



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 395, Frontline Staff: Hurr. Supp. - Recog., Hon. T. Rushton.....	3374
Vote - Affirmative.....	3375
Res. 396, Dyslexia Awareness Mo.: Supp. of Those with Dyslexia - Recog., Hon. B. Wong.....	3375
Vote - Affirmative.....	3375
Res. 397, Mi'kmaq History Mo.: Beadwork Trad. - Recog., Hon. K. MacFarlane.....	3376
Vote - Affirmative.....	3376
Res. 398, Emerg. Mgmt. Staff: Hurr. Supp. - Recog., Hon. J. Lohr.....	3376
Vote - Affirmative.....	3377
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 206, An Act to Amend Chapter 37 of the Acts of 2001, the Underground Hydrocarbons Storage Act, Hon. T. Rushton.....	3377

No. 207, An Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2004, the Electricity Act, Respecting the Hydrogen Innovation Program, Hon. T. Rushton	3377
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Voluns.: Music and Mem'ries Weekend - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland	3378
Nicholson, Jane: Miss United World 2023 Win - Recog., Hon. I. Rankin	3378
Hfx. Chebucto MLA: Birth of Grandchild - Congrats., C. Chender	3379
Barnhill, Dan: Tollermania Org. - Recog., Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	3379
NSP Line Techs.: Hurr. Supp. - Thanks, Hon. Z. Churchill	3380
Beaton, Kate: <i>Ducks</i> Graphic Novel Launch - Congrats., G. Burrill	3380
Landry, Hannah: Leg. Asst. Work - Thanks, E. Smith-McCrossin	3380
Broad Cove Com. Assoc.: Hall Upgrades - Congrats., Hon. B. Druhan	3381
The Social Boutique: Bus. Success - Congrats., Hon. K. Regan	3381
Intl. Day for Erad. of Pov.: Red. Income Ineq. - Recog., S. Hansen	3382
Reid, Brooke: Rugby 7s Team Success - Congrats., Hon. K. MacFarlane	3382
Stewart, James: Gallery Introduction - Welcome, Hon. Z. Churchill	3383
Boutilier, Lindsay: High Tide Interiors - Congrats., Hon. B. Maguire	3383
Ori Foods Co.: New Dart. Bus. - Thanks, S. Leblanc	3384
MacMaster, Jane: 36 Yrs. at Pictou Co. Hous. Auth. - Congrats., Hon. P. Dunn	3384
Buha, Nikunj - Washmill Gen. Store: Bus. Success - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	3385
Intl. Day for Erad. of Pov.: Dignity of All - Recog., L. Lachance	3385
Various Orgs.: Emerg. Shelter Set-Up - Thanks, E. Smith-McCrossin	3386
Smith, Andy & Vera Faye: 50 th Wedding Anniv. - Congrats., L. Harrison	3386
<i>Chronicle-Herald</i> Newspaper: Journalism Work - Thanks, A. Duale	3387
Hfx. Cit.-Sable I. MLA: Work in Leg. - Recog., C. Chender	3387

Noël, Lauren & Janie: Bus. Awd. Recips. - Congrats., Hon. J. Lohr	3388
ECEs: Importance of Work - Recog., Hon. B. Jessome.....	3388
Randy's Pizza: 35 Yrs. in Bus. - Congrats., S. Hansen	3388
Young, Dave: Hurr. Supp. - Recog., Hon. T. Rushton.....	3389
Googoo, Jarvis: Many Accomplishments - Recog., L. Nicoll	3390
Primrose Lawtons Staff: Thanksgiv. Dinner Don. - Thanks, S. Leblanc	3390
Harvey, Raymond: Death of - Tribute, M. Sheehy-Richard	3391
Kirkbright, Janice: Jubilee Medal Recip. - Congrats., Hon. T. Ince	3391
Spencer House: Buddy Project - Congrats., L. Lachance.....	3392
MacRae, Kenene: Death of - Tribute, Hon. M. Thompson.....	3392
Deveau, Vickie: Gala Awd. Wins - Congrats., R. LeBlanc	3393
Voluns. & Sponsors: W. Kings Com. Fair - Thanks, C. Palmer	3393
Friends of Blue Mtn.-Birch Cove Lakes.: Pres. Work - Congrats., B. Clark.....	3394
Parker-Brown, Angie: Book Launch - Congrats., D. Ritcey	3394
Springfield Firefighters: Awd. Recips. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	3395
Catalone Convenience: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon B. Comer	3395
Lawlor, Allison: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	3396
EXIT Real Estate & MediTerra: Hurr. Supp. - Thanks, Hon. S. Craig.....	3396
Gallagher, Linda: Vol. of Yr. Awd. Recip. - Recog., Hon. Z. Churchill	3396
Nimmo, Bev: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. T. Halman.....	3397
Laney, H./Décarie-Garnier, M./Chao, N.: Lib. Bursary Recips. - Congrats., Hon. K. Regan.....	3397
Donaldson, Bernice: Death of - Tribute, J.A. MacDonald	3398
Daughter, Isla Rose: Birthday Wishes, Hon. B. Maguire	3398

E & F Webber's Lakeside Resort: 50 Yrs. of Ops. - Congrats., K. Smith	3398
Mexico Lindo Owners: Retirement - Best Wishes, Hon. P. Arab	3399
Local Seniors: 80 th Birthday - Best Wishes, T. Taggart.....	3399
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 203, Labour Standards Code (amended)	
Hon. J. Balsler	3401
L. Nicoll	3403
K. Coombes.....	3404
M. Sheehy-Richard	3405
Hon. K. Regan.....	3405
Hon. P. Arab	3406
Hon. Z. Churchill	3407
Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	3408
Hon. I. Rankin.....	3409
C. Kerr.....	3410
C. Chender	3410
Hon. B. Maguire	3411
A. Duale	3412
R. LeBlanc	3413
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	3414
Hon. J. Balsler.....	3414
Vote - Affirmative.....	3415
No. 204, Municipal Government Act (amended) and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended)	
Hon. J. Lohr	3415
Hon. B. Maguire	3416
K. Coombes.....	3424
D. Ritcey	3425
B. Clark.....	3426
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	3433
Hon. J. Lohr	3435
Vote - Affirmative.....	3436
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again on Tue., Oct. 18 th at 1:00 p.m.....	3437



HALIFAX, MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

5:00 P.M.

SPEAKER
Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS
Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order please.

The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise in my seat and apologize and clarify a comment I made during Question Period last Friday.

I am concerned that my answer that I gave potentially conveyed that I do not understand the scope of homelessness in our province. I would never want to leave the people we serve, and our partners and stakeholders, with that impression.

I am aware of the scope of this issue, and that people experiencing homelessness include people staying in shelters, staying with friends, staying in hotels, and sleeping rough. I am also aware of the many supports needed to meet the distinct needs of those experiencing homelessness, and the dedication of our service providers and what they provide to our community and the tailored supports.

Over the past year, we have done significant work to address homelessness in Nova Scotia. In this year's budget, an increase of nearly \$17 million will be invested in new and continued supportive housing initiatives to improve people's safety and well-being. I know there is so much more to do. We will continue working across all levels of government, within communities, and with our community partners to focus on this important issue.

Again, Mr. Speaker, please know that my intentions were never to hurt anyone or to convey that I am not aware that some Nova Scotians are experiencing a very difficult time. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: We'll move on to the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS, AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

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

RESOLUTION NO. 395

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

Whereas Nova Scotia experienced one of the worst storms in its history when Hurricane Fiona struck, causing widespread damage throughout the province; and

Whereas staff from Natural Resources and Renewables have been working in lockstep with EMO every single day to coordinate more than 200 wildfire staff from across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Québec, who are clearing trees and debris so that power can be restored; and

Whereas these crews have been away from their families and homes for nearly three weeks, working tirelessly to clean up hundreds of sites where trees were impacting the power grid and public infrastructure safety;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House extend a sincere thank you to our frontline and support staff for all their work to help their fellow Nova Scotians recover from the storm as quickly as possible.

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 Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 396

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

Whereas October is Dyslexia Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness for a learning disability in reading that can affect a person's ability to read accurately and fluently; and

Whereas on October 16th - yesterday - the Nova Scotia Legislature was lit up red in recognition of Dyslexia Canada's Mark It Red campaign, whose theme this year is Celebrating Progress; and

Whereas within this theme we celebrate progress in removing barriers to those with dyslexia in our province's workplaces, schools and post-secondaries, and celebrate the personal progress of individuals living with dyslexia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize October as Dyslexia Awareness Month and the importance of supporting those with dyslexia in our communities.

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 Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 397

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

Whereas October is Mi'kmaq History Month and this year's theme is Mi'kmaw Beadwork & the Art of Beading, highlighting the importance of this tradition to Nova Scotia's history and culture; and

Whereas beading through intricate designs and colour palettes has been part of Mi'kmaw culture for generations, from pre-contact wampum to the beautiful pieces created today; and

Whereas Mi'kmaw beadwork is an art form preserved and passed down by the ancestors, and contemporary artisans are keeping the tradition alive by creating an array of beautiful, wearable art that adorns bodies, clothes and other Mi'kmaw objects;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing October as Mi'kmaq History Month and take this opportunity to learn more about Mi'kmaw beadwork and the art of beading by visiting the website, mikmaqhistorymonth.ca.

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 responsible for the Office of Emergency Management.

RESOLUTION NO. 398

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

Whereas Hurricane Fiona made landfall in Nova Scotia shortly after 3:00 a.m. on September 23rd and battered the province with winds gusting from 100 to 140 kilometres an hour, and heavy rainfall and storm surges caused extensive damage and widespread power outages; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's Emergency Management Office activated the Provincial Coordination Centre and maintained the highest level of activation - Level 3 - with 24/7 staffing for 18 straight days, along with support from our regional EMO partners and other key organizations and agencies; and

Whereas thousands of people across the province participated in a coordinated response effort, working hard to assess damage to infrastructure, clear debris, restore power and provide support to Nova Scotians impacted by the storm as quickly as possible;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House thank those who make it their jobs to help us prepare and respond when emergencies happen, and to encourage all Nova Scotians to make an emergency plan and ensure they have a 72-hour emergency kit ready. Emergencies can happen without warning.

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. 206 - An Act to Amend Chapter 37 of the Acts of 2001, the Underground Hydrocarbons Storage Act. (Hon. Tory Rushton)

Bill No. 207 - An Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2004, the Electricity Act, Respecting the Hydrogen Innovation Program. (Hon. Tory Rushton)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

VOLUNS.: MUSIC AND MEM'RIES WEEKEND - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, in August I had the pleasure of speaking at the official ribbon cutting of the 1st Annual Carroll Baker Music and Mem'ries weekend at the newly named Music and Mem'ries Centre.

Carroll, Canada's First Lady of Country Music, first performed as a young girl on the stage of the Port Medway Baptist Church in Queens County. Now, in a come-full-circle moment, she has worked with The Friends of Carroll Baker Society to transform the church into the Music and Mem'ries Centre.

Over that weekend, audiences were treated to performances by folks from all over the Maritimes, and most importantly for many, Carroll herself came home for the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Carroll, and thank the many volunteers of the Society who gave their time and efforts to help make this event such a success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

NICHOLSON, JANE: MISS UNITED WORLD 2023 WIN - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jane Nicholson of Hubley on winning the title of Ms. United World 2023 in Texas on September 4th, after winning the Nova Scotia title and the national title.

At the age of 26, it is a remarkable achievement, especially for someone who didn't know if pageantry was for her. This pageant was different because of its message to women. The pageant's slogan, United We Stand, is strong on sisterhood, women supporting women, and really lifting one another up. All the same issues Jane is passionate about.

Jane plans to use her platform in pageantry to help support other women. Her podcast *Coffee and Anxiety* offers free ad space for female-owned businesses, and she also runs an award-winning videography and photography company, and does Olympic-style weightlifting in her spare time. With this world title under her belt, she plans to start an online workspace for female business owners called The Working Women Guide.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Jane on her success and recognizing her important work to guide women to live to their most confident lives and for putting her hometown on the world map.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

HFX. CHEBUCTO MLA: BIRTH OF GRANDCHILD - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my friend and colleague Gary Burrill on the birth of his very first grandchild, Raynard Perry Tynes Fairfax-Burrill who came into the world on October 16th at 12:23 a.m. weighing 7 lbs. 14 oz. (Applause)

Gary's daughter Rosanna Burrill and her partner Jackson Fairfax-Perry are resting at home with baby Raynard and are all healthy and well.

I think all members of the Legislature will agree with me that with Gary as a role model, this child will have no shortage of love, colourful bedtime stories and, with any luck, a laugh as hearty as his grandfather's.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Gary on this momentous milestone. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Considering the fact that we're not supposed to be using proper names in the House, on this special occasion I will certainly let it slide.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

BARNHILL, DAN: TOLLERMANIA ORG. - RECOG.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dan Barnhill, organizer of a truly international event celebrating our province's beloved official canine.

Tollermania was held over the past weekend near New Germany and attracted hundreds of Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers and their owners. For those unfamiliar, the Nova Scotia Duck Toller is a purely Canadian dog breed, known for its energy and intelligence. It was developed at Yarmouth and is now found around the world.

In fact, much to Dan's surprise, Tollermania - which he organized in memory of his first dog, Diesel - quickly attracted global interest. Some of this weekend's attendees travelled from as far away as Sweden and Australia. That said, Dan and his latest toller, Oakley, handled it all in stride, welcoming one and all.

Mr. Speaker, I hope Dan takes a bow, because, wow, he really created a wonderful event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

[5:15 p.m.]

NSP LINE TECHS.: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight the incredible hard work and sacrifice of our Nova Scotia Power line technicians and frontline workers during the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona and thank them for their perseverance and dedication to that work.

These workers have been away from their homes and families for weeks now as they do everything they can as quickly and efficiently as they can to restore power to the thousands in our province who were hit hardest by Hurricane Fiona. I know several of these workers personally. There was a large team from Yarmouth County that has travelled throughout the province to help out.

I ask this House to join me in thanking all of our Nova Scotia Power employees who have been working tirelessly on the ground and wishing them safety and a quick finish to the restoration projects.

THE SPEAKER: I'll refer to him this time as the member for Halifax Chebucto.

BEATON, KATE: DUCKS GRAPHIC NOVEL LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

GARY BURRILL: I'd like to extend the congratulations of the House to Kate Beaton of Mabou on the launch three weeks ago of her important graphic novel, *Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands*. *Ducks* treats a subject that is a major theme in the literature of Nova Scotia - out-migration, or leaving home for work - but it treats this subject with a dimension that has not been adequately confronted or understood: women's experience, and particularly women's experience of sexualized violence in the world of Maritimers' migrant labour.

Ducks treats the subject of home and away without cliché, itself an extraordinary accomplishment, as well as with love for home, community, and family, and with an understanding of how these worlds are undermined by capitalism's demand for a constant supply of relatively inexpensive labour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

LANDRY, HANNAH: LEG. ASST. WORK - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: This Summer session, I stood and read a very emotional member's statement in honour of Kait Saxton. Kait was my legislative assistant who died very unexpectedly on June 11th, and it was a very difficult loss. I was very worried how I would ever replace or find someone new in that role of legislative

assistant, but I'm happy to share I posted for the job in August, and a beautiful young woman named Hannah Landry applied.

Hannah served right here in the Legislature as a Page in 2011 with Kait Saxton, and Kait's mom Kathy believes that Kait sent her to me as an angel. Hannah worked with the Darrell Dexter government after she graduated from Mount Saint Vincent University with a political science degree. Then she moved to Alberta and worked with the Minister of Health in the Alberta Legislature and was part of forming the first opioid treatment program.

Today I want to thank Hannah Landry for joining my team, welcome her, and hope that you'll all join me in welcoming Hannah Landry.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

BROAD COVE COM. ASSOC.: HALL UPGRADES - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I rise today to recognize the Broad Cove Community Association members, friends, and supporters on the recent upgrades to their vibrant and welcoming hall by the sea.

The association's work has successfully brought the outside in, improving accessibility, and providing enhanced spaces for people to socialize, give musical performances, be active, laugh, meet, and enjoy. The expansions and renovations to this community hub took the vision, determination, spirit, and hard work of many.

The hall improves the quality of life in the community, and this project will create new memories, build friendships, and enhance the experience of all users, now and for years to come.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to please join me in congratulating the Broad Cove Community Association, the project designer, planners, fundraisers, and supporters on a job well done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

THE SOCIAL BOUTIQUE: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I did want to note that it is Small Business Week this week, and I've been celebrating some of the small businesses in Bedford Basin online and now here in the House. Today I'd like to talk a bit about The Social Boutique, which is a women's clothing store in Sunnyside Mall. It's also a social enterprise. The money raised from the store goes to support Dress for Success, which is an organization that helps women return to the workforce.

The store sells pre-loved and often new clothing at really good prices. I will just point out that the suede jacket-slash-dress that I'm wearing today is from The Social Boutique, and I would just like to congratulate Brenda Saunders Todd and her whole team at The Social Boutique on the excellent job they've been doing.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

INTL. DAY FOR ERAD. OF POV.: RED. INCOME INEQ. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: October 17th presents an opportunity to acknowledge the effort and the struggle of people living in poverty, and a chance for them to have their concerns heard.

On this day, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the United Nations points out poverty and inequality are “the result of deliberate decisions or inaction that disempower the poorest and marginalized in our societies and violate their fundamental rights.”

Enough food is being produced to feed everyone in the world, but 811 million people don't have enough to eat. Our economic system gives billionaires so much money that they can afford vanity trips to space, while two billion people don't have access to clean drinking water.

While the ways “the poorest people are treated are a measure of the respect in which human dignity is held in our societies,” too often programs to assist people living in poverty are deliberately designed to strip them of their dignity. This includes social assistance rates that are set at such a low level that even paying for food and shelter is a struggle.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is a wake-up call to the world. This year's theme, Dignity for All in Practice, must be a rallying cry for urgent global action.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

REID, BROOKE: RUGBY 7S TEAM SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I rise today to congratulate Brooke Reid on making the Nova Scotia Women's Rugby 7s team and competing in the 2022 Canada Summer Games in Ontario.

The team had an impressive showing, entering the medal round undefeated. They finished fourth overall. This is the first time for Women's Rugby 7s at the Games; 7s is a modified version of rugby with just seven players per team playing on a full-sized pitch with five replacements. Games are fast-paced, consisting of two seven-minute halves.

Brooke began playing rugby with the Nighthawks at Northumberland Regional High School, has played with the Nova Scotia Keltics, and will continue playing at Acadia University. I wish Brooke and the Acadia Axewomen a great season. I also wish Brooke academic success as she pursues her post-secondary education.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

STEWART, JAMES: GALLERY INTRODUCTION - WELCOME

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like the House to join me in welcoming a young Liberal who is in attendance tonight: James Stewart in the West Gallery. James is very young, despite how tall and old-looking he is, but he's also one of the sharpest political intellects I've had the chance to speak with recently. James, welcome to the House tonight, and I ask the members to join me in welcoming him as well.

THE SPEAKER: Indeed, we welcome all guests to the Legislature. We hope you enjoy the proceedings.

The member for Halifax Atlantic.

BOUTILIER, LINDSAY: HIGH TIDE INTERIORS - CONGRATS.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Today I rise in the House to recognize an extraordinary entrepreneur in our community: the owner and operator of High Tide Interiors, Lindsay Boutilier.

Lindsay's passion for home interior started at a young age when she found herself rearranging her friends' bedrooms, making them more functional. Right out of high school, Lindsay completed her interior decorating and design diploma at Eastern College with honours.

With over 10-plus years' experience in the industry, she took the leap of faith almost a year ago and started her company, High Tide Interiors. Lindsay can help with home staging, interior decorating, or design needs. To top it all off, High Tide Interiors is so excited to have the opportunity to work with the QEII Home Lottery to complete the Fall 2022 cottage. What an amazing experience for Lindsay.

I ask that all members in the House join me in congratulating Lindsay Boutilier of High Tide Interiors for everything she has accomplished over the past year. I have no doubt she will continue to be successful in our community and beyond.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ORI FOODS CO.: NEW DART. BUS. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I would like to celebrate Small Business Week by recognizing a newer addition to the Dartmouth North small business landscape, Ori Foods Co.

The small but mighty restaurant and café is owned and run by Zoë Bartel and Lachlan Culjak, a pastry chef and a chef with international experience. The two previously owned Ori Chocolate Company, which sold its wares at the Alderney Landing Farmers Market. Zoë and Lachlan had been looking to open a spot back home in Nova Scotia when they came upon a space at 258 Wyse Road, just down the street from some of Zoë's family, and we're really happy that they chose that spot.

Since Ori opened in April 2022, I have enjoyed many delicious locally sourced meals and treats at the beautifully designed café. The food and coffee are truly excellent, and my constituency coordinator, Rebecca, is especially excited that they have two dairy- and gluten-free cookie options.

I ask the House to join me in thanking Zoë and Lachlan for choosing Dartmouth North as Ori's home, and I encourage everyone to stop by and taste some delicious treats.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACMASTER, JANE: 36 YRS. AT PICTOU CO. HOUS. AUTH. - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place today to acknowledge the dedicated service of Jane MacMaster of Caribou, Pictou County, in her role at the Eastern Mainland Housing Authority.

Jane recently celebrated 36 years with the Housing Authority in Pictou County. She has been a valuable and compassionate member of this agency, and we can attest to the service that she has provided our office in Pictou Centre. Jane was in charge of placement of constituents in public housing for many years in this area of Nova Scotia. She garnered a reputation of being incredibly fair and caring when dealing with our people when they found themselves in need of assistance with housing.

As we can all appreciate, there are few things in life that are more important than a roof over our heads. Jane has taken on many positions in her time with the Authority. Regardless of her title, she has been excellent in her role. Jane is always accessible and ready to assist those in need to the fullest extent of her abilities.

I would ask that all members of this Legislature join me in congratulating Jane MacMaster on this very auspicious occasion and wish her the very best in the future. We sure hope that she'll be sticking around for many years to come.

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

BUHA, NIKUNJ - WASHMILL GEN. STORE: BUS. SUCCESS - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the first day of Small Business Week to congratulate Nikunj Buha - and I apologize if I said that incorrectly - on a successful first three months in business at the Washmill General Store, located at 325 Washmill Lake Drive.

Mr. Buha and his family came to Nova Scotia from India in 2016, and this is his newest business venture, which I'm so pleased to have in our community of Fairview-Clayton Park, as so many others have chosen over the last 10 years. Fairview-Clayton Park continues to see a construction boom and influx of thousands of new residents, and the Washmill Lake Drive area is no exception.

With the addition of many new apartment buildings over the last few years, there was a distinct lack of services for these new residents. Mr. Buha saw this need and jumped at the opportunity to join other businesses in our newest strip mall at the top of Fairview. This large and bright store has everything you need, from bread and milk to evening snacks, as well as many road trip essentials, all within walking distance of these new, large buildings.

Also in this complex are four other small businesses: Pizzatown, Pür & Simple, Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa, and Eisenhower Insurance. If you're driving by, you will see a busy parking lot with a lot of happy customers.

I ask all members of this House to join me in celebrating Mr. Buha and wishing him continued success in his years to come.

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

INTL. DAY FOR ERAD. OF POV.: DIGNITY OF ALL - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, October 17th is the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The 2022 theme is Dignity for All in Practice.

The dignity of all human beings is not only a fundamental right, but it is the basis of other human rights. We all hold the right to dignity, but many people living in poverty see their dignity eroded. Poverty and inequality are not inevitable. The experience of poverty is violent, with social exclusion, structural discrimination, and disempowerment. Systems make it harder for people trapped in extreme poverty to escape and deny their humanity.

[5:30 p.m.]

Here in the House of the people, we make choices every day that could serve to enhance people's fundamental dignity and worth, as well as eliminate poverty in Nova Scotia. There are many ideas that we discuss often, including ensuring sufficient support for all families during the cost of living crisis, raising income assistance, eliminating Pharmacare co-pays, supporting environmental retrofitting so that people can get a break on their power bills, and so much more. Importantly, we also need to ensure that people living in poverty are engaged in developing the solutions and support they want.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

VARIOUS ORGS.: EMERG. SHELTER SET-UP - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize all those who assisted in getting an emergency shelter opened for the most vulnerable during Hurricane Fiona. I would like to thank our community outreach team, who are funded by the Department of Community Services as well as Affordable Housing Nova Scotia. Specifically, I would like to thank Aiden Kivisto, Ellen Gaudet, Monica Gibbons, and Victoria McLellan. They care so much for the people they work with each and every day: those who are living unsheltered in our communities. They wanted to be sure that they had a dry and safe place to be during the storm.

I would like to also thank the Amherst Lions Club for the use of their hall for the weekend, and the Salvation Army, who offered space and also donated dry clothing to those in need. I would also like to thank the Canadian Red Cross for the use of their cots.

There was a great response to making this happen. People donated bedding, food, and clothing, all with a call to action within 48 hours.

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

SMITH, ANDY & VERA FAYE: 50TH WEDDING ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

LARRY HARRISON: I rise today to wish a very happy 50th anniversary to my dear friends, Andy and Vera Faye Smith of Hilden. Andy and Vera Faye were married on September 2, 1972, and had two sons, Darren and Duncan. They both had very successful careers in education before retiring to become super volunteers in our community.

Andy and Vera Faye have been involved with the Colchester Food Bank for more than 15 years and Vera Faye currently serves as the chair of the board of directors. They

have also both been very active in the Brookfield Pastoral Charge, and have served in numerous positions at Knox United Church in Brookfield.

Andy and Vera Faye are also very politically engaged in Colchester County, and I want to personally thank them for all they have done for me.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Andy and Vera Faye Smith on 50 years of marriage and wish them many more years of happiness in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

CHRONICLE HERALD NEWSPAPER: JOURNALISM WORK - THANKS

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize *The Chronicle Herald* newspaper, located on Joseph Howe Drive directly across from my constituency office. Since 1874, the *Herald* has been a Halifax, Nova Scotia staple of news and opinion. They represented, and still represent to this day, the importance of the free press and the power of meaningful report.

To all of the current, former, and future journalists out there in Nova Scotia, I thank you for your work, and I look forward to reading more of your stories.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

HFX. CIT.-SABLE I. MLA: WORK IN LEG. - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize another one of my colleagues, the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island. In a relatively short time in the Legislature, they have certainly made a mark. They have championed legislation, been a fierce advocate and critic, organized events and engagements in their riding and here at Province House, and brought conversations into this Chamber specifically regarding equity and 2SLGBTQIA+ issues that have not been previously considered.

I was particularly proud to stand with them as they were appointed the first nonbinary Deputy Speaker of this House of Assembly last year, alongside the member for Preston, who was appointed the first African Nova Scotian Deputy Speaker.

Until we have a Chamber and an Executive Council that more accurately reflect the people we serve, appointments like this are incredibly important. I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing the work of the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

NOËL, LAUREN & JANIE: BUS. AWD. RECIPS. - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I rise today to bring recognition to Lauren and Janie Noël of Kentville. Lauren and Janie are twin sisters, Northeast Kings Education Centre high school students, environmentally minded teenagers, socially conscious budding entrepreneurs, and philanthropists.

Lauren and Janie began Noël & Co. Candles with a Conscience to fund a school trip to Greece. These young entrepreneurs have created a collection of vegan, cruelty-free, phthalate-free, and paraben-free candles, bath salts, linen sprays, and room diffusers.

Lauren and Janie donate 2 per cent of their sales to the Atlantic Kidney Foundation, and to date, they have donated more than \$1,200 to this important cause. These entrepreneurs were also presented with the 2022 Best New Business Award by the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Please join me today in congratulating Lauren and Janie Noël for winning this award and for their generous support to the Kidney Foundation.

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

ECEs: IMPORTANCE OF WORK - RECOG.

HON. BEN JESSOME: On this 17th day of October, I'd like to recognize the contributions of early childhood educators and the child care sector from across our province. They play a critical role for our children in their formative years, and they support our families in a big way, enabling parents to be able to go to work and know that their children are safe.

This predominantly female-driven sector of our province plays a critical role in our overall economy, again enabling people to get to work and do the jobs that we all need done across the province.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to wish co-owners Lisa Rondeau and Donna Buckland, and the entire team at Giant Steps Children's Centre out in my constituency in Hammonds Plains-Lucasville congratulations on 20 years of success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

RANDY'S PIZZA: 35 YRS. IN BUS. - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to celebrate a local business and family in the North End - Walid Farid and his family, who own and operate Randy's Pizza on Agricola Street.

Walid says there is no great secret to success. He says you have to work hard with any business.

Walid and his wife had nothing when they emigrated to Canada. They made a lot of mistakes turning Randy's Pizza into a thriving business as it is today. Walid said that after a while it was worth it, but it was very hard.

Walid arrived in Nova Scotia during a wave of immigration after the onset of the Lebanese Civil War in 1982. Randy's Pizza opened its doors in 1987. Walid Farid and his contemporaries were the pioneers whose cultural influence on food and business would spread through every sector of the Maritimes. It all started from the humblest of beginnings, and the Farid family has been selling pizza in Halifax for over 35 years.

I would like the members of this House to help me congratulate Randy's Pizzeria on 35 years of serving the north end community and wish them many more years of success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member of Cumberland South.

YOUNG, DAVE: HURR. SUPP. - RECOG.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the many people across Cumberland South who stepped up to be of assistance to others when they were most vulnerable in the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona: Emergency Services, Cumberland REMO, Public Works crews, neighbours and many volunteers. One of those was a 14-year veteran firefighter from the Parrsboro Fire Department, Dave "The Hammer" Young, who staffed the department and cooked enough food to feed everyone who showed up.

Dave and his group of volunteers stayed six days at the fire department, looking after whatever needed to be done. During that time, Dave and his crew cooked close to 700 meals, starting at 7:00 a.m. each day and kept cooking until everyone was fed supper that evening.

Dave said that the people in the area were very supportive. As well, the farmers' market and the co-op provided food to help out. Dave also jumped in with other volunteers to help with downed trees, cutting them and getting them off the roadways where possible.

Will you please join me in acknowledging the incredible volunteer effort put forth by Dave and the many volunteers who stepped up to volunteer, and thank them for being there for our communities in their time of need?

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

GOOGOO, JARVIS: MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize an inspiring Cole Harbour-Dartmouth resident, Jarvis Googoo. Born and raised in We'koqma'q First Nation, Jarvis holds degrees from St. Mary's University, Dalhousie Law School, and is a non-practicing member of the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society.

He has extensive engagement experience with First Nations' communities and organizations, mainly in health and education, and with the urban Aboriginal community. He also possesses knowledge on Aboriginal law and Mi'kmaw history, culture, and language, often acting as a cultural language resource liaison. He has been recognized as a youth leader by numerous organizations and committees.

Jarvis has spoken and presented at many events, including at Dalhousie Law and Medical Schools, and led the development of the Donald Marshall Junior Memorial Award. Passionate about running, yoga, fitness, and health, Jarvis was recently the first person from We'koqma'q First Nation to qualify, be accepted, and compete in the historic Boston Marathon. Catch him if you can.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

PRIMROSE LAWTONS STAFF: THANKSGIV. DINNER DON. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on the Friday before Thanksgiving, staff from Lawtons at 6 Primrose Street in Dartmouth North dropped by the Tawaak Housing and Elizabeth Fry Building on Pinecrest Street to donate to their Thanksgiving dinner. The sixplex of affordable housing apartments is a partnership between the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, which works with criminalized women, girls, non-binary and gender diverse folks and the Aboriginal affordable housing non-profit Tawaak Housing.

In addition to the \$150 in grocery gift cards that Lawtons donated, they also donated six pies to the dinner. Residential manager Patricia Whyte later wrote about the donation that they were proud to live in, and be a part of, this community. I agree with Patricia. It's acts of kindness such as these that make me proud to be a part of the Dartmouth North community.

I ask that this House join me in thanking the staff and management of Lawtons on Primrose Street for their meaningful donation and ongoing commitment to Dartmouth North.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

HARVEY, RAYMOND: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Raymond Harvey, who recently passed away after a brief battle with cancer. Raymond opened his own accounting firm in Windsor in 1977 and, although he retired in October of 2021, he continued to work part-time from his home.

Raymond was someone you could count on and if he could help, he would. He proved this through his years of volunteering. He was a member of the Rotary Club of Windsor, the Windsor Gyros, which eventually became the Windsor Social Club, and served in various positions at both the Windsor United Church and the Newport Pastoral Charge. He also enjoyed a good round of golf.

He was a man who loved his family fiercely. He very seldomly missed any of his grandchildren's events and had a very busy schedule travelling around the province to cheer them on from the stands. Raymond always had a story to tell and was just as good a listener.

Raymond was a true pillar in our community and has left a lasting impression on all of us as a successful businessman, family man, avid golfer, volunteer, and most of all a friend.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

KIRKBRIGHT, JANICE: JUBILEE MEDAL RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. TONY INCE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Janice Kirkbright, the Executive Director of the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm Museum. Janice was recently awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal by the Association of Nova Scotia Museums.

She was recognized for her hard work in keeping the farm relevant and a cherished destination in our community. You only have to look at families bringing excited children to visit animals or the people spilling out of the tearoom to know that the Heritage Farm is a vital and integral part of the fabric of Cole Harbour.

Through pop-ups, craft markets, events, workshops, and blacksmithing, the Heritage Farm keeps the agricultural past while bringing the awareness of modern food and farming practices to the urban presence.

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

SPENCER HOUSE: BUDDY PROJECT - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, sometimes it's hard to make new friends. I rise today to acknowledge an innovative new program that helps overcome this at Spencer House, in collaboration with Engage Nova Scotia, Saint Mary's University, the YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs, and Chebucto Links.

The Buddy Project pairs seniors with newcomers based on similar interests and hobbies. Buddies decide what they want to do and where they want to go. They are given an allowance for their outings that can cover activity costs, transportation, and translation services.

The vision is to create a safe and inclusive space that enables people from diverse backgrounds and experiences to connect with one another, build lasting friendships, and most importantly, exchange cultural knowledge and understanding.

I ask all members to offer their congratulations to Spencer House for the launch of an amazing community program.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MACRAE, KENENE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say goodbye to Kenene MacRae from Nyanza, Victoria County. Kenene was armed with a quick wit and curiosity throughout her lifetime. She was a devoted mother and grandmother, a wonderful sister, and had a keen business sense and strong work ethic.

She and her husband, Monty, built and ran the Trailsman Motel from 1965 until it was sold in 2016. Over the years, the Trailsman built a reputation for excellence and welcomed many travellers and innumerable bus tours. Patrons were met with home-cooked hearty meals and pristinely clean rooms.

My sisters, our cousins, and I spent many a hot Summer day enjoying the outdoor pool at the Trailsman throughout our childhood. We had paved driveways to ride our bikes, cold pop from the pop machine, and there was always home baking to enjoy.

I ask all members of the House to join me in sending sincere condolences to Monty, Kenene's husband and business partner, to her children Bruce, Danny, and Cindy MacRae, to my sisters, and my cousins as they say goodbye to the matriarch of their family over the coming days.

THE SPEAKER: Very well said. Thank you.

The honourable member for Clare.

DEVEAU, VICKIE: GALA AWD. WINS - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Monsieur le président, le Gala de la chanson de Caraquet est le concours de chant francophone le plus prestigieux du Canada Atlantique. Au fil des années, ce concours a favorisé l'épanouissement de quelque 600 artistes émergents grâce à ses séances de perfectionnement et à ses nombreux prix et bourses.

Au gala de cette année, Vickie Deveau de Clare, finaliste dans la catégorie auteur-compositeur-interprète et dans la catégorie chansons, a fait très bonne figure. Elle est rentrée chez elle avec le prix coup de cœur - Pays de la Sagouine, un prix qui comprends une vitrine rémunérée. Plus impressionnant encore, elle est également revenue avec le prix de la Chanson Étoile, sa chanson Non Non s'étant placée première dans la catégorie chanson.

Je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour féliciter Vickie Deveau pour son succès au Gala de la chanson de Caraquet et lui souhaiter bonne chance dans ses futurs projets.

Mr. Speaker, the Gala de la chanson de Caraquet is the most prestigious francophone singing contest in Atlantic Canada. Over the years, this competition has fostered the growth of some 600 emerging artists through its development sessions and its many prizes and scholarships.

At this year's gala, Clare's Vickie Deveau, a finalist in the Singer/Songwriter category and the Song category, did extremely well. She returned home with the prix du coup du coeur - Pays de la Sagouine, a prize that includes a paid showcase. More impressively, she also returned with the prix de la Chanson Étoile, her song Non Non having placed first in the Song category.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating Vickie Deveau on her success at the Gala de la chanson de Caraquet and wish her well in her future musical endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

VOLUNS. & SPONSORS: W. KINGS COM. FAIR - THANKS

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, for 85 years, communities in western Kings County have gathered at the end of the Summer for a traditional country fair. The Western Kings Community Fair, also known as the Tremont World Fair, was held this year on September 3rd.

After a three-year pause, this event featured sunshine and fun for all ages, along with ox pulls, display competitions for arts and crafts, sewing, cooking, fruit, vegetables, and flowers. Children's and pets parades, cattle judging, crosscut saw competitions, children's games, music, and delicious food rounded out the day's activities.

I was pleased to be able to attend this year and celebrate with the residents in Tremont. I ask all members of the House to help me in thanking all the sponsors and volunteers who helped to make the 85th Tremont World Fair another successful event in our area.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

FRIENDS OF BLUE MTN.-BIRCH COVE LAKES: PRES. WORK - CONGRATS.

BRAEDON CLARK: Recently myself, the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, the member for Clayton Park West, and many others had the pleasure of attending the AGM for the Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Society, which is an outstanding volunteer organization that spans across many constituencies in and around Halifax.

Their primary goal is to protect, preserve, and expand the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, which is an absolute gem, maybe 20 minutes' drive from here. One of the main things they want to do is see that become a national urban park. It would be the first national urban park in Atlantic Canada. I think it's a very worthwhile pursuit. We have heard some very promising things from the minister and from the federal minister as well.

I want to congratulate all the members of the Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Society and wish them the best on the national urban park designation.

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

PARKER-BROWN, ANGIE: BOOK LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a truly inspirational member in our community, Angie Parker-Brown. On September 18th, she launched her first book, *Writing with My Eyes: Staying Alive While Dying*.

Angie lives with ALS, a fatal neuromuscular disease that has slowly taken away her speech and the majority of her motor functions. The book was written using incredible eye-tracking technology. Angie's inspirational story of her journey with ALS has garnered national attention and encouraged people across the country to share their own difficult stories in return. Those who know Angie know how much her journey has changed

people's perspectives on what they can do and what they are capable of. In her words, "Aim for full capacity sparkle."

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in congratulating Angie Parker-Brown and thank her for sharing her moving story.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

SPRINGFIELD FIREFIGHTERS: AWD. RECIPS. - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: In communities across our province, volunteer firefighters sacrifice so much to help their fellow citizens, and I'm always pleased to celebrate their tremendous efforts.

Last month, I was honoured to attend the Springfield and District Fire Department's Awards Gala. I would like to take a moment to recognize the award recipients. The Long Service Award winners were as follows: Roland Acker at 50 years; Vincent Lohnes at 49 years; Carson Lowe, 47 years; Paul Veinot at 44 years; Paul Lecuyer, 34 years; Tim Robar at 32 years.

The Peer-Nominated Award winners were: for the Chief's Award, Jeff Veinot; Firefighter of the Year Brendan DeMone; MFR of the Year, Vanessa Junkin; and Leadership of the Year Jeff Veinot.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking all members of the Springfield and District Fire Department for all they do to make our communities safer places to work, play, and live.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

CATALONE CONVENIENCE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BRIAN COMER: I rise today to praise Catalone Convenience in Catalone, Cape Breton, for their continued dedication to the community and surrounding areas.

This store is owned and run by Barry McComber, known for its community involvement and spirit, although Hurricane Fiona put them through the test, and they did not waiver. Every day they continued to show up, working long hours. Even though their own staff were still without power themselves, they kept their customers up to date.

Today I'd like to take this time to commend Barry and his staff at Catalone Convenience for their continued dedication and compassion for their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

LAWLOR, ALLISON: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today to recognize Allison Lawlor of Prospect. Allison is a freelance writer who has worked from her home in Prospect Village since 2003. Allison is an active and engaged community leader who is passionate about the place she calls home.

She serves as Chair of the Prospect Peninsula Residents Association, and through their grassroots organization, the village manages and maintains its community wharf, the focus of this unique fishing community, and advocates for the surrounding natural beauty of High Head's coastal barren.

PPRA also brings residents together to build strong traditions of celebration gatherings, like the Canada Day celebration, where people from all over the village and beyond come to celebrate Canada Day.

I'd like the members of the House to join me in thanking Allison for the generosity and compassion to help others during a very difficult, challenging time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

EXIT REAL ESTATE & MEDITERRA: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

HON. STEVE CRAIG: I rise today to thank all those in my community who went above and beyond during Hurricane Fiona. A few to mention are Scott Grace and his team at EXIT Real Estate Professionals, who hosted a free barbecue for all those in the community without power following the hurricane. They also provided an opportunity to charge phones and other devices.

Likewise, Ergul Kocabaş and family, who owns MediTerra Kitchen and Turkish Grocery, stayed open during the storm by way of generator power, offering free warm drinks and soup for the community. They too provided an opportunity to charge devices.

I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking Scott and his team, the Kocabaş family, as well as those who contributed in many ways we may never hear about, to help their neighbours through and after Hurricane Fiona.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

GALLAGHER, LINDA: VOL. OF YR. AWD. RECIP. - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to recognize Linda Gallagher, who has been named the Town of Yarmouth's Volunteer of the Year for the 2022 Nova Scotia Volunteer Awards.

Linda has led the dedicated group of volunteers of the Yarmouth Splash Park Society. She has fundraised, identified, and applied for fundraising opportunities, and engaged all levels of government. In doing so, she was successful at raising over \$330,000 to see her dream and the dream of many Yarmouthians of a splash park become reality this past Summer.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Linda Gallagher on this prestigious award and in thanking her for her vision and tireless work in bringing the Yarmouth Splash Park to families in our community for generations to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

NIMMO, BEV: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: I rise today to recognize Bev Nimmo. Bev has been a volunteer with the RCMP Pipes and Drums of Nova Scotia for nearly 20 years. On top of her volunteer role as a bagpiper, Bev also volunteers as an event coordinator to make sure that the band has appropriate volunteers in place to match their many requests from the community.

During COVID-19, Bev was instrumental to bringing music to some of HRM's long-term care facilities for seniors during lockdowns. The band played away from the homes in a safe environment as the seniors listened and watched the pipes, drums, and dancers from a safe distance.

Since Bev joined the organization, she has volunteered thousands of hours to bring the music of her Scottish heritage to communities around the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

LANEY, H./DÉCARIE-GARNIER, M./CHAO, N.: LIB. BURSARY RECIPS. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate three students on receiving \$400 bursaries from the Bedford Basin Liberal Association. They received these bursaries at three steamy graduation ceremonies this past June.

Bedford Basin is served by three high schools, Charles P. Allen High School, École secondaire du Sommet, and Bedford and Forsyth Education Centres. The latter is the only one that's actually located in the constituency.

I'd like to congratulate Hailey Laney from BFEC on receiving the bursary. From Sommet, Maximilien Décarie-Garnier a gagné la bourse - he won the bursary - and from CPA, Nathan Chao won the bursary, as well.

I want to thank the teachers who took the time to select the students for us and I'm grateful to my constituency association for their support for young persons as they pursue their paths.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

DONALDSON, BERNICE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, it's with great regret that I announce the passing of Bernice Donaldson of Enfield. Bernice always made time to help others when needed.

She was one of the co-founders of the Caring & Sharing/Angel Tree Food Bank in Enfield, where she worked tirelessly for 31 years to ensure that people who needed help received it. She's received so many awards for the things that people knew she did from the Lions Club, the Municipality of East Hants Volunteer of the Year, and the Provincial Volunteer of the Year.

I will miss her advice and how she would tell anybody who asked what they needed to know, not necessarily what they wanted to know.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

DAUGHTER, ISLA ROSE: BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to recognize a very special young girl, Isla Rose Maguire, who turned 6 years old this past week. (Applause)

She is my wild child and I think a bit of a payback from when I was a kid. Isla can usually be found barefoot in the backyard, usually with pieces of clothing missing. She is a fantastic bundle of energy.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel her birthday party this weekend because she was sick. Isla, Daddy will make it up to you, I promise. Happy Birthday. I love you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

E & F WEBBER'S LAKESIDE RESORT: 50 YRS. OF OPS. - CONGRATS.

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend sincere congratulations to E & F Webber's Lakeside Resort on 50 years of operations on the Eastern Shore.

This well-respected family-run campground on beautiful Lake Charlotte in Upper Lakeville is a destination sought out for its exceptional service and natural beauty. When owners Marilyn and Robin Webber install their business sign at the head of the Upper Lakeville Road, it's a much-anticipated herald of Summer to our communities.

I ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in offering congratulations for another successful season and wish them many more to come.

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

MEXICO LINDO OWNERS: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I rise today to say goodbye to a beloved Fairview institution, Mexico Lindo restaurant. For 23 years, the husband-and-wife team of Ana Jimenez Jenkins and Wilson Jenkins have proudly served the residents of Fairview-Clayton Park and beyond with fresh, delicious, and authentic Mexican cuisine.

The bright yellow and blue walls of this cozy restaurant are lined with images of smiling faces and the landscape of Mexico providing customers with an immersive experience and the feeling that you are actually sitting around Ana's dinner table at home. On November 30th, this amazing couple will begin a new journey as they close the restaurant and start a new and hopefully relaxing retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in wishing Ana and Wilson a busy and enjoyable last month in business and all the best in their next adventure.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

LOCAL SENIORS: 80TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, within the communities of Bass River, Economy, and Five Islands there is a group of people who went to school together and have kept in touch over the years.

Upon reaching their 61st birthdays, these folks decided to celebrate their birthdays every five years with a birthday party. This August, those friends celebrated their 80th birthday.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish a happy 80th birthday to Dorothy Carson, Carole Dibbon, Paul Soley, Barbara Morrison, Gary Newton, Harold Welch, Judy Gordon Lewis, Sheldon Patriquin, Tim Webb, Joyce Canning, Helen Annan, and Anita MacLellan and wish them continued good health and happiness for many years.

Mr. Speaker, that's a testament to the fresh air and good living in Colchester North.

[6:00 p.m.]

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 5C(1), I move that the hours tomorrow, Tuesday, October 18th, be not 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., but 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to extend the hours tomorrow, Tuesday, from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

A recorded vote has been called for.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[6:01 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

There is a motion on the floor that the House hours tomorrow be extended from 1:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[6:59 p.m.]

YEAS

Hon. Brad Johns
 Hon. Tory Rushton
 Hon. Barbara Adams
 Hon. Kim Masland
 Hon. Allan MacMaster
 Hon. Karla MacFarlane
 Hon. Michelle Thompson
 Hon. John Lohr
 Hon. Pat Dunn
 Hon. Timothy Halman
 Hon. Steve Craig
 Dave Ritcey

NAYS

Hon. Patricia Arab
 Hon. Brendan Maguire
 Hon. Kelly Regan
 Hon. Zach Churchill
 Hon. Iain Rankin
 Susan Leblanc
 Claudia Chender
 Suzy Hansen
 Gary Burrill
 Lisa Lachance
 Hon. Tony Ince
 Lorelei Nicoll

ABSTENTIONS

E. Smith-McCrossin

Hon. Brian Wong	Hon. Ben Jessome
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek	Ali Duale
Hon. Brian Comer	Carmen Kerr
Hon. Colton LeBlanc	Braedon Clark
Hon. Jill Balsler	Ronnie LeBlanc
Trevor Boudreau	
Hon. Greg Morrow	
Hon. Becky Druhan	
Larry Harrison	
Chris Palmer	
John A. MacDonald	
Melissa Sheehy-Richard	
Danielle Barkhouse	
Tom Taggart	
Nolan Young	
Kent Smith	

[7:00 p.m.]

THE CLERK: For, 28. Nay, 17. Abstentions, 1.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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. 203.

Bill No. 203 - Labour Standards Code (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill entitled An Act to Amend the Labour Standards Code be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the end of a pregnancy is something that impacts many Nova Scotians across the province each year and in many different circumstances. When someone experiences the end of a pregnancy, they should not have to worry about taking time away from work. They should not have to worry about whether their job will be there for them when they return. That's why we have recently introduced changes to the Labour Standards Code, which will ensure employees who experience the end of a pregnancy can take a protected leave from their job if they need it.

An end of a pregnancy may occur in different circumstances. In this proposed legislation, end of pregnancy is defined as a pregnancy that does not result in a live birth. Mr. Speaker, these changes will ensure employees have access to an unpaid leave of absence of up to five consecutive working days for a pregnancy that does not result in a live birth, or an unpaid leave of up to 16 weeks if their pregnancy ends after the 19th week of pregnancy.

Under these proposed changes, an employee would be eligible for an unpaid leave of absence for up to five consecutive working days when: their pregnancy ends; their spouse or partner's pregnancy ends; their former spouse or partner's pregnancy ends if they would have been the biological parent; they would have been the parent of a child born as a result of a pregnancy under a surrogacy agreement; or they would have been a parent of a child born as a result of a pregnancy by the means of an intended adoption pursuant under the laws of the Province.

The Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration conducted a broad stakeholder consultation in Nova Scotia. We also performed a jurisdictional scan to see what type of leave looks like in other provinces and territories across Canada, and we considered the protected leaves under the Labour Standards Code.

Taking all of this into account, we are proposing an unpaid leave for end of pregnancy. The proposed amendments to the code set a minimum standard that employers must follow. We know that many employers go above that minimum, and we thank those that go above and beyond it. We recommend that Nova Scotians who have questions about the different leave benefits their employer may offer reach out to their employer.

During our consultation efforts, we heard from women's centres and advocacy groups, employers and employer organizations, labour organizations, and from individuals directly. Overall, we received positive response and support for these amendments, and their feedback is reflected in this bill. These proposed amendments are important, as they reflect the current work environment and the real experiences of Nova Scotians.

I'd like to take a moment again to acknowledge all of those Nova Scotians who have experienced an end of pregnancy. Each story and circumstance are as unique as the individuals themselves, and their stories are impactful. As all of us here today will recall, in the sitting of the Legislature last Fall, a private member's bill was introduced to amend

the Labour Standards Code to provide leave for expecting parents and biological parents when a pregnancy ends in a manner other than a live birth. This bill was inspired by real people and real stories. It is experiences like this that are the impetus of the change behind these amendments.

Nova Scotia's Labour Standard Code offers Nova Scotians many different types of protection. These changes will offer job protection to employees in Nova Scotia who must deal with a very personal situation. Nova Scotians deserve the support from their employers when they experience an end of pregnancy. As a government, we're committed to supporting employees across the province in making sure that they have the support they need to build their lives and to thrive.

My sincere thanks to everyone at my department, the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, who worked hard to bring this bill to a reality. My sincere thanks to everyone who was involved when we consulted. We value your input and your stories. You have made a difference with this bill.

I now welcome responses from some of the colleagues and the members of the House.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: I'd like to start off by thanking the minister, the deputy minister, and their entire team for their hard work, and especially for their thoughtfulness, throughout the development of this amendment to the Labour Code.

When I introduced the private member's bill which we came to know as Ruby's Law, we quickly discovered just how many people had been personally impacted by pregnancy loss and infant death, including members of this House. I'm thankful we've been able to look beyond partisanship toward the greater good and to find ways to better support parents of Nova Scotia.

It's a wonderful step forward for equity in the workplace for women. No one should have to worry about their employment when they are in the depths of grief, losing their child. I've heard stories from women going through pregnancy loss who are unable to take time off in fear of losing their job.

Witnessing the pain my daughter and my son-in-law experienced after Ruby died will always be one of the hardest things I did as a parent. Speaking about it in this House was equally difficult. Ruby dying will always be that difficult thing, and any anxiety on top of this emotional pain is inexcusable. It should never be up to an employer whether or not you get time to grieve your loved ones. It is important to note that this bill will also align with other standards that allow partners job security and five days of unpaid leave for a pregnancy loss.

All this being said, we should view this amendment as a first step in better supporting grieving people. The issue of this being an unpaid leave means we are excluding those who cannot afford to take that crucial time off to heal. Our next step will require working with employers and the federal government to amend insurance coverage and employment insurance. This could include amending employment insurance to provide the same level of benefits to a lost parent as it does to a parent on parental leave. Mental health benefit plans should also be considered.

I hope more options like this will be considered to extend this bill to have paid leave, as well, by working with our federal counterparts. While you can get employment insurance, the process can be extremely long and onerous during a time of emotional and physical pain.

Again, I'd like to thank everyone who contributed to this amendment. My hope is that it will help all grieving parents, whether the loss has happened yesterday or 50 years ago. I look forward to continuing this initiative throughout my time in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Standing Ovation)

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

KENDRA COOMBES: First, Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature. For a miscarriage, loss of pregnancy, it affects so many people, more than we know. They say that statistics are one in four, but I would say the statistics are higher, considering the many people I know who experienced pregnancy loss, myself included.

These changes that are coming forward are very much needed, and I thank the minister for taking this bill - Ruby's Law - and putting it into action for all Nova Scotians because it is so much needed and it's important that people experiencing pregnancy loss have that time to - not just to grieve but recover. There's a physical and mental aspect to pregnancy loss that we don't talk about, and to give people that time to recover is very much needed and I appreciate that.

There are only a few things I hope the minister can take back, and that is to look at paid sick leave because there are so many people, so many Nova Scotians, who just cannot take the time that they need to recover, both mentally and physically, emotionally, when they have the economic pressures also within their lives.

I just do hope that the minister can take a look at a paid time off so that people can take the time that they need, especially with the five days that's offered. I think it's incredibly important and, again, I look forward to hearing from others in Law Amendments Committee, and I look forward to speaking about this in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, as well as in third reading.

[7:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I'm so very proud to rise today to speak to Bill No. 203, an act to amend the Labour Standards Code pregnancy laws. This bill is a deeply personal one that will have long-lasting effects on many families who are going through an extremely difficult time. This change will modernize legislation to ensure that those who experience an end of pregnancy will have access to time away from work without the concern of job security. There's enough to worry about during these difficult times, and this bill will hopefully help ease the burden, even just by a small amount.

Although it doesn't get discussed very often, we know that pregnancy loss is far more common than many people realize. In fact, until I became a statistic, I didn't realize that one in three pregnancies ends in miscarriage. I also didn't realize that because you suffered through multiple miscarriages, that does not change. Often, losses are kept private, which makes it even more challenging for those who experience loss to gain the support they need. Sometimes, a loss occurs even before the employee has had a chance to share the news with the employer.

We hope that this bill will ensure that all Nova Scotians will receive the support that they deserve from their employers when they experience an end of pregnancy.

This bill reflects the modern family dynamics of today and aims to support parents in whatever form who are going through the grief of a pregnancy loss. We want to ensure our labour laws protect their employment while they take the time that they need to deal with a very personal situation.

Before these changes, Nova Scotia did not expressly address protective leave for employees in the context of the end of pregnancy. Government continues to listen to employees in Nova Scotia and works to create safe, inclusive, healthy workplaces in all regions of our province.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to this bill will hopefully bring some peace to a time that can be unimaginably difficult for our Nova Scotian families.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I want to thank the minister and I want to thank the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for putting forth their versions of this particular bill. As members of the House know, we just heard eloquently from my colleague from across the harbour about what her family went through when her daughter lost Ruby late in pregnancy.

When a new life enters a family, even before that life arrives, it's the stuff that dreams are made of. Everyone begins to think about who this little person is going to be, what sex they're going to be, what they'll look like. Very quickly they take on a personality even though they haven't actually arrived in this world. Parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, great-grandparents - everyone - becomes invested in that little person.

It's very difficult when the loss happens, even if it happens in the first few weeks after conception or at a stillbirth. It's just very difficult for families when that happens. For people who have actually physically given birth, it's even more difficult because you have hormones, and you're dealing with those in addition to the grief that you would feel because someone whom you feel you know has passed away.

I think that this bill is a good first step. I'm so pleased to see it. I'm so pleased for my colleague that one of the reasons why she wanted to get elected is coming to pass.

I think about the fact that I only recently found out about some miscarriages in our family - aunts and my mother et cetera. No one talked about it. You just pretended it didn't happen. That's changing. These days we acknowledge earlier when people are expecting. Before it was just kind of hushed up. You put away the clothes, and you hoped you'd have a chance to use them again. I'm glad to see that things are changing.

I do take the point that my honourable colleague made that for some people, being able to take an unpaid leave is simply out of reach. I do think that is something we need to take into consideration.

Change happens. It doesn't always happen as far as we would like to see it but nonetheless it is moving in the right direction. I think is an important thing to do. I want to thank my colleague who sits with me on the Public Accounts Committee - because I can't remember what her constituency is - for pointing out that one in three pregnancies actually does end in miscarriage. It wasn't a statistic I was aware of it, but it points out just how common it is and I suspect that as women are waiting until they're older to get pregnant, we might see a little more of that, so the numbers might be higher than they once were.

I do want to congratulate both of my colleagues here in this House for this bill. Ruby's Law is a great step in a great direction.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I'm just going to take a very few short minutes. I want to be on the record as well to congratulate the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration on these amendments. Her kindness and her compassion just exude through these amendments. This is such an important first step, and I want to congratulate my colleague from Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. This was one of her founding motivations for running, and to be able to see that within the first year of being an MLA is so remarkable. I'm so proud

of her. I'm so proud of the courage that she showed in sharing her personal story, and the stories that have been shown. It's hard.

There are many times when I want to stand up and share something personal, and I actually stop and I don't. I don't feel brave enough and I don't feel safe enough to do that, so when I see my colleagues being able to do that, it just fills me with so much pride and so much happiness that they're able to express themselves. These are all my colleagues, not just the ones who sit over here with me.

As the member for Bedford Basin just stated, there's so much shame around miscarriage, but there's shame around women's health in general. When you're talking about the Labour Standards Code, this really is a first step in normalizing some of the things that women - and I will focus on women. I know that these amendments encompass any parent, but there are so many things in women's health that we don't talk about that do impact our abilities to work and the challenges that we face, and we're taught to not talk about those things. We're taught to be ashamed of those things, and I feel like this is a really good first step in possibly looking at some of these other larger issues that impact our workforce, and maybe we can start having more conversations to normalize some taboo issues or things that have been deemed taboo.

Recently, our family went through a miscarriage. It's not my story to tell so I'm not going to get into details, but one thing that resonated with me was how so many of us were impacted by it and how so many of us were devastated by it, so I can't imagine what the actual parents were feeling. I couldn't even grasp that because it was too painful to try and put myself in their position. To alleviate, or to give some days where you can focus on the healing and work through that grief that's so complicated and sometimes not allowed or expected - you're supposed to just shrug it off and say it's okay, or how many times I've heard people say: Well, at least you got pregnant. There are just so many ways that we normalize miscarriage and late - I don't know how - and late-term miscarriages.

There are so many ways that we normalize it and we try to encourage parents to move forward, and they're not really given the opportunity to be able to grieve and to take a step back and find a healthy way to work through the emotions that they're feeling. This is really the first step to this, and I'm looking forward to hearing what stakeholders have to say at the Law Amendments Committee. I hope that we do have people come to speak. I know that there is the issue of having to be a paid leave. I think that there should be a lot of things that are on the table to see how we can strengthen this amendment. Again, just a congratulations and a thank you to both of the members.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I want to rise and lend my support and the support of this caucus for this bill. I do want to thank the minister for bringing it forward. This is a very important bill that I think will hopefully have a positive impact on the lives of people

who are dealing with a very difficult situation and one that I'm sure a lot of us have experienced.

My wife's first pregnancy ended in miscarriage. Of course, looking at it now, we would not have had Cecilia or Eva - the two loves of our lives - had that not happened. At the time certainly I was able to, I would say, witness first-hand the grief that my wife was going through. I was grieving, but it wasn't the same as the feelings that my wife had - and she still grieves on occasion, to be honest, when the thoughts of that first pregnancy do come to mind.

I do know that it would have been very difficult for her to get back to work. She's self-employed, thankfully, and was able to take as much time as she needed, but not every Nova Scotian is able to do that. This is a really important step in the right direction to ensure that parents do have that ability.

I really do want to also express how proud I am and how thankful I am for the work of the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, whom I know has had an influence on this piece of legislation. I believe that she's inspired it. The member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth is one of the many MLAs who aren't elected because they are partisan. They're elected because they're community-focused. They're in politics to have a positive impact on the lives of people, to help people, and to do the right thing.

Here's a really clear example of how you can have that sort of influence with that approach, even from Opposition benches. I do want to commend the member for her approach to politics overall that has served her and her community well for close to, or over, 20 years in municipal government. (Interruption) Not that long? It could have been that long. I just think that this is another great addition to the impressive legacy of the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

There are more moments like this than we get credit for. People say, why can't you just get along in there and work together on issues that matter? While we do disagree on a number of things, based either on principle, philosophy or policy disagreement, there have actually been some pretty significant moments during my time, in my 12 years in office.

I can think of the Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act and I'm sure there are others - the Adoption Records Act, a number of these bills where you do see the whole House coalesce and support something that's right, that's good, and that will help people and, particularly in this case, during a very difficult time.

Again, I do want to thank the government and the minister for bringing this forward and I commend the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth on influencing and inspiring this course of action. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 203, an amendment to the Labour Standards Code that will protect the employment of persons dealing with the end of pregnancy.

Many years ago, while working as a newspaper journalist, I was assigned a story on a then-new support group for bereaved parents in Lunenburg County. The related interviews were some of the most heart-wrenching conversations I've ever had.

Certainly, what became clear to me is that from the moment individuals find they are expecting, their hopes and their dreams, their very concept of future is invested in that child. In this way, it doesn't matter if the child lost is a senior citizen or is yet unborn. It is a deeply impactful event. It was with those memories running through my mind that I watched with such pride as my colleague the truly honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration introduced this bill last week.

This Chamber has already heard personal stories connected to the loss of unborn children. Many more stories will go unspoken, both here and in the public space. This is, after all, a private matter of health and heart.

In the same way that individuals may choose to keep the news of a pregnancy private for a time, so, too, may the loss of a child deserve such privacy. Again, I think back to those interviews with the bereavement support group and its members and one young woman who expressed her frustration when people whom she recognized as intending to be kind, told her, "it's probably for the best, dear," and her telling me it did not at all feel the best.

There can also be a tendency in our society even as the face and composition of our families change to diminish the loss suffered by those whose bodies did not carry a child - the partners, male, female, or genderqueer, adoptive parents, parties to surrogacies. In these cases, too, hopes and dreams are invested in a new life and their grief is real.

Mr. Speaker, this bill ensures that those impacted by an end of pregnancy have the time away from work to heal and to grieve without concern for their job security. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that many, many employers already extend the kindness of time off in these instances. This bill will enshrine that in law.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put myself on the record in support of the bill, in support of the government's efforts to work together with the Opposition, especially to the minister. It shows a lot of character and leadership to be able to do that, to bring such an important bill forward. I thank the minister for that work.

[7:30 p.m.]

To my colleague and long-time friend, as the person who cajoled her into getting into provincial politics, I certainly respected the work she did on HRM Council over the years, championing a lot of women's issues. I think this is a further indication of the power she has to make sure she can make positive change. She has only been an MLA for just over a year now, so it shows how much you can do.

To the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, I know that your family - especially Elizabeth - is very proud of you on this night, seeing this pass this reading and continue to go forward. It's such a personal experience that I know many in this House have had within their own families, I as well. I grew up around all women; I don't have any brothers. I certainly have personal stories that I won't share, but I think we all - if not within our own immediate families - know somebody who had to suffer, sometimes in silence. A lot of women still keep the personal information of even being pregnant for the first number of months.

I understand it can be very isolating for not even being able to share the news to those who are closest to you. I think it's important that we acknowledge that, and I'd like to see the government work together with the Opposition in times like this. So I think it's a good day for all of us in the House.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for introducing her private member's bill. Our family is certainly not immune to this experience. I know how difficult this was for you - we've talked about it a few times - even more difficult to relive it and speak about it in public. I'm really proud of you for doing so.

Thank you to the minister and her staff for bringing this forward. The minister was always one of my favourite MLAs in the House, and she continues to be, so thank you.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: It wasn't my intention to stand. I think a lot of wonderful and appropriate things have been said, particularly by the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. I want to share with my colleagues in applauding her for bringing this forward.

I think the Leader of the Official Opposition spoke of moments like these. Particularly those of us who've been around a few years, we can all recall the moments like these. The moments like these have two things in common, I would suggest. One is that they touch a nerve. Something is championed by a member that is personally important to them, and they or someone they're connected to can tell that story in a really compelling

way that connects to all of us, and then there's consensus around it. That's one thing, and then there's the bravery of bringing that forward.

I want to remark, though, that moments like these also are filled with all of us telling our stories. While that's important, it also, I think, bears noting that there are lots of people who are not here telling their stories. The member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth championed this. She decided that she wanted to get elected and put it forward, and she did it. For every member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, I would suggest there are hundreds more people in this province who have very pressing needs and desires that don't get heard here.

I guess I want to take a moment and recognize the collaboration, recognize the importance of this bill in particular. I think many people have spoken to this, but it does touch us all, and not only does it touch us all, but it is still taboo. Hopefully, this bill goes somehow toward breaking down that taboo and making it okay to breathe when, perhaps, it was not thought of as okay before.

Also, I want to note that we ought to always be alive to the stories of the people in this province - particularly stories of people not feeling cared for properly or the ability to go about their lives in the way that they need to because of some invisible taboo. There are a lot of those out there. I think this is one instance of us breaking down that barrier. I applaud the government also for taking this on, but there are also so many more.

I hope that we can continue to work forward in this way. We can bring our stories here. But for every story of our own that we bring here, can we also bring someone else's in the way that the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth brought that of her daughter and son-in-law?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll just be quick. I do want to recognize the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. It's pretty amazing to me that one day she woke up and was like, I'm going to run for politics, and this is why.

I think a lot of people over the course of our lifetime have done that and said that - something's very important to me, I'm going to run for politics, I'm going to make the change - and they don't actually get the chance to make that change. She worked really hard to get elected. She's been a fantastic public servant for the better part of a decade. One of the most highly respected councillors in HRM at the time. I really feel like having her as part of our family, because we truly are a family. She brings a lot to the table.

I'm blessed with three beautiful children, and you know, when you don't go through those circumstances, you really don't think about it. When she brought up Ruby's Law, it took some time.

I'll second the member for Annapolis: The minister is one of the nicest people in my nine years of being in here that I've had the privilege to talk to. We don't talk much, but all my interactions with the minister have been kind. She really is somebody who listens. I think everybody has a little partisanship, but it doesn't really shine through with the minister, and I think that's a good thing. I think that working with the Opposition and with the member on something personal like this says a lot about you as a human being and as a politician.

It also says a lot about my colleague. I just think it's an incredible thing to put a personal story out there like that - one that she knows that everybody is going to be discussing, one that was in the media, and was in the spotlight, and almost having to relive those moments. I think it shows incredible bravery.

I will say that it is kind of nice when we have moments like this - I'll second, third, fourth, fifth everyone who said that. It doesn't happen very often. I remember a former member, Dave Wilson for the NDP. There was a bill around PTSD for paramedics, I think - something he was extremely passionate about. If you had never met Dave Wilson from Sackville, the former MLA - one of the kindest, nicest people you'll ever meet. The government of the day worked with him to pass it.

The Leader of the Third Party is right. A lot of times when these bills get passed, they're deeply personal bills and ones that we have experience with.

One thing I will say is that we all understand the importance of family, and we understand the importance of being there for one another. I think we have to look at moments like this and have it transcend more into how we run the Legislature, the House. We have a lot of parents here, a lot of grandparents here. We have some single parents here. They are missing time with their children because hours are running until 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00 at night. Those are moments you'll never get back with your children. It also discourages a lot of people from running for politics when they see this.

All parties are guilty of that. I'm not saying that it's one party or another. I'm just saying that if we're going to be looking at bills that are about family and bringing our families together, then we should take more of a holistic approach to how we conduct our own matters and our own behaviour. That's a story for another day.

I just want to thank the minister for really pushing this forward and her staff working on it. Most importantly, I want to thank my colleague, my friend, and someone we all consider family, for her incredible hard work on this.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: There is a time in life, there's a moment in life, you don't miss. This is one of those moments. First of all, I would like to say a few words to Bill No. 203. I

would like to thank the minister for her leadership and courage to stand for what's right. Also, I'm grateful to be a member of this House. This is one of those moments when I feel I belong here. It's one of those moments when I feel this is what we have been elected for. This is what we have been expected for. I'm glad that from time to time we have that courage, and we have that collective working together.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge my colleague, the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, who is not a stranger to me. I have met her during my service of the municipality as a firefighter, while she was serving as a city councillor. The record speaks for itself. She's one of the builders of the municipality who created a women's council initiative. That is public record. The outcome of that is we have seen how many women have entered politics, how many women have run in municipal elections. That is public record. That is leadership. I can go on and on and on.

What I would like to say is this municipality has lost a leader, but what I also would like bring to the attention of the people of Nova Scotia is that you have a leader. That testimony is right here in this House. While she's a rookie, a backbencher - if I'm not making a mistake, this might be the second bill. That's leadership. I really believe we as elected officials sometimes need to pay attention to each other.

I can also say openly Lorelei can sit on that side, and she can sit on that side, and stay here, and still produce something.

I am saying all these things - it's my personal testimony and what I have observed. I really believe that as she spoke tonight, she was tearing. I was not even able to pass her a napkin. That's a passion, that's a pain, that's the testimony.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the members of this House, no matter what political agenda we have, I would encourage the members of this House that we need to pay attention to each other from time to time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to stand up and support this bill. I certainly want to thank the minister and her staff for all their work in bringing this forward. I know how important it is to the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

As well, I want to stand up to recognize all the work. I know how personal it is for the member that this be brought forward so I feel compelled to congratulate both of you. This is very important for this House and it's very important for everybody. With just those few words, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

[7:45 p.m.]

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to echo the comments to thank the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration for bringing this forward, as well as her recognition of this important topic for families throughout all of Nova Scotia and working in collaboration - it's a beautiful thing to see - with our MLA on this side of the House, the MLA for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. It's true leadership and it's a shining light for democracy, so thank you, minister.

It's a very sensitive topic, a very emotional topic for a lot of people here and throughout all of Nova Scotia. I think that tonight it shines a beautiful light to show what the innocence and purity of an unborn child can bring here in this Legislature for democracy, so thank you, minister.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you to everyone in the House for their kind comments, their support on this piece of legislation and me personally to extend my gratitude to the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. I'll never forget the day because in Question Period, when you got up and told your daughter's story, it touched all of us. I remember sitting in my chair and listening to your words and my heart just dropped, thinking is this with me?

The Minister of Community Services got up and answered the question, and we made a commitment that day to do something about it. That's what we did, Mr. Speaker. When the Labour Standards Code is interpreted so broadly that people don't know what their rights are under the code, we had to make a change to make it very clear that if anyone experiences an end of pregnancy that they have job protection, that they have leave to be able to grieve and be heard, to have that time with their family for support.

We really wanted to make sure that our whole heart and soul went into this. We know that the member brought that forward too, to make sure that the reflections of the bill that were brought forward were also in this.

We also know there are many stories that we're going to hear from many Nova Scotians because, as we've learned tonight, this touches so many people. With those few remarks, I just want to say thank you again to everyone in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 203.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 203.

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. 204.

Bill No. 204 - the Municipal Government Act (amended) and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 204 now be read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about amendments to the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter that will support municipalities in generating more revenue to attract events, people, and tourists to their communities.

One year ago, I received a mandate that included a commitment to review and modernize the Municipal Government Act and the HRM Charter. I am pleased to deliver on that commitment with the proposed amendments that were introduced last week. They will create a consistent, province-wide approach to allow all municipalities across the province to charge a marketing levy towards the purchase price of accommodations.

Mr. Speaker, marketing levies already exist in many jurisdictions across the country and in four municipalities in our province: HRM, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Digby, and Yarmouth, but the way they are administered is time-consuming and inconsistent. It has caused confusion for municipalities, tourism marketing organizations, event organizers, sponsors, and visitors.

Without this legislation, municipalities will have to continue to request legislative authority from the Province to create a marketing levy through a private member's bill. Each levy that is approved is governed by its own legislation and varies in application and rate.

The current process is outdated and unfair. The proposed legislation will fix that and enhance consistency and fairness for all municipalities that wish to impose a marketing levy. It will also reduce red tape.

Under the proposed legislation, municipalities will have the authority to choose if they want to impose a levy and at what rate, up to a maximum of 3 per cent of the total cost of accommodation. It won't be mandatory, and it could look different depending on the municipality's needs.

With today's increased costs of living, it was critical that these amendments struck a strong balance. We know we have to address the needs and concerns of our valued municipal partners, and enhance consistency and fairness around levies, but we also have to ensure that the levies remain one of the lowest in the country. These amendments achieve that.

It's important to note that these levies won't be charged for people who are staying in a hotel for a medical visit or procedure. These levies will also align with the Tourism Accommodation Registration Act and its regulations when they are proclaimed, and will apply to short-term rentals.

As I said, the fees will vary, with the maximum being a 3 per cent levy rate. For example, a \$150 accommodation would see a levy of \$4.50. Consultation has taken place with key stakeholders - groups like the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, the municipalities themselves, tourist industries, and many are supportive.

There are questions about the administration of the levy and those details will soon be worked out.

Like other parts of the country, our Maritime neighbours already have reasonable marketing levies in place that help municipalities develop, plan, attract, and pay for large events which benefit communities. This legislation aligns us with other provinces and supports businesses and tourism in our own province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I want to thank the minister for the explanation and for putting this bill forward. We are now three days into this session. Nova Scotians are facing a housing crisis. They're facing inflation. We're in the middle of power rates going through, potential huge spikes in power rates, and the bill that this government has chosen as one of their main bills in this session is one for Airbnb.

It's confusing to me because we know that we're in the middle of a health crisis, one that this government is now denying. They're denying that we're in a health crisis because they've decided, behind the scenes - and it'll come out because the minister had made some remarks about the usefulness of the Need a Family Practice Registry. We know that they're in the process of getting rid of that list and hiding the numbers.

Yet they want to create a new list around Airbnbs. They want information that they feel is helpful to themselves, but they don't want information that shows that they're failing at their biggest campaign promises.

This was a government that promised 24/7 surgery delivery during the campaign, and we have an Airbnb bill here. This is many sessions we've sat in this House now, and none of this has been addressed. This is a government that has said they were going to address homelessness last Winter, and Airbnb is part of the housing. I see some people confused and walking up to the Clerk and things like that, but Airbnb . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the member to speak on the intent of the bill and come back to what the bill is about.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Airbnb impacts our housing market. We know that. There're many things that impact the housing market, particularly in HRM.

We had, just the other day, comments made about housing and homelessness where people who are living in shelters were considered people who had housing, which is simply not true.

We had a government who spoke about housing and talked about Airbnbs as part of the problem. Then last year, a year almost, well it was a year to this session, they released - and I'll go back, and I'll say it again and again - \$30 million that was going to eliminate homelessness in this province. That's what they said. This was going to tackle homelessness. The Premier himself and the minister both said: Winter is coming, and everybody will be dealt with. They'll have a place to stay. That's what they said in this Legislature.

Yet we have an Airbnb bill here to deal with and put a levy on the industry, knowing that none of that money is going to go to tackle housing or homelessness. Because, quite frankly, I don't think it is a priority of the government. If it were a priority, that \$30 million that they had released to tackle homelessness wouldn't have all gone to one major developer. That's basically what happened. The whole chunk of it went to one major developer to build homes, some of which will be Airbnbs, Mr. Speaker . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask again that the speaker go back to the topic of the bill and not housing development or anything else at this point. We're talking about the municipal charter and the HRM Charter.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: When it comes to Airbnbs and homelessness, and housing in the HRM, we know that HRM in particular has lots of asks when it comes to the Charter. If you're opening up the HRM Charter, there're lots of things that they wanted. I bet you, if you asked the councillors and the mayor himself, this is nowhere near the top of their list.

[8:00 p.m.]

What this is, it's going to be another stream of revenue for this government to give to developers and friends, whomever else they decide, and it's not going to touch the issue that HRM is facing when it comes to housing. HRM has spoken openly about the impacts of Airbnbs on housing. Putting a levy on Airbnbs, I think the government thinks that it's a way to get extra revenue.

I almost guarantee we'll see where they say we're combatting affordable housing by putting levies on Airbnbs in HRM, and this is going to have a major, major impact on affordable housing and on homelessness in this province. What it's going to do - and they know, some of them claim to be accountants - they know that money they're levying on Airbnbs is actually going to trickle down on the customers. It's not going to prevent - it's just going to trickle down.

I would like to know from the minister just who at HRM asked for this - and we know that HRM has given them a list of priorities - and where those other priorities are especially when it comes to the Charter. We hear all the time from HRM, if you're going to open up the HRM Charter and make changes to the Charter, here are the things that we want you to do. I would ask that maybe the minister table some of those requests and give an explanation of why this was their top priority when it comes to changes to the HRM Charter and the Municipal Government Act.

Like I said, I suspect that this is going to be their way of saying we're doing something about the housing issue. I think I read recently there were 3,000 or 4,000 Airbnbs in HRM in particular. That's a large revenue stream that's going to be coming from this new bill. I read an article the other day on CBC - and I'll table it: "Roaring economy, soaring inflation helping produce extra cash for government coffers." Maybe they read that article and thought - I see members over there laughing. That's fine, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm allowed to say that, right?

One of the things that it pointed out was that every government in Canada was actually running a surplus or a reduced budget except for Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia is actually on pace to run a wider deficit while everyone else is decreasing their deficits and having surpluses. Again, we see the government looking for ways to get that extra money, get some extra dollars in their back pocket so that they can seem like they're fiscally responsible.

The one thing I will say about the money that they're going to be bringing in on this - and it's something that was kind of touched on in this article - is that all these other provinces are bringing in money from different resources and different sources. Nova Scotia, we know now, and HRM in particular, will be bringing in money from this new levy. One of the things that the other governments - even Progressive Conservative governments - across Canada did with the extra windfall was help people who are in a

housing crisis, increased income assistance limits, invested in bringing people's power rates down, and helped people with their grocery bill. This government did none of that - none of that.

One of the questions I have for the Finance and Treasury Board Minister and the Premier himself is: If you had all this extra windfall, which was \$1 billion we saw, now we're getting more money from the levy, which I would like to see the number - it's probably going to be in the millions - are you going to be a responsible government and spend it on the people? Spend it on helping people get by day-to-day?

I'd like to see the forecasts on the amount of money that will be brought in by this. I suspect it will be probably tens of millions of dollars a year. The minister made an interesting comment when he was talking. He talked about some of the groups he met with and he said that many are supportive. That leads me to believe that some are not supportive.

I wonder how, if he has met with the tourism industry, if they are supportive of this, if he has met individually with the councillors in HRM, and if they are supportive of this, and if he has met with the mayor himself and he is supportive of this, and any suggestions HRM has for where this money can go.

Does the minister who is now responsible for municipal affairs and housing believe that this is a spoke, I'll say, or a resource in fighting for affordable housing? Mr. Speaker, will we see a press release - because they're good at press releases, we see them all the time, especially when there's bad news coming - that says the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing put a levy against Airbnbs and this will create X amount of affordable housing because we have seen that a bit in the past, especially when they're dealing with HRM and the Municipal Charter, where they've championed themselves at doing things in support of HRM, City Council, the Charter and HRM, but in reality it didn't have a positive impact.

I think it's very clear here today, in the first year or so that they've been in government, that their priorities have been less about fixing the problems and more about putting their people in charge, to look like they are fixing the problems. That doesn't just go with tourism and opening up the HRM Charter, it goes with health care. We see it with the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, with economic and rural development . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Once again, the member is straying from the topic of the bill when you are making comparisons to other departments. I'm going to ask that you come back and stick to the bill at this point.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I'm just getting talked to, left and right.

I wonder again where the idea for this came from, where the idea for opening up the Charter, did it come from One Government Place? Did it come from the minister and his staff? Did it come directly from HRM? The reason why I don't think it came from HRM - it's just in my limited experience in that department - is usually when you tackle the HRM Charter it comes with a whole host of asks. If you are going to open it, let's take a look at this, this and this. We'll never know those conversations.

I wonder if we're here tonight until 10 o'clock at night debating Airbnbs when we have a health care crisis that's been made exponentially worse over the last year, worse than it's ever been. We have a housing crisis, an inflation crisis, and a cost of living crisis, we have power rates through the roof, but we're here discussing Airbnb in the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter bill until 10 o'clock at night - mostly because they want to get out in about two weeks. They don't want to be here. (Interruption).

THE SPEAKER: This is the final notice to the member. Please talk to the bill and don't make accusations as to what might be taking place going into the future. I'm going to ask that you stick with the bill.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for being so lenient and being so respectful. You're certainly one of the better Speakers I've seen in my time here and you deserve a lot of respect. That's for sure.

What I want to talk about mostly is, what kind of impact does this government think, Mx. Speaker, that this bill will have on the whole scheme of things? Why is it such a priority that they needed to extend hours to discuss Airbnbs? If we were opening the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. We're not going to talk about the hours. We're going to talk about the bill before us. You don't have three more strikes because I have changed into the Speaker. I want you to speak to the bill.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Just to be clear, Mx. Speaker, I'm not allowed to speak of why we're here tonight discussing this at 8:12 at night? I just need a little bit of clarification. I want to make sure that I follow the rules correctly.

THE SPEAKER: I guess what I was hearing was speculation about us being here at 10 o'clock at night to talk about Airbnbs.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry. I apologize. I'll be clearer.

THE SPEAKER: So we're just going to keep it - okay.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Mx. Chair. So we're here at 8:12:59 p.m., Mx. Chair, to discuss Airbnbs and the opening up of the Halifax Charter. I wonder why this is such a priority for this government that they needed to extend the hours?

Again, I will say, if you go through the Halifax Charter and the things that it oversees and overlooks, you have campaign finance reform, you have elections, you have parks. Things like that that the Charter oversees. The charter is a massive document. In fact, my former - the MLA for Cole Harbour would probably know how big that charter document is. I imagine it's pretty huge.

I wonder, as the minister, if he had an opportunity to go through that Charter line by line by line and figure out what impacts HRM the most? What is it about the Charter that controls and oversees and impacts our day-to-day life? Because the truth is, Mr. Speaker, you know as well - better than most, because you've been around for quite some time, and you're known as a constituency MLA - when it comes to politics, a lot of times it's the municipal politics that impact our day-to-day lives the most. What covers the municipal politics in HRM? It's the Charter.

Did the minister sit down with some of the legal people at HRM? Did he speak to them about this? Do they consider him a partner, because you should be considered a partner with your municipalities, especially when you have the power to change . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. All questions are supposed to come through the Chair, not directly to the minister.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, this Charter impacts how our day-to-day life in HRM is conducted. When is our garbage picked up? The zoning, which is extremely important, falls under the HRM Charter, right? Yes. That is something that we could have an open and fair and honest discussion about - the zoning that applies to that Charter. That's what has impacts on affordable housing and that's one of the things that's holding things up. We've heard that from our councillors, we've heard that from our mayor, who has said we want to be able to govern without Big Brother watching over us and forcing our hand.

I hope that when we go to Law Amendments Committee, that the councillors don't show up or Jacques Dubé - is it Jacques Dubé? He's leaving, but Dubé has a tendency to show up at Law Amendments Committee, I can tell you that when things go in that he doesn't agree with. I'll be interested to see who shows up at Law Amendments Committee on this and says I agree or disagree.

[8:15 p.m.]

In fact, I'm going to encourage some of the local councillors to actually show up and to verify if they were consulted. The minister said there was widespread consultation on this, and it was something we heard a lot about in Opposition, that the previous government didn't consult enough. I hope that they're true to their word. I hope that they consulted, and I suspect what we'll hear from representatives of HRM, is it's not very often that you open the Charter. I think it's a lot more than it used to be, but what you'll hear is it's not very often that you open the Charter, so please do this, this, this, and this, or look at these options.

Being good public servants on this side of the House, I'm sure the NDP will put forward some alternatives and some priorities in Law Amendments Committee, and we will too, and it will be voted down by the government of the day and HRM will say, again? You opened the Charter to make changes and you're not doing what we asked you to do, and the response will be: Now is not the time or place. We'll open the Charter again soon, and when we do, we'll get you. We'll get you good. But we know that's not going to happen.

I think it would be wise of the minister, whom I have a lot of respect for - I've known him for a long time. He's a great individual, a great character. Great MLA, too. I hope that they've crossed their t's and dotted their i's on this one. I look across and I see a lot of former councillors on that side of the House. I see another outstanding former HRM Councillor over there. He's gotten a little gray since he got into provincial politics, but that's neither here nor there, and I'm sure that he's been advised about opening the Charter, the importance of what's in that Charter, and making sure that you do what's right for the city. We need Halifax to be prosperous.

We need a prosperous capital city, just like any jurisdiction. We also need prosperous municipalities right across this province. Right now, over 50 per cent of the population, I think, now lives in HRM and this is opening this up. We know there's been a lot of complaints from HRM about the way things are done and not having the ability.

I'll give you a good example, Mr. Speaker. I think it's illegal for HRM or any municipality to run a deficit. The municipalities right across this province are in a sticky situation. Revenues are down. Costs are up. They need some flexibility. That's something that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing could be looking at in the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Charter, giving the municipalities some flexibility when it comes to financing.

Mr. Speaker, you come from a fantastic place. If you talk to councillors in CBRM and the mayor . . . (Interruption) Let me finish.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Please go back to the topic at hand and try not to surmise what discussions took place between the department and the HRM until it becomes public.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What I was going to say is that, as you've been a politician for a long time, you know people who are sitting on council in CBRM. I know people who are sitting on council in HRM. I know what they want and what they ask for and a lot of it has to do with not needing the Province to hold their hand anymore.

We've seen a little bit of this, if not a lot, from this current government, especially around housing. HRM in their Charter has the right to zoning. They have a right for planning and creating their own city, deciding where roads go and deciding where communities are built. This government said that they don't trust them, even though Halifax was originally formed in 1749, became a city in 1842, and HRM became a municipality in 1996.

What they're saying is that they have rights within their Charter. Municipalities have rights within their charters. When I was on that side, I spoke to all the mayors and councillors and it was a common theme from them. Maybe at one point in the formation of HRM, they needed us to guide and lead and help, but they're an engine now. They're a finely tuned engine and they know what they're doing and they want the Province as a partner. That's what their rights are under the Charter. They have a right to that.

That Charter wasn't written over a burger and fries one night by a bunch of people. It might have been, but it took a lot of people a long time to create that document and to create the city that they wanted. I think they deserve a little bit of an explanation here. They deserve an explanation, especially on the zoning, which they have the right to.

They have a right to plan their zoning in the Halifax Charter. It's right in the Charter that they have a right to do zoning. If you're opening up the Charter, then that's part of the discussion. Why did they take away . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We're still going off topic here because zoning is not part of the bill that has been presented to us. It's part of the Charter, but this is an amendment to the Municipal Government Act and the HRM Charter, and that's what it is.

I'm going to ask once more, for the final time, that the member stick to the topic at hand.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do you know what? I am not going to give you a hard time tonight because I respect you too much.

I think I'll finish off with saying that I hope when we get into Law Amendments Committee, what we hear about this bill is that they were listened to, it was asked for, and there's not 30 or 40 more things they asked for that were ignored. That's what I hope, because this government ran on a lot of things, and one of them wasn't Airbnb legislation. With that, honourable and respectful Speaker - I will not sit down yet - I'm just joking, I'll take my leave, thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the next speaker, the member for Halifax Atlantic referenced a CBC article, and I'm going to ask that he table that with the Clerks.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you. Because of you, I can remember which bill we were talking about, because I wasn't quite sure at some points, thanks to the member for Halifax Atlantic.

THE SPEAKER: We are talking about Bill No. 204.

KENDRA COOMBES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for Halifax Atlantic for that rah-rah-rah for municipalities. I'm glad to speak to these amendments. I'm also grateful that I don't have to stand up here and ask about consultation. I am aware that prior consultation has taken place with groups such as the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, as well as other groups that were part of it, including from Cape Breton. I thank the minister for the consultation that has already taken place.

We know the role that Airbnbs and short-term rentals are playing in our current housing crisis. It's good to hear that these smaller-scale rentals will no longer be excluded from the levies in the Halifax area, and I believe this is possibly going to extend to other areas. I think this is a great step forward for equality and equity amongst the various use rentals we have. I think that's a great step.

I was talking to others who were very much for this, the fact that it makes an equal playing ground for everybody. I understand these proposed changes would make the current system of levies more streamlined across the province and available to more municipalities, which again, enabling legislation, Mr. Speaker, is very important to municipalities. Municipalities really enjoy enabling legislation, not legislation that is ascribed to them and being basically told to eat your veggies and do what we tell you to do. They would rather be treated like adults and not children set at the kids' table.

We love to see the government take a stronger action in the regulation of Airbnbs and other short-term rentals. It's very much needed, as has been noted across media, Mr.

Speaker. I think we know that more regulations are definitely needed in the Airbnb industry. With that, I look forward to continuing these discussions and hearing from stakeholders at Law Amendments Committee. I am brief and I will take my seat.

[8:30 p.m.]

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

DAVE RITCEY: I am honoured to speak to the legislative changes we are discussing here today, and part of the commitment to review modernized Bill No. 204, the Municipal Government Act (amended) and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended) with respect to marketing levies. The levies will provide municipalities with a greater ability to generate revenue and attract events, people, tourists, to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, it's prudent of any government to ensure that our legislation keeps us up with the times and provides a framework for a consistent approach to marketing levies across all municipalities in Nova Scotia.

Other parts of the country, including our Maritime neighbours - New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island - have already implemented reasonable marketing levies that help municipalities develop, plan, attract, and pay for large events, which benefit people and the local community, including mine in small, rural Nova Scotia, Truro and Colchester County.

Recommended amendments will align Nova Scotia with other provinces and support businesses and tourism in our province. Marketing levies already apply to four areas across Nova Scotia, which include Halifax Regional Municipality; Cape Breton Regional Municipality; Yarmouth, the Town and Municipality; and Digby, the Town and Municipality. The current practice is that municipalities have to request legislative authority from the Province to create a marketing levy through a private member's bill. The bill will allow for consistency and structure throughout the province in which current legislation causes confusion for many.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give you an example of locally, in my region of Truro in Colchester County. As I have always stated in a lot of my spiels here in the House, I will continue to advocate for the area because it's a strategic location in our province and in our region. For a small market such as Truro and Colchester County, we have punched way above our weight in hosting major events and can be a destination area in Nova Scotia, not just a stopover or pass-through events, tourism, and festivals. For example, our region is primed for leadership with state-of-the-art sport and event tourism hosting infrastructure, such as the Rath Eastlink Community Centre, the Cougar Dome, and the soon-to-be newly renovated TAAC Grounds.

The sport and event tourism sectors were amongst the first industries to be shut down by the pandemic, and early signs are showing that these sectors are leading our recovery efforts by injecting much-needed economic impact for our business sector, and positive social impacts for residents in our communities. These sectors are critical to our region's success over the shoulder seasons, and Truro and Colchester County have experienced recent success with two special events: the Grand Slam of Curling and the Down Syndrome World Swimming Championships.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019 Sport Tourism Canada, in partnership with Sportcal, the publisher of the Global Sport Impact Report, developed the GSI Canada Index. It is based on national championships and international championships, both hosted in 2019. Truro ranked 6th of 59 in the nation for sport event hosting in communities with populations under 50,000, and 12th of 119 overall amongst all population categories. I'll table that information.

Truro, Colchester County is one of the few communities listed in the report I just provided that has still not implemented a marketing and accommodation levy, and it is still achieving success without dedicated, recurring funding. Truro is one of the few communities listed in the 2019 Global Sport Canada Index that has still not implemented that levy.

Through departmental consultation with key stakeholders - groups like the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, the municipalities themselves, and groups from the tourism industry - moving this proposed legislation forward is extra encouraging. The fees will vary with the maximum 3 per cent. The 3 per cent maximum rate being proposed in Nova Scotia is lower than average rates across the country. Under the proposed legislation, municipalities will have the authority to choose if they want to impose a levy and at what rate, up to a maximum of 3 per cent of the total cost of an accommodation. The levy applies to rooms registered by the Nova Scotia Tourism Accommodation Registration Act, including bed and breakfasts, hotels/motels, and short-term rentals.

Mr. Speaker, this is an exciting piece of legislation for the municipalities in my area and the 48 others right across the province that aren't part of it - tourism operators, businesses, facilities in this province..

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, it's great to speak to Bill No. 204 here today. As I read through this bill and as I thought about the implications of it relative to short-term rentals, relative to the Airbnbs, relative to housing - which we know is a significant issue here in the province - I was struck by the fact that there is really nothing any government can do that is more important than figuring out how to raise money, how to raise taxes, in this case, or a levy.

When we're talking about a 3 per cent levy on short-term rentals across the province, across all municipalities, that's going to represent a substantial amount of money that will go to municipalities. However, in Section 5 of the bill it does mandate that the money raised through this 3 per cent levy must be used to promote tourism.

We all agree that tourism is a vital economic driver here in Nova Scotia. Just walking downtown over the past few weeks, there were thousands of tourists coming off cruise ships every day in the months of October and September. That is a very important economic engine in our province, but I wonder why the Province has decided to essentially tie the municipalities' hands on this issue and direct that the money should go to promote tourism, as opposed to perhaps giving them a little bit more freedom - perhaps allowing them to direct some of that money to housing, which is of course intimately connected with the issue of short-term rentals. That is one point.

I understand the minister touched on consultation that was done through the development and drafting of this bill. I certainly take him at his word on that front, but I would be interested to hear more from municipalities in terms of what they could potentially use that money for. Would it be best served to promote tourism or do they feel they'd rather use that money to build more affordable housing in the municipalities, for example? We know that not just in HRM but across the entire province, it is a pressing issue.

Also, when we talk about short-term rentals - and the minister cited this as well - an essential thing you always need is really accurate data for any issue of public policy. I know that for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services, the Tourist Accommodations Registration Act is a series of regulations that is coming forward, which I also think is really important, so that we have an accurate database of short-term rentals in this province. If we can't accurately measure the issue around short-term rentals, I don't think there's any way that we can figure out how to solve it.

Is the solution a 3 per cent levy? It's hard to say if we don't know what the problem is that we're trying to address. For example, we know there are at least 3,700 units - what could be long-term rental units - in Nova Scotia that are currently being used for short-term rentals. This is an issue I heard about quite a bit a few weeks ago when we were down on the South Shore meeting with housing organizations down there, in Lunenburg County in particular, having issues with short-term rentals soaking up much of the rental stock in the municipality.

It's no disparagement to short-term rentals by any means. I mean, we've all used Airbnbs. I'll be in one this weekend for a wedding, so they're great. It's a great concept. I understand that things move faster than government can sometimes, but I think we're now trying to catch up on this issue of short-term rentals. Until we have the right data - the most accurate data for all 49 municipalities in the province - I don't think we can really say whether or not the solution that is being proposed in this bill, Bill No. 204, is actually

solving the problem. Or are we just dealing with the symptom of the bigger cause of our housing crisis in Nova Scotia?

I know the minister mentioned in his opening remarks that there had been some consultation done and that many were supportive. I haven't seen a whole lot on the record from some of these groups, so I would like to see that. Perhaps the minister can speak to that when he closes debate or on third reading on this bill as well. It would be helpful to hear what the NSFM in particular and tourist organizations think of this concept.

Again, I just want to emphasize a couple of issues related to housing as it relates to short-term rentals. Recently, as I said, 3,700 units across the province taken out of the long-term rental stock, short-term rentals. Rent in Nova Scotia - this is just a few days ago - is on average \$2,453. That is the second-highest in Canada behind only British Columbia, higher than it is in Ontario, and over the past year, that is up 35.5 per cent in a year, year over year. We have, as everyone in this Chamber knows, a massive affordability issue on housing. We have a massive supply issue on housing, and the question is not whether or not it's an issue; we're past that point now. The question is what can we do about it?

I also recently met with an organization called Youthful Cities which put together a really informative study, rigorous study, on affordability for young people in Canada, city by city, and what that report found - and I would encourage all members to read it. It has been mentioned in the House of Commons, it has been mentioned in many provincial legislatures, and now we'll add us as well. What it found was that Halifax is actually the least affordable city in Canada for young people, and I think the definition in that case was perhaps 18-34, and I might be wrong on that.

The issue, as I spoke to the folks who actually did that report, is twofold: It's low wages, for one, and housing that is no longer affordable, as we all know. Those two issues combine to create a real crunch for young people. We see - I think the number was \$900. On average, they found that young people in Halifax are running short, running a deficit - \$1,200? \$1,200 a month of shortfall.

If we want to get serious about this kind of issue - and it is incredibly serious, the issue of housing - we really need to tackle the issue of short-term rentals and how we complement them. I don't think anyone here is suggesting, and I'm certainly not suggesting, that this is something that we need to do away with, because I think it's an innovation in the accommodations market.

I think, based on the success of short-term rentals worldwide, it's not going anywhere, so we don't need to belabour that point, but we do need to figure out these hundreds and hundreds of short-term rentals across the province, for the owners of those properties. They're being asked to pay an additional tax, an additional levy of 3 per cent on those properties, and for what purpose, I guess, is another open question for me. I read

this bill, and as I said at the top, the decision to tax or not to tax is one of the most serious and solemn that the government has.

Based on that, I think there should be a pretty high standard of justification for why you are or are not taxing a particular activity. In this case, I don't really see in the bill - and I didn't hear from the minister or from the member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River the justification as to why this tax is being imposed, this levy is being imposed. I know what it's being used for, and, again, it's being used to promote tourism, and I raised some concerns with that at the beginning in terms of tying the municipalities' hands.

Fine, if you want to raise money to promote tourism, that could be a worthwhile goal, but the issue of the problem and the scope of the problem I think is still an open question. Sometimes, I think in government it can be tempting to look at headlines and look at issues and think, well, we have to fix this and find a solution, but sometimes your solution is in search of a problem, and I think that might be the case here.

As I mentioned earlier, pending regulations about the database of short-term rentals in Nova Scotia, I think is a critical issue. I was at a housing symposium a few weeks ago. The member for Halifax Needham was there. There was a gentleman - I believe it might be called Neighbours Speak Up, the organization - I could be wrong - who has done a lot of good work to kind of raise this issue of short-term rentals and the distortion that it can have on the housing market. He raised this issue with me, and I'm sure he raised the issue with the member for Halifax Needham as well, in terms of we need these regulations ASAP, hopefully this session. We're still early in the session. I'm optimistic that we might see those things at some point. That would be a good starting point.

Again, there are 49 municipalities in the province, with vastly varying degrees of scale: some, obviously, hundreds of thousands, and some a few hundred. If those municipalities, regardless of their size, have the ability to go onto a database and say, okay, in Mahone Bay we have 27 short-term rentals, and in HRM we have 4,000, and in Truro we have X number - that helps them devise policy. That helps them figure out what to do on zoning. That helps them make decisions on funding for housing developments and for affordable housing developments, which as we know are a critical step in solving this housing crisis that we continue to find ourselves in.

As I said, I'm really looking forward to that. I hope that we will see those regulations proclaimed sooner rather than later.

Levies in HRM, as the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth helpfully pointed out to me earlier, are how important organizations like Discover Halifax are funded. That organization, of course, does a lot of great work on the tourism promotion side, which as we know, is still kind of working its way back up from the difficulties of two to three years of essentially zero tourism.

[8:45 p.m.]

It's important that all accommodations are being treated fairly, I think. That's an important principle as well, in terms of taxation - that it's fair and representative. If hotels - traditional hotels I should say - are taxed, levied, as well, then I do think it's reasonable that short-term rentals, again, are levied in the same way so that there is a level playing field for the accommodations sector across the board. Similar to tourism, of course - that is an economic driver for many regions of the province.

A few minutes here left for me, but I do just want to touch again quickly on the issue of funding here. I think it can be a missed opportunity to raise money and to mandate that it should be going to tourism only. I do hope that - and if the minister has the evidence to prove it, I'd love to see it - that that decision is one that municipalities, whether it's through NSFAM or individual municipalities on their own, are comfortable with. And if they're not, we need to know that too.

We're talking about a significant amount of money, and municipalities, as we all know, are closest to the housing issue. They know this issue very, very well. They are responsible for zoning. They are responsible for approvals and all of these issues that, in many cases, determine whether or not a housing development goes ahead.

I know the Province has stepped in with this government over the past year or so and dipped their toes into the housing waters more than in the past. We will see what issue that does, but I think a lot of that housing is going to end up on the market side. There are, of course, some affordable housing developments happening as well, which are positive. But I think one of the issues we see is that without a consistent strategy across the board from the Province - and I know the department is in the early stages, probably, of developing a provincial housing strategy, and we all look forward to that.

But without that kind of overarching vision for what housing will look like in the province, sometimes it falls to piecemeal kind of ad hoc developments - which are great on their own, of course. No one is going to say no to an affordable housing development. I think, for example, of one that Souls Harbour Rescue Mission is doing in East Chezzetcook - I think, it could be West Chezzetcook, I'm not sure - that I heard about when I was in Bridgewater actually. It's about a 12-unit building, I believe, funded through the federal government's Rapid Housing Initiative. The member for Timberlea-Prospect, there's one happening in his riding as well.

Again, these are great projects, really important projects, but without that umbrella - and in this case I think it should be the provincial government really investing in a significant way to direct large-scale affordable housing development - I think we're going to continue to see an issue on the housing front and on the affordable housing front in particular.

I don't think the data on vacancies has shifted much over the past two or three years, despite the fact there are more cranes than ever in the sky. There's obviously some kind of disconnect here that is simply not being solved by the market. That, of course, will be part of it, but I do think there is an opportunity for government to also play a constructive role in affordable housing. I don't think that has been happening to the scale that might be necessary. I am looking forward to that as well.

Again, the other group - and maybe I misheard when the minister was speaking at the beginning - but the other group that I didn't hear about necessarily might be owners of short-term rentals. Sometimes it can be easy to forget about them, because they obviously have a significant stake in this issue as well. Most of these people are doing good work and providing accommodations and providing a service, and are really in it, I'm sure, for the appropriate reasons. Obviously nobody likes to be taxed, but I'm wondering what their point of view was, what the consultation with those groups might have been and how we can engage them, because obviously they have the information and the data at hand - they know which properties they own.

How are we leveraging their knowledge and their expertise to give us more data, give us better information, allow us as a province and as municipalities at the local level to make better and more informed planning decisions when it comes to housing? That is an additional group that we haven't heard much about, and I think we should.

We have heard quite a bit about housing this evening. We're going to continue to hear a lot about housing over the course of this sitting and over the next couple of years as well. I think we need to look at housing and, again, I've been the Housing Critic for our Party just for a couple of months now, but what struck me is how complex the issue is and how difficult it is to disentangle all the threads of it and say, where do we start, what is a good first step on housing that will actually build toward something positive for people?

That is a very difficult question, and I don't envy the minister or the government for being in that position. I appreciate it's a difficult position, whether you're talking to affordable housing advocates, whether you're talking to developers, whether you're talking to homeowners or renters, everybody has their preferred solution, their preferred method for dealing with the housing crisis.

I worry sometimes that when we look at housing, it's one of those issues - and health can sometimes be in this bucket as well - it's such a big, complicated issue that you kind of spin and you don't really know how to start, and it can be difficult to make progress and have momentum. I hope the minister appreciates that. I'm sure he does.

When we look at short-term rentals, that's a piece of the pie for sure and, again, I do think there are some inconsistencies in this bill that might be perhaps missing the mark on how to regulate and account for short-term rentals and how that affects the affordable housing market, how that affects rental housing, how that affects market housing. All those

things are interconnected. It's really an ecosystem of housing. I don't want any of us, I don't want the public, I don't want folks to look at this issue and say well, we're taxing short-term rentals, there's a marketing levy, great, that's good for that short-term rental issue. It's one step, it's one piece, but it's far from a comprehensive solution.

We're also looking to see what will be a grander scale on affordable housing. What's going to happen from a governance point of view?

The number one recommendation of the Affordable Housing Commission Report was to create an independent, arm's length housing entity. We have not seen real news on that. I am interested in that because I've heard from members on the commission that that was the No. 1 recommendation, because it was unanimously supported by everyone and everyone on that commission included civil servants, developers, affordable housing organizations - folks from across the housing spectrum. They all agreed that this was something that really needed to be pursued.

Again, that is the No. 1 recommendation of that commission and it's most important in a lot of ways. We have seen very little progress on it, so until we see that first domino fall, I'm not sure how the rest will fall in sequence. That's another housing issue that is top of mind for me and is something that I care about and I know that all the members of our caucus, our constituents, every member of this House I know recognizes that it's an important issue.

The sooner we move on that most important recommendation - because it's really hard to fix systems if you don't have the right structure in place to actually fix the system. I think perhaps we are putting the cart before the horse a little bit on this issue.

As I said earlier, we are still very early in the session. I'm looking forward to some more news coming out of the minister's department on this in the months to come as well because this is not an issue that's going away. We all know that this housing issue has been building for years and it will take years to resolve itself, for sure.

As I said, take things holistically. Let's not just look at short-term rentals and say we've taxed them.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Can I ask the honourable member to focus his remarks on the content of the bill?

The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Thanks, Mx Speaker, I needed a water break anyway, so it's good timing.

I will close over the next couple of minutes here. I'll just close by saying and re-emphasizing the issue around the taxation and the raising of money: What kind of dollar figure are we talking about?

Perhaps the minister - I'm sure the experts in his department have crunched some numbers. I hope they have, anyway. If they haven't, that's an issue - but I hope they have crunched some numbers, analyzed what this 3 per cent levy might mean for municipalities and really given some clear thought to whether it's the best use of those dollars for promotion of tourism. Is the best use of those dollars for housing work in municipalities? Is the best use of those dollars leaving it to municipalities, as local experts, to make decisions for their citizens and for their communities.

I think that's an open question that we can all consider and think about as we move through Law Amendments Committee, Committee of the Whole House on Bills, and third reading on this particular bill.

I don't want us to lose sight of that and I don't want us to think that just because we're imposing an additional 3 per cent tax on short-term rentals that we have somehow, some way, solved the problem of short-term rentals, solved the issue of housing in Nova Scotia, solved the issue of affordable housing, because that is certainly not the case. It is an incredibly complex issue that touches on all regions of the province, all municipalities, all income levels. Of course, everyone in this province needs somewhere to live, somewhere to live that's affordable and safe for them and their families.

I appreciate the minister and his department for bringing forward this legislation. Those would be my concerns and I will take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like to stand and make a few comments about Bill No. 204, amendments to the MGA. I have consulted with our municipal colleagues from the Town of Amherst as well as the County of Cumberland and look forward to hearing from more people during Law Amendments Committee.

As I consult with our municipal councillors and mayors for both the Town of Amherst and the County of Cumberland, what I'm hearing back from them is just echoing the significance of tourism in our area. I look forward to hearing comments from them about the proposed levies and how that might impact and benefit our area.

Certainly, tourism is important to Cumberland County. Back in 2019, I used some of my MLA budget to take out ads in the *Chronicle Herald*, and someone just shared that on Twitter this morning. It was a good reminder of just how much Cumberland County has to offer and how much these potential marketing levies could impact our area.

[9:00 p.m.]

Not that long ago, the Minister of Economic Development visited Cumberland County at the invitation of the Cumberland Business Connector, and we were so pleased to have her. She was able to see first-hand one of our showpieces in Cumberland County: Fox Harb'r five-star resort and spa. We're so proud they employ hundreds of people from the local area. It's businesses like Fox Harb'r Resort and spa that really need our government to make sure that we're doing everything we can to support tourism in our area.

Even in the community of Malagash, of course we have Jost winery. They recently have been doing a partnership with Fox Harb'r and growing grapes and creating their own special wine to be able to serve at Fox Harb'r. Right down the road from Jost winery, we have Cambra Sands, and I have consulted with them. Just this morning, my assistant reached out to the owner of Cambra Sands to get their opinion on this proposed amendment to the MGA around the marketing levy.

I have consulted with several businesses, as well as our municipal councillors, and will be looking forward to bringing their comments forward also in third reading of this bill, Bill No. 204.

There's a lot of controversy, or there can be controversy, around the Airbnb business, hotel management, bed and breakfasts, and levies can be controversial. Not everyone supports them, but it is important that we consult with those who are in the tourism industry, including our hotels, those people who own Airbnbs, as well as those who have bed and breakfasts.

I also will be consulting with other small businesses in Cumberland North to ask for their input on this marketing levy, for them to provide input, and suggest that they present at the Law Amendments Committee to talk about the importance of tourism and the impact that this bill may have on their businesses as well.

We have many restaurants and other small businesses that rely on tourism, like Maritime Mosaic in downtown Amherst, and Maritime Tartan Company. Many of you will remember them and how valuable they were during the pandemic. They donated so much of their profits and proceeds to the IWK from selling all of the masks that they made, as they pivoted their business so uniquely during a very difficult time for many small businesses in the area.

I will end my comments on that, but I will look forward to seeing what people are saying at Law Amendments Committee on these proposed amendments to the MGA. I look forward to bringing forth the comments from the municipal councillors of the Town of Amherst, the municipal councillors for the County of Cumberland, as well as the mayors of both.

With that, I'll close my comments on Bill No. 204. Thank you, Mx. Speaker.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank my colleagues in the House for all their comments and look forward to Law Amendments Committee. We'll have more to say in third reading.

I now move second reading of Bill No. 204. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill 204.

There has been a call for a recorded vote.

The bells will ring until the Whips are satisfied.

[9:06 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. There has been a request for a recorded vote on Bill No. 204. I will ask the Assistant Clerk to proceed with the recorded vote.

Are the Whips satisfied?

Before we proceed with the recorded vote, I'll just remind all members to remain completely silent while the Clerks record your vote. I'll remind all members to stand up with a simple "yea" or "nay."

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[9:57 p.m.]

YEAS

NAYS

Hon. Brad Johns
Hon. Tory Rushton
Hon. Barbara Adams
Hon. Kim Masland
Hon. Allan MacMaster
Hon. Karla MacFarlane
Hon. Michelle Thompson

Hon. John Lohr
Hon. Pat Dunn
Hon. Timothy Halman
Hon. Steve Craig
Dave Ritcey
Hon. Brian Wong
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek
Hon. Brian Comer
Hon. Colton LeBlanc
Hon. Jill Balsler
Trevor Boudreau
Hon. Greg Morrow
Hon. Becky Druhan
Larry Harrison
Chris Palmer
John A. MacDonald
Melissa Sheehy-Richard
Danielle Barkhouse
Tom Taggart
Nolan Young
Kent Smith
Hon. Patricia Arab
Hon. Brendan Maguire
Hon. Kelly Regan
Hon. Zach Churchill
Hon. Derek Mombourquette
Hon. Iain Rankin
Suzy Hansen
Gary Burrill
Hon. Tony Ince
Lorelei Nicoll
Hon. Ben Jessome
Ali Duale
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
Carman Kerr
Braedon Clark
Ronnie LeBlanc

[10:00 p.m.]

THE CLERK: For, 44. Against, 0.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The hour of adjournment has been reached.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, October 18th, at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 10:01 p.m.]