



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2022

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine I'd like to give a Speaker's ruling from a request from yesterday.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Yesterday, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition rose on a point of order following Question Period. He referred to statements from the Office of the Premier that allegedly showed that the Premier was exercising influence over the position of Speaker and suggested that the Premier should not be immune from being questioned on a matter just because they went beyond the scope of his official responsibilities.

The scope of what may be asked during Question Period is quite broad, but it does have its limits. As I stated yesterday during Question Period, Paragraph (1) of Rule 31 explicitly states that questions put "shall relate only to the matters for which a Minister is officially responsible."

This conforms with the practice of the House of Commons in a ruling delivered by Speaker Scheer in the House of Commons on January 28, 2014. He held that:

“ . . . the Speaker must adhere to the longstanding principle that question period is intended to hold the government to account. I have to look at whether the matter concerns a government department, or a minister who is exercising ministerial functions, as a minister of the Crown, and not just as a political figure or as a member of a political party. The Speaker must ask whether the question was actually touching upon those types of government responsibilities, or whether it was about elections or party finances or some other subject unrelated to the actual administrative responsibilities of the government.”

While the ruling of Speaker Scheer focuses on what is permissible, a ruling by Speaker Parent in the House of Commons from May 2, 1994, is explicit about one of the matters upon which questions may not touch: “. . . a member may not question a minister concerning a public statement that is not directly related to his department.”

The alleged actions of the Premier and the public statements from the Premier’s Office do not relate to the administrative responsibilities of the executive branch of government. They relate solely to matters within the purview of this House. There are other channels, such as tabling a notice of motion on the matter or calling it for debate or submitting the matter as the subject for an adjournment debate, which would allow this matter to come before the House.

As for Question Period, the test is purely whether the matter comes within the minister’s official responsibility. The Speaker’s Office does not come within the responsibility of the Premier or any member of the Executive Council. Accordingly, the Premier cannot be questioned on this matter in Question Period. The issue may only be raised in this House during other proceedings appropriate for that purpose.

We’ll move on now to the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause reads as follows:

“We the undersigned, as residents of Tanglewood, Evergreen Drive Sydney, NS request the Department of Public Works pave Evergreen Drive as the road is falling into disrepair.”

I have affixed my signature as per the rules of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition.

There are 215 signatures, and the operative clause reads as follows:

“We the undersigned, as residents of Dominion, Gardiner Mines and Reserve Mines and other users of the Dominion Boardwalk request the appropriate departments including the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables and the Department of Environment and Climate Change make the Dominion Boardwalk accessible to all users by removing rocks blocking the boardwalk to allow for the full enjoyment and use of the boardwalk. We also request scheduled maintenance of the Dominion Boardwalk.”

I have affixed my signature as per the rules of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I believe, in fairness, that I might be called as a witness in this point of privilege, so I'm going to ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair and I'll excuse myself from the Chair.

[9:09 a.m. Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds assumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege - this is not something that we submit lightly - on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

Yesterday afternoon, following Question Period, the Speaker of the House offered the following public statement when asked if the Premier had asked for his resignation: Yes, he did, and his reason was that there were a couple of times that, as Speaker, I did put the Premier and government in a hard spot with some of my rulings. I will table that.

Madam Speaker, yesterday in the House, the Speaker also disallowed any line of questioning pertaining to this topic. It is important that I outline exactly what's happening here.

The Premier and the Speaker have met and continue to meet in a manner that amounts, I believe, to intimidation by the Premier over the Speaker, whereby he has asked or threatened to remove the Speaker from his position. The Premier will not answer questions publicly about this situation. In this House, the Speaker is disallowing any form of questioning or discussion of the matter.

As Speaker Bosley noted in 1996, if an honourable member is impeded or obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts, or other improper behaviours, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege. I believe, Madam Speaker, that is what we've seen happen.

My point of privilege is related to the ability of all members of this House to perform our duties as members. Due to the inappropriate effects of the Premier's actions, we as MLAs have been impeded in the performance of our parliamentary function, and this matter is directly related to a proceeding in the Legislature. As such, it is a prima facie violation of my privilege as a member and the privilege of the House as a whole.

We also submit that this question of privilege due to the gravity of the situation and its direct impact on any subsequent deliberations in the House requires an immediate decision, Madam Speaker.

We all know that the referee in any sport game plays a critical, impartial role. We know the impacts that would happen in any game if one of the coaches was able to influence the referee in favour of their team.

I hope that this point of privilege is taken seriously, and that we get a decision on it as quickly as possible. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. We're going to take a brief recess.

[9:12 a.m. The House recessed.]

[9:23 a.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. We heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition, and we've decided that I will be taking this matter under advisement and ruling at a later date.

I ask the Speaker to resume the Chair.

[9:24 a.m. Speaker Keith Bain resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We'll move on with 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 honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 388

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

Whereas foster care givers are the backbone of our child welfare system and among the most dedicated volunteers in our province, and an inspiration to all of us; and

Whereas October 16th to 22nd is Foster Family Appreciation Week, an opportunity to recognize the Nova Scotians who open their hearts and homes to children and youth; and

Whereas foster families deserve our gratitude, not just this week but every day of the year for providing vulnerable children and youth safety, security, and love;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House join me in thanking foster families for everything they do to support the children and youth who need them.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

RESOLUTION NO. 389

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

Whereas October 9th to 15th is Fire Prevention Week; and

Whereas throughout our province, thousands of volunteers and hundreds of career firefighters give selflessly to help protect residents and their communities from fires; and

Whereas all Nova Scotians have a responsibility to educate themselves about how to prevent fires and keep their families safe;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House thank all firefighters in our province and encourage all Nova Scotians to know two ways out of every room and have a plan to escape during a fire, practise that plan with their families, and ensure smoke alarms are working properly.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care.

RESOLUTION NO. 390

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

Whereas continuing care assistants are vitally important members of our province's health care team who provide a high level of care and support to many Nova Scotians in their homes, in long-term care facilities, and in other settings; and

Whereas continuing care assistants are compassionate, highly dedicated health care providers who care for and support some of the most vulnerable citizens of our province; and

Whereas these health care providers have made a significant difference in the lives of many Nova Scotians, including those they care for and their loved ones;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House take the opportunity presented by Continuing Care Assistant Week in Nova Scotia to recognize the many people who work in this vital and rewarding profession and their contribution to our province.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 203 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code. (Hon. Jill Balsler)

Bill No. 204 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998, the Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Marketing Levies. (Hon. John Lohr)

Bill No. 205 - Entitled An Act to Amend Chapter 29 of the Acts of 2014, the St. Francis Xavier University Act. (Hon. Michelle Thompson)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

RESOLUTION NO. 391

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

Whereas the Office of the Speaker acts independently of the Premier, the Office of the Premier, and the Government of Nova Scotia; and

[9:30 a.m.]

Whereas the Premier has interfered with the Speaker and compromised the integrity and independence of the Office of the Speaker; and

Whereas the Speaker is accountable to the House of Assembly, not the Premier or the Office of the Premier, making this an incident of great concern to our democracy;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be directed, as an Office of the House of Assembly, to conduct an independent review to reaffirm that the Office of the Speaker is independent from, and not answerable, to the Office of the Premier.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several noes.

The motion is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MACINTOSH ASSAULT SURVIVORS: BRAVERY - RECOG.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, a notorious convicted pedophile has arrived in Nova Scotia. Ernest Fenwick MacIntosh was seen in the Strait of Canso area, possibly visiting to deliver documents to the Port Hawkesbury Supreme Court, as part of a countersuit he has filed to sue the very people he sexually assaulted when they were young boys.

MacIntosh is a psychopath who continues to find ways to hurt the people whose innocence he stole. I make this statement so that Nova Scotians are aware of his presence and to remind him that this man's entire life has been centered around sexually assaulting children, including when he was a senior citizen.

Let us share our support in this Legislature for those six brave survivors who continue to stand and tell their stories so that other children will not have to risk contact with Ernest Fenwick MacIntosh.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

BLACKBURN, MIKE: LIFE-SAVING ACTIONS - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mike Blackburn from Brookside. On June 22nd Mike was playing hockey with his friend Shaun Brownell at the Centennial Arena in Halifax. The long-time friends have been playing hockey together several times a week for years.

Shaun was feeling weak that day but thought the exercise would be good for him, and never mentioned that he was feeling unwell to anyone. In fact, just after the first goal was scored, Shaun thought to himself, I have to pick up my game and skate a little harder.

Shortly after that thought Shaun collapsed on the ice, suffering a cardiac event. Mike, with over 30 years experience as a firefighter, and recently retired, knew that his friend needed help. Mike's decades of training and experience kicked in and without hesitation, he was by Shaun's side to perform CPR while staff located a defibrillator.

The defibrillator handed to Mike had a low battery and the machine did not have a backup battery. Staff at the rink scurried around the facility again and located a second one. The second machine also had a low battery but there was just enough battery to produce one shock. That was enough for Mike to continue CPR to get Shaun's heartbeat back to a regular rhythm.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Mike for his quick action, professional conduct, and dedication to stay by his friend's side, administering life-saving actions.

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

DAL. COASTAL HYDROL. LAB: SABLE I. RES. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: My constituency is unique in that you have to take a 90-minute flight over open ocean to get from one end to the other.

That, however, does not stop the Dalhousie Coastal Hydrology Lab from conducting new and important research on Sable Island. Dr. Barret Kurylyk's work in water resource studies is crucial to understanding how climate change and coastal hydrology intertwine.

Just last month, the team installed a series of wireless sensors at ponds around Sable Island to collect data on air temperature and humidity at the same time as data on levels, temperatures, and salinity of the ponds. They have also deployed monitoring wells to track ground water levels within aquifers. Later on this year, everyone will be able to see this data on the Dalhousie Coastal Hydrology Lab's webpage.

Mr. Speaker, could I ask all of my fellow members to join me in recognizing Dr. Kurylyk's team for this innovative project. It gives Nova Scotia one more innovative way to track and study climate change in the province's most remote area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

FIRE PREV. WK.: FIREFIGHTERS' SACRIFICES - RECOG.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: This week, from October 9th to 15th, is Fire Prevention Week, and this year's theme is: Fire won't wait. Plan your escape.

This week reminds us, regardless of where we live or work, to be best prepared to prevent and survive a fire. I also want to take this opportunity to recognize all the dedicated firefighters across our province, both career and volunteer, who make personal sacrifices daily to keep our communities safe.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment made by firefighters in my constituency from the following departments: Amiraaults Hill/ Hubbards Point; East Pubnico; Eel Brook & District; Islands & District; Kemptville & District; Lake Vaughan; Quinan & District; Wedgeport & District; and West Pubnico.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking all firefighters for everything they do for Nova Scotians in their time of need every single day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

COLE HBR. RESIDENTS: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

HON. TONY INCE: It is with great pride that I wish to acknowledge and thank all community members in my constituency of Cole Harbour.

When Fiona came roaring through our province three weeks ago, our area wasn't hit as hard as some others but there was a lot of damage still. Demonstrating the best of Nova Scotian traits, everyone came together to help clean up yards, provide a hot meal or a drink for their neighbours without power, and charge cell phones so that no one was completely cut off.

I've received many calls from people concerned about elderly neighbours who were without power and/or about hidden problems with the power lines that hard-working Nova Scotia Power line men couldn't see as they drove through the neighbourhoods fixing issues.

Everywhere I went - I drove around to help out as I could - I witnessed care, compassion, and community. Mr. Speaker, Cole Harbour isn't just lucky because we

missed the brunt of the storm, it is lucky because we have such caring neighbours who make our community a strong and wonderful place.

THE SPEAKER: Once again I'll remind members to please keep your Member Statements within the allotted time limit.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DART. LAWN BOWLS CLUB: CH'SHIP PERF. - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize members of the Dartmouth Lawn Bowls Club who, this past August, made history at the 2022 Canadian Lawn Bowling Championships in Burlington, Ontario.

Steve Ogden, along with Halifax-based teammate Steve Bezanson, won gold in the Men's Pairs, making Mr. Ogden a seven-time Canadian champion and a fifth-time champion in Men's Pairs. Raymond MacDonald and John Siteman brought home the silver medal in the Men's Fours with long-time Bridgetown-based teammates Braeden Campbell and Liam Campbell in a loss to Alberta. This team is unique in lawn bowls for debuting a team with three out of four members aged 25 years old or younger on the national stage.

Please join me in congratulating the Dartmouth Lawn Bowls Club on their amazing performance and for breaking down the age barrier in sport. Congratulations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

PETTEN, BONNIE: ALS CARE CONCERNS - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring awareness to a very serious disease: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. One of my constituents, Bonnie Petten, has been diagnosed, and this disease has progressed very rapidly.

Bonnie used to work as a registered massage therapist providing care to others, and now she requires 24/7 care. She requires a care team that understands her disease and her needs. Bonnie is a fighter and throughout her illness she's taken the time to write to me of her frustrations in trying to get the quality care that she needs.

No one should have to worry about getting proper care while going through such a horrible disease. Bonnie has asked to stay in her own home with her two furry babies but is being told that the care cannot be provided. But if she lived only 10 minutes away in New Brunswick, she would be able to stay in her home and die in her home as per her wishes. She has asked me for a miracle, and I bring her request here in the Legislature, where the power lies for her miracle to be granted.

I ask that Bonnie be allowed to die in dignity in her own home here in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

FED.-PROV.-TERR. JUST. MTGS.: N.S. HOST - RECOG.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I'm pleased to rise today to advise members of the House that over the past two and a half days, Nova Scotia has been host province for the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety.

Federal and provincial ministers of justice and public safety, solicitors general, attorneys general, their deputies, staff, as well as representatives from the Assembly of First Nations, have all come to Nova Scotia to discuss various justice issues significant to all Canadians. Court modernization, child sexual exploitation, addressing systemic racism throughout the justice system, gangs, and gun violence are all being discussed, as well as many more topics.

I'm pleased to have been able to help co-chair these important meetings, which conclude today, and I want to thank all those from jurisdictions across Canada who have come to Nova Scotia. We have had successful, productive discussions that will not only help all Canadians, but particularly all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

BENNETT, DYLAN: TAEKWONDO MEDAL WIN - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to congratulate Dylan Bennett, my part-time constituency assistant, for his medal win at the 2022 Xavier Taekwondo Championships. Dylan has been doing Taekwondo since he was eight years old. His unwavering love and dedication to the sport is inspiring.

Now, at 23 years old, he is competing at the highest level, all while attending graduate school doing his master's in political science and working part-time at my office. He is also very humble about his high skills and achievements at this sport. He's an instructor and a role model to many young people.

I would ask the House to join me in congratulating Dylan for this medal win at the championship, and I wish him well in his training for the national team trials in 2023.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

ELECT. OF 1ST RESP. GOVT.: 175TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Let us mark the fact that since the last session of this House in July, our province has marked the 175th anniversary of the election of the first responsible government in British North America on August 5, 1847.

In the 1847 election in our province, as it is commemorated on the tablet behind the government benches, a majority of MLAs was elected under the leadership of Joseph Howe, who stood for the principle that only those persons ought to be eligible to be in the Cabinet who had been chosen in an election to serve a constituency in the province. In the context of the time of international revolutionary upheaval against oligarchies in the late 1840s, the British deemed it wise to accede to this demand in Nova Scotia, which they had long resisted.

August 5, 1847 may rightly be marked as the beginning of real, effective representative democracy in Nova Scotia, and this House ought not to neglect the significance of the 175th anniversary of this date.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

FIRE PREV. WK.: FIREFIGHTERS' WORK - THANKS

HON. KIM MASLAND: This marks the 100th anniversary of Fire Prevention Week for the National Fire Protection Association, and I rise today to acknowledge and thank all the brave and selfless members of Queens County volunteer fire departments, their auxiliaries, and our junior firefighters.

Although we highlight their efforts during this week, these tireless folks work each and every day of the year to fundraise, recruit, train members, maintain equipment, and educate the community and youth, all while answering each and every call for assistance that comes in.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me as I express my sincere appreciation to all our volunteer members and thank them for their sacrifices and their commitment to the constituents of Queens.

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

PREG. & INFANT LOSS REM. DAY: AWARENESS PROM. - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: I'd like to acknowledge that tomorrow, Saturday, October 15th, in Nova Scotia is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. October 15th serves as an annual day of remembrance for pregnancy loss and infant death.

[9:45 a.m.]

As the members of the House know, I have a personal connection to this day with the loss of my granddaughter Ruby, who was stillborn in November 2020. On this day and every day, there are many ways we can support parents and remember those babies gone too soon. Say their names. Acknowledge their existence. Let parents know that they are not alone in their grief.

I'd like to invite everyone to participate in the International Wave of Light, a globally recognized event. I'd like to invite you to join other families across the world by lighting a candle tomorrow at 7 p.m. and leave it burning for one hour to remember and honour our babies, who will always light up our lives.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DAYE, MELINDA: BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate an amazing person, Ms. Melinda Daye - to most, Aunt Lynn or Lynn.

Ms. Daye is a lifelong resident of North End Halifax and daughter of Mr. Delmore "Buddy" Daye and Ms. Laura Daye. She is a renowned speaker, facilitator, organizer, and advocate, and the recipient of many national and international awards, as she has the voice of an angel. She believes these things have only caused her to look deeper within, for with this comes a sense of humility and a depth of character. She considers herself to have a serving heart, which I can attest to.

I could speak in depth about such an amazing person in my life, but that would take quite a long time, and we don't have that. I want to thank you, Lynn, for your guidance, love, and laughs, always being an honourable member of the West Sisters.

I'd like the House to join me in wishing Ms. Melinda Daye - Lynn - a happy birthday and wishing her many blessings in the years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

MACINNIS, COLLEEN: COM. SERV. - THANKS

NOLAN YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Colleen MacInnis and her team at TLC Pharmacy on recently receiving the Outstanding Performance Award for Community/Charitable Leadership, presented for her outstanding contributions to our community.

Since moving to Shelburne, Colleen and her husband Matt have made innumerable contributions to our community, including being leaders in initiating pilot projects supporting the health care needs of our residents.

I respectfully ask all members to join me in thanking Cyclone Colleen, as her husband lovingly refers to her, for her commitment to the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

SYD. MINES FIRE DEPT.: HURR. SUPP. - RECOG.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, as I previously mentioned, I'll be spending the next couple of days thanking and recognizing groups in my community who stepped up during Hurricane Fiona. Two of those groups I'll recognize today.

The Sydney Mines Fire Department: This group of extremely dedicated volunteers, even though they have not been approved for a comfort centre for reasons I can't understand, stepped up and provided tea and coffee for residents 24/7 during this hurricane.

Audrey MacDougall and her members of the Sydney Mines Food Bank approached the fire department with an idea to feed the citizens of Sydney Mines, and they came together and put on a barbeque for over 500 residents of Sydney Mines. It was no easy task, but they pulled together, like they always do, and did a wonderful thing for the citizens of our community. I thank them so much for that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

N.S. POWER: RATE INC. HEARINGS - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, when Hurricane Fiona hit Nova Scotia on September 23rd - 24th, this Province's Utility and Review Board was in the midst of hearing Nova Scotia Power's general rate application for rate increases of over 11 per cent. I attended the hearings with my colleague, the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

Even before Fiona and the ensuing power outages, constituents were contacting my office in opposition to the rate increase. One of these people was Lisa Dudka. Lisa wrote to me to say that the proposed rate increase would add up to an additional \$264 per year for her family. As a single parent and sole provider, Lisa would otherwise spend that money on her child, food, or even savings. High housing costs, poverty-level wages, and increases to food and other costs of living are making it hard for Nova Scotians, including Lisa, to continue to survive, let alone thrive.

As Lisa wrote in her email to me, when do Nova Scotians say enough is enough to Nova Scotia Power's rate increases? I hope, Mr. Speaker, that answer is now.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

SENIORS HOUSING: NEED FOR ALT. POWER - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring awareness to our seniors in housing.

Many of our seniors were without power during the storm and buildings either did not have a generator or the generator needed repair or in some cases didn't get filled with gas. Some of our seniors need power for health reasons such as home dialysis or oxygen or even having a lifeline in case of an emergency.

Due to mobility issues, some of the residents could not leave the building, as there was no access to the elevator without power, and many of my local community members rose to help those in need by checking in on them and providing hot meals to encourage them during this difficult time.

It is very important that our seniors have the comfort that they will have an alternative power source in the event of a power outage. I am looking forward to seeing changes by the government to ensure that this event of our seniors not having access to power does not happen in future storms.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

105.9 SEASIDE FM RADIO: 20TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 105.9 Seaside FM radio station for celebrating 20 years broadcasting from right here in Eastern Passage, my hometown.

On August 6, 2022, at the Fisherman's Cove Heritage Centre, Seaside FM celebrated the 20th anniversary along with many members of our community. This not-for-profit community radio station was founded by Wayne Harrett and has been serving the HRM area since 2002. Seaside has reached an audience of over 30,000 loyal listeners.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating 105.9 Seaside FM on their success over the past 20 years, and we want to wish Seaside FM many more entertaining years giving back to the community they love so much.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

LEBLANC, SOPHIE: VOL. OF YR. AWD. RECIP. - RECOG.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, every year our municipality names one of its residents Volunteer of the Year. Sophie LeBlanc, this year's honouree, has a lengthy list of organizations where she volunteers, a list she accumulated at a very young age.

Nominated by the Société acadienne de Clare, this 16-year-old student has been a member of the SAC board for the past two years. She has also taken a lead role in its youth committee and is committed to developing projects with her peers. Sophie also volunteers at the Clare Special Olympics, Helene's School of Dance, Clare Minor Soccer Association, Jeune Femmes en Action Nouvelle Écosse, and her school, École Secondaire de Clare.

I ask that all members join me in recognizing Sophie LeBlanc on receiving this award and encouraging her to continue being involved in her community.

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

WHIT. PIER GRP.: MELTING POT SPKRS. SERIES - THANKS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Whitney Pier Group's Melting Pot Speaker Series. As many in the House are aware, Whitney Pier is one of the most culturally diverse communities east of Montreal. The series honours cultures through guests recalling the history, foods, and music. The Polish, Italian, African Nova Scotian, and Ukrainian residents were on board for this one. Each night was a different culture, different speaker, and different experience.

Polish night was Maura Lea Morykot. Italian night was Paul MacDougall. On African Nova Scotian night, it was Lillian Marsman and Noreen MacKinnon, and I was proudly honoured to have our Nova Scotia NDP Leader to participate with us. I will say that we were entertained on our anniversary of the election by Mike Morrison and Joe Parris and their band. On Ukrainian night, it was Father Roman, who shared stories of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine as a chaplain to the 70 men and women in Ukraine.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Whitney Pier group for this beautiful series.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

DIGBY CARE 25: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, today I recognize an incredible organization called Digby Care 25.

Digby Care 25 is an organization led by women bringing together other women in the community four times a year to raise money for charity. Members have quarterly

meetings and listen to presentations from registered charity organizations within the communities of Digby, the Islands, Annapolis, Bear River, and Weymouth.

After listening to all the presentations, members get to vote on which charity they would like to give their night's donation to. Each member donates at least \$25 at each meeting. Recently, the Digby Splash Park received \$3,320 in donations. The Digby Care 25's mission is to make positive change one \$25 donation at a time.

I am pleased to say that they have made a significant impact in their communities. I want to thank all members of Digby Care 25. I would also like to thank Michelle Levings and Debbie Haight for their incredible work organizing this great group of women.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

EAST COAST CONCH REST. & BAR: OPENING - CONGRATS.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate owner Leo Morris, head chef Dale Pickstock, Jr., and their entire team on the recent opening of the new East Coast Conch Restaurant and Bar in my riding of Bedford South.

This new restaurant is one-of-a-kind in Atlantic Canada and is an exciting addition to the diverse and wonderful restaurants in our community. It offers food specialties well-loved in the Bahamas, with a focal point on conch salad and a range of different seafoods.

This new small business adds to the economic vibrancy of the area and provides a warm, welcoming place to gather for some great times while building and strengthening our social community.

I would encourage everyone to drop by and enjoy some great Bahamian cuisine. Please join me in extending our best wishes for every success to East Coast Conch Restaurant and Bar.

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

ASSOC. OF N.S. MUSEUMS: MEDAL RECIPS. - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, there is no better place to learn about Nova Scotian culture and communities in my riding than one of the many museums located in downtown Halifax. This Fall, the Association of Nova Scotia Museums presented Her Late Majesty's Platinum Jubilee medals to Nova Scotians who have made their museums a richer and more inclusive learning environment.

From my constituency I would like to recognize Eamonn Doorly of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic; Joleen Gordon, Penny Harvey and Dr. Roger Lewis of the Nova

Scotia Museum; Stephanie Smith of Archives, Museums & Libraries; and Karin Kierstead of the Association of Nova Scotia Museums itself.

I invite my colleagues to join me in congratulating these Platinum Jubilee recipients for their work in preserving our province's communities and culture, and for those who work in museums across Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

SAMSON, BOBBY & DEBBIE: COM. SERV. - THANKS

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a very special couple from Louisdale, in Richmond. Bobby and Debbie Samson have been very active in their community for many years. They are the parents of four children and the grandparents of 10.

The community of Louisdale has been very fortunate to have benefited from the dedicated service that has included too many volunteer hours to count. Their work ethic, commitment, and love of their community has been noticed and appreciated by young and old. This past Spring, they were presented with an award in recognition from St. Louis Parish in appreciation for all their efforts.

On behalf of the community of Louisdale and all of Richmond County, I would like to offer Bobby and Debbie Samson a huge congratulations and thank you, and wish them continued health and happiness in their future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

THE CROW'S NEST REST.: SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, we are lucky in Annapolis to have so many excellent restaurants. Today I'd like to take a moment to highlight one of them. The Crow's Nest in Hillsburn is a hidden gem in Annapolis County. Jackie and Peter Longmire opened the restaurant on January 3, 2015, and it quickly built a reputation as one of the best places around. More and more customers travel from great distances to enjoy the delicious food and beautiful setting overlooking the Bay of Fundy.

In 2016 Jackie and Peter opened their second restaurant in Digby, also known as The Crow's Nest. Presently they employ 36 dedicated staff members in both restaurants.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the Longmires, the entire Crow's Nest team, for their commitment to providing great food and service and contributing to the economic success of our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Halifax Needham.

HALI DELI: SHARING HOSPITALITY - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: Today I rise to recognize a long-time business in Halifax Needham, Hali Deli on Agricola Street. It has been there for as long as I can remember and for the owners, Victor and Sybil Fineberg, deli food is simple food from Eastern Europe, Lithuania, Russia, and Hungary. Many deli items were developed out of a necessity as Jewish people migrated from country to country.

The kitchen was the centre of the Jewish home. The kitchen and the stove is where it began. The wonderful aromas would hit you as you walked through the front door. “You must be hungry,” “Try this,” “Try that”: Those were all too familiar shouts as Victor and Sybil walked into the kitchen. Both of them were so fortunate to have grown up in families where food, entertaining, and hospitality played a major role in their upbringing. They would watch their mothers prepare daily and holiday meals.

For years their family homes have hosted many friends, families, visitors and students from away, which is why I would like to ask all members of this Assembly to help me in thanking Victor and Sybil Fineberg for sharing their family recipes and hospitality with all of us who love to eat at Hali Deli on Agricola Street.

THE SPEAKER: Rather than recognize another speaker, we’ll just wait another 10 seconds and move into Question Period.

The honourable member for Lunenburg wants to make one short statement.

SON, NATHAN: BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for indulging me as I wish a happy birthday to my eldest son, Nathan Greek, who turned 24 earlier this week.

THE SPEAKER: The time for Statements by Members has expired.

[10:00 a.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - NEED A FAM. PRAC. REG.: NUMBERS - RELEASE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Need a Family Practice Registry numbers are meant to be released within the first five business days of every month. However, now we're almost halfway through October and we've still yet to see the new numbers.

I understand that this count has grown each month over the course of the last year, and at last count, the number of people who needed a family doctor in Nova Scotia was at 110,000. Obviously, that's not a good story for a government that promised to fix health care, but withholding information from Nova Scotians doesn't make the problem go away.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Why is the government withholding information from the Need a Family Practice Registry?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Obviously, we're concerned about the number of Nova Scotians on that list, for sure. I want to remind Nova Scotians that having a family doctor is a goal. We want every Nova Scotian to have a family doctor. We want every Canadian to have a family doctor. But the world is also changing. There are additional ways to access care: Virtual Care NS, walk-in clinics. We want Nova Scotians to know that there are many ways to access care.

We're concerned about the list, but there are many ways to access care. We'll continue to invest in initiatives, like we invested in this week with Dalhousie Family Medicine. We will continue to do that. We are committed to making sure Nova Scotians can access the health care they need when they need it.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Since the government has taken office, over 50,000 more Nova Scotians have been applied to that list. Now we are seeing the list not being released on time, so Nova Scotians don't know what's happening with it.

I heard the Premier, when he was Leader of the Opposition, leverage that list thousands of times, literally, when it was around 70,000. Now that he's in government, he's actually brought into question the validity of the Need a Family Practice Registry, and I'll table that. He stated, "How accurate the actual number is, I don't know."

The Premier leveraged these numbers in Opposition to make his political point. Why is he bringing into question the validity of that list and withholding the most updated numbers from Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: The full quote goes on to say that regardless of the number on that list, we know there's an issue and we are committed to fixing it. I will say this: that the former Minister of Health and Wellness knows a thing or two about withholding information from Nova Scotians, because that's exactly that they did for a number of years. We will not do that.

I encourage the member to simply google Action for Health Nova Scotia. They will see more statistics on what is happening on our health care system than they can possibly consume.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier is fixated on the five months that I served as Minister of Health and Wellness. I'll remind the Premier that he's been in twice as long, and the situation has gotten twice as bad. Do the math.

This government also ran on accountability. This Need a Family Practice Registry was brought in by the previous government. It's in there to have accountability with the public so we know how many people need a doctor in the province and where they need them, yet we have not had the Premier tell this House today when the updated numbers are going to be released. They're supposed to be released at the beginning of every month.

Can the Premier please tell us why they're not releasing these numbers?

THE PREMIER: The reality is that we've always been clear with Nova Scotians. It will take time to fix this. When you do five months of doing nothing as the Minister of Health and Wellness, problems get bigger and bigger.

We have a big issue to solve in this province. The former Minister of Health and Wellness is a big part of the reason we have such a problem to solve in this province. I would just remind him, if he wants to google Action for Health, he will see many statistics on what's happening in our health care system. I encourage him to do that.

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

PREM.: COST OF LIVING - ASSIST

CLAUDIA CHENDER: My question is for the Premier. Arthur Gaudreau, the author of the blog *Halifax ReTales*, has been tracking the cost of groceries for years. He's found that prices at major grocery chains have increased by 45 per cent in five years.

Thanksgiving this past weekend was a painful reminder for too many families that they are teetering on the edge of a cliff. Despite this, the Premier has done less than every other premier in the country to help with rising costs.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Why is he not doing anything to immediately help families with the skyrocketing cost of living?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're extremely concerned about affordability for Nova Scotians. We know Nova Scotians are struggling. We know Canadians are struggling. This is something we're extremely concerned about.

This is exactly why we're making changes that are sustainable in the long-term - increasing the wages of CCAs, addressing the issue of wages for ECEs and other Nova Scotians, the MOST program, the Seniors Care Grant. We will continue to support Nova Scotians in sustainable ways. Nova Scotians know that.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we spoke about Allan Smith, whose household faces hundreds of dollars of drug costs each month. He said: With the rising costs of food, gas, and power, getting a break on Pharmacare fees would make a big difference to our monthly bills and improve things for lots of other seniors I know in the same situation.

Mr. Speaker, as our health care system continues to deteriorate, what are the Premier's plans to ensure that seniors can afford to take their prescriptions, stay healthy, and stay out of hospital? Unlike the last time I asked this, I will remind the Premier that the Seniors Care Grant doesn't do it.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, obviously, stories like that are concerning. I hear them every day when I speak to Nova Scotians and meet with seniors' groups, as does the minister. We're concerned about affordability in this province.

I think initiatives like the Seniors Care Grant - which I believe is up to \$1,000 now - help with other expenses. Any time you can help somebody with their whole entirety of household expenses in any little way matters to them. We will continue to look for ways to support all Nova Scotians, including seniors, for sure. We'll continue to look for ways to do that.

I think that everybody knows that there is a big affordability crunch hitting Nova Scotians and Canadians. We want to help them where we can.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked the Premier about this, he said, ". . . of course we want everyone to take the prescriptions that have been issued to them by health care professionals. Of course, every Nova Scotian wants that." Indeed, we all want that, but it's not happening.

In a survey, Feed Nova Scotia found that the cost of prescription medication had a discernible effect on respondents' food insecurity. Fifty-six per cent stated that they had to sacrifice spending on food to pay for prescriptions. Thirty per cent found that it impacted their affordability of housing and heating, while 19 per cent curbed their leisure time due to the cost of prescription medications.

The Premier said he's looking for solutions and he's listening. I didn't get an answer yesterday, so I'll ask the Premier again: If he wants every Nova Scotian to take their medication, why is he choosing not to help them do it?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the premise of the question. Nobody is choosing to not help Nova Scotians. In fact, we're choosing to help Nova Scotians in every way we possibly can.

The review of Pharmacare, the review of Seniors' Pharmacare, the review of the formulary are things that are critically important. They're in the minister's mandate letter. We'll continue to look at that. We want to support Nova Scotians in every way we can and it's a big task. It's an important task. We have to do it in a sustainable way that really gets to the crux of the matter. That's where our focus is.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: NEED A FAM. PRAC. REG. DATA - UPDATE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I recently met with health care professionals in my home community in Yarmouth and they informed me that they expect the Need a Family Practice Registry to go up by 10,000 people in the next four years in Yarmouth alone. We're hearing from health care professionals who expect that number to be close to 150,000 by Christmastime.

That's almost half the local population in Yarmouth. For the first time, we're seeing these numbers increase in Halifax in a very dramatic way. Is this why the Premier is withholding this information from the public?

THE PREMIER: I want to assure the member that there's nothing being withheld from the public. That's absolutely untrue. It's unparliamentary to suggest that something's being withheld, as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker.

What I would say is that we want to be very open and transparent about what's happening in our health care system. That's why we have the Action for Health plan. That's why we have the first publicly released plan on what's possible in the health care system. That's why we have Action for Health. That's why we have the first publicly released plan on what's possible in the health care system.

I want to remind Nova Scotians that the Need a Family Practice Registry is an important measurement for sure. It's something we look at for sure, but it doesn't mean that you don't have access to care. Access to care comes in many forms and in the future will continue to come in many forms.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We see the Premier trying to play Speaker again in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

We have asked several times when this wait-list is going to be updated. We are weeks behind when it is supposed to be. Yet the Premier says he's not withholding this

information from the public. We have seen this with COVID-19. When COVID-19 got worse, the information was reduced. As this gets worse, the information is reduced.

Is the Premier's action plan on health care just to sweep all the data under the rug, I wonder?

THE PREMIER: I want to assure the member that there is nothing being withheld from Nova Scotians. We are very open and transparent about what's happening in our health care system. I encourage the member to take a review of the Action for Health page and then come back, and we can have a meaningful discussion about the disclosure of information. There are issues in our health care system. There are challenges in our health care system. We know that. We accept that, and we're working on it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

DHW: SURGERY DELAYS - EXPLAIN

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I recently received an email from a Nova Scotian visiting Cumberland County who broke their leg during the hurricane. The Nova Scotian called an ambulance at 9:50 a.m. and made it to the Amherst hospital at 2:00 p.m. They of course praised the incredible staff at the hospital for doing exceptional work. She waited five days in Amherst to be transferred to Aberdeen Hospital for surgery. When they arrived at Aberdeen, they were told by the staff that the surgeon and the staff had been waiting days for the arrival of this patient, but there was no ambulance available to transfer this patient.

The health care workers are doing everything and more they can with the extreme pressures they are under. However, no amount of this government's talk is going to distract Nova Scotians from the fact that there is a health care crisis. Does the Premier think that this is an example of the remarkable health care system?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with EHS. I'm not familiar with the facts of that case. It's certainly something I'm not willing to discuss on the floor of the Legislature.

I can tell you that there have been a number of changes that have gone very well with EHS. One of the things that has been happening is we have hired almost 180 transport drivers. We have reduced the non-urgent transfers from 86 per cent in September 2021 to 22 per cent in September 2022. Our goal is to reach 5 per cent.

We now have a medical coms director who helps paramedics work in the field. They help triage and prioritize care. Actually, four out of ten patients now no longer need to be triaged and transferred to the hospital as a result of the doctor and the boss that we have. There are a number of changes, and we continue to make more.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: It's becoming a trend here in the House that the Premier is refusing to answer questions put forward to him by the MLAs and outside the House by the media, so I'll redirect.

In this case, the surgeon and the staff were ready to perform the necessary surgery on this patient. The problem was that there were no ambulances able to transfer this patient. Stories like this result in severe negative impacts to people across this province. This is not remarkable, and no amount of so-called positive thinking is going to change the fact that health care in this province is in crisis.

My question - since the Premier won't answer - to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Is she aware that people are having surgeries delayed because of the lack of ambulances across this province? What would she say to this individual and many more Nova Scotians who wait in pain and discomfort for life-altering surgeries?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, I want to let Nova Scotians know that there is a tremendous amount of work that's happening in health care with a system that we inherited that had been neglected for at least eight years. I know that because I worked in it every day. They can say all they want that they were attending to health care. I worked it. I lived it, and I understand it.

I have been working very hard with the people in this government and in the Department of Health and Wellness and Nova Scotia Health Authority, and we are all in. There are a number of excellent initiatives that are happening to undo what has been done by the previous government, and I am confident in our ability to deliver for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DHW: HEALTH CARE - ACTION

HON. KELLY REGAN: It's clear this government has no real plan to provide improved access to primary care. They have run through recruiters, fired a highly regarded doctor who was head of the health authority and replaced him with a Tory lawyer. The Premier's actual plan appears to be to fire anybody who doesn't agree with him. I would encourage him, by the way, to come to Bedford and try to get into a walk-in clinic, because you can't.

Can the Premier please outline when Bedford and area will see more doctors arrive and set up practice?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Some of the initiatives that we've done to increase access: First of all, we do continue to recruit and retain, and we've seen a bumper crop of physicians this year. We had 163 recruited to the area. We continue to work in the

community. We have an upcoming tour to talk to folks about what are the plans that are happening in their areas. We continue to recruit.

[10:15 a.m.]

There is access through a number of different initiatives. We actually tested and tried recently a mobile clinic in Membertou, which was absolutely excellent. We're working at optimizing family physician practices, as you've seen with Dalhousie Family Medicine clinics, which allowed them to take 3,500 people off the list. The work has just started. I'm very confident.

KELLY REGAN: I would just let the Minister of Health and Wellness know that it is a long way from Membertou to Bedford, so you want to bring the mobile clinic? Folks would be really happy to have it.

Look, I get it. The Premier has told us he's an accountant. He's the very highest level of accountant and surely an accountant of such high achievement can figure out that if more people are moving to an area, you're going to need more services, and those services include primary care. In the Bedford-Sackville-Hammonds Plains area, the number of people needing primary care has risen 1,111 per cent, and I'll table that.

That's not 1,111 individual people. That's 1,111 per cent, and that is a crisis. Does the Premier think that this kind of percentage increase of Nova Scotians needing primary care is acceptable?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I think what the member is talking about is actually the neglect of the former government to plan for this crisis with retirement and the influx of people. You might remember the adage, the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. Today we are recruiting physicians. We have increased training seats. We are in recruitment. There have been 163 physicians come to this province, and I'm very confident in our ability and the initiatives that are under way to support the people in the member's constituency.

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

MAH: C.B. DISASTER RELIEF - ACTION

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Cape Bretoners have shown again and again incredible depths of resilience as we continue to deal with the fallout of Hurricane Fiona. Federal funds clearly cover the removal of hazardous material from private property, but CBRM still has 800-plus requests from the public for support that pertain to debris removal.

As the mayor has said, it's not enough to promise money and walk away. The government needs to step in now. Will the minister tell the people of Cape Breton exactly what he's doing to make sure this gets done?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I can tell the House that we have been in conversations with Public Safety Canada in terms of what is covered by the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements program. We have as recently as just last night learned that tree debris removal will be covered under two conditions: applicants must first have accessed the \$250 provincial fund, which we've announced and made available, for which receipts are required to get that fund; and the second condition is that the dwelling owner must prove that they did not have insurance for that particular incident, for tree debris removal.

It's good news for the province of Nova Scotia, not only for CBRM, but for all the other counties that have been very severely affected, everybody who's been affected by Hurricane Fiona, that this is covered.

KENDRA COOMBES: I can assure the minister that not many people have this kind of coverage, and I can also tell you that the \$250 should be more like \$3,000 plus.

A constituent of mine who is waiting for help removing trees from her property after the hurricane was told by a CBRM councillor that CBRM has no money and there's nothing more he can do. Two provincial workers who stopped by in response to a 311 call also said there was nothing they could do, as it required special equipment. They gave her the number of Christian Aid Ministries Canada.

There are hundreds of other residents in similar situations, waiting and waiting for help from this government. Trees are on their homes. My question to the minister is: What is the provincial government's message to Cape Bretoners who are still waiting for help?

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, not only Cape Bretoners but people in Pictou County, Antigonish, Cumberland, Colchester, our message to them is to apply for the \$250 tree trim removal program. We realize that is inadequate for a massive tree, clearly, and apply for the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements Program.

These are backstops, these will help the public, and help the removal of these issues. I am very pleased to be able to announce that this morning.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DHW: URGENT TREAT. CTR. - EXPLAIN

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a promise to fix health care but many of my constituents feel like the situation has gotten worse. A recent announcement tells us that the collaborative emergency centre will be transitioning to an

urgent treatment centre, thereby removing hospital-based emergencies from our community.

From talking to local physicians, I understand that the collaborative emergency centre was no longer sustainable, due to deficiencies in physician staffing, nurse staffing, diagnostic technician staffing and EHS support.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: What did the Nova Scotia Health Authority and this government do to attempt to address these challenges and save the emergency centre before resorting to the current model?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to ensure the member opposite that we are very aware of the concerns in the constituency. Certainly, there was recently a public information session in order to hear the concerns.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority and the Department of Health and Wellness worked closely with the physicians to try to identify a model that was sustainable for them so that we don't reduce services completely. We do have very generous recruitment incentives for physicians to come to rural communities. We continue to work with EHS around what type of services can be offered in that community, and the commitment is there to continue to work to improve the services to folks in the member's constituency.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, prior to this decision to transition from the collaborative emergency centre to the urgent treatment centre, the emergency centre was closed for months due to staffing shortages. During that time, I was told that all models of health care delivery would be considered.

My question to the minister is: Will the minister provide details on what other models were being considered for this facility and why the urgent treatment centre was considered the best fit?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: There have been a number of innovations that have happened across the province in terms of what are the potential models that allow folks to have primary care. We have things like the urgent treatment centres, as you mentioned, that allow people to come with non-urgent - issues that come up that can't be predictable.

We also have very good models with nurse practitioners and pharmacies that allow people to have access to primary care. We look at the utilization of how a facility is used and what is the best service we can provide to folks.

We also look at things like spare units, with the paramedics, where one paramedic can treat and release somebody, under the direction of a physician, in the medical comms centre.

There is a variety of ways we can support communities. What is very important is that we tailor it to the community to ensure they have the best access to care.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DHW: 24-HR. URGENT CARE - COMMIT

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, the residents of Clayton Park West are anxiously waiting for the opening of the new Bayers Lake QEII Community Outpatient Centre, which is a key part of the QEII redevelopment project.

My constituency and all the adjacent constituencies in Halifax West are growing so fast and the wait times are growing even faster at the emergency departments. As well, I would like to tell the minister that our government planted the seed 10 years ago for this redevelopment and she will be opening those three developments.

My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Will the minister commit to adding a small part, which is an urgent care centre that is open 24 hours, to service this huge number of people who are moving to Halifax West?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Just to reassure the member that the Bayers Lake QEII Community Outpatient Centre does deliver primary care services, ambulatory care services, dialysis, DI, and other blood collection. We currently are staying within the scope of that project.

I have answered that question many times in the House. We continue to look at what services are available in Metro, as well as across the province and we will continue the dialogue. As of now, there is no change in the scope of that development.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Walk-in clinics, as the Premier mentioned, in my constituency of Clayton Park West - you need to go to four or five and then go home in pain without medication and without help. That is what walk-in clinics in Clayton Park West are like right now. That is one.

Also, urgent care - Halifax is expanding so much, and no attention is being paid. Halifax is forgotten by this new government for the number of people who are moving here. We need help. Our constituencies are . . .

THE SPEAKER: Is there a question?

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Yes. I want a commitment from the minister that 24-hour urgent care is going to go to the Bayers Lake QEII Community Outpatient Centre.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to work with the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the Department of Health and Wellness around looking at models of care throughout the province. Again, I will reiterate that there is no change to the scope of that program at this time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DHW: HEALTH CARE RECRUIT. SUPP. - ELAB.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, a few months ago the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care announced that her constituency was getting a doctor. Unfortunately, the minister had to later announce to her constituents that the doctor was not going to be coming. We know that this province is in need of more health care professionals. It is critical to make sure that young health care professionals - all professionals - and their families feel welcome and wanted in Nova Scotia.

Can the Minister of Health and Wellness please elaborate on what supports and initiatives exist for families of health care professionals recruited to this province to make sure that they feel like they can call Nova Scotia home?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: In addition to the recruiters whom we have, shared between the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, we work really hard to identify physicians for certain communities.

What's really important is that we ensure that they are a good match. Many of the municipalities across this province have navigators who help settle families as well as working with Minister Balser in the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration for internationally educated physicians.

We've had a couple of excellent announcements recently. We did do some work with the Ukrainian nationals in order to help them settle and the Nova Scotia Health Authority has a number of people who work with Ukrainian families and physicians and health care workers to come and settle.

So there are a number of initiatives that are undertaken. We're really pleased with those and feel that they've been a very positive step in recruitment.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I'm happy to hear that there are initiatives. I hope, and I would encourage the minister to ensure, that one of the initiatives is to be culturally competent. It's an enormous amount of fundamental work to make sure that there are good matches, but if they're not culturally competent - it's not only about the personal networks of the families. It's about the recruitment and retention of doctors here. I've heard in my constituency and in my area that health care professionals are struggling not only with their families being integrated into community, but also their networks and referral services.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is the Minister of Health and Wellness doing to recruit the team to develop more extensive retention plans?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: There is no one-size-fits-all in terms of settling people. We really need to understand where they are. It needs to be tailored to the physicians.

As an example, the Dalhousie Family Medicine clinic just opened a proof of concept where new physicians come in and they work in an environment where they panel up, take on a number of patients over a period of six to 12 months, they work with a health care team, and then they're transitioned, with support, out into the community to take on their own practice is one example.

When we look at the Ukrainian national health care workers who are coming to our province, we actually hired folks from Ukraine, as well, to work with and speak with them in Ukrainian in order to bridge that gap.

We are doing a number of initiatives between the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the Department of Health and Wellness around a health equity framework not only to ensure access for Nova Scotians but also to make sure that physicians are supported in their work environment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DCS: UNHOUSED SENIORS NUMBERS - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Earlier this week there was a media report, which I'll table, about a 65-year-old woman who found herself shocked that it was the first time in her life that she was without a roof over her head other than the one she had come to access at the Open Arms shelter in Kentville. Her experience indicates a new dimension about homelessness in the province, and that is the number of those who are unhoused who are seniors.

In that most recent point-in-time count of homelessness in the province, which I'll table - of the 586 people counted in the HRM, 87 were over the age of 60. That's 15 per cent.

Does the Premier agree with me that this is an indictment and a scandal?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: The Department of Community Services takes the issue of homelessness and making sure that individuals find permanent housing solutions seriously. That is why this government has invested \$17 million in this last budget. We continue to work with our service providers across this province, ensuring that we find permanent solutions to housing, but our investments continue in shelters and other facilities that house individuals until we can find them a permanent solution.

[10:30 a.m.]

GARY BURRILL: One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that the point-in-time count of the homeless does is ask each person they speak with if this is the first time that they have found themselves unhoused. Of those in the HRM in the most recent count for whom homelessness was a new experience in their lives, right now more than 25 per cent are seniors.

What I asked the Premier is simply this: Does he agree with me that this is an outrage?

KARLA MACFARLANE: We know that there is a housing crisis in the province of Nova Scotia. We know that this government continues to make substantial financial investments into housing and supportive housing. We continue to work with housing navigators, with municipalities.

I want to reassure everyone, when we speak about that point-in-time count - as the member indicated, there were 500-some on the list. Those individuals aren't homeless. Those individuals are in shelters. They're being cared for. (Interruption) They are being cared for if they want to be. My point is that we will continue to find them permanent housing, but they are being looked after right now if they want to be.

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

DHW - PREG.-RELATED DEATHS: IDENT. PROCESS - REVIEW

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, tomorrow marks the National Day of Remembrance for Pregnancy and Infant Loss. From 2000 to 2020, at least 523 women died from complications of pregnancy or childbirth, and I'll table that. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada predicts that the number of women who die from pregnancy-related causes is significantly higher than what is reported to Stats Canada. The number is likely well over 800. Provinces and territories count maternal deaths differently. Seven provinces are not reviewing them at all.

My question for the Minister of Health and Wellness: What is the current process to identify pregnancy-related deaths, and will she commit to reviewing the current process?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, through our obstetricians and gynecologists in the province and certainly through the quality and safety work that happens at Nova Scotia Health Authority, deaths are monitored. There would also be Canadian standards by which we measure those unfortunate and untimely deaths.

I would have to get more information about the exact process for the member, but I do know that we watch it carefully not only at the IWK, which is our centre of excellence

for high-risk pregnancy, but also in our rural communities and regional hospitals where we have obstetricians and gynecologists.

LORELEI NICOLL: While I appreciate that response, Canada does poorly in collecting this data. I would strongly encourage the minister to look into it further. For every mother who dies in Canada, 85 to 100 come close to dying. Eclampsia and pre-eclampsia are leading causes of pregnancy complications. Women across the country, including here in Nova Scotia regardless of where they live in the province, are often left in the dark on pre-eclampsia. Without proper care or awareness, it can be fatal, and it is.

What is this government doing to ensure that women who are experiencing pre-eclampsia are diagnosed properly and are being treated with immediate action?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: There are a number of things that happen. It's very important that our primary care providers - also some of the Open Arms Clinics, folks like that - do regular screenings to look for folks who are experiencing pre-eclampsia, looking for early warning signs in order to ensure that we identify women who are high risk for pre-eclampsia and eclampsia.

It's very important that those folks are referred to obstetrics and gynecology to get specialized care, and it's important that when they transition to hospital that the nursing staff, particularly, are aware of the pre-hospital diagnosis in order to ensure that they're cared for.

So there are a number of protocols that are in place for pre-eclamptic and eclamptic women, and I know that the health care workers adhere to those, and it's tracked through quality data at Nova Scotia Health and the IWK.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DHW: MAMMOGRAM BOOKINGS - EXPAND

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mammograms are a vital health screening service that is necessary for early detection and prevention of breast cancer. However, right now women who are younger are having an extremely difficult time accessing mammogram bookings. The best way to save lives and provide good care is to make sure that we are investing and increasing investment in preventive care, not just addressing acute care.

Can the Minister of Health and Wellness explain what they are doing to expand crucial services like mammograms and breast cancer screenings?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: There are guidelines about when all of us should start to undertake particular cancer screening as an example. There are mobile breast units throughout the province that reach out to folks in communities who may find it difficult to

travel, and we also have mammogram services available in a variety of hospitals throughout the province. We continue to look at the evidence, make sure that our clinical standards are aligned with that, and if there's a particular person that you're concerned about, I'd be happy to speak with you after.

IAIN RANKIN: There is a particular cohort that I'm concerned about and it's young women. A 33-year-old woman in my community was unable for an extended period of time to access a mammogram despite finding a lump in one of her breasts, an early sign of what was eventually diagnosed as an invasive carcinoma. I agree with her words completely: Cancer doesn't have an age limit, and mammogram bookings shouldn't either.

To the Minister of Health and Wellness: What changes will this government make to our mammogram booking system to ensure that young women are able to access this essential service?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, there are clinical guidelines that we ask our primary health care providers to adhere to in order to make sure that we are screening people at an appropriate age. If there's a clinical finding that happens during an exam with a primary care provider, there are always avenues for which they can identify and raise the alarm that maybe somebody at a different age would require that.

It may not be that we drop the entire age, but maybe it is an opportunity for us to do increased education with primary care providers about how we identify and triage people to make sure that if they don't meet that basic age requirement, or whatever the screening requirements are, that they're clear on how to increase the triage score in order to make sure that people are seen in a timely fashion.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW: CUMB. NURSING RECRUITMENT - REVIEW

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is for the honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

The emergency department and ICU at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre in Upper Nappan is experiencing an extreme shortage of nursing staff. The emergency room is providing care with just under half of the nursing positions filled, while the ICU has only 40 per cent of the nursing positions filled. This number could dip as low as 34 per cent in the month of December if more nursing positions aren't filled. Meanwhile, our neighbours next door in New Brunswick are offering hiring incentives for nurses that are making it even harder to retain, as well as attract, new nurses to the Cumberland area.

Will the minister commit to reviewing and making changes in the hiring of nurses, as well as retention incentives, to ensure that Nova Scotia is at the very least equal to or on the same equal footing as our neighbours in New Brunswick?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to work with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment and the primary employer, which is the Nova Scotia Health Authority, around how we can best attract nurses to the province and how we can keep people staying in their position longer when they reach the age of retirement.

Part of the issue that's happening right now in the hospital is that there is an outbreak amongst the staff and not everybody is able to be at work, so it's not a true reflection of the actual number of vacancies in both of those departments. Fortunately, they're cross-trained, which is another important part in order for us to ensure that we have adequate access to critical care throughout the province.

There are a number of initiatives under way. We're working with the Nova Scotia Nurses Union, and we will go through the collective agreement process as expected when the time is right. We are very open to hearing from health care workers and trying to find ways to keep them not only in their jobs but recruit for the vacancies.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: The outbreak that the minister refers to actually has just happened within the last 24 hours, so the numbers I just gave in my preamble are actual numbers not related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Our internal medicine physicians are very concerned about the safety of their patients, as well as their potential to stay in their positions if they can't effectively and safely take care of their critically ill patients on ventilators in the ICU. Due to this shortage, just yesterday our ICU and emergency departments were amalgamated, as there are just not enough nurses to effectively and safely treat our patients.

My question to the minister is: What action is she prepared to take to address the situation today, so that residents of Cumberland County and northern Nova Scotia are not without access to a safe ICU in the coming days ahead?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure Nova Scotians that the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the staff there are excellent primary care and acute care providers and that patients are safe in our hospitals throughout this province. That information was brought to me more than 24 hours ago.

I know that the leadership team and the staff at the hospital are working within their circles, working with New Brunswick, working with Truro, to make sure that anybody who needs critical care in that environment receives it. I think it is irresponsible to insinuate that there would be unsafe care delivered purposely in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DOJ: NDA LEGISLATION - UPDATE

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The Premier recently expressed disappointment and called for accountability from Hockey Canada - I'll table that - but has not acknowledged the abuse of non-disclosure agreements that is a critical part of the story and a problem that could easily be solved by this government.

The minister recently shared on social media an article titled "Hockey Canada scandal shows the need to ban non-disclosure agreements," and I just tabled that. If the minister believes that abuse of non-disclosure agreements is an issue that needs to be addressed, will she say when her government will table legislation to address it?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member, of course this was an issue that came up the last time the House met. We have had staff at the Department of Justice reviewing across jurisdictional legislation and we are continuing to watch that. We haven't moved forward but we are continuing to look to see what other provinces across the country are doing.

SUZY HANSEN: I appreciate those words from the Minister of Justice, even though it was similar to the one that was given at the last sitting. Mr. Speaker, this is a tool that is used to unfairly silence victims of sexual assault and the government must do something about it. Earlier this year, as I said, the Minister of Justice said his department was looking at the legislation to prevent the abuse of non-disclosure agreements and stated, "We anticipate coming back in the Fall" - which is now - "with some legislation once we get some more information on this." Can the minister tell this House if we will see legislation this Fall?

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I think you know that nobody on this side of the House or within this House wants to see abuse of NDAs. We'll continue to monitor what other provinces are doing and come back in the future.

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

DHW: GYN. APPT. WAIT TIMES - REDUCE

HON. BEN JESSOME: On the subject of women's health, I have a constituent I've connected with who is on Year 4 of trying to get an appointment with a gynecologist. This is so she can establish a treatment plan to manage her symptoms and maintain her current health and lifestyle. Mr. Speaker, this woman does not only not have an appointment, there is zero indication of how long it will take to get one. My question to the Minister of Health and Wellness is: Can the minister please inform the House and my constituent what they have planned to reduce extensive wait times for gynecological appointments, please?

[10:45 a.m.]

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'm not entirely sure if it's a regular obstetrician or gynecologist or if it's a specialty service that you require. I do know that the IWK recently developed a program for people with chronic pelvic pain which supports people in maintaining their wellness. There have been resources added to that clinic, if that is specific to the question.

We continue to look at our resources of obstetricians and gynecologists throughout the province. There have been some recent hirings in some of the other zones, but if there's a particular situation that you would like to discuss, I'd be happy to do that afterwards.

BEN JESSOME: If folks are lucky enough to find specialist care, it takes forever to see them, regardless of the complexity of the issue. In the meantime, they have to rely on their family doctor, if they have one, particularly in an area like Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, where physician recruitment incentives have been removed and the wait-list continues to surge under this PC government.

Our system works best when we can tailor the system to patients' needs, and women need access to gynecological services. I will follow up with the minister and ask her to update us with plans on how she and her government plan to attract and retain gynecological services in Nova Scotia.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: There are a couple of issues there. I think, first of all, it's really important that we maintain competency in our primary care providers in their offices throughout the province. It is really important that we make sure that we're referring people for the right reason to the right provider. I know that sometimes that is not always the case and that we do have some primary care providers we want to encourage to increase and utilize their competencies.

Second, we do look at the number of people who are on the wait-list. We look at clinic-specific wait-lists and wonder where we can attract and bring new physicians. Some of the subspecialty clinics are very precise and they are very difficult for us to recruit to because the number of physicians overall is quite small across the country.

The other thing that's happened is we have a virtual hallway now. The primary care providers can access specialist care, get online consultations and order support care in their regions for people.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DHW: CGM COSTS - ASSIST

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, Type 1 diabetes can be a difficult condition to live with and manage. This is especially true for kids who would much rather be playing than pricking their fingertips several times a day. Fortunately, there is a solution to this problem called a continuous glucose monitor, or CGM. These devices monitor blood sugar levels in real time and have made a huge difference in the life of Olivia Furdas, a constituent of mine.

According to Olivia's mom, Gloria, Olivia's blood sugars are in the recommended range 75 to 100 per cent of the time with the CGM, as opposed to only 40 per cent using traditional methods. I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness if she agrees that CGMs are a critical and needed technology for dealing with Type 1 diabetes.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Since before I became the Minister of Health and Wellness and was elected, and certainly since, I've had the opportunity to speak and work with a number of families across all age groups who live with Type 1 diabetes, and Type 2 diabetes as well. We know that the longer CGMs are available, the more evidence that we get around how people can help manage and change outcomes in the long term for disease processes.

We are committed to reviewing the cost and benefit of CGM, and continuing that conversation with folks in relation to that equipment.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for that response. I'm glad to hear that the minister sees the value of this technology. A major barrier, as the minister alluded to, to widespread use of CGMs is cost, which can be between \$300 and \$600 per month. Just this past May, P.E.I. became the first province in Atlantic Canada - but not the first province in the country - to offer public coverage for CGMs. I'd like to ask the minister: Will Nova Scotia follow P.E.I.'s lead and help more kids like Olivia?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: What I will say is that we know that it has a significant impact. We have a number of demands on our public system to fund a variety of different technologies as well as medications, so we continue to look at that. I do feel that over time we will be able to have a more fulsome review and get back to the member with a more definitive answer.

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

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 Second Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 196.

Bill No. 196 - Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I now move that Bill No. 196, amendments to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act, be read a second time.

This legislation arises from a review of agencies, offices, and Crown corporations that was completed this Summer. As a government, we committed to ensuring that agencies, offices, and other bodies are operating economically and effectively. These amendments reflect that commitment. They will help strengthen and modernize the gallery's governance and operations. They also reflect what we have heard directly from the gallery board and leadership as we work with them to position the gallery for success both now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is such an important part of Nova Scotia's cultural landscape. Art and artists help us share and celebrate our diverse and unique stories, making for a stronger province. The staff and leadership of the gallery have done some incredible work over the past few years in adapting their programming to make sure that Nova Scotians can experience art in its many forms.

When COVID-19 limited our ability to gather in person, they engaged communities and artists in virtual and hybrid artist talks and tours, podcasts, and multiple workshops. Through the success of their new ways of thinking vision, they were able to deliver engaging, challenging, and thought-provoking exhibits and programs to many audiences.

As minister, it has been an honour and a privilege to see the great work happening at the gallery and throughout the arts sector. We are committed to helping the gallery operate even more effectively and efficiently.

Amendments in this bill will reduce the size of the gallery board. The board will be between 7 and 13 members, which is down from the current 19. As many of you may know, vacancies have been a challenge on the board for some time now. We have been working with the current members on solutions, and it's clear that a more streamlined board will

better meet the gallery's needs. It's a change the board wanted, and we are happy to move it forward.

Mr. Speaker, to help address vacancies, this legislation also requires the board to create a nominating committee, which will also be tasked to consider and address diversity on the board, including regional diversity. Throughout the department, we are striving to ensure that the leadership of agencies, boards, commissions, and organizations that we support truly reflects the diversity of the communities they serve.

This bill will also move gallery staff from the civil service to the broader public service to become direct employees of the gallery. This is consistent with the structure of other Crown corporations, and it will give the gallery flexibility in human resources planning and staffing to meet their unique operational needs. I want to note, Mr. Speaker, that this change will not affect the employment status, compensation, or benefits of any staff. Over the coming months, we will work with the gallery to complete this transition, which will take effect January 1st.

The amendments will also give the minister authority to approve the hiring or termination of the CEO following a board recommendation. It also requires that any registered charity intending to raise funds for the gallery will have to submit annual financial statements.

Mr. Speaker, these changes are intended to strengthen accountability and add another layer of checks and balances. We know the gallery is doing good work. Through this bill, we are ensuring the board and staff are equipped to continue that good work.

With those words, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: The government says that these changes came as a result of a Crown review, which was done quite broadly across government.

I agree with the minister that the art gallery has done an incredible job in the face of COVID-19, ensuring that their programming reached Nova Scotians. I was briefly an employee there back 26 years ago, working on the Maud Lewis project, which was a wonderful project. I will say that some of the concerns that existed back then continue to exist today. I'll speak a little more on that in a bit.

There are three main pillars to this bill regarding the art gallery. The first reduces the size of the board from 19 down to between 7 and 13. As the minister acknowledged, often getting board members onboarded was a bit of an issue. I will say that the nominating committee sounds like a good idea. It is, in fact, a real example of succession planning. I think that's an important thing to do at the art gallery at appropriate times.

Moving the gallery staff from the civil service to the broader public service to become direct employees of the gallery - we do have concerns about the implications of that. I am pleased to hear the minister say that this will not affect their compensation or their pensions.

We'll want to delve into that a little bit more to understand how that will affect them and whether this, in fact, was recommended by the board. The minister referred to the size of the board being reduced was recommended by the board. Was this recommended by the board?

The bill also gives the minister authority to approve the hiring or the termination of the CEO following a board recommendation. Again, we have a little bit of a concern around that, about the government taking control of an independent board or Crown corporation. We've seen what happened with the NSHA board. We've seen the Premier's friends being hired to become in charge of Crown corporations. There is a trend that we see emerging, so we want to ensure that is not happening in this particular case.

Then, of course, there is also the change to the Nova Scotia Museum Act. We may speak on that further later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is all I have to say for now.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am happy to rise and speak to these amendments. First of all, I would like to say how wonderful it is to hear my honourable colleague, the minister, speak about art and the benefits of art to our province. It's always good when we in this Chamber can acknowledge how important art and culture is to Nova Scotians.

I was just thinking about this before I got up: artists in Nova Scotia come from all the tiny little corners - some of the most incredible artists, like Maud Lewis and Alan Syliboy. I could go on and on. They come from all the far reaches of the province. We all, as representatives of our own communities, can be proud of the amazing work that happens.

Of course, it goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that we need to invest heavily in the creation of art and culture, not only in the housing of art and culture, which is the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

Obviously, these changes make sense. Nineteen people seems unruly for a board. To be able to streamline some of these things and make the art gallery function in an easier and better way will be great, especially as a board that stewards the organization into the future and, hopefully without too much more delay, into a new gallery space.

Like my colleague from Bedford Basin, I do want to flag our concerns a little bit about the labour issues and do want to make sure, after speaking with the staff themselves,

that that seems to be a good move. I also want to applaud the idea of having the nominating committee for the board to increase some diversity on the board.

[11:00 a.m.]

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind my honourable colleagues in this House that this weekend is Nocturne. In fact, on the steps of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, as we speak, there is an exhibit that you can go and take a look at. It's outdoors. There will be outdoor art all around the HRM, or at least the main core of the city. Some of it will be indoors, some of it will be outdoors.

If my colleagues want an opportunity to take in some art, they can literally walk across the street - as soon as I am finished speaking - and go and take some in.

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

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I asked to speak about this bill because I have quite a few wonderful artists in my constituency and of course the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is very important to them. For those of you who may or may not know here in this room and you fine taxpayers watching us from home, I thought I'd paint a picture: The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is the largest art museum in Atlantic Canada. It's an anchor to the province's cultural tourism sector and it is a celebration of fine art.

The museum's permanent collection has over 18,000 works by Nova Scotian, Canadian, and international artists. One of the most popular attractions at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is the collection of Maud Lewis paintings. It is the most visited exhibition space in the museum and includes 55 works and Maud Lewis's cute, tiny home.

I have to say that Nova Scotians expect government to respect their tax dollars, spend responsibly and ensure that government (Inaudible) is effective, efficient and responsive. That's why this government did a review of Crown corporations and that's what this bill is about.

The amendment to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act will help strengthen and modernize the gallery's governance and operations and, to be honest, as the oldest gallery in Nova Scotia, a little modernization won't hurt us from time to time. It will reduce the number of directors on the board and increase the diversity. These changes will give the gallery a more efficient board that better reflects Nova Scotians' diversity and better positions the gallery for success now and into the future.

I am happy to hear my colleagues approve of this. With that, I will sit down.

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

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

HON. PAT DUNN: Prior to closing debate, I welcome the comments made by the member for Bedford Basin and of course the member for Dartmouth North and other comments made by a member on our side.

Without further discussion on this, Mr. Speaker, on which I will have some other things to say later on, I close debate on Bill No. 196, amendments to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 196.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 198.

Bill No. 198 - Emergency “911” Act (amended) and Emergency Management Act (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of Bill No. 198, an Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1992, the Emergency “911” Act, and Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act.

Mr. Speaker, this bill really comes out of our recent experience of Hurricane Fiona, recognizing the importance of communications during the hurricane event. Prior to the hurricane event we worked hard to prepare for it through EMO. We activated our provincial coordination centre prior to the event, and we have over 100 different participants in our provincial coordination centre coordinating all the aspects of different elements that need to be coordinated - fire services, police services, and municipal EMOs, our provincial EMOs, Nova Scotia Power, all of the different participants, weather briefings, all of those things are present at that provincial coordination centre.

One of our frustrations was the difficulty of getting our telecoms present at that, so this bill addresses that. It identifies critical service providers. It will require that the telecoms - which provide an incredibly important service to us through our phone service - be present at the provincial coordination centre. The benefit of that will be that there will be instantaneous coordination after an emergency, as whatever needs to be done to assist

our telecoms to have power back up and running, to have phone service active, as well as power service, will be done. The coordination will be instantaneous.

This will also require critical service providers like telecoms to provide annual emergency measures plans that we will review - I will review and sign off on as minister - and the reason for that is, as all members know, our emergency measures organizations, whether they are municipal or provincial, all go through preparatory planning exercises to try to anticipate how these events will unfold. There's the old saying: If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. So we don't plan to fail. We want to succeed. We want to be able to recover from these emergency events as they occur, whatever they are. Obviously, that will be encapsulated in those EMO plans which we will be asking to sign off on.

Furthermore, we recognize that during power outages, for example, Nova Scotians - the meter's not running on the side of your house, but that's not true for your interaction with your phone service provider. You may not have service for a period of time, but you're still paying your bills. There's a sense of fairness and natural justice that we see that that's not fair. We are saying that those amounts will be rebated to the customer and, further, there are fines built into the bill to address failure of any part of the requirements in the bill.

With those words, I look forward to hearing my colleagues' comments on this bill.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward today. I also want to acknowledge Paul Mason and all the great work that he does with emergency management.

Public safety is imperative to all residents of Nova Scotia. We've learned from all the severe weather events in the past that it matters to protect the people of this province going forward. Due to climate change, we will have more and more dangerous storms that will affect our telecommunications. We have heard stories about people not being able to connect with loved ones or, in more drastic cases, with 911. I know myself, I opened the door and there were my two adult children checking in on me during Fiona. It matters that telecommunication companies are being proactive in their approach to these disastrous events as this is not an "if it will happen again" situation but a "when it will definitely happen again" situation.

There are also other important issues related to emergency management that need to be addressed in prevention for the next disaster, such as addressing concerns with lack of fuel and aging power grids. This is a good step for accountability, but that's just about it - it's a step. It doesn't necessarily mean that the telecommunication companies will be able to prevent all outages. The hurricane showed that there is still much work that this government needs to do. Emergency response is an important area in which you have to continually adapt and prepare. To that end, improved collaboration with the provincial

emergency management is key, and that office and the telecom emergency response plan should be developed and tested in co-operation with that office.

While it makes little sense to have the telecom emergency response be directed from the provincial EMO, it makes perfect sense to rather have the telecoms develop an emergency communications plan that details what data is shared with the Emergency Management Office at their customers. I recently went to Nova Scotia Power's emergency response centre. It was not physically in the Emergency Management Office in Dartmouth; it was in their facility. That's where you want to have your resources. You want your communications people to be in the Emergency Management Office with the provincial EMO and the municipal EMO, because you don't want to take your resources away from your key technicians who are out there preparing and addressing the response themselves.

While I see that this is a good step, fines and swaggering are a heavy-handed approach to compliance, in my opinion. It has been my experience that a collaborative approach to develop shared priorities is a much more improved visibility, and the telecom operations may be more effective than just being heavy-handed.

I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward, but I do have some concerns with the approach, with getting them to the table and having those discussions. A communications plan being asked for the telecoms to actually provide it to the province would be a first step in my opinion. That's been my experience in my emergency management work of the past.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm glad to rise to speak to these amendments and to see the steps taken to hold the essential services providers accountable to Nova Scotians. Phone service, Mr. Speaker, as well as internet service are essential parts of public safety. Although I see in this bill that internet providers could still be subjected to the proposed requirements so long as they are designated critical service providers by the minister, I think it's safe to say that these internet services are essential, considering, from what I saw during Hurricane Fiona, almost all the information was coming to us through the internet - through Facebook, through Twitter, through websites.

That was because I also witnessed that our news stations, at least in Cape Breton, completely went silent. I listened to CBC all night long during the hurricane. I was awake till the morning. CBC lost air. Other news stations lost air. They could not provide us with the safety information we needed, the public safety information that was being provided by government. That was now left to the internet, and when people lost their internet and didn't have their data, they were left incommunicado.

[11:15 a.m.]

This is a very dangerous situation, so I hope that the minister can look at this and actually make it a must for internet providers. As I said, when our other media sources go down, there's nothing else left to communicate to the public.

Hurricane Fiona did have a devastating impact on Nova Scotia communities. My community is still reeling from this. It highlighted this large failure of cell phone service. We know that storms like this will continue to impact our province at an increasing rate. These amendments are important in taking steps for this, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to talk for a few minutes about a few people from my community. I had people from one end of Nova Scotia to the other going down, calling, or trying to get hold of their parents and could not get hold of their parents. I know somebody who travelled from one end of the province to the other to get to their mother after the storm because they could not get in touch with them. There was no phone service, Mr. Speaker. Not only was this concept of people travelling after the storm fairly dangerous and actually impacted how much of the cleanup was able to happen because of travel on the roads.

We had several things. People were travelling to get to their parents and their family members to make sure they were safe. Meanwhile, by travelling, they were impacting how fast we could clean up after the storm.

It becomes essential. When somebody can't call 911 and they're lying on their floor, it is a dangerous situation. When people cannot get hold of an emergency contact, it is a safety issue. When somebody is trapped in their own home by trees all over them, and I have somebody in my constituency who had 10 trees surrounding their home. They were completely trapped, and their windows were shut because of these trees. They could not get out their window.

This is a serious situation. They could not call the fire department, they could not call the police. We really need to take these service providers to task and tell them that they have to get better. If this bill can do that, then I think it's a great first step. I look forward to asking the questions about how these proposed amendments interact with our federal powers and hearing from stakeholders at Law Amendments Committee. With that, I will take my seat.

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

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Another one I'm passionate about. Hurricane Fiona taught us a lot of lessons. We learned what we already knew: Nova Scotians are resilient. They have big hearts, and when their neighbours need them, they come running. Another thing we learned is that telecommunications companies have to do better. They must communicate with Nova Scotians and provide reliable service during an emergency.

These proposed changes will require critical service providers to take responsible actions to ensure continuation of services and develop an annual emergency response plan that must be approved by the minister. When the Province convenes an emergency response table, this bill gives the minister the authority to physically be at that table. They will be required to be at the provincial coordination centre and collaborate with all partners.

Finally, this bill will mean consumers don't pay when they don't have service. I'd be remiss to say that I have Tanook Islands in my constituency, and their cell service isn't the best. As soon as it starts raining, they lose their land lines as well. If you could just imagine what a hurricane or a tropical storm could do just because the cable should have been replaced years ago.

Even though many Nova Scotians were disconnected from phone, internet, emergency services, they continued to be charged for these services by telecommunications companies. This bill will protect public safety after Hurricane Fiona emergency responders and electrical repair line personnel were unable to communicate with each other or with coordination centres.

As I said at the onset, Hurricane Fiona taught us an important lesson. It is important that we take note of those lessons and prepare for the next storm and help keep our taxpayers safe.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'm actually going to be really quick here. I wasn't going to speak, but the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier said something that really struck a little bit of a chord with me. We see here today that this government is reacting with legislation, especially around telecommunications, to make sure that this critical piece of infrastructure has a plan and is at the table, and there are heavy fines if they don't.

What has always struck a little bit of a nerve with me is, if we want to talk about politics, and federal politics in particular, their federal brothers' and sisters' relationship with the CBC and how easily they beat up on the CBC. The reason I wanted to bring that up today is because the member talked about having access to information. For most people in Nova Scotia and most people across Canada, when the power goes out, when cellphone service goes out, and when the home services go out, CBC is the number one thing they can rely on for information.

I was without power for a week, or a little over a week. We were listening to the radio. We had a crank radio, stuff like that, and people right across Nova Scotia - from all of your constituencies, all of your communities - were calling in to CBC to get the information they needed on power restoration, on cellphone service, on all of that.

We really see how important it is in a time of need to have something out there that communicates with all of us; 95.7 FM, for example, has a small, limited audience when it comes to Nova Scotia. I heard the member for Eastern Passage today speak about a radio station in her community - that is an exceptional radio station, but I don't think I can get it over where I'm at.

We need to make sure we have a national broadcaster, especially when it comes to the radio, that's there in case of emergency. We see here today that the Premier's reacting very quickly when it comes to telecommunication. I would ask that you also do the same when it comes to the CBC and supporting the CBC, especially in times of emergency.

When we hear that your federal counterparts, whom you support - one of their biggest election promises is to defund and cut the CBC - I would say that during Hurricane Ian, Hurricane Juan, Hurricane Dorian, if the federal Conservatives get their way, a lot of those people are going to be without information, and they're going to be without some life-saving things.

Instead of just taking one side of this argument, one that I think is low-hanging fruit that will get your name in the paper and a good story, I would ask that you take a more holistic view of this and reach out to your federal counterparts and say, during this hurricane, things like the CBC are extremely important. I hope that you continue to support them, and that will continue to support rural Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, before I start on my prepared statement, there's been a lot said over the past 21 days or so about damage in different parts of Nova Scotia, particularly focused on Glace Bay and Sydney. I feel for them. I know exactly what it's like. But I just kind of want people to understand the destruction and the personal challenges that people in Colchester North in a very rural community with no real towns in them, what we went through.

I just have to say this: When I go over to the North Shore, over Tatamagouche way, and I see like eight, 10, 12 power poles in a row down on the side of the road, and I go to somebody's home near the beach and I look down the shore, I see other homes that are just exploded, really. Whether they're homes or cottages or what they are, they just basically exploded there on the side of the bay, from the wind and the rain and stuff like that. I think this is an important piece too.

I'm sorry for taking this time to say this, but the way that people reacted to this, for the most part, was just unbelievable, how understanding they were, the whole thing. It was unbelievable.

The Premier came to Colchester North and we walked to what's really my only urban subdivision there one afternoon. There was one guy there, and I talked to him in

advance. I talked to him a lot of times in advance, actually. He had like eight huge poplar trees down on his house. He wasn't saying, who's going to do this, and who's going to do that? He was pretty upset, you know what I mean, and he said: My wife would be here, but she can't even drive by without crying. But he wasn't there to demand or whatever.

We go to another place - I'm trying to paint a picture here. These people have a beautiful home - in our part of the world, likely, I don't know, a half-million or so. There's two or three huge maple trees lying on a house and holes in the roof. Their mattresses are sitting out on the side of the road because they got so soaked during the storm, you know what I mean? I just want to paint that picture for people to understand the challenges that we faced at home.

With respect to the telecommunications issue, there's no doubt that Hurricane Fiona taught us a lot of lessons. The most important it taught us was how deeply the residents of Nova Scotia - and in my case, the residents of small communities - care about each other, how they reached out to their neighbours, shared their meals, shared generators. Volunteers at the fire brigades provided warming centres, and small community groups provided warm meals. As we slowly move away from the disaster, we must ensure that we learn and act immediately to correct any shortcoming and any lessons learned.

I believe one of the greatest challenges we faced in Colchester North was the inability to communicate, to understand where we could go for help, to understand the depth of the disaster and how our friends and neighbours were. They would say, I have a medical emergency - who and how do I ask for help? There were no communications.

We all understand the challenges everyone faced - telecoms, Nova Scotia Power, EMO, and everyone faced. There's no doubt, they were unprecedented. However, the idea that these large telecoms were asked and did not participate in the emergency coordination centre is not acceptable. They must provide an emergency preparedness plan.

I personally believe that in 2022, they must have a plan that ensures that we in Nova Scotia and in Colchester North should not be left in isolation and expect to be able to communicate. We need to be able to communicate and to call for help in a reasonable amount of time.

It is unacceptable that on October 12th, 19 days after the hurricane, I received the following email. Because I have another email here, I'm not going to use any telecom names. I just don't think it's proper:

Dear Tom, can you call and find out why we here at Nuttby Mountain and down in North River do not have any home phone? Some of us live alone and have no way of calling 911. In the future, if they are going to have our home phones down, they should notify you so you can let us know. We live in a cell-dead zone. I have

tried the live chat on their Facebook and got no word. I put up a post on Facebook for someone to call me and see what is going on. I still have no phone. I live alone.

I have another email here that just came in this morning, if you don't mind. If I'm allowed to just take a couple . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm just going to ask the member if he's referring to emails - they have to be tabled as well. If you can get a paper copy and make sure that the clerks have it in their possession.

The honourable member for Colchester North.

TOM TAGGART: What I wanted to say before that - I certainly didn't read that email in its entirety. There are pieces in that that would be - okay. This one, I'm not reading it in its entirety. It's quite long:

It's good to hear there is new legislation for telecom companies after a major storm. We lost power for 8 or 9 days, and phone, internet, and TV for 10 days. They kept saying on the radio - our only communication - to call and visit their website, et cetera, for information, but we had no way of doing it as we lost all services. We only had a cellphone, and that wasn't working very well.

Our son and family just got their phone and internet back, 18.5 days after Fiona. They live in Onslow Mountain where we also live . . .

Onslow Mountain is not a remote area, you know what I mean? It's 10 minutes from Truro.

They called several times on their cellphone, and the last time they had to wait two and a half hours to talk to someone. I have a friend in Glenholme who doesn't have phone and internet back yet, and I believe we got our phone and internet back a bit earlier.

That's as far as I'll go with that. I will table that on Monday, Mr. Speaker.

For me to continue on with these emails is really of no value. The message should be clear. I wish to point out that the communities of Nuttby Mountain and North River are not remote rural communities. They are located on heavily travelled highways. They have no cell service nor a landline and, 19 days after a hurricane, no way to call 911. It's not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, if demanding that the telecom leadership be present and engaged in the provincial emergency centre is heavy-handed, then I am all for it. For me it is

incomprehensible that they did not feel the need to be there during the aftermath of the most significant storm in the history of Canada.

[11:30 a.m.]

I strongly support this bill in support of all rural communities in Nova Scotia. I urge all members of this Nova Scotia Legislature to cast their vote in favour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I stand to add a few comments on the amendments proposed to the Emergency “911” Act and the Emergency Management Act. I have mostly questions to ask of the minister.

Will Clause 2(a) require telecommunications service providers to ensure that their customers have continued access to Nova Scotia 911 service? Will this include fixing the problems that many Nova Scotians have experienced before Hurricane Fiona, especially those who live near the provinces of P.E.I. and New Brunswick, when calls go to cell towers and 911 calls are directed to the wrong province? This causes delays in contacting first responders such as fire service or ambulances. These issues have been brought to this House before the storm and many letters have been written.

When I read through these proposed amendments, my question was: Will this bill fix those problems that pre-existed before the storm?

Will Clause 2(a) require telecommunications service providers to ensure that their customers have access to Nova Scotia 911 service regardless of where they live? For example, there are many areas in Cumberland North, and I’m sure throughout all of Nova Scotia, that are considered dead zones. That means there is no cell service - I guess when I wrote this last night, I had a sense of humour - so you will be dead if you need emergency services in this area because you simply are not able to call 911.

My question to the minister for these amendments is: Will telecommunications service providers now be required to put up cellphone towers in these areas that, even before the storm were considered dead zones, where people living in these areas have not had access to 911 service?

In Clause 2(b), I was wondering how will the telecommunications service providers notify their customers of any disruptions? That is one of the requirements. How would they communicate that disruption of the 911 service? Certainly, in Amherst and Cumberland North, we have very strong community radio, such as CFTA 107.9. They would love to be more involved in helping with communications during storms like the one we just experienced.

Where are the municipalities in the meetings? How are they kept abreast and involved in this communication that Clause 2 recommends?

In general, I also think that the people of Nova Scotia would like to know: How many telecommunications providers are there now in Nova Scotia? Who owns the telecommunications poles? These are questions that I'm often asked. Who is responsible if one company owns the pole, but another company rents the pole for their wires?

For example, there is a pole that was broken in the most recent storm right in front of an apartment building on Victoria Street in Amherst. The wires were fixed quickly, but the wires are so low that vehicles cannot go in and out of the driveway. I had constituents call me to ask who's going to fix it. Nova Scotia Power electrical lines are on the other side of the street, so these are purely telecommunication wires. The question is, who is responsible? Who holds the company accountable to repair this? In the meantime, the residents found a unique way to just drive across the lawn and go out the neighbour's driveway, but this will have to be fixed.

How much money is currently sitting in the 911 fund? These, of course, are the monies that are collected from the 911 fee on every phone line here in the province of Nova Scotia. Would the minister be willing to table a report of this fund? I know in previous years, there was quite an excess amount of money. We had debate here in the Legislature on how we all felt that excess money should be used to provide more money to comfort centres in municipalities, as well as things like generators in the times of power outages. Would the minister be willing to table a report on the fund and show how the monies have been spent from this fund over the past three years since Hurricane Dorian?

With regard to the amendments proposed to the Emergency Management Act, what is the definition of a critical service provider? Specifically, list the telecommunication service providers so the public and providers themselves ensure that they know exactly who they are.

My questions when I read through the proposed amendments were: Who makes the call when an emergency event is called, and what is the criteria? Is there a committee? Is it a subjective decision by the minister? Clarification should be given also to what the implications may be upon issues such as insurance or liabilities thereof.

How often are the emergency response plans prepared to be submitted in comparison to the legislation around municipalities? How often are they required to prepare and submit a plan?

Around Clause 6, what does this mean? What will the regulations state? Will people be expected to participate in person, or will virtual participation be sufficient? How often will they need to meet and who determines this? What if a critical service provider doesn't participate? What are the ramifications?

The hurricane-strength post-tropical storm Fiona has certainly given us a golden opportunity to improve upon emergency management here in this province and throughout all of our Maritime region. Some of the recommendations that I've been hearing from people in my area are, number one, to establish a clear chain of command. We had several reports of military as well as other personnel who were there to help but sat for hours. One report was up to three days where there was no clear chain of command of where they were supposed to go and what they were supposed to do. There was a concern that there was a loss of supports simply due to no one knew who was running the ship, I guess you would say. Establishing a clear chain of command in times of storms like what we just experienced would help improve matters.

Clean up the organizational structure of EMO between the Province and municipalities, ensuring that municipalities have EMO coordinators, and if they don't, then ensuring that someone provincially is making decisions within that area. I would be curious to know from the minister and the department how many municipalities were without an EMO coordinator leading up to this recent storm. Were measures taken to ensure that those municipalities had proper supports, and if not, who was making the decisions? Did they actually have the knowledge and education to be making those types of decisions?

Ensure vulnerable persons are on a registry. We've already heard the Official Opposition bring a bill forward on that. That was one of the recommendations that I heard a number of times, as I would have phone calls from family members of persons on home dialysis who were not able to receive their treatment. In one case, we called the renal dialysis team in Halifax, and the recommendation to the family was to bring their person to the VG Hospital, but that simply was not an option for the family member.

Having a registry, who coordinates that? Would it be through EMO, or would it be through another governance structure? Making sure that each person who requires electricity - whether it's for home dialysis or home oxygen or some lifeline support - that an emergency backup plan is in place or that they have access to generators.

One comment by one woman whom I was with at an emergency storm shelter said: The fact is, Elizabeth, most people do not have the ability to purchase a generator. They don't have the financial means, and that is a reality.

Ensuring that seniors who are in provincial government housing have generators that work, have a fuel supply and have staff who are refuelling as needed.

Improving the communication planning for residents and working to prevent future extended outages by improving reliability of power supply. This could include doing pilot projects in the province to allow for power plants to supply power to localized areas, decreasing the reliance on the main power grid.

These are just a few of the questions and comments that I had to the amendments to these two bills. I look forward to hearing more from others in this House.

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

The honourable Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I appreciate the comments from all sides of the House. There were a number of questions asked which, hopefully, we will get answered in third reading. I look forward to hearing from the Law Amendments Committee as well.

I do want to just comment on one thing. That was the first member who spoke, the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, thanking Paul Mason particularly. I do want to reiterate that. In our EMO response throughout Hurricane Fiona - not only at the provincial level but throughout the municipalities across Nova Scotia - there was an enormous amount of work done by all of the individuals who contributed to helping get through Hurricane Fiona, including community members, as some of my colleagues have said.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate on second reading of this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 198.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 200.

Bill No. 200 - Nova Scotia Museum Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

HON. PAT DUNN: I now move that Bill No. 200, amendments to the Nova Scotia Museum Act, be read a second time.

These amendments came based on recommendations from the review of agencies, offices, and Crown corporations that was completed this Summer. As a government, we committed to ensuring that agencies, offices, and other bodies are operating effectively and are accountable. We are continuing this work through these amendments.

[11:45 a.m.]

Museums not only communicate our heritage and values, but they also serve as important community centres where people gather to learn and be with one another. They provide us with a better understanding of our history and offer countless educational and recreational activities in urban and rural areas across our province.

Mr. Speaker, our provincial museums are making it a priority to tell stories that represent the full spectrum of Nova Scotia's unique history and cultures in a way we haven't always done in the past. For example, this year, the Museum of Industry in Stellarton introduced *Hockey, Whose Game Is It?* It is a brand-new exhibit that shares the stories of Nova Scotia's hockey history. The exhibit focuses on the contributions to hockey made by women, Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotians, people of African descent, racialized communities, and those with physical and intellectual disabilities.

The *How Unique We Still Are* exhibit at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic is another great example of how museums are sharing our province's diverse history. This exhibit highlights the many ways Mi'kmaw people are connected to the lands and especially the waters of Mi'kma'ki, ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq. These are the stories that are often not highlighted enough, and our museums are working to ensure that they receive the recognition they deserve.

Our museums often serve as hubs for residents and visitors. Following Hurricane Fiona, several museums opened their doors as community support centres, demonstrating how they contributed to the overall well-being of our province. We all benefit from these institutions, and we are grateful for everything they do for our communities.

Now that I've shared just some of the reasons why our provincial museums are so important, I am pleased to bring forward the proposed amendments to the Nova Scotia Museum Act. The amendments will include the Sherbrooke Restoration Commission board chair as a member of the Nova Scotia Museum Board of Governors. This addition includes an important rural, locally managed museum voice to our province's museum governance. It is another step in our commitment to helping agencies, boards, and commissions operate efficiently and effectively. The chair will join the Nova Scotia Museum Board effective January 1, 2023.

As the largest museum site, Sherbrooke Village will be well-represented at the Nova Scotia Museum Board table. These amendments will benefit both the Sherbrooke Restoration Commission and the Nova Scotia Museum Board, and I am pleased to bring them forward for consideration of the House.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the minister it is to close debate on the bill.

The honourable Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to close second reading on Bill No. 200.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 200.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise, to meet again on Monday, October 17th, between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Government business will include second reading of Bills No. 203, 204, 205, and Resolution No. 385. Thank you and have a great weekend, everyone.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise, to meet again on Monday, October 17th, between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 11:49 a.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 392**

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas marriages are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage is the celebration of love, trust and partnership; and

Whereas on August 20, 2022, a very special occasion took place when Josie Munroe and Luke Grant of Queens County celebrated their wedding;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Josie and Luke on their marriage and wish them a lifetime of health and happiness.

RESOLUTION NO. 393

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

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

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

Whereas on June 6, 2022, parents Hannah and Brandon Whynot welcomed their daughter, Olivia May Whynot, into the world;

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

RESOLUTION NO. 394

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas marriages are an occasion for family and friends to gather together to celebrate the life of two individuals united as one; and

Whereas it was once said that a marriage is the celebration of love, trust and partnership; and

Whereas on October 7, 2022, a very special occasion took place when Natalie Rogers and Owen Vouri of Queens County celebrated their wedding;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Natalie and Owen on their marriage and wish them a lifetime of health and happiness.