewable energy by 2030, at least 20 per cent of total land and water mass will be conserved and the environmental assessment process will be modernized to include consideration of cumulative impacts of climate change; and

Whereas while Nova Scotians understand that carbon taxes recognize the cost of pollution, imposing the federal carbon tax at this time will increase the price of gas by more than 14 cents a litre, a measure that could push inflation above 10 per cent, increase the price of virtually everything we buy, and inflict real pain on Nova Scotians who must drive to get to work;

Therefore Mr. Speaker, be it resolved that all members of the Legislative Assembly join with Nova Scotians who are struggling enough with high prices and speak with one clear, united voice, to ask the federal government not to introduce the punishing 14 cents per litre carbon tax at this time.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes.

The motion is tabled.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

WIFE, 13TH WEDDING ANNIV. - BEST WISHES

CARMAN KERR: I rise today to congratulate my wife on a happy 13th wedding anniversary and, to segue from the Premier's comments and his analogy on gardening last week, I thought I'd compare it to an English garden. It is both whimsical and wild. There

are pathways that converge but also go defiantly on their own. It offers strong, deep roots, is unfinished, beautiful, and full of colour.

I'm very proud to be your husband. I'm very impressed with all the businesses you've developed. The boys and I are very lucky to have you in our lives as we raise our family in Annapolis Valley.

Once again, thank you, and congratulations.

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

CLEAN FOUNDATION: 35TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Clean Foundation on their 35th anniversary. Clean Foundation is an independent non-governmental environmental charity that began in 1988.

Clean's work, from promoting electric vehicles to supporting youth and students through green internships to providing energy assessments and rebates to habitat restoration, and providing important education to all ages, makes them a one-stop shop for environmental work and expertise. Dartmouth is proud to host the Clean Foundation offices, where their amazing staff are busy doing what they do best - in their words, "supporting the fair transition to a cleaner economy and a greener society."

Please join me in thanking and congratulating the team on meeting this incredible milestone.

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

MAKKAR, RAJ: COM. SERV. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the contributions of a community leader and advocate, Bible Hill's Raj Makkar.

Raj serves his community in many capacities outside his full-time job with the Colchester East Hants Health Centre, with the added responsibility of being the Northern Zone COVID-19 response manager. Raj sits as the board chair for the United Way of Colchester and on the RECC's operating board. He also is one of the founding members of the Walk with a Doc program that promotes an active lifestyle, organizer of the Heartland Tour activities in Truro, and founder of the We Care About Cancer Fund. His commitment to volunteering was most recently recognized by the Rotary Club of Truro when they awarded him with their prestigious Community Service Award for 2022.

Raj's involvement in his community would not be possible without the support of his loving wife, Hema, and two sons, Sanjeev and Vijay.

I ask the members to rise and thank Raj for his commitment to volunteerism and dedication to the health and well-being of our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

SOUTHWELL, RUSTUM: BUS. HALL OF FAME LAUREATE - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate a constituent, Rustum Southwell, on being named one of the 2022 laureates for the Business Hall of Fame by Nova Scotia's Junior Achievement.

Rustum Southwell was a founding CEO of what he considers to be his life's work, the Black Business Initiative. It addresses the needs of African Nova Scotian entrepreneurs. I will say that it has actually now expanded its services into other of our sister provinces here in Atlantic Canada. It was created by the federal and provincial governments back in 1996 and is, in fact, the longest-running Black business development initiative in Canada.

I would like to congratulate Rustum on this well-deserved honour and wish him much more success in the future.

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

SPENCER HOUSE: COM. CUPBOARD - THANKS

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a new initiative of Spencer House. Since 1983, Spencer House has been providing connection and community for folks over 50 in Halifax. They are always responding in innovative ways to the evolving needs of their members.

In recent months, Spencer House started its first-ever community cupboard as one way to help the members meet basic needs in a time of inflation and the cost of living crisis. The cupboard is stocked with care and consideration, with items that seniors may need in particular. For instance, it includes canned soups with pull-tab lids so that people do not have to worry about a can opener. There is low-sugar Ensure and other dietary supplements, as well as personal sanitary supplies.

It's a tough time for seniors in Nova Scotia. I ask all members to share our gratitude to organizations like Spencer House who are always looking at the community and meeting seniors' needs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

VOLUNS.: PARRSBORO CAR SHOW - THANKS

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the volunteers and community on a successful 22nd Annual Show & Shine car show in Parrsboro this past weekend. The event took place over two days, and hundreds of people and cars lined Main Street while it was closed down on Saturday evening. While the vehicles were on display, there was a band playing in the background and canteen treats available.

This was a huge success for the Fundy Shore Auto Club and the community. I want to give special recognition to the volunteers and businesses that have made this a success, but all of those volunteers and workers would echo my comments when they thank Jordan Erb, who organized this last year as a main street event and took it on head steam this year.

I want to thank and congratulate all the volunteers and dedicated hard workers and look to see everyone at the car show next year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HOUSE LEADERS: EFFORTS DURING SITTING - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I do this after every session. This was a short one, but I always like to stand and recognize the House Leaders of both the third party and the government, and all the conversations we have to have to navigate all of the wonderful debate here day in and day out.

As always, I've had the honour of serving as House Leader for the last year with both the Government House Leader - now we have a new House Leader with the NDP, and I wish her all the best trying to deal with me as well.

It's an honour to do what we do, and there are a lot of conversations behind the scenes, so I always like to recognize the work that we do to try to get through this.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BROTHER, JOSEPH GANGOO - BIRTHDAY WISHES

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to wish a special person in my life a happy birthday: Joseph Gangoo. He is a union delegate, an educator, a political candidate, a basketball coach, a great dad, and husband, and most of all, he's my big brother.

Joseph Gangoo is a Red Seal certified carpenter, the first in the Gangoo family, and has been the Moncton union delegate for the Atlantic Canada Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights since 2018. He was appointed to the board of the Carpenter Millwright College in Fredericton.

He volunteers his time wherever his kids are focused on, be it basketball, hockey, football, or even anything. He is an amazing dad and support for my nephews Shea, Harlem, and Wesley. I could talk all day about how proud I am to have such an amazing brother who inspires me daily, motivates me to be my true self always, and I am truly grateful for the bond that we share as siblings. I love you.

I would like all the members join me in wishing my big brother Joseph Gangoo a happy birthday, and here's wishing you many more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

PETTEN, BONNIE: DEALING WITH ALS - BEST WISHES

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I stand in honour of a very strong woman, one of the strongest women that I've come to know in the last year. Her name is Bonnie Petten.

I visited her over the weekend. She's currently in hospital having respite care. Just last year, Bonnie was diagnosed with ALS, otherwise known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. Bonnie is sharp as a whip, her spirit is strong as iron, and she's lost almost all of her muscle control and function. She can still move her hands a little bit, and she communicated to me on her phone.

I just want to say to Bonnie how proud I am of you, Bonnie, and she's taught me a lot and will continue to teach many of us. I also want to say thank you to her caregivers, to the doctors and nurses, and just sending a message of love to Bonnie.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

BERWICK UNITED CHURCH CAMP: 150TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: Today I'd like to speak about another treasured landmark in Kings West. This week marks 150 years of operation for the Berwick United Church Camp. The camp originally consisted of tents with visitors arriving via train cars in the 19th century.

Today people still come from all over the Maritimes. There are over 100 cabins, a dining hall, dormitories, and more. Ten days of the year, the camp holds a camp meeting where families come together and the grounds are open to the public. During the meeting there is a daily bible school and church service, along with musical concerts throughout the week. Aside from those 10 days, the camp is available for rent to other community groups and families. The economic impact is felt throughout the Town of Berwick as campers support the local businesses while attending.

Additionally, at Halloween one of the buildings is transformed into a haunted house for the public. Mr. Speaker, please join me in recognizing all those who have helped maintain this incredible space and in wishing the camp another 150 years of success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS: ACTION NEEDED - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: As we approach the end of this short emergency session on MLA salaries, I'd like to take a moment to point out a real emergency in Nova Scotia: access to mental health and addiction services. In particular, what my friends Sherry and Bobby are going through.

They go to bed every night, worried and anxious for a family member. We've reached out to Department of Health and Wellness on their behalf and have received no hope, no help, and no path. Sherry and Bobby deserve better, their family deserves better, and this is an all-too-common occurrence of no service and no response.

I will continue to fight for Sherry and Bobby and all Nova Scotians to have safe and timely access to mental health and addiction services.

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

FÊTE DE L'ACADIE: CONV. NAT. ACAD. - RECON.

LISA LACHANCE: Monsieur le Président, je me lève aujourd'hui pour reconnaître la Fête de l'Acadie.

On souligne la Fête de l'Acadie le 15 août depuis 1881. Dans ma circonscription de Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, il y a plusieurs activités planifiées pour souligner cette journée importante.

Par exemple, joignez-vous à la célébration chez Grand Parade Square le 12 août. Le Conseil Communautaire du Grand-Havre (CCGH), la Festival Quinzou et la Municipalité de Halifax ont travaillé ensemble pour planifier un évènement extraordinaire. Lors de cet évènement, nous allons lever le drapeau Acadian et écouter de la musique de Ashley MacIsaac, Maxim Cormier, Gervais Cormier, Serena Wu, Ça Chante Encore, Weldon et Josée Boudreau, et Jacques Surette.

Je félicite la communauté Acadien lors de la journée de la Fete de l'Acadie.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the National Acadian Day on the 15th of August. We've celebrated it on August 15th since 1881. This year in Halifax Citadel-Sable Island there are many activities planned. For example, you can come join us on August 12th

at the Grand Parade Square, where Le Conseil Communautaire du Grand-Havre (CCGH), the Festival Quinzou, and Halifax Municipality have worked together to develop an amazing lineup of entertainment and speakers, including raising the Acadian flag.

[3:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

MEMORIES CAFÉ & EATERY: 10TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: When Memories Cafe & Eatery opened its doors in May 2012, founders Shirley and Linda Smith were committed to creating a welcoming environment where customers could enjoy fresh, homemade meals, drinks, and treats while relaxing, chatting, and sharing laughter and stories. On May 17th I was pleased to stop and congratulate the owners, management, and staff on their 10th anniversary.

Throughout the decade, this gem has become a favourite gathering place for locals and visitors and a talented and friendly staff always leave patrons wanting to return for the amazing service and great selection of delicious dishes, sweets, coffee, and more.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to please join me in congratulating the incredible folks who make Memories such a special place to visit, and in wishing them continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

TOMLIK, REBECCA: CAMPAIGN WORK - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take a moment to share a small appreciation for a young person in the building today. Her name is Rebecca Tomlik and she is one of the Pages this session.

I wanted to let people know that she just wrapped up her last semester in political science and French at Dalhousie University, and not only that, she did this while being part of my office as a placement and then continued to champion and do the work during the leadership. She is a mighty force to be reckoned with, she did incredible work, and not only that, she did things without hesitation. No task was too big for her and it really was a great opportunity for me to be able to work with her.

So to you, Becca: If this energy and work ethic is something that you have in volunteering, I can only imagine what your future will hold. So the sky's the limit for you and one thing I would say that I value most about you is that you were never scared to share your ideas with us and I value your ability to be able to speak with your heart and what is really meaningful to you.

I just want to ask the House to say congratulations to Rebecca and it is great for me to see you here.

THE SPEAKER: Indeed, congratulations - and you might as well get a copy of it and frame it too.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

SENOBE PADDLERS: PADDLEALL RACES PARTIC. - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Sam Starr, Leighanne Porter Salvaterra, and Victoria Scattolon. These three Senobe Aquatic Club paddlers will be participating in the PaddleALL exhibition races during the 2022 ICF Canoe Sprint and Paracanoe World Championships in Dartmouth this week.

The PaddleALL exhibition races are specifically designed for athletes with intellectual disabilities and this will be the first time PaddleALL will take place at the World Championships. The best domestic and international paddlers will be out on the waters of Lake Banook, so be sure you catch their race on Thursday at 12:20 p.m.

I ask that all members of this House join me in wishing Sam, Leighanne, and Victoria the very best of luck.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

TUTTLE, HANNAH: CATTLE FARMING - RECOG.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Hannah Tuttle. Hannah is a 22-year-old herdsman who owns 10 beef cows. During the summer she will keep her cattle at the new Cape John Community Pasture.

This new pasture is one of eight community pastures in Nova Scotia that are leased to co-operatives that fund their operations by charging user fees. The community pastures allow farmers to keep larger herds because their own fields can be used for hay production to feed animals during the Winter.

Hannah would like to continue a career and a lifestyle as a cattle farmer. In addition to cattle farming, she plans to begin a licensed practical nursing course in the Fall.

I ask the members to join me in wishing Hannah well as she grows her cattle business, a traditionally male-dominated industry, and as she begins her LPN course. She is truly a remarkable young woman.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

HOTEL & INN STAFF: COM. SERV. - THANKS

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to thank the staff of the hotels and inns across the province. I'd especially like to mention the Best Western Plus Chocolate Lake Hotel and the Seasons Inn Halifax, operating in and around the Halifax Armdale riding and providing an essential service to our community and those visiting around Halifax.

It takes a lot to operate a hotel. It takes many different people with many different skills working many different jobs, yet all function as a team to accomplish one shared goal.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

M. JEAN FOUND.: NAT. BLACK CDNS. SUMMIT - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rose on Friday to talk about the National Black Canadian Summit powered by the Michaëlle Jean Foundation. It was a major mobilization event, bringing together Black Canadians from all ages, sectors, and walks of life to share their experiences, raise awareness, and spark an inclusive national dialogue.

This event took place in Halifax, and as legislators it was an opportunity to show up and be present. I would have liked to have seen some of the members from the government side attend to listen and learn about the injustices, inequalities, and racism that occur daily to all Black Canadians first-hand. I would like to congratulate the foundation on such an awesome event. It was one of the largest gatherings of its kind for Black Canadians, and I was grateful to be a part of it.

During the Summit, many witnessed the Halifax Declaration, a powerful statement of Canada's commitments and actions to eliminate systemic racial discrimination, and I would like to encourage all members to go online and to view it for yourselves.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

BOUGIE, CÉLINE: 25TH ANNIV. WITH CSAP - RECOG.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Monsieur le Président, je me lève aujourd'hui pour reconnaître Céline Bougie, une aide-enseignante à l'école Bois-Joli qui célèbre 25 ans avec le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

En 1999, Céline a créé un programme de danse après l'école où elle a enseigné aux jeunes étudiants multiples styles de danse au cours des 20 dernières années. En plus du succès de son programme parascolaire, Céline a également participé à de nombreux projets,

dont la création de costumes de danse, la création de la mascotte de Bois-Joli, l'ensemble vocal les Voix d'Acadie et son implication au Congrès mondial acadien 2004.

Sur une note personnelle, mes filles ont également participé au programme parascolaire de danse avec M^{me} Bougie, et je connais de première main la patience, la compréhension et l'amour qu'elle partage avec ses élèves.

Monsieur le Président, je demande à tous les députés de la Chambre de se joindre à moi pour célébrer le 25^e anniversaire de Céline avec le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Céline Bougie, a teaching assistant at École Bois-Joli in Dartmouth East who is celebrating her 25th anniversary with the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial.

In 1999, Céline founded an after-school dance program where she has taught young students a variety of dance styles over the past 20 years. In addition to her successful after-school program, Celine has participated in many projects, including the designing of dance costumes, the creation of the Bois-Joli mascot, the Voix d'Acadie vocal ensemble and her involvement in the 2004 Congrès Mondial Acadien.

On a personal note, my daughters also took part in Céline's after-school dance program, so I know first-hand the patience, understanding, and love she shares with her students.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the House join me in celebrating Céline's 25th anniversary with the CSAP.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

HRM URBAN FORESTRY: BEETLE MGMT. - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize HRM Urban Forestry for managing the ongoing infestation of the emerald ash borer beetle.

The emerald ash borer is a beetle that feeds on ash trees and is native to northeastern Asia. Once a tree is infested with the beetle, the tree declines quickly, typically dying within three years. Traps have been installed on affected ash trees in both Bedford South and Bedford Basin in an effort to fight against infestation, including the replacement of about 80 ash trees in and around DeWolf Park.

I'd like to again thank HRM urban forestry for their work in dealing with this important issue and protecting our environment from invasive species.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

PARAMEDICS: STRESSFUL CONDS. - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I want to take this last opportunity that I have in a member's statement to say an emphatic thank you to every paramedic in Cumberland North and throughout all of Nova Scotia. I don't think most Nova Scotians realize the stress they are under. Many of them have not had any summer vacation at all. Some of them are on Day 28 of working straight in a row with no break. They are often leaving their own communities unserved, with no emergency ambulance service, and that alone is causing many of them great duress.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I stand to honour our paramedics to say thank you and to please do not give up hope. We will continue to work on your behalf.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

O'TOOLE, EVAN: BASEBALL ACCOMPLISHMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Evan O'Toole, an accomplished baseball pitcher from Bridgewater. In 2021 Evan was named the Iowa Community College Athletic Conference Player of the Year. He also received the honour of being named as a 2021 National Junior College Athletic Association second team Division 1 baseball All-American.

Evan is committed to play with Oklahoma State University in the Fall and will work towards a Bachelor of Exercise Science on an academic and athletic scholarship. He is eligible for the 2022 Major League Baseball draft.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to congratulate Evan on his accomplishments and ask all members to join me in offering our congratulations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

MCNEIL, KEVIN: COM. SERV. - THANKS

FRED TILLEY: Today I would like to recognize a very hard-working and fine young gentleman from the Northside area who exemplifies hard work in our community, Kevin MacNeil. Kevin, or Kevvie, as he is affectionately known by most residents of the Northside, works at Walmart in North Sydney, and he is always quick with a smile and a quick "How has your day been?"

After his job at Walmart, you can find Kevvie at the Sydney Mines Community Centre, where he puts in countless hours. Without Kevvie, the community centre wouldn't operate as well as it does.

Today I would like to recognize him for his hard work in the community. If you see Kevvie out and about on his bike or walking from job to job, say hi, and thank him for his hard work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

WOOD, ASHLEY & TONY: BUSINESS OPENING - CONGRATS.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my friends and entrepreneurs Ashley and Tony Wood of Windsor on the opening of their new, larger location, the Spoke & Note in Falmouth. Ashley and Tony opened the original store in March 2018 and, as the name hints, it is all things musical and bicycle.

Their mission is sharing their love of music and bikes with the community. They also offer group rides and music lessons and are always finding ways to bring people together and help with an event.

When COVID-19 hit, they immediately looked for ways to continue to run their business by creating an online website offering contactless pickup and delivery. Despite the challenges of being a new business during very difficult times, they persevered and are going strong to this day.

When not at the shop, you will find them out having adventures with their two beautiful girls, Alexa and Willow.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the Legislature join me in congratulating Ashley and Tony on their thriving business and wish them many more years of success and growth.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

CHALLA, JYOTSNA: ARCHERY SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my constituent Jyotsna Challa for her outstanding service to the community through sports. Jyotsna has been involved in archery since 2017 at her junior high school. From there she attended the Osprey Archery Club with hopes of competing on the national level.

Her dreams came true after she placed third in the Canadian Field Championships and represented Nova Scotia at the 2022 Youth and Masters Pan American Championship.

This competition, which included 150 players from 12 countries, took place in my riding Clayton Park West. Jyotsna is a force to be reckoned with. She has placed first twice at the Nova Scotia Provincials.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House join me in congratulating Jyotsna on her amazing success at archery and thank her for her commitment to this sport. Thank you, Jyotsna.

[3:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

SCOTIAN SHORES: CLEANUP OF SHORELINES - THANKS

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize an incredible organization that has been cleaning the shores of Nova Scotia, Scotian Shores. They clean our shorelines and create awareness of plastic pollution. Since they started their journey in Summer 2020, they have already removed an unbelievable 200,000 pounds of debris.

Scotian Shores has steadily been growing and now host multiple cleanups, even on the same day in different parts of the province. I know that they are often in the southwest region of the province and in my constituency. In the month of July, they hosted two cleanups in both Gilberts Cove and Sandy Cove.

Team leaders Angela, Peggy, and Kristen work behind the scenes on logistics, administration, planning, permitting, data collection, and much more.

I ask that all the members of this House join me in thanking Scotian Shores for all the fantastic work that they have done for our shorelines. I look forward to working with Peggy, Angela, and Kristen in the future and volunteering at many more clean-ups.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

P'TIT BELLIVEAU: 2ND ALBUM RELEASE - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, Jonah Guimond, better known as P'tit Belliveau, recently released his sophomore album, entitled *Un homme et son piano*. P'tit Belliveau grew up in Clare, which inspired his lyrics with frequent mentions of lakes, nature, and fishing. Often funny, sometimes ironic, he has developed a unique musical style, a sound influenced by country, bluegrass, folk, and other genres.

He was first recognized on the national stage when he reached the finals of Francouvertes in 2019. P'tit Belliveau released his first album, *Greatest Hits, Vol. 1*, in Spring 2020. Though he could not tour to support this album, it was well-received, with

P'tit Belliveau nominated for SOCAN's Prix de la chanson, the award for best emerging singer/songwriter.

I ask members to join me in congratulating P'tit Belliveau on the release of his second album and in wishing him a successful tour. Félicitations et continue le bon travail.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

MACLELLAN, CHARLENE: COM. SERV. RECOG.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Charlene MacLellan of Kingsport as she retires from the board of directors of the Kingsport Community Association, where she has served for almost 20 years. Charlene has held positions from member at large to president. She has contributed many ideas for improvements and conducted her leadership roles in a responsible and professional manner.

The Kingsport Community Association celebrated its official opening of the new accessible waterfront in 2018 under the leadership of then-president Charlene MacLellan. The new waterfront brought increased accessibility for people facing mobility challenges and increased tourism to the popular beach.

Please join me today in recognizing Charlene MacLellan for her dedication and service to the Kingsport Community Association.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

TRAVEL MEDIA ASSOC. OF CAN.: CONF. IN YAR. - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, in June, Yarmouth was the host for the Travel Media Association of Canada's conference. Over 200 delegates from across the country came and explored everything our region has to offer. It was the first time many of the travel media had ever been to this part of the province, referring to our region as "a treasure in this international port of call for Nova Scotia and our country." That's a direct quote.

The delegates visited the Tusket Islands, Cape Forchu, and all of our museums, and they of course enjoyed our famous seafood and hospitality. Yarmouth and Acadian Shores Tourism Association Executive Director Neil MacKenzie says that the immediate impacts are already being felt. Over the next few months, articles will come out about Yarmouth and Acadian Shores, and the impacts should continue to be felt for the next two or three years.

I'd like to thank the Travel Media Association of Canada for selecting Yarmouth as the host location for its conference. Also, a huge thank you to Yarmouth and Acadian

Shores Tourism Association for its hard work in preparing for this important event and showcasing our area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

KIDNEY, RILEY: TEAM CANADA - CONGRATS.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Congratulations to Riley Kidney, our Nova Scotian named to Team Canada for the World Junior Hockey Championships this month in Edmonton. Riley's mom is Angela Kidney, Executive Director of Labour Relations. I do believe Riley has inherited his mom's ability to see all the angles and options she sees dealing with complex labour matters. He is a gifted playmaker. He sees things before they happen and is already making the next play in his mind before it transpires on the ice.

Riley was drafted 63rd overall in 2021 by the Montreal Canadiens, and he now joins the top 25 players in Canada for international competition.

Nova Scotians will be cheering, but especially in Riley's hometown of Enfield as Canada opens its first game against Latvia. It will be extra special because Riley's roommate, Harijs Brauts, who plays with him with the Acadie Bathurst team in the QMJHL, will be playing with Team Latvia.

Let us wish them both well in the tournament and in their promising future hockey careers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HICKS, HANNAH: ART CONTEST WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would just like to say congratulations to a Bedford artist on winning an art contest. Hannah Hicks's painting, Lava Dance, won the art contest for the Canadian Association for Supported Employment. The conference was held in Winnipeg in June, and so Hannah was the artist-in-residence for that entire conference.

I just want to say congratulations to Hannah. She's a very talented young artist. Some of the members would have seen some of her artwork on some of my cards. I'm delighted for her.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

CMTE. MBRS.: PATRIOT DAYS FESTIVAL - RECOG.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Sackville Patriot Days Committee. Members of this committee include elected representatives - I

would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge Councillor Paul Russell - service organizations, club members, and dedicated volunteers, all of whom are responsible for the organization and production of the Patriot Days Festival, which is held in Sackville from June 27th to July 1st.

The work of the committee members has made it possible for the festival to host activities such as fireworks, a free concert at Kinsmen Park, and a Canada Day parade along Sackville Drive.

I would like to express my gratitude towards the volunteers of the Patriot Days Committee and their contributions to helping make this festival a reality in Sackville.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

SKAFTE, STEVE: HIST. PRESERV. - THANKS

CARMAN KERR: How marriage is like an English garden, Part 2. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to highlight the important work that Steve Skafte is helping to preserve - the history of communities in Annapolis County.

Steve is an accomplished writer, photographer, and poet, but today I would like to highlight his efforts to locate and restore old, abandoned cemeteries. He has plotted around 40 cemeteries in Annapolis County alone, with most headstones dating back to the 1800s. He documents his work on his Facebook group Abandoned Cemeteries of Nova Scotia, where he encourages others to post their own discoveries of forgotten cemeteries.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Steve Skafte for his commitment to preserving the rich history of Annapolis County.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

LINK, LOUANN: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS EFFORTS - THANKS

NOLAN YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Louann Link, organizer of the Let Your Light Shine Jevon Link Society, founded in the memory of Jevon Link.

Although family support was always there, Louann and her husband David recently lost their son Jevon, aged 27, who passed away after suffering from a period of mental illness. Louann has since dedicated herself to raising awareness around the importance of mental health services and to raising funds to support these resources at the community level.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Louann for her efforts towards ensuring that other families will not have to suffer as they have.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

LOCAL ARCHITECTS: AWD. RECIPS. - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to recognize that there are local architects in Sydney, Spyro Trifos Design, who were awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Award for Excellence in Architecture for the Eltuek Centre in Sydney, which is the former Holy Angels School.

Since the redesign, it is now home to 20 spaces for local artists. Celtic Colours is located there. The Coast, the local radio station, is there. The arts program for the Nova Scotia Community College is located there as well as a number of private businesses. The redevelopment of the Holy Angels site is an amazing story, taking the building, which has a long history, and repurposing it for so many important organizations within the greater Sydney area. It also has been such an amazing enhancement to the north end of Sydney and downtown Sydney in general.

I rise in my place to recognize Trifos Design, Spyro, the entire team, for their excellent work, not only on the repurposing of the Holy Angels site - now the Eltuek Centre, which has been named by the Mi'kmaq elders' committee across the island - but for the work that they do in the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

MUSIC 4 MENTAL HEALTH CMTE.: FUNDRAISER - CONGRATS.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to recognize the constituency of Eastern Passage's Music 4 Mental Health fundraising committee, who on June 4, 2022 hosted our community's first fundraiser.

Through the two and a half years of hard work, the committee, the volunteer music groups, the tattoo artists, Tricia-lishous Food Truck, and our sponsors, the Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Firefighters Association, Parkland Retirement Living - At the Lakes, Valero, Buffalo Club, the Beacon, the Eastern Passage & Area Business Association, Passage Pizza, Down East Tours, Dartmouth Plumbing, the Eastern Passage PC Association, and the entire community raised \$14,800 for mental health programs in our community.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking and congratulating the committee, as well as all of the participants in a wonderful event. We look forward to next year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

FRONTLINE HEALTH CARE WORKERS: NEED FOR HELP - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'd like to take a moment to recognize all of our frontline health care workers as they navigate this critical time in Nova Scotia's history. We're at a time when our health care workers are exhausted, and told they can't have vacation. Some are actually holding a strike vote on August 15.

The last few days, I've had to deal with health care due to my daughter getting injured and my father stuck in his bed with a back injury. The words I've heard from health care workers are "disgusted," "exhausted," "ready to quit," "falling on deaf ears," and "afraid to speak up."

This government ran on a promise to immediately fix health care. A year later, it has only gotten worse, and world-class Nova Scotians have been fired. Those who remain are not being listened to.

We need to put our party politics aside and listen to Nova Scotians and our frontline health care workers before our system completely collapses.

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

COLE, HANNAH: MOTOCROSS RACES PARTIC. - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: Nova Scotia resident Hannah Cole attended the Southeast YOUTH Regional Championship in Jacksonville, Florida, WW Ranch Motocross Park. Hannah was trying to qualify in the girls' class to attend the world's largest amateur motocross race called Monster Energy AMA Amateur National Motocross Championship, which is located at Loretta Lynn's family ranch in Hurricane Mills, Tennessee, from August 1st to the 6th.

Hannah got fifth overall and her ticket to the ranch. Only the top six get a ticket. Hannah is the only female in Atlantic Canada to ever make it. Hannah and her family left on July 29th for Tennessee, and you can watch the races at racertv.com. Her races are as follows: Wednesday, August 3rd at 2:30 p.m.; Friday, August 5th at 10:00 a.m.; and Saturday, August 6th at 5 p.m.

I'm sure we all join in congratulating Hannah and wish her all the best in the race.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

UPSHAW, TIA: BLK WOMEN OF EXCEL. - CONGRATS.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Today I want to acknowledge Tia Upshaw and the work that she's doing with her non-profit organization, Blk Women in Excellence. I want to congratulate her and the work that she's doing daily to promote Black women entrepreneurs within Canada.

Tia is a strong, full-of-energy, vibrant, creative woman - Black woman in particular - addressing and breaking barriers impacting Black women in business. Blk Women in Excellence's mission statement is to intentionally create space for Black women in business and to break the glass ceiling along the way.

As Tia remarks - and I'm going to say, Tia, I apologize if I quote you wrong - today is a great day to be a Black woman. I'll go further to say every day is a great day to be a Black woman.

I want to thank you for continuing to inspire us all to do things people tell us we can't do. Thank you, and I ask the House to congratulate Tia Upshaw and Blk Women in Excellence.

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

FOUR SISTERS: SHOREHAM VILLAGE SERV. - RECOG.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I rise today to bring recognition to four sisters from the community of Chester who have spent their careers in service at Shoreham Village.

Three of them - Barb, Marie, and Patricia - graduated together in 1976 in the first ever PCW certified course in the province. Later they were joined at Shoreham by their sister Eileen. These women share a commitment to the community and a desire to provide respect and dignity to our seniors.

The last two years have been especially hard on CCAs in Nova Scotia, but their spirit and commitment to our elderly has never wavered.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing the contributions of these four sisters to the care and the well-being of our seniors for over 40 years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

[3:45 p.m.]

GOODFARE CAFÉ: COM. SERV. - THANKS

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize Goodfare Halifax café. Goodfare stands out among the other chain coffee houses around the riding because it uses the coffee beans from only the freshest Atlantic roasters in the business.

They also have inclusivity on their mind. If you ever want a milk substitute or a wide variety of zero sugar or decaf options, then Goodfare is the place for you. Their baristas are truly craft people and put an artistic touch into everything they produce.

Thank you, Goodfare, for serving our community. I'll ask the members of this House to support small businesses, especially those that are authentic, local businesses.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

NATIONAL ACADIAN DAY: CELEB. OF ACAD. HER. - RECOG.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Monsieur le Président, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour reconnaître la Fête nationale de l'Acadie. Célébrée chaque année le 15 août depuis 1881, cette journée reconnaît le patrimoine riche et unique des Acadiens.

Cette année, le concert national d'ICI Télé sera diffusé en direct dans ma circonscription à partir du quai de Dennis Point le 15 août.

Comme le Congrès mondial acadien 2024 aura lieu dans deux ans dans le sud-ouest de la Nouvelle-Écosse, ce concert, La fête en Acadie « Havre au tchai », est un événement de lancement approprié qui mettra en vedette un mélange impressionnant d'artistes représentant le long héritage et le brillant avenir de la musique acadienne contemporaine.

Je souhaite la bienvenue à tous les membres de l'Assemblée et à tous les Néo-Écossais dans la belle ville de Pubnico-Ouest le 15 août, où l'on peut être certain de passer un bon moment. Vive l'Acadie.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly recognize National Acadian Day. Celebrated annually on August 15th since 1881, the day recognizes the Acadians' rich and unique heritage. This year ICI Télé's national concert will be broadcast live in my constituency from the Dennis Point wharf on August 15th. With the Congrès mondial acadien 2024 in southwest Nova Scotia in two years, this concert, La fête en Acadie "Havre au tchai" is a fitting kickoff event and will feature an impressive mix of artists representing the long legacy and bright future of contemporary Acadian music.

I welcome all members of the Legislature and all Nova Scotians to beautiful West Pubnico on August 15th, where it is certain to be a great time. Vive l'Acadie.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

CORMIER, ALEX: BOOK RELEASE - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: I rise to congratulate Cape Breton author Alex Cormier on the introduction of her fourth book. Yesterday she released her fourth book and it is about her grandfather, Cecil Boutilier, well-known resident of the Northside, strong community volunteer, and role model for many people in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask folks to check out her Facebook page, Alex Cormier - Cape Breton Author & Autism Mom, for information about her book launch, which will take place on August 18th.

I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating Alex Cormier on the introduction of her fourth book.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

MAILLET INSTITUT DE TAEKWONDO: 20TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Monsieur le Président, je me lève aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage à Maître Marc Maillet et au 20^e anniversaire du Maillet Institut de Taekwondo.

Commençant par l'enseignement du Taekwondo à l'école Bois-Joli après l'école en 2002, le programme a changé et évolué pour enseigner les jeunes et les adultes de notre communauté. Maître Maillet est un leader, un mentor, et un modèle pour nos jeunes de Dartmouth. Depuis 20 ans, son institut contribue à rendre nos jeunes forts physiquement et mentalement. Les principes du Taekwondo, tels que la maîtrise de soi et l'intégrité, sont des compétences de vie importante, et au cours des 20 dernières années, Maître Maillet a développé un programme pour encourager et soutenir ses élèves.

Je tiens à remercier Marc Maillet pour tout ce qu'il a fait, personnellement pour mes enfants et la jeunesse de Dartmouth. Un travail bien fait, Marc. Merci.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Master Marc Maillet and the 20th anniversary of the Maillet Institut de Taekwondo.

Back in 2002, Marc began teaching taekwondo at l'école Bois-Joli at the after-school program. The program evolved and expanded to teach youth and adults in the wider community.

Marc is a leader, mentor, and role model for our youth in Dartmouth. For 20 years, his institute has contributed to building our youth to be physically and mentally strong. The principles of taekwondo, such as self-control and integrity, are important life skills and over the past 20 years, Marc has developed a program to encourage and support his students.

I want to thank Marc Maillet for all that he has done and continues to do, personally for my children, and the youth of Dartmouth. A job well done, Marc.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

WISEMAN, ADAM - WISE GRP.: COM. SERV. - THANKS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to recognize Adam Wiseman, the founder of Wise Group Non-profit. Adam has started many different initiatives to help his community, including Project Stay Warm, a program to acquire winter wear for people who are experiencing homelessness.

In addition, he helps to run soup kitchens and hosts workshops with individuals on the autism spectrum. Recently, Adam has created a community soccer program at the BMO Centre to help encourage youth to be active at an affordable price.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the members of the House join me in recognizing and thanking Adam and the Wise Group Non-profit for their incredible community commitment and wish Adam continued success. Thank you, Adam.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HIMMELMAN, D./O'REGAN, T.: HOSP. FUNDRAISING - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize David Himmelman and Tim O'Regan, two local businessmen who are the co-chairs of the Health Services Foundation fundraising portion of the South Shore Regional Hospital Redevelopment Project.

They and their families have pledged an incredible \$1 million towards this project, which will see the South Shore Regional Hospital grow in size by nearly 30 per cent. This expansion will provide expanded services and improved facilities for both patients and health care professionals.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking David Himmelman, Tim O'Regan, and their families for their philanthropy and personal investments in our local health care system. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

TUFTS, ÉRIC: CAUBO AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Chaque année, l'Association canadienne du personnel administratif universitaire rend hommage à un chef administratif ou financier d'université qui a apporté une contribution importante à l'association et à la gestion de l'enseignement supérieur au cours de sa carrière. Cette année, l'Association a décerné son prix pour services distingués à Éric Tufts, de l'Université Sainte-Anne.

M. Tufts, en plus de superviser les opérations financières de l'Université Sainte-Anne, a géré un certain nombre d'initiatives importantes pour relever les défis de l'université et assurer sa croissance future. Il a également siégé au conseil d'administration de l'ACPAU pendant 10 ans, dont deux à titre de président. Toujours passionné de golf, M. Tufts est aussi actuellement président de notre club de golf local.

Je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour féliciter Éric Tufts d'avoir reçu ce prix et lui souhaiter bonne chance alors qu'il se prépare à prendre sa retraite.

Every year, the Canadian Association of University Business Officers honours a university chief administrative financial officer who has made a significant contribution to the association and the management of higher education during their career.

This year they have bestowed their Distinguished Service Award to Université Sainte-Anne's Éric Tufts. Mr. Tufts, in addition to overseeing Université Sainte-Anne's financial operations, has managed a number of important initiatives to address the university's challenges and ensure its future growth. He has also served on the board of directors of CAUBO for 10 years, two as its president. Always a golfing enthusiast, Mr. Tufts is also currently serving as president of our local golf course.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating Éric Tufts on receiving this award and wish him well as he prepares for his retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

HALYN, ALYRA: EAST COAST LOCAL LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Canning resident Alyra Halyn on her new business, East Coast Local Inc.

Alyra Halyn is a marine engineer who changed careers during the pandemic to become an entrepreneur in Nova Scotia. In 2021, she launched East Coast Local, a business that provides fixed-price, customizable, weekly food baskets delivered straight to doorsteps. East Coast Local is committed to highlighting quality products by connecting

residents with quality local food and fairly compensating producers. Clients receive free delivery of a fixed-price basket of their choice of veggies and other local pantry products in a convenient and modern style.

Please join me in congratulating Alyra Halyn on her commitment to local sustainability and her new business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

CARBON TAX STATEMENT: INACCURATE - RECOG.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I have with me a press release from the PC party caucus here, headlined “Liberals and NDP refused to oppose a carbon tax and stand up for Nova Scotians” in reference to a resolution that was introduced earlier this afternoon.

This release is not accurate, as the members of the government side should know. Our party voted in favour of the resolution. We in fact also created the system which the government is so intent on keeping. This is the second time this session that I have had to stand up and correct an obvious and simple falsehood from the government side. It is disappointing, and I hope it does not become a trend, although we are moving in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to get this on the record, and I’ll table this document.

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Documents cannot be tabled during Members’ Statements.

The honourable member for Shelburne.

PERRY, ANNE: COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS EFFORTS - THANKS

NOLAN YOUNG: I rise today to recognize Anne Perry and her effort to raise awareness of colorectal cancer, a very treatable disease if caught in time. Anne’s ultimate goal is reducing the number of deaths from this disease.

Sadly, Anne lost her husband Toby in 2019 at age 49. Since then, Anne has done several fundraisers including bringing the Push for Your Tush run to Shelburne. Shelburne is the only community in Canada, outside of four major cities, to hold this run.

Along with her children, Anne created Test for Toby on Facebook and Instagram, where people can become informed about symptoms, early testing, and regular check-ups.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Anne Perry for increasing awareness and changing the narrative regarding colorectal cancer.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

DART. GEN. HOSP. FOUND.: FUNDRAISER - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation for their hard work and dedication to making patient experiences better through fundraising events such as the 37th Annual Lobster Dinner and Auction held at Fisherman's Cove in Eastern Passage.

The event was a great success, being held outdoors on the shores of Eastern Passage. Harbour experience tickets were made available for guests to arrive on-site via the *Harbour Queen*. This year's event included holding a silent auction and a 50/50 draw to raise funds for an MRI machine, which will help reduce wait times for patients here in Eastern Passage and across the province.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to come to Eastern Passage this Summer and to join me in recognizing the Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation for their compassion for Nova Scotians and for their continued dedication to giving back. For this, we thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

ORGS. & VOLUNS.: WEDGEPORT TUNA TOURN. - RECOG.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the organizers, volunteers, and participants of the 18th Annual Wedgeport Tuna Tournament & Festival taking place this year from August 21st to 27th.

Since its revival in 2004, the Tuna Tournament has grown each year, attracting more participants and spectators. While the competition for the heaviest tuna takes place at sea, on land the festivities continue. Various events throughout the festival include the Tuna Fun Run, a wine and cheese, a scavenger hunt, the Tuna Pageant, a community yard sale, and of course, the very popular Tuna Tent.

I ask all members to join me in thanking the many volunteers and sponsors making this event possible and in wishing all participants a safe, successful, and happy tournament and festival.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

[4:00 p.m.]

HEALTH CARE WORKERS: HEROES - THANKS

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I very quickly just stand today, and I want to give recognition to health care workers at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre and the Halifax Infirmary and all the support staff, the paramedics, and LifeFlight.

Back in February and again in March, those individuals were heroes of my father. I'm very pleased to stand here today and say that my father is back to work. He's happy. His colour's back. He's smiling. But those heroes were my father's heroes for two consecutive months to allow me to have my hero for one more day.

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 honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - HEALTH CARE CRISIS: FAILED LEADERSHIP - ADMIT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Last week, Mr. Speaker, when answering questions about the state of our health care system, the Premier said that the previous leadership had ignored the reality of health care. I'll table that.

One year later, the grim reality is that health care is worse by every metric possible when you look at the system. The reality is that our ERs and hospitals are under extreme pressure. There are no beds for those needing care. I'll table that. The reality is that people are being turned away from ERs with Tylenol in hand and broken bones. I'll table that. The reality is that COVID hospitalizations have doubled due to this Premier's management of the pandemic. I'll table that. The reality is that the Need a Family Practice wait-list is out of control, and doctors are saying that the primary care system is broken. I'll table that.

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The reality is that every day under this Premier, health care is getting worse. Will the Premier acknowledge his failed leadership on health care?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, look, there's a lot of work to be done in health care. There's no question about that. The one simple reality when you

cut through it all is that Nova Scotians know if the former Health and Wellness Minister was still at the helm in health care, it would be a lot worse.

For eight years, this government looked the other way. We are not looking the other way. We had to get the garden ready. Nova Scotians know all about that. The soil was very hard from neglect. We tilled the soil. We planted a lot of seeds, and we're watering those seeds. Those seeds are growing, and Nova Scotians know it, and they are thankful that there's a government here that cares enough to get to work on health care.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I remember my time in health care when we had 60,000 people without a family doctor. At that time, the then-Leader of the Official Opposition said we had a crisis on our hands. Now that that number has almost doubled in 10 months under his leadership, he told the press the other day that the situation in health care was remarkable.

I think there is someone in this House who is turning a blind eye, and I believe it's the Premier. We know that the Premier doesn't want to talk about the realities of health care because the situation is deteriorating. The Premier promised 24/7 surgeries, but people are dying as the wait-list continues to grow. The Premier promised universal mental health care, but Nova Scotians are still paying out of pocket in the midst of a cost of living crisis. I'll table that. The Premier promised virtual care as a stopgap solution for primary care, but only one in five on the wait-lists now have access to it.

This Premier is really good at delivering announcements and delivering attacks on the Opposition, but when will we actually start seeing positive changes in our health care system instead of deterioration and system collapse?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't so laughable it would be funny. The former Health and Wellness Minister has a lot of answers now, but where were those answers for eight years when things were getting worse and worse and worse? Since we've taken government, we've been extremely focused on health care and expanded virtual care. There's pretty much not a day that goes by that somebody doesn't reach out and tell me how good virtual care has been for them - multiple times just this weekend.

What we've done - if you think about what's happening in the eight year . . . (Interruption) You're more than welcome to address it now, if you want. I'll cede my time.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Halifax Atlantic, there was a word that I caught a little while ago. I'm going to have to ask you to leave the House because it was unparliamentary language.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What did I say that was unparliamentary?

THE SPEAKER: The word was "liar" - "you're lying." (Interruption)

We'll get a ruling on that, and we'll let you know.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that since we've formed government, the work under the Health and Wellness Minister and the health leadership team has been remarkable. Paramedics know that. Since we've been here, the new temporary licence so graduating paramedics can get to work. The former Health and Wellness Minister turned a blind eye to that. We've added new vehicles to double patient transfers. The former Health and Wellness Minister couldn't do that, decided not to. Hired 180 transport operators for routine - these are all good things.

We are planting a lot of seeds, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to plant more.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier's lack of ability to take responsibility for the state of our health care system after 10 months of government is a bit astounding and should be concerning to Nova Scotians.

Does the Premier not think that firing experts and replacing them with partisans might have had an impact on health care management over the last 10 months? Does the Premier not think that running a "Get Back Out There" marketing campaign, in the most-deadly transmissible wave of COVID-19 which saw 800 staff out on sick leave, had an impact on the health system and delivery?

Does the Premier not think that at a time when we're asking people to self-manage during COVID-19, that removing critical information from them on hospitalizations and on the epidemiology of the virus has had a negative impact on the health care system?

I'm sorry, the Premier can keep his eyes on the rear view as long as he wants but the fact is that he is the Premier now. He has taken a challenging situation and made it worse. When will he take responsibility for it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I took responsibility the day after the election, way before we were sworn in. Do you know why? Because that government walked away. The day after the election they walked away, and we took control.

We are looking firmly ahead, Mr. Speaker. More information on COVID-19. Go to the Action for Health Care site - more transparency, more information than ever.

I'll tell you what: I have incredible confidence in the team at Public Health. I have incredible confidence in the health leadership team. If the members opposite don't trust the Public Health team and think they can do a bit better, I think Nova Scotians have seen what the members opposite are all capable of doing when they are in government.

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

PREM. - FAMILY PHARMACARE: LOWER EXPENSES - COMMIT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: My question is for the Premier. Since this government was elected, the price of almost everything has been climbing, but family budgets have not. Under the Family Pharmacare Program, a family making \$30,000 a year with one dependent could still have to pay over \$1,000 out of pocket before they would see any savings from the program.

I am sure the Premier can see that this math simply doesn't add up. For so many people who need access to live-saving drugs, they have a choice of whether to pay for food or to pay for medicine. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier lower Family Pharmacare expenses so that families can afford their medications?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the important question. The cost of living is up for sure, record inflation across the country, across the province, and certainly across the world. We are very conscious of the fact of the impact that this is having on Nova Scotians.

In terms of the specific question about access to drugs, I'll remind the members that we fully committed to increase the presumptive coverage for volunteer firefighters. We made cystic fibrosis drugs more widely available. We will continue to work on access to drugs.

In terms of the very specific question about Family Pharmacare, I'm happy to take that away and see what's possible in that program as well to expand coverage.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Regardless of what's available, the co-pays still come out of people's pockets. Older people are particularly vulnerable to the rising cost of living. The average senior in Canada is prescribed seven different drugs. The Seniors Care Grant doesn't cover medication costs.

Under the Seniors' Pharmacare Program, a single person with an income of \$35,000 a year would pay a premium of \$424 and would have to pay a co-payment of 30 per cent of each prescription, up to \$382. In other words, a senior would pay over \$800 before they saw any savings to the program - \$800 that many don't have. Nova Scotians are good at scrimping and saving, but medication can't be scrimped.

Will the Premier take real action to help ensure that seniors don't skip vital medications because they can't afford them, and lower co-payments and charges for Seniors' Pharmacare?

THE PREMIER: Of course, we understand the pressure that the cost of living situation has on all Nova Scotians, particularly seniors as well.

Just a point of clarification: the Seniors' Care Grant does apply for medications. That is a valid use for that. As the member would know, we are continuing to look at how to improve that Seniors' Care Grant situation. Just last week we made some improvements to that program, and we'll continue to do that.

The member raises a serious question, and we'll take it very seriously as well.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We've learned in the past week that the Premier won't provide paid sick days, won't implement an immediate \$15 an hour minimum wage, won't raise income assistance rates, and won't offer direct support to people.

The NDP has spent the last week proposing a series of things that the government could do - that list among them - and here is another one. I want to ask the Premier one more time: Will he lower Seniors Pharmacare and Family Pharmacare payments so that families struggling to pay the cost of groceries, rent, and medication can have a shot at affording one of them?

THE PREMIER: We'll certainly take that away and look at it and see what's possible, but what Nova Scotians also know is that the NDP for a week has been very busy in this Chamber taking personal attacks at those who step up to support Nova Scotians. We know that the NDP had a lot to say on a number of issues in this Chamber. Nova Scotians noted that very well.

What I would say to the member is now that they've gotten around to asking serious questions that impact Nova Scotians every single day, we'll certainly take that away. We understand the pressure on Nova Scotians across the province. We'll do anything we can to help them, including looking at what the member has suggested.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DHW: IMPROVING HEALTH CARE ACCESS - PLAN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier accused the Liberals of walking away from governing after we lost the election. I think I speak on behalf of everybody in the Chamber when I say, wouldn't it have been a little awkward had we not walked away from governing after losing? What is more concerning is the Premier walking back from his own responsibility to improve the health care system that he promised to do on behalf of Nova Scotians.

The reality of our health care system is that it's getting worse. The reality of our health care system was on display this weekend with the Nova Scotia Health Authority

issuing a notice to Nova Scotians which I'll table: "All four Nova Scotia Health zones continue to face significant patient capacity and staffing challenges entering the long weekend. This is affecting our ability to provide timely care."

My question is to the Premier - and if he can get beyond blaming, I'd love to get an answer on this. What is his plan specifically to improve timely access to primary care in this province?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly access to primary care is one of the biggest priorities that we have. First of all, we need to stabilize our workforce, which is why we've increased seats by 200 nursing students in the past several weeks. We are working with communities, looking at clinical services plans to understand what the needs of communities are, going out and talking to folks about how we can best input health care in their region. We've opened different pilots. Virtual care is certainly accessible to a number of people. We have a nurse practitioner and pharmacist model that is being piloted and is easily scalable.

We also have to think about those folks who also need access, so looking at different types of clinic formats in order to ensure that Nova Scotians have timely access to health care.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I think at least we have one person who takes their responsibility seriously in here to work on health care, and it is refreshing to get some answers. I will say that those are not new announcements, though. For a government that says this government did nothing and neglected the health care system, they sure do like regurgitating all the announcements that we made while I was Minister of Health and Wellness.

The situation isn't getting better, and I think we have to be clear about that. Nova Scotians were told this weekend that the timely access was not just limited to the emergency rooms, but also to ambulance care. I'll table this. An article said, "timely transfer of care at facilities across Nova Scotia by EHS crews may not always be possible, leading to significant ambulance offload delays in some cases."

My question to the minister: What is the minister's plan to address the timely response time of our ambulance system?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: What I will say is that certainly over my years in nursing, this is not a new issue on a long weekend, certainly not throughout the year. When we see that, we know there are surges, and people's physicians' offices are closed for an extended period of time.

What has changed is that we're communicating clearly with Nova Scotians about what the expectation is and asking them to seek health care in their communities in different

ways, such as working with their pharmacists and other people who have their scopes expanded.

[4:15 p.m.]

We continue to recruit. We know that there is a significant gap. We have had a record number of recruitment in this province. In the past year we've recruited over 160 physicians. We've also hired 90 nurse practitioners. It is not going to be quick, but the work is ongoing and we are committed to improving.

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

DHW: UKRAINIAN HEALTH WORKERS - PLAN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The reality in our health care system is that we are low on workers right now. We do have a proud record in Nova Scotia of bringing clinically trained health care workers from across the world to practise here in our province. Over the last number of months, we have welcomed Ukrainian families to Nova Scotia who are fleeing conflict. There are over 200 Ukrainian health care workers trying to find work in our province right now, and I'll table that.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What is the plan to get these 200-plus workers from Ukraine into our hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies across the province?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: In regard to the Ukrainian health care workers who have come to the province, there are roughly 200. There is a website that's available to Ukrainian health care providers to identify themselves and allow us to follow up. We are working with the college around what the credentialling process could look like. We are looking at how we can license folks. We are looking at where maybe there are some training or education gaps in order to fill that.

We're also looking in the interim - are there meaningful ways that they can contribute to the system while they're working towards their credentialling process? We are very much aware of the number of folks. Internationally trained graduates are the key - one of the keys - to the success of the health care system, and we are working closely to ensure that those folks find meaningful work in the province.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We are learning that the Nova Scotia Health Authority has also contacted Ukrainian physicians in Newfoundland and Labrador, offering housing and daycare if they relocate to Nova Scotia. I will table that. I will remind the minister that we do have 200 health care professionals living here right now from Ukraine that we're being told and the media is being told are willing to work.

Can the minister please give us a timeline on when these folks can be incorporated into our health care system at a time when we really desperately need these positions to be filled, and we have people here who are ready to fill them?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: There is some work happening with the colleges. One of the things that we need to understand is how the credentialling process and the education process marries up and works with ours. The first thing we need to do is understand what the credentials are and how we can scale people up in a timely manner. The other thing we need to understand as well is that people were moved unexpectedly, and we need to ensure that folks meet the standards for English, as an example, English as a second language. I know there's work happening around that.

We are committed to having these health care professionals come to us in addition to all other internationally educated graduates. If they cannot work to their full scope immediately, where are the places that they could contribute to the health care system and support Nova Scotians as well as their individual families?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

OAMH: MENTAL ILLNESS INCREASE - UPDATE

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a promise to fix health care and on a very significant commitment to provide universal mental health care to Nova Scotians. During a cost of living crisis, mental health illness is on the rise as Nova Scotians struggle to put gas in their cars and provide for their families. I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health if he could update the House on when Nova Scotians will be able to access mental health services without having to pay out of pocket.

HON. BRIAN COMER: We as a government and myself as the minister remain deeply committed to universal access. I think there has been a lot of good things that have been happening. Last week, the sexual violence trauma therapy, a new province-wide model, is a good thing. The acute mental health day hospital; recovery support centres; pre-school autism; Tajikeimik, with our First Nations partners, which is a community-led initiative for the first time, and there will be an update in the coming months, for sure.

BRAEDON CLARK: We know that Nova Scotians are having to make difficult financial decisions these days, including having to cancel therapy appointments in some cases because they simply cannot afford them. With the cost of everything skyrocketing, there has never been a more important time for this government to deliver on its promise of a universal mental health care system. In February, members of the Health Committee heard that there was an astronomical amount of work needed and that at that time, about six months ago, there was no specific timeline to get this system in place. I respect the

minister. I appreciate his comments on news to come, but we don't have any details on when this really, really important initiative is going to take place.

I would like to ask the minister: Why should Nova Scotians have confidence that this key promise will ever be met?

BRIAN COMER: I think the mental health issues are not just a Nova Scotia or a Canadian thing, it's actually a global issue facing citizens right across the world. So far, we have met with approximately 80 community-based groups and 182 individuals. It's very rapid and my most important mandate item for certain. We remain deeply committed and will have an update, I'm sure, in the very near future.

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

DHW: C.B. ER CLOSURES - ACTION

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

It was a challenging weekend for families in Cape Breton who needed emergency care. According to the Nova Scotia Health website, the ER at the Eastern Memorial is closed until August 8th; Strait Richmond Hospital ER is closed until August 3rd; Victoria County Memorial was closed on the weekend; Glace Bay ER is closed; and the New Waterford Consolidated Hospital ER is closed.

When someone is sick or injured their first reaction should not be to figure out what ER is open or, even worse, arrive at hospital to find the ER closed and then have to keep driving. This is not about planting seeds, it is about the needs of Cape Bretoners who need health care today. My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier tell families in Cape Breton what they should do when their child is sick and the local ER is closed?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly we do know that there are a number of ER closures over the province, in fact. We did make a conscious effort this Summer to make sure that our health care workers got the much-needed rest they required and, wherever possible, we have planned closures so that communities and EHS and our other stakeholders can plan.

Again, we continue to recruit. That is the key to our success. We need more primary care, we need more options for primary care, and we need to enhance virtual care, so we continue to work. We have a laser focus on access as well as primary care in the community and we are committed to improving.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, this government cannot continue to refuse ownership of the current crisis that everyday families are living through right now. They can plant all the seeds they want, but the reality is that under the watch of this government

there has been a 70 per cent increase in the number of people leaving Cape Breton Regional ER without being seen. Under this government there has been a 42 per cent increase in the number of people going to the Cape Breton Regional Hospital's emergency room without having a family doctor. These figures are even worse in the rest of the province.

My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier stop handing out high-paying jobs to his personal friends and start focusing on the needs of everyday families in Cape Breton who need health care?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reiterate that the secret to the success is really increasing primary care options. We have established the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment. We've had a record year this year with 163 physicians coming, and we've hired 90 nurse practitioners. We have increased the training seats for registered nurses and licensed practical nurses; we have made the CCA program free; and we have increased CCA wages by 23 per cent.

There is a deficit of approximately 85 physicians in this province. We know that and we are laser-focused. We are working very hard to recruit and retain our health care professionals in the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

SLTC: COST OF LIVING CRISIS - ACTION

HON. KELLY REGAN: This government has patted itself on the back for some time now for giving a \$150 one-time payment to certain Nova Scotians. Can the Premier actually remember the last time he was able to feed his family of four for \$150 for a single week? We haven't seen any broad-based support that has come to Nova Scotians. More and more Nova Scotians are being squeezed by this cost of living crisis.

My question to the Premier is: Can the Premier actually stand here today and tell us that he actually thinks that this government has given enough help to Nova Scotians?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: As the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care, I take full responsibility for the actions of my department. Just to make sure everybody is really clear, one of the groups that we are talking about is seniors. We increased the brand new seniors grant from \$500 to \$750, so all Nova Scotians know that any senior over the age of 65 who has a household income of less than \$37,500 is eligible to use those funds for medication, eye examinations, chiropractor, physiotherapy, massage therapist, foot care. Mr. Speaker, that \$750 is new money that was not offered under the previous government and we're very proud of that fact.

KELLY REGAN: I don't know where the Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care heard the words "seniors" or "long-term care" in my question, but I do appreciate the

improvement in the program that she mentioned because we were asking for that. As soon as it came out, we indicated it did not go far enough, so good on you for actually listening to us.

Mr. Speaker, the value of that \$150 in a one-time payment was less than it was four months ago because of rising inflation. For months the Premier and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board assured people that support was on its way. Everything was on the table. They were considering everything. The fact of the matter is, when push came to shove, for the vast majority of Nova Scotians, there is no help.

My question for the Premier: If he doesn't consider the cost of living crisis to be an emergency, then what would he call it?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: This government has taken all concern with regard to the cost of living in Nova Scotia. We're leading by example by our own Premier taking a reduction in his pay, for one. As we continue to lead by example, though, let's just go over. We have reducing child care fees. We have increased . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Community Services has the floor.

KARLA MACFARLANE: We have increased the child tax benefit. We've invested in our food banks. We have increased daily rates, up to \$15 more, for foster care families. We continue to invest in Nova Scotians. There are so many more things that this government has invested in.

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

SLTC: AFFORDABILITY HELP NEEDED - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I will note again that the Premier reduced his salary after being challenged by this side, because that was certainly not in anything they were talking about, number one. Number two, the fact of the matter is that we are seeing a pattern develop here where women ask a question, but men don't answer. Interesting. (Interruptions) Well, after last week, no wonder.

Nova Scotians don't have to look far to see what real leadership on the cost of living crisis looks like. Prince Edward Island is acting. Newfoundland is acting. New Brunswick is acting. I'll table that. Yet all we see from this government is inaction on broad-based assistance.

Why do Nova Scotians have to suffer while every other province in this country is providing broad-based support for this cost of living crisis?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start off by saying the current Premier has put in place in the largest departments in the Nova Scotia government very capable, competent women. To suggest that the Premier is having women answer these questions is a bit insulting to the women who have been answering those questions. We want to encourage all women to feel that their value in this House is equal to every other person in this House. I will say that on this side of the House, the Premier has confidence in his ministers to answer questions.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, both the Premier and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board have justified their inaction on the cost of living crisis, saying that support must be sustainable - I'll table that - and by providing inflation support, we could damage our ability to fix health care or provide social services, yet every other provincial government right across this country has been providing support - broad-based support - all while continuing to provide those essential government services the Premier spoke of.

My question for the Premier or the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board: Why is his government the national outlier?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Look, there have been a number of broad-based supports for Nova Scotians, through my department and through all the departments here, because we all work together. Everyone is struggling right now, but our most vulnerable in Nova Scotia - it's very complex, living in poverty, and they don't all require the same programs. That is why we've made different investments in different things, and it's working. By the way, we can table this, but right now the current gas price - Nova Scotia has the lowest gas price right now. Yes.

So Mr. Speaker, we can go on and on and stand here all day. No, I know we won't, but we could go on and on and go on about all the different programs...

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

EECD: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL RETURN - SPECIFY

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I appreciate the back and forth in Question Period, but really I feel like the government is really missing the mark on opportunities that could really support our kids.

My first question would be to the Premier, if the Premier will give it to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: School is coming in a month. We all know the cost of living and how it's impacting families that are preparing to start for school. What plans are in place to provide additional supports to families and to children who are about to enter school in September?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Our department and our schools are preparing. I'm very excited to see the return of students in the Fall and we know it is an exciting time for families and for students. We also know that some students need support and I want to assure the member opposite, and Nova Scotians, that any student who does need support, any student who needs food, any student who needs supplies does not go without that food or those supplies.

Our schools work very hard, our staff works very hard, and we have incredible volunteers and other organizations that support the needs of our students and I want to thank them and ensure Nova Scotians that all our students will have their needs met.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Again, I reiterate that if there is one way that the government can provide broad-based supports to families who may not qualify for a lot of the programs that are offered, there are ways that we can do that to support our children in school, whether it's through meals and supplies.

We've seen other provinces take the lead on this, where they're covering these costs, similar to what we did during the pandemic when we provided the technology for students. The ability is there to provide those broad-based supports, especially in an environment where the cost of everything is so high that families are struggling trying to figure out how they're going to be able to provide a lot of these supplies and supports for kids in school.

My question to the minister: Will the minister today commit to every student in Nova Scotia supports moving into the school year to help support families?

BECKY DRUHAN: I will absolutely commit that every student who needs support for this coming school year will receive the support that they need.

For the member's information, if he is looking for specifics or if Nova Scotians are interested in specifics, I can speak to a number of those. For example, for school supplies, our regions and the CSAP are ready and able to supply school supplies for any students who need them. Last year they invested about \$4 million in supplies and we're good to go again for that this year.

We continue to provide food for students and families who need it. They can access 211 and various other ways of getting food. We have made child care more affordable by reducing fees by 25 per cent. We have covered the planned increase in the cost of school . . .

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

DHW: MONKEYPOX VACCINE - ACCESS

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The World Health Organization declared the monkeypox outbreak a global health emergency on July 23rd and its arrival in Nova Scotia is inevitable. Access to vaccines in Nova Scotia is still strictly limited but that is not the case in every province. Many people are starting to worry that they won't have access to the vaccine if they want one. I would like to ask the Premier: Will this government share its plan to advocate for more monkeypox vaccine from the federal government?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly there are provinces in which there is more access to monkeypox vaccine but they are also the places where there are monkeypox outbreaks. We continue to work with Public Health. The federal government, Health Canada, and Public Health Agency of Canada actually are working with us because they are the people who provide and give us the vaccine. We work with them closely. We continue to monitor the situation, and in the event that we require more monkeypox vaccine in this province, we have assurances from our federal counterparts that that will happen.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization director-general said that stigma and discrimination can be as dangerous as any virus, and I will table that. The 2SLGBTQ+ communities around the world are being proactive, lining up for vaccines and getting the message out about risk, but they need support from public health agencies to underline who is at risk and to share accurate information about the virus.

Will the Premier explain specifically what actions this government is taking to combat homophobia while it gets information out to people as cases of monkeypox rise across the country?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Further to the member's question, we are working very closely with our own public health practitioners who are experts in surveillance, who are watching for cases of monkeypox, also looking at close contacts of those individuals who may have monkeypox, and working with our federal partners. This is not a situation where anything is being withheld. We do have a Canada-wide limited amount of vaccinations, and we have to work with our public health partners, both regionally and nationally, to ensure that we are using that vaccine in a judicious way, making sure all Canadians and all Nova Scotians have access when they need it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DED: FIRING OF EXPERTS - REASON

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Just this week, the Premier fired three highly qualified CEOs with years of experience, replacing them with two individuals whom the Premier himself described as his personal friends whom he has known for a long time. I will table

that. It was right here. I must ask the Premier: Why is he bringing back this disturbing practice of firing experts with key positions and replacing them with personal friends? How does he answer that one?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: This is not about turning back the clock. This is about the future. The individuals who have been selected have been selected for an interim position to guide the creation of two new agencies that will be responsible for ensuring that Nova Scotia fully optimizes every opportunity headed our way.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Fired two women who are exceptional women, who were responsible for projects worth millions of dollars, all on time, all on budget, and that was not the way for the future? You don't consider that right for the future?

My question is: When the Premier was asked by the reporters how his office identified his friends for these positions, the Premier said: I identified them; they are both people who have been known to me for a long time. I would like to ask the Premier himself: Does he believe this is a fair hiring practice?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: As the minister of this department, I can tell you that it was a fair hiring process. In terms of the suggestion that this was somehow anti-women, we took five agencies and we've made them into two. This was not a report card. This is setting up Nova Scotia for the future, and those CEOs have been genuinely invited to apply for these new positions, and I hope they do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FTB: RISING GAS PRICES - SOLUTION

FRED TILLEY: It's clear to me that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and this government have trouble with facts. On Friday, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board decided to take a shot at me, even though I wasn't in this Chamber, and he stated: "I wonder if the people of Northside-Westmount know that he and his party want to drive up the price of gas by more than 14 cents per litre in the coming months, because they won't take action . . ."

I'll table that. This made me laugh when I heard about this, because it's so out of touch and unbelievable. The only person and only party in this Chamber in this session that put forth a solution for gas prices was me and this party.

THE SPEAKER: Question.

FRED TILLEY: My question for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, because he's the one putting the brakes on gas prices . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question.

FRED TILLEY: My question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: Do the people of Inverness know that he and his Party are the ones who are sitting idle as gas prices soar in Nova Scotia?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the good people of Northside-Westmount and the good people of Inverness will not be happy if they see an over 14 cents per litre tax, which is coming our way. The member opposite had a chance earlier today when a motion was put on the floor of this Legislature to stand with the government and to stand with Nova Scotians and what do they do . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has the floor.

ALLAN MACMASTER: . . . and the members opposite voted against it. We took action, Mr. Speaker, to try to help prevent further increases in the price of gas and the Opposition said no, we don't want to join you to help Nova Scotians.

FRED TILLEY: Again, Mr. Speaker, we have trouble with facts in this Legislature. When this Finance and Treasury Board Minister says he's taking action, it is sitting at his computer and writing a letter. When the previous government negotiated this thing, they got to work. If they're looking for our help, if they don't feel capable to do the negotiations themselves, we'll certainly go to Ottawa and help you. It's time for this government to get off their posteriors and go to work for the people of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: I don't know if there was actually a question there or a statement.

FRED TILLEY: Tell the minister to go to work for the people of Nova Scotia.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I did today. I came into the Chamber here today. A motion was put forward to say let's all say no to a carbon tax of 14 cents per litre. Now is not the time. People need alternatives.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We have only eight minutes left so please show some respect in those last eight minutes.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has the floor.

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the NDP and the Liberals want Nova Scotians to be further punished with even higher gasoline prices. They want a 14 cent per litre increase to the price. They keep saying no, they talk about how they care about people suffering from the cost of living and then when there's a chance to do something about it, they stand down. They don't stand with us, and they don't stand with Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount on a new question.

DED: NOVA SCOTIA LOYAL PGM. - VALUE

FRED TILLEY: I will say that respect is earned, Mr. Speaker.

Nova Scotians and businesses are expecting real support from this government. Instead, the government has provided a glorified research project, spending \$100,000 to talk to Nova Scotians in supermarkets, otherwise known as Nova Scotia Loyal. My question for the Minister of Economic Development is: Does this government truly believe that this marketing campaign is the solution that Nova Scotians need in this current cost of living crisis?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I absolutely do believe in Nova Scotia Loyal but please don't mistake, this is not yet a marketing program and at the same time it will be far greater than a marketing program. Yes, this is a program with a goal of shifting local purchasing by 10 per cent, increasing it 10 per cent but it is also a mantra for Nova Scotians to believe in themselves, to believe in their businesses, to invest in their businesses. The prototyping that is taking place right now in fact is to ensure it is real and meaningful for every Nova Scotian.

FRED TILLEY: This government ran on being solutionists for Nova Scotians. One of those solutions was the Nova Scotia Loyal program, which the Premier said he would do right away, along with the better paycheque, I might add. Now, 11 months in, this government is saying they are having a team visit stores and markets across the province to talk to people. Mr. Speaker, for something that was a huge point in the Tory platform, my question is: If they had all of these well-researched solutions, why are we just starting the research now?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: We've spent much of these last number of days together talking about affordability. Where better to talk to Nova Scotians about issues that are important to us, like affordability, than in the supermarket?

We have not been sitting idly by, as has been noted. We have worked to review and consolidate our Crown corporations, to create agencies that will serve our province through the future. We've created the More Opportunity for Skilled Trades program to address our labour shortages. We've invested in airports. We've invested in internet. We've invested in Nova Scotians.

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

[4:45 p.m.]

DHW: HEALTH PROFESSIONAL VACANCIES - PLAN

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. There are upwards of 1,000 nurse vacancies in Nova Scotia. On top of that, 25 per cent of nurses in the province hope to retire in the next five years. Even with increased nursing seats, and even if every nurse graduate accepted a job offer, there would still not be close to enough nurses to fill these gaps.

Virtually every person in this province who needs health care at all is impacted by the lack of a coherent plan to replace this workforce. The government promised to fix health care. Can the Premier explain how that can happen without enough nurses?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We know that it's really important that we grow our own health care workers, but to the member opposite's point, that's it exactly. We need to look at our labour and immigration strategy.

We've been working with our partners in the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. We've been working with our federal counterparts. There are a number of initiatives that are under way in regard to how we bring folks into this province, how we credential them, how we make sure that their education is on par with ours so that we can get them on the floors and get them taking care of Nova Scotians.

We have a number of different plans that are in the test-and-try stage, and I am very hopeful. Immigration absolutely is a huge part of our success to fixing the workforce in Nova Scotia.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you for that answer - although I hope they can also find a place to live.

There are roughly a thousand health care vacancies on top of nurses, including dozens of paramedics. The ones we speak to don't have great things to say about the government. In the meantime, people are waiting and waiting in doctors' offices and emergency rooms, and in their homes for an ambulance.

In a global shortage of health professionals, this government keeps repeating - and we just heard - recruitment, recruitment, recruitment, but they won't even tell us the employment status of the person in charge of recruitment.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Does he have a real plan to fill these vacancies, and if so, can he share it with Nova Scotians?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We certainly know that stabilizing the workforce in this province is a key to our success. We have hired 100 medical drivers who are non-paramedics to allow paramedics, as an example, to do the work that they, the emergency services, respond to.

In regard to the paramedicine workforce, we have a workforce committee that sits on a regular basis and includes the College of Paramedics. It includes the union. It includes Nova Scotia Health. It includes the Department of Health and Wellness. We have a graduate licence to make sure the paramedics can get into the trucks and into the communities sooner.

We know there's a lot of work to do, Mr. Speaker, but these are early signs that we are committed to improving health care in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

DCS: HOMELESS CHILDREN IN LUN. CO. - PLAN

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the South Shore Open Doors Association found that after one month of tracking, data identified 25 children experiencing homelessness in Lunenburg County. More troubling is that they believe the true number is much higher. Where are these children and their families living, Mr. Speaker? Some of them are living in tents. I'll table that.

What does the Premier have to say to these families who cannot afford to put a roof over their children's head?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I thank the member for this most important question. I had an opportunity just last week to be in that area and discuss some of the challenges in that area. What we want everyone to know is that we have definitely put more investments into . . .

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

The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: On a point of order, we heard multiple times throughout Question Period where multiple members of the government have indicated that our caucus voted against the resolution that happened earlier in the session, which we clearly did not. We were in support of the resolution from the government. I heard multiple times from the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance and Treasury Board that we did not support it.

I want to get on the record that as a caucus, again, we do support the resolution that came forward, and ultimately, it's going to be up to the government to negotiate what happens.

THE SPEAKER: I just want to inform the member that is not a point of order. If that was a member's statement that came, we do not record votes, but there were enough noes to say that the amendment would be tabled. Not the amendment . . .

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Just for clarification, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't talking about the member's statement. I was talking about the initial resolution that came forward from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change where during Question Period multiple times it was said that our caucus did not support the resolution from the minister when we actually did.

I'm happy to defend that. I think it's important for us to get up and defend that as a caucus. We support that work. We negotiated the initial deal that gave us the deal that we had. Now it's up to the new government to negotiate it. They put forward a resolution. Of course, we want to support that.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, we will go back. The resolution was put. There were enough Noes that it wasn't unanimous. There was no point of order.

SPEAKER'S DECISION

Before we take our break, I want to go back. I'm going to use this for the education of all members of the House as to something that took place today. I earlier had asked the member for Halifax Atlantic to leave the room. The word that he said will not appear in Hansard, but for me to make a ruling, it doesn't have to appear in Hansard either. If I, as Speaker, hear a member saying something unparliamentary within this Chamber, I have every right to ask the individual to leave the room. I just want to be clear.

The word that was used is No. 110, if you want to look at some of the words that are deemed unparliamentary. Again, that's just for everybody's information. The Clerk and I will be discussing whether or not the member will be back in.

We're going to take a 10-minute recess.

[4:53 p.m. The House recessed.]

[5:07 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 185.

Bill No. 185 - House of Assembly Act

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 185 - an Act to Amend Chapter 1, 1992 Supplement, of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the House of Assembly Act - be now read a third time and do pass.

Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. We have introduced legislation that will prevent any MLA wage increases at this time. This legislation was required to overturn the binding recommendations of a panel report commissioned by the Speaker earlier this year.

This is not the time, Mr. Speaker, to increase compensation for MLAs. Nova Scotians face high inflation, and the province has important challenges to address. Despite the independent review panel finding that the Premier's compensation is fair and reasonable and should not be adjusted, the Premier has chosen to voluntarily reduce his salary by more than \$11,000.

We won't let this issue distract us from the important things we are doing on behalf of Nova Scotians: improving access to health care, making child care more affordable, creating more affordable housing, and making sure Nova Scotians have the services and supports they need. These are the issues our Premier cares about, and this legislation will allow us to get back to focusing on these important issues that have tremendous impact on the lives of Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to thank the minister for his address. I speak on behalf of the Liberal caucus when I say we will be supporting this piece of legislation - I hope we don't see any means or press releases suggesting otherwise. We're clearly on the record here.

I do want to make a few comments in relation to this, Mr. Speaker. We did get called back for an emergency session on this issue. I will argue that this was not the emergency facing Nova Scotians. I do believe the fact that we bring this conversation into the Chamber puts us all in a conflict of interest.

The process for MLA salaries should be an independent one. I say that recognizing that our government also kept MLA salaries capped for eight years. We never called an emergency session on it. There was never a big fuss made about it. It was something that we did, it was done out of principle at the time. Premier McNeil was asking members of the public service to take low salary increases, and he wanted to lead by example. This was during a low inflationary time, at a time when we were asking everybody else to pay attention to ballooning costs of the provincial deficit and the impact that public sector salaries have on it.

This situation is very different, and I do believe that this has all been done to distract Nova Scotians from the bad headlines that we're seeing in the newspapers and in the media about our ERs that are closing more than ever before, the doctor wait-lists ballooning by almost 100 per cent in 10 months. We have seen an extreme labour shortage be exacerbated in our health care system and in our economy. We have a health care system that has gone from being one experiencing an incredible amount of pressure but was holding, to one that is literally potentially facing collapse if some of these issues are not addressed very quickly, particularly as we head into another wave of the pandemic.

These, I would argue, are the real emergencies in Nova Scotia. The cost of living crisis is not only impacting every single family in Nova Scotia, some more than others, but the impact that inflation is having on the spending power in each of our household incomes is impacting our economy. According to the government's own budget, we are on track to a recession. This is quite concerning.

If there are emergencies to be dealt with in Nova Scotia, I would argue to this House that these are the very emergencies: a looming recession; a labour shortage; a cost of living crisis putting incredible pressure on seniors and families alike where they don't know where to spend their money - if it's going to be on their drugs, if it's going to be on their food or their gas; and a situation in health care that is very precarious.

We are seeing it get worse by the day, and we are potentially facing an immediate new pressure as a new wave of COVID comes through our province. We've already seen hospitalizations double in a week. This is a very problematic trend, and I would argue it is the real emergency.

When you look at how the previous government managed MLA expenses, it was quiet, it was never called for an emergency session at the Legislature. Premier McNeil actually passed legislation, again, quietly in this Chamber, to not even strike the committee

to begin with. It was not to have a big flash and give the Premier a chance to thump his chest in the House and in the media.

I will recognize the Premier has taken a pay cut. I believe that happened because there was a request in the independent report that this happen, recognizing that the Premier of Nova Scotia is the third-highest paid in the country. It is also something that the current Premier talked a lot about when he was in Opposition. I do think that's entirely fair.

I have seen an attack ad that came out against myself recently because when asked if I would take the same pay cut, I informed the media that if it was recommended by an independent panel, I certainly would. It was not, and the reason being is because the Leader of the Official Opposition has the third-lowest pay in this pay bracket of colleagues in the province, which is probably around where it should be.

The salary for the Official Leader of the Official Opposition, the leader of the third party's salary is lower than the Official Opposition Leader. The Official Opposition Leader's salary in this province is tied to ministerial salaries, each and every single minister, as well as the Speaker. To have a government suggest that we're not showing leadership because we haven't taken an arbitrary pay cut that wasn't recommended by an independent panel, when that the current Premier never said he was interested in when he was Leader of the Official Opposition, and that no minister has stood up and said they want either - I do think that is unfair.

It really speaks to the conflict of interest that we face in this Chamber on this issue. There are two conflicts of interest here. One is the obvious one, the financial conflict of interest, to have us vote and debate our own salaries when we know large segments of the population feel very strongly on this issue or that we benefit financially if we do support a pay increase - it's not a fair position to put us in.

There's also a political conflict of interest here, which I think we have seen on display for the last week, Mr. Speaker - that's when this issue became the subject of the House. There's also the political motivation to make a big fuss about it and to pretend to be the hero when bigger issues are actually going on outside of this Chamber.

I'll give credit to the Premier that he took an \$11,000 pay cut - that has saved each Nova Scotian one one-thousandth of a penny during a cost of living crisis. We're all voting to keep our salaries frozen. That is saving Nova Scotians approximately 75 cents each year. We're all supporting it. We're doing it. But I hope the point of my comments are not lost on the government. There are bigger issues that we're faced with.

This issue itself is a conflict of interest for us. I think that this last week has demonstrated the fact that we were called in here on an emergency basis to deal with this issue, which is of very small significance to the general population outside of the political viewpoints on it. Instead of being called to deal with the real emergencies that this province

is facing, particularly in health care, particularly on the affordability crisis, and on the economic front, I think demonstrates clearly to this House and to the people of this province where the priorities of this government are.

[5:15 p.m.]

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to take my seat.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We will be voting in favour of this legislation, but I just have a few comments to make.

People across this province are not all living in the positivity ditch. Many of them are having a hard time, and the seeds that they're planting are not growing right now. Their gardens are fallow, to use the government's analogy. And why? Because we are in an unprecedented in my lifetime inflationary environment. The cost of everything is skyrocketing. Why? Because we are also in an unprecedented-in-my-lifetime health care crisis.

Now as I think about travelling around this province over the Summer and the activities that my children are in and that I participate in, I actually have to think about the health care consequences in a way that I never have. I know other members have spoken about their own children who have had health care issues. Access to health care in this province right now is as precarious as it has ever been, and it continues to deteriorate. We have been talking about that.

We are experiencing one of the hottest Summers in my lifetime. That's the climate crisis. Yet we have grandstanding on the government's lack of willingness to do the homework that they need to do to get us out of it.

Nowhere on that list does MLA pay rank as a thing that we hear about from our constituents. All of the other things I mentioned I hear about every day. MLA pay, until the government decided to politicize it, is not something that I heard about.

The minister stood up in his opening comments and said he doesn't want it to be a distraction. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this government has made the issue of MLA pay a distraction. They don't want to talk about all of the real issues facing Nova Scotians.

I want to be very clear, because I think we need to be clear. When the parties were briefed on the report of the independent panel, we were told - explicitly - that if there was agreement between the three parties on what to do with this legislation, there would be no need to recall the Legislature until the Fall. I'm going to say that again: There was no requirement to recall the Legislature until the Fall.

So why are we here? We're here because the government wanted to be clear with Nova Scotians, I suppose, that they were - in their words - standing in solidarity. Again, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that many Nova Scotians struggling to pay bills would particularly see capping an increase to folks who make north of \$80,000 a year solidarity.

We've been here proposing real things that the government could do. I should say I don't actually think it's the government's role to stand in solidarity. The government's role is to do their job. At this point, I think their job is to make a difference in the lives of Nova Scotians for the issues that matter most to them - that is the health care crisis, the cost of living crisis. Yet again and again, we have seen deflection of those questions in this Chamber.

I also want to take a moment and just say something about this report. The idea that this has happened at the earliest possible moment when the government found out about this, that is not true. This panel was struck months ago. The inevitable conclusion of this panel, after a 10-year pay freeze, was an increase in pay. Everyone knew that would happen, yet the government did not do what other Premiers have done, rightly or wrongly, which is to prevent the panel from meeting. No, the panel was empowered to do the work and they did the work.

They didn't just come back and say that MLAs should get a pay raise. They produced a 360-page report. In that report, they considered pay - and we've talked about that - but they also considered other things. They considered equity and representation. They considered child care. They considered Mi'kmaw representation. I'm proud to say that many of these things were, in fact, in our party's submission to the independent panel. This is what we asked the panel to consider when they came to us and said, what does your party want on the agenda? We said these are the things that are important to our party that we'd like to discuss.

Mr. Speaker, for organizations that care about equity and representation, access to child care is a workplace issue. The House of Assembly is not immune to that conversation, but the government politicized and blocked any real, substantive conversation of that issue.

I want to note that if we want this House to be more representative of the people who live here, we need to adjust and modernize the way we do things - child care in particular, the need for child care, or for care for other family members or dependants outside regular working hours. We're not talking about daycare. We're talking about the expenses reasonably incurred when you are doing business. Those expenses are different for different folks, and they impact different folks differently.

When I was deciding whether or not to run for office, I had coffee with a former MLA and he said to me very proudly, you know my children have never had a babysitter. He had three teenagers. I said, wow, that's amazing, what's the secret? He said, well, between my in-laws and my wife, we never needed one.

I think that the story of many MLAs in this Chamber over the last 250 years is that they had what I think former Premier McNeil referred to as traditional child care, or organic child care. That organic child care is women - spouses and mothers. We want those mysterious, organic child care fairies to sit in this House - we want them here. So we need to create a system and a structure that allows that to happen.

I think that's what the conversation was about in this report. Were all the recommendations right? I don't know, but we didn't actually get a chance to debate them, and I think that's really too bad.

We need to consider how all aspects of this job intersect with gender, race, culture and disability. There's consideration of these questions in the panel's report, but we have not been able to discuss them and now we are jettisoning the report entirely.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to aspersions cast during Question Period, I want to reiterate that the NDP caucus came here to work - to work on behalf of everyday families for the real emergencies that we are living through right now. We came here to do the work that we need to do to understand what people need, but instead, we have been subjected to political theatre. This is theatre.

All parties have agreed to forego a pay increase. We were told that it could wait. So why are we here? Are we here to talk about health care? Are we here to talk about the cost of living? Are we here to talk about how to meet our climate commitments in a fair way and ensure that people can afford energy? Are we here to discuss the makeup of this Chamber? According to the government, the answer to these questions is most decidedly no.

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

DAVE RITCEY: I am honoured to rise today to speak to Bill No. 185 in third reading. I'll be brief with my comments. Being here in the Legislature for the past week and a day, I guess, we are sending a clear message to Nova Scotians that our government is one of action.

When the report was tabled recommending increases to MLAs' salaries, our caucus did not hesitate to act in the interest of Nova Scotians. With high inflation, housing pressures, and other challenges, now is simply not the time. In particular, today I want to address the Premier's pay cut.

Let's be clear, the report did not recommend a stand-alone pay cut for our Premier. Regardless, the Premier voluntarily - voluntarily - took a decrease to a salary by more than \$11,000. This is not a common practice for anyone, let alone the Premier of the province.

Honestly, I'm not surprised because I know that our Premier does what needs to be done. He does what's right, and he takes action.

He acted so that we can get back to the business of government, and building and growing this amazing province. He took action so that we can move forward and continue to do the work in our constituencies, that the constituents expect from us, like improving access to health care, increasing the availability of affordable child care and housing, and so many other important services across this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Premier of action and I know that the constituents of Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River, and all Nova Scotians, are better off to have his leadership of this great province. For that, I want to thank him for his leadership.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: A number of people who spoke ahead of me have mentioned that we did not need to be here to make this happen or that we did not need to be here to ensure that MLAs did not get an increase. I'm not going to belabour that point because we all know that, had there been agreement, we didn't have to be here. We know that it's happened before, where salaries have been frozen.

I can tell you that Stephen McNeil felt we couldn't take an increase. He didn't have to recall the Legislature for a special session - an emergency session. You didn't even get your 28 days of notice - man, we had to suddenly be here. This was an emergency, except for it really isn't because there was agreement among all three parties.

I can tell you when he cut the retirement benefit for MLAs, he didn't have to have a special session. He just did the right thing and that's what we call "all cattle, no hat." He didn't need to appoint a committee, have them work their butts off, come back with a 300-page report, and then having read it for seven minutes, turn it down. He just did the right thing.

By its own definition of having to call us back with less than 28 days' notice, this was an emergency session but there were issues of way more importance that we should have been dealing here, and we tried. We tried. We brought it to the government's attention and, really, we had bills here that they could have passed. We had the Pandemic Impact Transparency Act, which would have given Nova Scotians information about what's actually going on with the pandemic.

I can tell you that in my riding, we continuously have folks coming to our door looking for test kits. Why are they looking for test kits? Because they want to do the right thing. They want to make sure they're not giving COVID to vulnerable people, to grandparents, to friends, to loved ones. They want to do the right thing. What would really

help them do the right thing, Mr. Speaker, is if they actually had information on how many cases are happening right now. Now we're getting the information after a month.

[5:30 p.m.]

In fact, some research projects have had to be abandoned because they can't even get timely information from some of the provinces. This province, which used to be a leader in providing information to its citizens, is no longer that province anymore.

We could have passed legislation here respecting earnings and rates at Emera, which my colleague from Annapolis Royal introduced. We could have provided relief not just for seniors, but for Nova Scotians who are living on lower incomes. Don't get me wrong. The improvements to the program for seniors, which included an increase and also an expansion of the items that were eligible for that program, we are much appreciative. We're glad to see that, but let's be clear: We have been asking for that for quite a while, and we would like to see that expanded beyond seniors.

By the way, \$37,500 is not a whole lot of money to be living on, so if you're living on \$38,000, you're out of luck, folks. There are other changes that could have been made that would provide more help to more people. That's what we're talking about, broad-based support for Nova Scotians.

They could have passed an Act to amend the Revenue Act to cut provincial gas taxes, which my colleague, the member for Northside-Westmount put forward. We could have cut the mode of fuel tax in half because right now the government is making out like bandits on the HST. They could earn back money there.

Let me be clear: If this government is trying to balance the books on the backs of Nova Scotians in the greatest cost of living crisis that we have ever seen . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask the member for Bedford Basin if she would talk on the bill that's presented to the House.

KELLY REGAN: We could have passed the School Supplies Relief Act, but we didn't. We didn't even touch it.

This bill was put forward because it was an emergency. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to talk about what the emergencies are. The emergencies are things like health care. I can tell you that since we have been in this House, people in my riding are contacting me because they're watching. They're watching Question Period, which kind of blew me away, because, wow, you would hope that they have other things to do. They have been watching Question Period, and they don't like the answers that they're hearing. They know that all Summer we have been hearing about health care emergencies - real emergencies. This is not an emergency.

The 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're not going to get in there at all; hospitals in some rural areas, we have heard from our colleagues, that are not shut for a day here or there, or a weekend, but weeks at a time; 100,000 Nova Scotians without a doctor. When the government was in Opposition, 60,000 or 65,000 Nova Scotians without a doctor, that was an emergency, and that was a health care crisis. It turns out, whoops, now that it's 100,000, it's not a problem. It's okay. Fixed, it works. Growing wait-lists for surgeries, and procedures and more.

I have to tell you that I have had people reaching out from home. A woman who indicated that she's not a senior citizen, she's well south of that - she had a stroke and went to the hospital. They sent her home. They did not do appropriate follow-up care. She's had another stroke. That could have been avoided. This is the kind of thing that's happening right now.

Another constituent in her 90s, after a month and a half in hospital, is sent home to be looked after by her child. Only problem is, the child works. The child is an adult, but the child works. She was given 30 hours a month - 30 hours a month - in respite care. That wouldn't even get her through a whole week. So we had to advocate on her behalf.

This is the kind of thing that's going on right now. If the government is under the illusion that the emergencies that this session was about, this bill - that that was the emergency, it's not. The emergencies are things like what we just talked about with the health care system.

It's also about the cost of living crisis. We've talked about this at length, and we tabled a number of bills that would have made a difference. As we noted month ago, Quebec gave \$500 to everyone making less than \$100,000 to deal - and we keep hearing from the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and the Premier say, oh, we can only do sustainable things. Well, one time is not something that you have to do again and again. By definition, it does not have to be sustainable, number one.

Then they said that in Alberta they can do it because they have lots of money. That would have been okay if Alberta were the only province doing it, but every other province is doing broad-based assistance. That's not happening here, and there are a whole lot of people who are being left out, for whom this is a real emergency.

We're hearing from people - we know that getting ready to go back to school is exceedingly difficult. P.E.I. decided to actually help people out with the cost of that. That would have been great.

We could provide really good school breakfast. I'm hearing from teachers that what they've been getting in recent months has not been good for their school breakfast. They're supposed to be able to give them to the entire class. The whole idea is that you don't want

to stigmatize anybody. That's what the emergency was. Those are the salaries that we need to help out - the parents. But no, it didn't happen.

We also heard this past week that a number of developers are delaying proceeding with developments. That is concerning, because we are in a housing crisis right now. With interest rates climbing - when it gets over 3 per cent, developers are not proceeding with those developments. These are much-needed projects. In fact, what we saw was that housing starts fell by 50 per cent between May and June. The government made a big deal in May: most housing starts ever - the most ever. But they were really quiet when June rolled around, and they plummeted by 50 per cent.

Those are the emergencies we could have dealt with in this session, but they decided not to do that. They decided to just deal with this one bill, because that makes them look good. Now, where I come from, we call that all hat and no cattle - which is kind of weird, cause it's a German area, and I don't know why they're worried about cowboy hats. But that's what we grew up with.

This was out there for show. Stuff that people really need didn't happen in this particular session, and I think it's a shame. I think that we've been here for a week, and we could have done so much more.

But I'm happy to have been here and to raise the issues of the things I'm hearing about in my community. I know that if I'm hearing about it in my community, the members opposite are hearing about it in theirs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this very important issue and this bill.

Mr. Speaker, we're in this House because the government and the Premier of the day thought they could get some quick public relations, show leadership on something, and get out quickly.

We're now in the process of spending probably - and you would know better than I, Mr. Speaker - tens of thousands, if not close to \$100,000 we've spent since we've been in here to keep the House open, to keep everything moving, to keep everything rolling. That's paid by the taxpayers so we could call this a \$100,000 public relations stunt by the Premier to try and make it look like he is doing something good for Nova Scotia.

The truth, Mr. Speaker, is that money we all agree should not be put in the pockets of MLAs. We agree, we've heard that here today. I was part of the previous government where we didn't come into the Legislature to do this. Stephen McNeil had the leadership and the dignity to do it outside of the House, to pass it through because he knew everybody

agreed, instead of spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' dollars to come in here and sit.

What we've seen in this time of emergency, in this time of crisis, is no member of the government stand up to speak to the real emergencies in Nova Scotia. We haven't heard anyone speak at length on housing, which we know is a huge crisis. This is a government that said they were going to fix housing. Again, if you come into my community - Sylvia Avenue, Lynnett Road, all throughout our community - rent is up 100 per cent, 150 per cent, 50 per cent, 200 per cent.

We haven't heard anything from the members opposite when we were telling them stories about the lady who came into my office who has spent her entire professional career working in helping people find housing, helping single mothers navigate the system, Her partner is an EMT and their rent just went up \$900 and they can't afford it.

I'm hearing those stories. Everybody opposite is hearing those stories. If you are not hearing the stories, you are in some trouble.

We're not hearing about the health care crisis. They are saying everything is better, everything is great. My father has been in bed now for nine days with a back issue, can't get out of bed, Mr. Speaker - no access to health care, nothing. My daughter - when she injured herself we called 811. It took 13 hours for them to call back. When the registered nurse spoke to me, she talked about how exhausted they were, how tired they were, how run-down they were because of COVID-19, because of COVID-19 staffing issues, because the emergency rooms are overrun with COVID-19, and how they just wish the government and the Health and Wellness Minister would at least acknowledge that it's at a state of emergency and that their philosophy on COVID-19 has only made things worse.

I am going to read something and then I'll table it. It's from a little news source called the *Cape Breton Post* - you might know what that is, Mr. Speaker - "Living with COVID-19 strategy backfires". This is a story that was in the *Cape Breton Post* today.

"We once showed the world how to successfully live with coronavirus - so what happened?"

Four months into this strategy and it is clearly not working. Half of all Nova Scotian COVID-19 deaths have occurred *after* the government lifted protections - that's over 200 people, including 35 primary caregivers. Case counts are up, wastewater levels of the virus are up, hospitals are overcrowded, businesses are short staffed, and we now have the second highest COVID-19 hazard risk in the country."

[5:45 p.m.]

This is after being one of the best in all of North America. (Interruption) Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing rumblings from the other side. If the members want to stand up, more than likely they can.

“The unchecked spread of COVID-19 through the population has resulted in increased death and disease. It has pushed an already strained health-care system to the brink, with hospitals cancelling surgeries and reporting ER overcrowding, long wait times and closures. Staff shortages for other critical services, like transit, have resulted in route cancellations.”

I will table that, Mr. Speaker. Before the long weekend, what did we see from this government? It wasn't, “Have a great weekend.” It was that the emergency rooms will be jam-packed, the wait time will be longer than ever, so please, please don't go to the emergency room. That's an emergency, Mr. Speaker, when you can't go to the emergency room.

It's also when 100,000 people and counting do not have a family doctor. At one point, the family wait-list was actually going down. COVID-19 hit and it had some implications. We came out of COVID-19 - I shouldn't say we came out of COVID-19, but the restrictions were lifted and the people who were so successful at reducing that health care list were fired. They were fired for doing a great job. They didn't do a bad job. Doctor recruitment that we are seeing now from this government was actually done by those individuals.

We were on the cover of *Maclean's* magazine because this province was the safest in the country. We've heard from individuals in the health care system that the entire delivery system and information system when it comes to COVID-19 was one of the first things that this government dismantled. Why? Because it costs money and it is very short-sighted because the system wasn't just created for COVID-19. It was created for outbreaks of H1N1. It could be for measles, for monkeypox, for anything. But one of the first things they did was go into the health care system and dismantle it. So that is a crisis because of the short-term vision.

Nobody is asking to be locked down, but what Nova Scotians ask for is the decency and respect from a government to be given the proper information so that they can actually make informed decisions. We stood on that side of the aisle and they all but called us murderers during a time when people were passing away. Seventy-five per cent of the deaths that happened in this province happened under the watch of that government in 10 months - in 10 months, and a lot of them were seniors. A lot of them are your parents and your grandparents, and we are not hearing anything. What we hear from them is everything is okay. It's fine, it's working well. But the long-term vision of this is that we went from a

health care system that was strained, that was seeing improvements, that has been absolutely devastated.

If you don't believe me, visit an emergency room, talk to health care staff. One of the health care staff at the emergency room when I took my daughter in said I hope that no one in that government was a former health care professional. That's what they said to me. The lack of understanding of what the system needs and - we say system, we almost dehumanize it - what the people need.

They need vacations but they are not being given their vacations. They can't function on 12-hour, 14-hour, 16-hour, or 24-hour shifts, but they are being told to do that. That is an emergency and that is a crisis. Yet we are here debating MLA pay when they had an opportunity to debate a lot more, and it has just been crickets.

I understand - listen, I've been on that side. A new majority government, you are in year one, you feel bulletproof like you feel like nothing can bother you, you got it. But people remember and these things add up.

I'll tell you some more things that we should be discussing here instead of MLAs' pay. The fact that there are tens of thousands of people in Nova Scotia on income assistance who didn't see a single dime from this government. In fact, they saw a reduction. They saw a reduction in their spending power because of inflation . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the member for Halifax Atlantic to bring it back around to the bill because the last discussion was more about health care than it was about the actual bill that's on the table. Please bring it around.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I would have loved to see that money that they're saving on this bill - I would love to see that money put into income assistance. We went from having the largest increase in income assistance history, which the government in Opposition voted against, to having absolutely no increase. Yet when they stand here and they talk about the MLAs' spending power and how we make enough money, we all agree with that.

But I would ask that they at least have some decency to stand in this House and address the real issues. They just won't, and that's what is maddening. That's what's frustrating about all this. At least say you're wrong and here's the reason why. When they stand there and they speak, they talk about a handful of people here and there. I will say this: They say they're listening. They say they have to go to the supermarkets to talk to people, to get their solutions - is what we heard - and that it's going to take time to address all the crises in Nova Scotia. Yet when it comes to money and it comes to MLAs' pay, they reacted instantly, did they not?

You know what else they reacted instantly on, Mr. Speaker? When wealthy homeowners outside of Nova Scotia complained that they didn't want to pay more taxes.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I have to bring the member back to order because now we've covered Health and Wellness and Community Services. Now we're talking about a tax assessment. That has nothing to do with the members' remuneration bill, Bill No. 185, which is before us.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I hear the members across clapping for that, and I think it's sad. I mean, I respect your ruling, but I think it's sad that the only time they give a reaction is not when we talk about the crises of Nova Scotia but when we're told not to speak about it.

Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that there is a real crisis in this province and it's not MLAs' pay. There was an opportunity here in this session to talk about the real issues and to come out - if this government is really all about the public relations, there was an opportunity to really come out of this looking good. We're going to freeze MLAs' pay. We're going to actually have a discussion on what's in the report and this bill. This bill affects this report because it quashed the report. It talked about Indigenous consultation and figuring out why we don't have Indigenous representation. Maybe when they're in the grocery store, they can ask that question too. Right? That seems to be how important it is.

When this report asked why we didn't have more African Nova Scotian candidates, why they were disengaged, this was something else. We could have had a wholesome discussion about it. Instead, they concentrated on the low-hanging fruit and the shiny object, MLAs' pay, because they didn't want to have the real difficult discussions on why, why people are disengaged. Why is it difficult to have more women in politics? What's preventing more people from the LBGQTIA community from putting their names forward? Why is it that a government with a massive majority couldn't find a single person of African Nova Scotian descent to represent that department? The answers were not in that report, but they told you where to look. They told you where to go and who to ask. It wasn't Sobeys, it wasn't the Superstore. It was going into those communities and asking the real questions.

That's what sad about just dismissing this report. The other thing is, if you were going to dismiss it straight out, why even commission the report? Again, that's taxpayers' dollars that could have been spent for lots of other things, and yet they did it. Again, I think we're at almost \$1 million with the report, and being in here today, so this became a \$1 million public relations stunt. That is not your money. That is the money of Nova Scotians that was spent on this report. That was the money of Nova Scotians that was spent to be in here today.

The cynic in me would say maybe this was the long game. Maybe it was to score a couple of bumps in the poll, and points, and stuff like that. I just find it incredibly difficult

to swallow how easily and how quickly this government reacts to emergencies and crises that they think are emergencies and crises. I think when I was at the doors in the last couple of elections, the number one issue was MLAs' pay. That's what I heard at every door. Everybody talked about it. Everybody talked about the out-of-province tax. That's what they talked about because this government instantly reacted to it.

What they haven't instantly reacted to is the cost of living crisis, the inflation crisis, the gas crisis, the health care crisis, the mental health crisis, the addiction crisis. This bill shows how quickly they can react to their priorities. I will end with this. I will say that there are a lot of crises in Nova Scotia that this government pointed out when they were in opposition which they're not forgetting all about. There are more and more people living in tents, there are more and more people sending their kids to school hungry, there are more and more people not being able to heat their homes, drive a car, which at one point I think the Premier said when the gas skyrocketed that Nova Scotians could shoulder the burden.

There are a lot of crises in Nova Scotia, but the number one crisis in Nova Scotia is the crisis in leadership and lack of.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm going to be brief. I just really appreciate the comments from everybody, and I just want to get up in my place and thank everybody, staff and folks here, and everybody who I know have come back from vacation to be here for the last week, to make sure that the Legislature could run, and we can go through this process.

I do want to say on behalf of caucus, just a big thank you to all the staff and all the departments of government. Everybody goes into hyperdrive when the Legislature goes back in, they've got to prepare ministers for Question Period, or they've got to prepare policy papers, or they've got to open the Legislature and they've got to do the daily work. I do want to say that to everybody.

There's been a lot said. I gave a couple of speeches earlier this week about what I thought about the session and why we really didn't need to be here. The Leader of the NDP was absolutely 1,000 per cent accurate in her account of what it was, the agreement that was had, and the complete - really no reason for us to be here, but we are. In the end, we debated some very important issues, and I think it's important that we got a lot out on the table.

I try to remove myself as a politician, and I'm trying to put my political strategist hat on with this session, because it's like - I don't understand. Whoever thought it was a good idea for the government to come back in in the middle of the Summer to discuss MLA raises, knowing full well that there are way more important issues that we need to debate - I'm really kind of shocked at that advice to come back in.

[6:00 p.m.]

I said it in the last speech, that this was a brand. The whole thing was based on a brand. It was the brand. It was the letter that went out. It was “We’re not taking the raise,” when in actuality everybody agreed long before that letter and the brand went out that we weren’t taking the raise. It was decided well beforehand.

I also want to get on my feet to thank the panel members who wrote the hundreds of pages of recommendations to us. I don’t want that to be lost on this. We’re all voting on the same thing. We all agree that this is not the right time to do this. We know that Nova Scotians are really struggling to make ends meet right now. But they did put a lot of work and time into it, and they volunteered their time, and caucuses came forward to put forward names and they stood up to say, you know what, this is important for us, not only on the remuneration side for elected representatives but some really great advice and recommendations around diversity and representation within the House.

I’ll leave it there. I appreciate the conversations from everyone. I leave this session of the Legislature really scratching my head going, to advise to come back here - I’ll say this: Any government, regardless of political stripe, when their compass is compassion and when you go into the Legislature and you’re putting forward bills that - and you’ve done it in sessions too, where you’re fulfilling your agenda - you’re doing things to help people, whether it’s our most vulnerable or whether it’s through the economy or whatever. But the compass of this last week has been politics. Really, you could feel it from Day 1.

There have been great bills that the government has passed. I give full credit. I could provide a number of examples. But the compass when you do that was compassion. It was about doing your job. It’s why you wanted to be here. It’s why you wanted to be elected representatives. This session was a compass of politics. It was like, we’re going to go in there and we’re going to figure out what political gain we can get by doing this. I would argue that you had multiple media stories where people have apologized for comments in here, and really brought to light some of the bigger issues that are affecting Nova Scotians.

I’ll leave it there, Mr. Speaker. I hope we’re all supportive of this, but ultimately, I do want to again reiterate my thanks on behalf of caucus to all of the staff in departments and within the Legislature - a lot of them had to come off vacation to do this. I really want to thank them.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable Minister of Justice to adjourn debate, I just want to make one thing perfectly clear. A lot of reference has been made that it was the government that called for the remuneration review, but it was actually my job as Speaker, after a general election, to call for the review. I just want everybody to be clear on that.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker. I move that we close debate on Bill No. 185, an Act to Amend Chapter 1 (1992 Supplement) of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the House of Assembly Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 185.

All those in favour?

Sorry about that. The motion is to close debate on Bill No. 185. Thanks to the Clerk for that. If not, we'd be back here tomorrow.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

On behalf of everyone in the Chamber, I'd like to extend our sincere thank you to all of the Pages who worked so very hard. Of course, a huge thank you to the House staff too, who went through the heat and the hot air of all of us as well, so thank you so much. I wish everyone a fabulous Summer, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn until the call of the Speaker.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Before we do adjourn, the Lieutenant Governor is not going to be available this evening due to a previous commitment, but all necessary paperwork will be completed later on.

I'm going to break with tradition. Yesterday was Emancipation Day so I'm going to ask all the members to please rise, and I'm going to ask the honourable member for Halifax Needham to lead us in the singing of the Black National Anthem. That, in turn,

will be followed by the singing of “O Canada,” led by the honourable member for Kings West and the competition, the member for Halifax Needham.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

[The member for Halifax Needham sang “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”]

(Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West and the honourable member for Halifax Needham, “O Canada.”

[The members sang “O Canada.”]

(Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you all. Enjoy the rest of your Summer.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 6:10 p.m.]