



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

**Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain**

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### First Session

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022**

**Sixty-fourth General Assembly**

**First Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Keith Bain

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, this evening's late debate is submitted by the honourable member for Halifax Atlantic:

Whereas the top concern of Nova Scotians is still access to primary health care, and 116,000 Nova Scotians are now without a family doctor; and

Whereas the Need a Family Practice Registry gives an accurate reflection of Nova Scotians who still need a primary care provider; and

Whereas the government has demonstrated a reluctance to update Nova Scotians with accurate and consistent public health data;

Be it resolved the government must continue to update and keep the Need a Family Practice Registry.

Again, that's submitted by the honorable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS****PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, I present the Annual Report for 2022.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

THE SPEAKER: As Speaker and pursuant to Section 18(4) of the Auditor General Act, I am tabling the following reports of the Auditor General of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: *Follow-up of 2017, 2018 and 2019, Performance Audit Recommendations; Oversight and Management of Individuals Serving Community-Based Sentences: Department of Justice, 2022; Oversight and Management of Government Owned Public Housing: Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Healthy Eating in Schools: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Nova Scotia Health; and Atlantic Provinces' Joint Follow-up of Recommendations to the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, 2022.*

The reports are tabled.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a couple of documents. They are two different editions of the Department of Finance and Treasury Board's economic stats - both from October 3<sup>rd</sup> - in connection with a member statement to be read later.

THE SPEAKER: The papers are tabled.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

**RESOLUTION NO. 403**

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:



Whereas climate change is real and Nova Scotia is a national leader in GHG reduction and climate action, with the most ambitious 2030 GHG emissions targets of any province or even the federal government, and a clear and credible path to achieve these goals; and

Whereas Nova Scotians already pay some of the highest energy costs in the country and increasing these costs through the addition of a Liberal carbon tax is not necessary, because the Nova Scotia government's plan, which is better than a carbon tax, would reduce GHG emissions by 17 per cent, when the Liberal carbon tax would only reduce them by 2 per cent; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia government offers a more effective, more affordable alternative to the carbon tax;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join with Nova Scotians who are struggling with high prices and ask the federal government to get behind Nova Scotia's better-than-a-carbon tax plan so that Nova Scotians are not subjected to the Liberals' punishing \$0.14/litre carbon tax at this time.

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 Natural Resources and Renewables.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 404**

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

Whereas more than 60 per cent of Nova Scotia's woodlands are privately owned and are vital for our forestry sector, providing year-round employment, contributing to the rural and provincial economy, and helping to promote biodiversity across the province; and

Whereas the Nova Scotia Woodland Owner of the Year Award recognizes landowners for outstanding stewardship of their woodlots and highlights how important our woodland owners are to forestry and Nova Scotia; and

Whereas this year's provincial winners are James Leggate and Christina Millar of Five Mile River, and the regional winners are Peter and Angela Kennedy of Lunenburg County in the Western Region, and Ron and Johanna Melchiorre of Guysborough County in the Eastern Region;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House join me in congratulating this year's winners and commending their work to support healthy forests and biodiversity for generations to come.

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 Environment and Climate Change.

#### **RESOLUTION NO. 405**

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

Whereas Oliver Baker, a 17-year-old Grade 12 student at Northeast Kings Education Centre in Canning, is a committed and passionate climate change leader and part of #decarbonize, a global youth action dialogue offered through the Centre for Global Education and taking IT global; and

Whereas Oliver will represent Canada at the Council of Youth and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, otherwise known as COP27 in Egypt in November; and

Whereas Oliver will be part of a network of global young changemakers sharing their voices and ideas and engaging youth to be passionate about climate change;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize Oliver Baker as a climate change leader and influencer and wish him success at the conference and in his future university studies in climate-based science.

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. 406**

HON. 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 Women's History Month, a time to celebrate the women and girls who have inspired us to do better and have helped to make our province and our country a better place to live; and

Whereas this year's theme, She Did, So Now I Can, celebrates the actions of the remarkable women who have had a positive impact on our lives today; and

Whereas reaching gender equality is the vision of the Status of Women Office through initiatives like the Women Innovating in Nova Scotia Bursary, the office encourages women to enter fields of science, trades, and technology - fields where they have been traditionally underrepresented.

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly celebrate and honour the women and girls in their lives for not accepting the status quo and for having the courage to push boundaries that will help us reach gender equality so that we can live in a more equitable society.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 212 - An Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, The Public Utilities Act. (Hon. Tory Rushton)**

**Bill No. 213 - An Act to Amend Chapter 380 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, The Public Utilities Act, Respecting Storm Hardiness for Electricity Utilities. (Claudia Chender)**

**Bill No. 214 - An Act to Establish Invest Nova Scotia. (Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek)**

**Bill No. 215 - An Act to Amend Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2014, The Invest Nova Scotia Board Act. (Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek)**

**Bill No. 216 - An Act to Establish Build Nova Scotia. (Hon. Kim Masland)**

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

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to bring the House's attention to the West Gallery, where a dear friend of mine, Debbie Muise, is in attendance tonight. Debbie is a local public servant. She's become a great friend of mine and our family. I'm so happy to recognize her here today. It's great seeing you, Debbie. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: We welcome all guests to the Legislature, and hope you enjoy watching the proceedings - sometimes.

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

[1:15 p.m.]

**OWNERS: DIGBY NATURAL ANNIV. - BEST WISHES**

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, as we mark Small Business Week, I rise to recognize Gisèle and her husband Marc Literski, business owners of Digby Natural, a health food and specialty store located in downtown Digby. Gisèle is a trained kinesiologist and an experienced manager in health food stores in Switzerland. She and her husband moved to Digby three years ago and opened the doors to their new business in August of 2021.

As owners and operators of Digby Natural, Gisèle and Marc make it a priority to promote health lifestyles by supporting local businesses. They supply a range of organic, eco-friendly foods and products, including Sissiboo Coffee, Bear River Farms, and Sohma Naturals.

I had the pleasure of meeting Gisèle earlier this month, and she showed me around the store. I also had the pleasure of meeting Sydney Roberts, a full-time employee who has been working at the store since April 2022. Businesses like this fuel our economy and add value to our small communities. I want to wish Gisèle and Marc and their team a belated happy one-year anniversary, and I wish them nothing but success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite where Asha Abdosh is joined by our friend Lauren Skabar, who works in our party office. Asha is an intern with us, and I'd like all members of this House to welcome her for her first time today in the House of Assembly. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Once again, welcome to the Legislature.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**ABDOSHA, ASHA: CO-OP PLACEMENT AT NDP OFFICE - CONGRATS.**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Asha, who joins us in the Gallery today. She's a student at Halifax West High School, and today is the first day of her co-op education placement at the NDP's party office just across the road. She brings with her considerable experience organizing in her own community, including at the Bilusa

Summer Camp and the annual barbecue. She possesses a great passion for social justice and building a province where none are neglected.

It is always moving to meet a young person engaged with our political system and one who seeks to get involved to better the lives of those living in their community and across the province. I ask the whole House to join me again in congratulating Asha on her placement and wishing her all the best for the term.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

### **SCOTT, BERNIE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, on August 14, 2022, the community of Sackville High School and surrounding areas lost a teacher and lifelong friend, Bernie Scott. Bernie was widely recognized not only for his teaching career at Sackville High, but also for the many acts of kindness that extended well beyond school. His daughter, Tonya, recalls many of the selfless acts she witnessed growing up, including Bernie welcoming students for dinner, finding them jobs, and even prom dresses. Personally, every year I ran the school talent show and Bernie was the teacher who oversaw that event. I often referred to Bernie as my favourite teacher who never taught me.

Although Bernie is no longer with us, the love he gave to the community will continue to live on and touch the generations after him. He will be missed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

### **LOCAL RESIDENTS: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I just want to recognize some folks who stepped up in our community during Hurricane Fiona.

Charlie Bennett, when he was doing a wellness check on some folks at a senior's home, realized that they'd been without power for a while, and they needed some assistance. He brought his own generator down, got them up and running, and helped them out. He put out a plea for help.

One of the groups that responded to that plea for help was a group of sisters and their families: Flora Cantwell, Paula Smith, Valeria MacPherson, Fred Cantwell, Phil Smith, and their nieces Canda MacPherson and Alana Pindar. They cooked up an amazing meal for the seniors of ham and scalloped potatoes, with a beautiful dessert. I was lucky enough to be invited to attend and meet with the seniors. I thank them for their generosity very much and congratulate them for their hard work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**SLOWLY SLOWLY: SLOW FASHION SHOP - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize a small business in Halifax Needham. Slowly Slowly is an awesome slow fashion and design boutique located at 5685 Cunard Street in the north end of Halifax.

Slowly Slowly is a kind reminder to slow down, to consume more mindfully, and to invest in a better future for the planet and everything that lives in it. It is a space created for the coming together of independent designers at the forefront of slow fashion and design.

Slowly Slowly believes in the brands they carry. Each and every one has a story to tell, and they work to offer you full transparency in sharing these stories. They want to give you all the knowledge they can on where your products are being made, how they're being made, who's making them, and what they're made of.

Slowly Slowly strives to solely carry brands and designers who are making a positive impact in the communities they work within, the environment they take resources from, and the individuals whose skills are employed to make them beautiful designs.

I would like to invite all members to visit the north end of Halifax and make sure to stop by Slowly Slowly during your next shopping trip.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**LPNs: NEED TO EXPAND ROLE - RECOG.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the invaluable contributions made to the delivery of health care in our province by licensed practical nurses, otherwise known as LPNs.

These individuals work in a variety of roles in hospitals, long-term care facilities, and community-based care settings. Working within a defined scope of practice, they build a unique rapport with other team members, but most importantly with their patients and their families. The care they provide is exemplary.

However, many of these highly skilled professionals are currently searching for employment even as we face a severe shortage of registered nurses. I would therefore encourage all Nova Scotia health care employers, including the Nova Scotia Health Authority, to give consideration to recognizing expanded roles of practice for licensed practical nurses, particularly in situations where there are shortages of registered nurses currently.

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

**MLA FOR COL.-MUSQ. VALLEY: LEG. SERV. - RECOG.**

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise in the House today to congratulate a fellow member: the Member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

You may not know this, but the member has been around a long time. How long, you ask? Long enough that on June 10, 2022, the member in question celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his entry into the Order of Ministry of the United Church of Canada.

Much of his career was spent at the Knox United Church in Brookfield, whereupon announcing his retirement several parishioners asked him to run in the 2013 election. We are incredibly grateful that he agreed to do so. For as much as he teases us, and gets teased himself, you'd be hard pressed to find a more decent and honourable person than our dear friend, the Reverend Larry Harrison. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Very well-deserved.

The honourable member for Clare.

**DAHLGREN, MEDORA & HERADO: SPEC. OLYM. SERV. - THANKS**

RONNIE LEBLANC: Recently, Medora and Herado Dahlgren retired from the many roles they held in the Clare Special Olympics since first volunteering for the organization in 1984.

In addition to volunteering as coaches and at fundraisers, Medora has been a member of the organization's executive, and Herado has often driven the bus bringing the athletes to their meets. They have been instrumental in building a strong and supportive organization for Clare athletes. Though retired, the Dahlgrens continue to be two of Clare's Special Olympics' enthusiastic supporters, and Medora will continue to organize the bi-weekly bowling events during the Fall and Winter.

I ask that all members join me in thanking the Dahlgrens for their 36 years of service to the Clare Special Olympics.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

**N.S. WAGES LOW: NEED FOR SUPP. - RECOG.**

GARY BURRILL: I have already tabled the first two sets of economic statistics brought forward by the Department of Finance and Treasury Board this month. They come



from the department's October 3<sup>rd</sup> econo stats publication. One of these documents covers income and consumption, the other, household wealth. The documents show that currently, on a per capita household basis, employee compensation in Nova Scotia is the lowest of all provinces in Canada.

They also show that regarding household savings, on a year-over-year basis, from the second quarter of 2021 to the second quarter of 2022, Nova Scotia households have moved from setting money aside to dipping into savings in a major way. The department's October econo stats numbers, that is, do not provide supportive evidence for the government's continued view that it would be economically negative to transfer funds directly to the people of Nova Scotia, following the example of other provinces, as a mitigation of the current inflation crisis.

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

**MARTIN, FRANKIE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, Frankie Martin is the owner of a popular small business in Glace Bay, Colette's Restaurant.

For as long as I've known Frankie, he has been offering a hand up to those around him. I could write a member's statement for the thousands of meals that Frankie provides students all year long, as well as an annual Christmas dinner. I could also write about the hundreds of meals he has provided to seniors during past power outages, or I could write about the support he gives to any charity that comes knocking on his doors.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Fiona left us in the dark. For the entirety of the blackout, Frankie supplied meals to the comfort centre twice daily. Then when he heard of a man who could not secure oxygen cylinders and his condenser was useless in a blackout, Frankie took his own generator from his home and set it up for this couple. Then for the rest of the week, Frankie delivered meals to those folks.

As we celebrate Small Business Week, knowing that people like Frankie are there to help us ride out the storm is indeed a comforting thought.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**HALIFAX LEARNING: SPELLREAD PGM. - THANKS**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, on this Small Business Week, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Halifax Learning SpellRead.

Founded in 1999 by Sarah Arnold, it has helped thousands of students discover the joy of learning with their expertly designed literacy intervention programs. It offers

effective results that continue to improve long after the students graduate. Halifax Learning is best known for its gold standard reading remediation program SpellReading, which is rigorously tested and structured, and meets the needs of all developing readers, including those struggling with a learning disability. It has been shown to be the number one program in reading comprehension. Halifax Learning is proud to be locally grown and evidence-driven, which is something I very much encourage and support.

I would ask all my colleagues to join me in wishing Halifax Learning SpellRead continued success and thank them for opening up the world of learning to so many children.

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

**CUPE 3912 STRIKE: SUPP. - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lend my support for CUPE 3912.

Low wages and work conditions have forced 1,500 part-time academics, teaching assistants, markers, and demonstrators at Dalhousie to take to the picket lines. The union members officially went on strike at 12:01 a.m. this morning. Mr. Speaker, workers need to be respected and bargaining must be fair. The union members are looking for better wages, and they have a right to do so. They are also looking for better working conditions.

I stand in solidarity with them. Solidarity forever, my friends, solidarity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**POTLOTEK FIRST NATION: MI'KMAW SUMMER GAMES - CONGRATS.**

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the community of Potlotek First Nation in Richmond County for their hard work and dedication to their culture. From July 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, Potlotek hosted the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Summer Games - the first time the games have been held since 2019. The last time Potlotek hosted the games was in 2014.

Participants took part in a variety of sporting events, pageants, and had various musicians and groups entertain audiences throughout the week.

I would like to mention Chief Wilbert Marshall and councillors Anita Basque, Jeremy Basque, Quentin Doucette, Basil Johnson, Wayne Johnson, Blayne Murray, and James Marshall for their continued dedication to their community.

Please join me in a round of applause for the community of Potlotek. Thank you.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

**BISHOP, CHRIS: SEARCH & RESCUE AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.**

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, Chris Bishop was recently recognized with the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association's Lifetime Honorary Membership. He is certainly a deserving recipient of this award. For nearly four decades, Chris was a committed member of the Annapolis County Ground Search and Rescue team. He served three terms as president and several terms as vice-president. He spent time as a training officer, a search director, he was involved with Project Lifesaver of Nova Scotia and the Hug-A-Tree and Survive program, and he was an active fundraiser.

Over his career, Chris was involved in hundreds of searches throughout Annapolis County and the province. Provincially, Chris was involved with the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association from the early days of the organization and was one of the first directors.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Chris Bishop on becoming a lifetime honorary member of the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association and thank him for the many years of service to our community.

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

**CUPE 3912 STRIKE: SUPP. - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of members of CUPE 3912, my former union, who are on strike today at Dalhousie University. Sessional instructors, teaching assistants, lab instructors and demonstrators who fill important roles in the university community. For students, these educators enhance their learning experience with their focus and expertise. For faculty, working in teams with these educators, means that they can deepen their curriculum and create more research linkages. For people in these roles, it provides an opportunity to share their growing expertise and support the academic journeys of others.

CUPE 3912 members are simply asking to be fairly compensated and treated. Caitlin Cunningham, a Ph.D. candidate, studying biodiversity, conservation in cities, wrote to the students she teaches six times a week, saying that in many ways being here has been a dream come true - I love my research and my colleagues and students are incredible . . . it has been stressful but not because of course work or thesis. Rather, my anxieties have been around being able to pay for basic necessities like rent and groceries, and whether my friends and colleagues can do the same.

I hope all members will recognize the valuable work of the members of CUPE 3912.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**CDN. DORY RACING ASSOC.: 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIV. - CONGRATS.**

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: As a long-time fan of the art of dory making and sport of dory racing, I rise today to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Canadian Dory Racing Association on its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. What began as a boast between fishermen has grown into a seven-decades-old event that now sees women, as well as men, hauling out the oars for recreation and competition.

Moreover, the international dory races have cemented a long-standing bond between Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and Gloucester, Massachusetts, our communities and our countries, a model of collaboration and camaraderie that we might do well to apply to our many areas of joint interest.

Mr. Speaker, I am also proud to share that our Canadian rowers won four out of five dory races during the recent international event at Lunenburg. Congratulations to the Canadian Dory Racing Association.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**EAST COAST ADAPTIVE ABILITIES: CH'SHIPS WIN - CONGRATS.**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise today to recognize East Coast Adaptive Abilities, an inclusive cheerleading team made up of athletes from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

The Adaptive Abilities team competed in the Unified Intermediate Division. They came together as one creative routine to compete in Orlando, Florida, at the ICU Cheerleading Championships. The International Cheer Union was established in 2004 and is recognized governing body of cheerleading. Each year they host the World Cheerleading Championships in Orlando at the ESPN Wide World of Sports, where over 70 nations come together and compete to be world champions.

Local cheerleading clubs involved in this team of 23 athletes were from West Halifax Cheer, Olympia Allstar Cheerleading, Integrity Cheer Empire, Port City Elite, Extreme Athletics, and Capital City Elite. These athletes from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick travelled each week and worked together to create an inclusive cheerleading routine to represent Canada on the world's biggest stage, at the ICU World Cheerleading Championships in April.

This group of athletes has been trying to compete at worlds since 2019, when they first won a bid to the event. They continued to practice throughout the pandemic virtually and stayed committed to their end goal of competing at the worlds. Through new additions of athletes and working both in person and virtually since 2020, their hard work paid off in April and they took home the gold.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Adaptive Abilities Team for their success and recognition as the only Canadian team to bring home a gold medal at the world championships.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, I would ask that the members try to keep their member statements within the one-minute time limit.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**CUPE 3912 STRIKE: SUPP. - RECOG.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my caucus colleagues and I are wearing pink today as an expression of solidarity with the members of CUPE 3912, my former union, on Day 1 of their strike.

CUPE 3912 represents part-time instructors, teaching assistants, markers, and demonstrators at Dalhousie University. Their wages are among the lowest in the country for both teaching assistants and contract faculty at Dalhousie. They've been asking for wage parity with similar institutions in other provinces for many years.

CUPE 3912 members have not received a raise in three years. They also don't get many of the benefits of their full-time colleagues - no health plan or dental plan, no sick days, no pensions - the list goes on.

As a former part-time academic, I can attest to the fact that these workers love their jobs and the students they work with. They also have to eat and pay their bills.

I hope the strike will be short and that the workers will be back to the classroom as soon as possible, but in a state where they are paid properly for the essential and important work that they do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**CUMB. REG. HEALTH CARE CTR. STAFF: EXTREME STRESS - RECOG.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring awareness to the extreme stress the staff at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre face. They

are feeling a lack of hope, but I believe this lack of hope could be rectified with strong leadership and communication with them.

They are working short-staffed and working extra-long hours. They are also working in compromising conditions in a temporary emergency room due to a flood that happened in May of this year - over six months ago. The emergency room repair is covered under insurance, but it remains closed with no date for reopening, and nothing is being communicated with the staff for an expected date. Then, of course, most recently they are working under conditions with a temporary, closed, or amalgamated ICU.

The staff have worked very hard during the pandemic, and they have adapted to all the changes. I would like to thank all the staff of the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre for the incredible work they do and the care they provide to their patients and families each and every day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

**CHALIFOUX, ALAIN: SPORTS ACCOMPLISHMENTS - CONGRATS.**

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to recognize another valuable Kings West volunteer and athlete, a man I have a lot of respect for, Alain Chalifoux. Alain has played a pivotal role in making some sports available in the Annapolis Valley, having received coaching certification from the National Coaching Certification Program, squash officiating certification, and slo-pitch umpire certification.

Alain has held many positions in the community in relation to sport, including president and coach of Greenwood Minor Basketball, player and president of Berwick Men's Slo-Pitch League, coaching volleyball, basketball, badminton, and slo-pitch at the junior and senior high school levels.

As well as supporting and promoting sport for youth in the Valley, Alain is also an accomplished athlete, having played on both civilian and military teams for slo-pitch, volleyball, and squash. Over the years he has received many accolades including the Canadian Armed Forces Male Coach of the Year award in 2010 and Royal Canadian Air Force Athlete of the Year in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking my good friend Alain Chalifoux for making sport possible for many in our area and congratulating him on all his athletic and volunteer successes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**DAUGHTER: LOST FIRST TOOTH - RECOG.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I had a prepared member statement, but I got a call this morning from Allie Mombourquette, who is six years old and called her dad to let him know that she lost her first tooth. (Applause)

She asked me to tell everybody at work when I was in Halifax when she called, so even better, I'll put it in Hansard for good. Allie, Dad is proud of you. You're a big girl. You lost your first tooth. The Tooth Fairy gave her \$10, so apparently even the price of teeth has gone up.

It's always nice when you can get up and get those calls first thing in the morning, being away from the crew. Allie, I'm proud of you for being a big girl. Take that \$10 and share it with your sister. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**MADE WITH LOCAL: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Small Business Week to recognize Made with Local, a Dartmouth South-based company that makes handcrafted health snacks with a huge impact.

Sheena Russell started making real food bars in 2011 and selling them at markets and today she has blazed a path for socially and environmentally responsible business success in Nova Scotia.

Made with Local is B Corp certified and they got their start employing local people who were facing barriers to employment through organizations such as The Flower Cart Group. They source ingredients from Nova Scotia farmers like Cosman and Whidden Honey, Nuts to You Nut Butters, Van Dyk's blueberries, and more. They've recently set up shop in their own factory in Windsor.

Made With Local granola bars are now available in hundreds of stores across the country, including Costco, and keep me going during these long hours. I may or may not have one in my desk.

Please join me in congratulating Made With Local for their ongoing success and for demonstrating that resilient and responsible business action is not only possible but is in very high demand.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

**SHORE CLOTHING CO.: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Small Business Week, I rise today to bring recognition to Stephanie and Bruce Murphy, owners of The Shore Clothing Company in Musquodoboit Harbour, for recently celebrating four years in business.

The family moved to the area in 2017 on a military posting and fell in love with the sense of community they experienced on the Shore. Their popular clothing line provides residents of the Shore, and those with close ties to it, an opportunity to express their love of the coast.

Shore Clothing Company offers uniquely designed clothing for all ages. They have clothing suitable for the new baby - for the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier - all the way up the member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley. You can find them most weekends at the Musquodoboit Harbour Farmers Market retailing from their easily identifiable trailer.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating Stephanie and Bruce on four years in business and to wish them continued success in their endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**YAR. BUSINESSES: AWD. NOMINEES - THANKS**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this week, the 2022 Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce Business Awards will be held in Yarmouth. I'd like to thank the chamber for their continuous hard work and commitment to supporting and highlighting all the businesses, both big and small, in our community.

I'd like to congratulate the many nominees for this year's business awards. They have all demonstrated perseverance and resilience during the last two years of the pandemic.

I ask this House to join me in wishing the Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce and all the businesses in Yarmouth much success and thank them all for their very important work and commitment to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**GOOD ROBOT BREWING CO.: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a business in Halifax Needham, Good Robot Brewing, a brewery, bar, and beer garden run by a pack of misfits in the heart of Halifax's historic North End.



Their beers are known to be eclectic, eccentric, and untrue to style, fraught with foraged materials, impulse decisions, and whimsy. They don't make craft beer; they make beer - kinda. And they enjoy sharing their beer, their building, and their childish minds with the community.

Good Robot began with three long-time friends and misfits, Joshua Council, Angus Campbell, and Doug Kehoe, who quit engineering to pursue their dream of quitting engineering. Of course, they had to do something to make money, and given they were spending nearly half of their paycheque on beer, pursuing a good-time beer company was the next natural step. Since 2015, the group of three former engineers has grown into a band of misfits who share their values of good times.

So if you want to sit your butt somewhere and just be yourself, well, I would encourage all members to visit Good Robot and set sail for Halifax's most questionable brewing experience.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

#### **SANTAS FOR S. SHORE SRS.: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, 351 seniors received a little extra love in their lives last holiday season thanks to Shannon Stewart and Santas for South Shore Seniors.

Through the Santas for South Shore Seniors program, local seniors receive gifts from their holiday wish list, provided anonymously by caring community members. The program brings joy to many.

Shannon was inspired to start this group the first Christmas after she lost her mom - her idol, Barb Stewart. Shannon says that Barb did anything she could to give back to her community, including starting the Giving Tree in Bridgewater some 50 years ago with a local church. Together, since 2019, Shannon, and her elves, Erika Mosher, Janice Costigand, and Jennifer Zweschper, and many other individuals and organizations, have carried on Barb Stewart's legacy. Their work to bring joy to seniors extends all year round and just keeps growing.

Thank you to Shannon Stewart and all those involved in Santas for South Shore Seniors for putting a smile on the faces of elders in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

[1:45 p.m.]

**REVOLVE: BRANDING & MARKETING AGENCY - RECOG.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, it being Small Business Week, I did want to give a shout-out to yet another Bedford small business. Today we're going to talk a bit about Revolve Branding & Marketing agency. It's a full-service branding and marketing firm serving clients across Canada and the U.S., and what they do is help clients turn business challenges into simple, straightforward brand strategies.

Their reach is well beyond Bedford. I actually don't think of them as a small business at all. When you drive along the Bedford Highway, you see the word Revolve emblazoned on the side of a big building there on the Bedford waterfront, so I always actually thought they were mid-size, but the founder and CEO of Revolve, Phil Otto, reached out to me and said, we're a small business.

I did want to share the news about Revolve. Phil and his company are deeply involved in a number of charitable organizations, including but not limited to the IWK Foundation, et cetera, and he's also been the Honorary Colonel for the Royal Canadian Air Force Base 12 Wing Shearwater. Kudos to Phil and Revolve.

THE SPEAKER: That was a little bit longer, as usual.

The honourable member for member for Halifax Chebucto.

**DEWAN, TAHMINA: CDN. CITIZENSHIP - CONGRATS.**

GARY BURRILL: I wish to celebrate the achievement of Canadian citizenship in a ceremony yesterday of proud Nova Scotian Tahmina Dewan. After immigrating from Bangladesh in 2013, Tahmina continued her studies at the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education and currently studies child and youth studies at Mount Saint Vincent. She works as an early childhood educator at Inglis Street Elementary School.

In addition to studying and working in the critical sector of early childhood education, Tahmina has also been involved in the development of the sector as a member of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia, as a former president at NSCECE student council, and as a board director at the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education.

In addition, Tahmina continues to be active politically while raising her family of two wonderful daughters together with her husband, Mahbubur Rahman. I ask all members to extend a warm congratulations to Tahmina on the completion of her quest to become a citizen of this country.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**4H CLUBS IN N.S.: 100TH ANNIV. - RECOG.**

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I rise today to recognize the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 4H in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia has 60 clubs spread across the province. Membership has doubled this year following two years of dealing with COVID restrictions.

Pictou County 4H members celebrated this milestone during the Pictou-North Colchester Exhibition that took place in early September in Pictou. The theme for the celebration was Then, Now, and 4H Forever. Members, leaders, and parents were provided an opportunity to meet and mingle with former members of the local clubs.

This marked a busy weekend for 4H, as members also eagerly participated in the many events, including livestock and pet showmanship. The 4H motto “Learning to do by Doing” was clearly evident over the course of the exhibition.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate 4H members in Pictou County and across this province on their successful resurgence, and I especially congratulate them as they continue to celebrate their centennial year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**TOPPLE, SCOTT: SPRYFIELD MINOR SOFTBALL EFFORTS - THANKS**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I’d like to take a moment to recognize one of our local community leaders, Scott Topple. Scott has spent the last 10 years coaching, organizing, fundraising, and managing Spryfield minor softball.

Scott’s 10 years of dedication ensured that thousands of kids in our community could play and enjoy softball, making new friends and memories. After 10 years, Scott is stepping away from his duties, and I want to personally thank him for all he has done. Scott is a great father, husband, friend, and volunteer.

Thank you, Scott. You will never fully understand the positive impact you have left on so many.

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

**JENSEN, BEATRICE: 110<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES**

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to recognize Beatrice Jensen of New Waterford. On November 3, 1912, Beatrice joined the world. That’s right, she’s turning 110 years young.

To celebrate, there's a Facebook group called Beatrice Jensen; 110 Candles, where you can make a card or wish for Beatrice. The deadline for this project is Halloween, October 31<sup>st</sup>.

I also want to take this time to recognize a great community leader of Whitney Pier on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, which we missed. He was born on August 13, 1922, and he's 100, and I wish him a happy birthday too. That is Lem Skeete.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**TIM HORTONS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

HON. PAT DUNN: I doubt you could find an individual in this province who is not familiar with Tim Hortons. For many of us, it is the way we start each day with our favourite brew from one of the many outlets in Nova Scotia, across the country and beyond.

I would like to recognize Jim Shaw, his family, and their extended family of employees in our Pictou County area. Regardless of the ask, this Tim Hortons family shows up 100 per cent in our county, providing the familiar fare of beverages and doughnuts. They are often seen delivering refreshments themselves to these events, proud to be a part of each and every event they attend.

During the devastation of Hurricane Fiona, the Tim Hortons organization donated \$100,000 to the provincial relief effort. At our wellness centre, our Tim Hortons had a kiosk where they delivered approximately 1,000 beverages daily, free of charge to our volunteers and linesmen, and all with a smile of thanks for their help.

For their continued support in our community, the Camp Days, the Smile Cookie Days, and many other events held annually that support everything from our most vulnerable children to the local fuel fund that helps those most in need to stay warm, we want Tim Hortons and our local shop family to know the depth of our gratitude for what they do every day, but especially during these trying times of recovery.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

**COLLEY, PERRY: QUILT OF VALOUR RECIP. - RECOG.**

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I rise in the House to recognize Mr. Perry Colley, a retired Chief Petty Officer II.

Chief Petty Officer II Perry Colley retired from the Royal Canadian Navy in November 2014, but on October 2, 2022, Mr. Colley was presented with a Quilt of Valour for his 38 years of service. Each quilt is homemade by Gillian McDougal of Dartmouth

and Heike MacNeil of Bridgetown. The ceremony took place on Sunday, October 2, 2022, at the Royal Canadian Legion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all veterans and those who are currently enlisted in the Armed Forces for their service, commitment, and sacrifice for our country. I ask all members in the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing retired Chief Petty Officer II Mr. Perry Colley for his commitment and service to protect.

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

**RAHMAN, MAHBUBUR: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an active Haligonian and one of the newest Canadian citizens, Mahbubur Rahman, who took his citizenship oath yesterday.

Coming from an academic background in Bangladesh, Mahbubur launched himself into further studies in civic engagement when he and his family arrived in Halifax. He studied civil engineering and project management, and completed a Master of Public Administration degree this past Spring at Dalhousie University.

While completing his studies, Mahbubur served as Vice President (Finance & Operations) with the Dalhousie Student Union. He has also been greatly involved in Fusion Halifax, serving as chair. He is currently a project manager at DeepSense, Dalhousie University, and Director of Professional Development at the Project Management Institute, Nova Scotia chapter. He has also been an active and engaged political leader, demonstrating his strong project management skills, all of this while being a dedicated partner and father.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Mahbubur for his contributions to our community and extending best wishes for the future.

THE SPEAKER: There seems to be quite a bit of chatter going on within the Chamber. I would ask people to just try and keep it a little lower, please.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

**TEAM HARRISON: WOMEN'S CURLING CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.**

LARRY HARRISON: Mr. Speaker, I stand to congratulate Team Harrison, who won the Nova Scotia Women's Curling Club Championship in March. Representing the Bluenose Curling Club, the team consists of skip Meredith Harrison, third Courtney Smith, second Gilda Chisholm, and lead Seana Collier.

These women are moving on to represent Nova Scotia at the nationals, the 2022 Everest Canadian Curling Club Championships in Edmonton, Alberta, from November 20<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish Team Harrison all the best in their search for the Canadian title. We will be rooting for you.

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

**SHAHI GROCERIES: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, on the third day of Small Business Week, I want to highlight Ali Hussain and Shahi Groceries, located in the Clayton Parking Shopping Centre.

Shahi Groceries celebrated their second anniversary this August and are entering into their third year of business with a continued motto of providing authenticity through South Asian groceries, spices, and ready-to-eat meals. With fresh fruits, veggies, and sweets arriving weekly, there is always something available to conjure memories of home and ensure you can make your recipe just the way Grandma intended.

Ali and the staff at Shahi Groceries pride themselves on customer service, which is evident, based on the loyal customer base and busy store. A curbside pickup and home delivery service was added during COVID-19 and is still a popular and easy way to shop for many items available.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and all the members of the House join me in congratulating Ali Hussain and Shahi Groceries on their continued success and invite all members to visit and try one of their ready-made meals for supper tonight.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**THE TRAINYARD GENERAL STORE: COM. SERV. - THANKS**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the Trainyard General Store may be located on Portland Street in Dartmouth South, but its reach is felt far beyond downtown Dartmouth. I am proud to say that the owners of this small business and community hub, Kimberley Dares and Jason MacDonald, live in Dartmouth North.

The Trainyard is bursting with local and ethically made items. They've been working with approximately 200 makers since they opened in 2016. Most impressive is the Trainyard's commitment to their values of anti-racism, 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion, accessibility, sustainability, and community.

The shop's motto is "kindness changes everything" and they put this into action through the Trainyard Connect, wherein they donate 5 per cent of profits to community groups. This year's benefactors include the North Grove, the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning, and Out of the Cold Community Association. In 2021, the Trainyard also launched a community action team to help others five back to the community.

I ask the whole House to join me in thanking Kimberley, Jason, and their entire team for all that they do for our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**FIRST CORN. BAPTIST CHURCH: 215TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.**

HON. JOHN LOHR: I rise today to congratulate the First Cornwallis Baptist Church of Upper Canard as they celebrate their 215<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The original church was built in the early 1800s with its first minister, Reverend Edward Manning, serving the congregation from 1807 to 1851. The first church was relatively small, but the second, built in 1873, could hold approximately 800 people. This church succumbed to fire in 1909. The current church, built on the same foundation in June 1910, is much smaller with seating for approximately 250 people.

In recognition of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a stained-glass window featuring Kings County imagery was installed in the church sanctuary. This year steeple repairs will be the focus of the 215<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Please join me today to congratulating Reverend Steven Wheaton and the First Cornwallis Baptist Church on its 215<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

**PATTERSON, A./TITUS, R.: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES**

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I have previously spoken in this House about the tremendous work of the Wolfville Farmers' Market to showcase homegrown products from our province, as well as incubate new vendors. Part of their success lies in having established vendors who understand the challenges of bringing local food to our tables and who pass this knowledge on.

Today I want to recognize two of those vendors who have recently announced their much-earned retirement from the Wolfville Farmer's Market: Angela Patterson and Ron Titus of Angelhoeve Farm. These vendors have been steady and reliable vendors at the market, requiring painfully early Saturday morning departures from their home to serve

their customers in Wolfville. It will be quite an adjustment to shop at the market without seeing them.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in extending a heartfelt thank you to Angela Patterson and Ron Titus for their contribution to making the Wolfville Farmers' Market the success that it is and for their contribution to our province's important food production sector.

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

**LOLA'S LANDING GIFT SHOP: BUS. SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, as it is Small Business Week in Nova Scotia, I want to bring attention to one of Hubbards's finest businesses, Lola's Landing.

This unique gift shop is full of lovely items and clothing from around the world. The discerning style of owner Maureen Moore means Lola's Landing is a favourite shop of many in, and out of, our community. As a matter of fact, my complete outfit comes from Lola's Landing today.

This Friday they are hosting a Girls' Nite Out party, with a *Great Gatsby* Roaring Twenties theme, which will include a fashion show and fundraiser for the food bank.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Lola's Landing on their continued success and thank them for their contributions to the community of Hubbards.

THE SPEAKER: I don't know if we could call that a prop or not. (Laughter)

The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**PERFORMERS: NURSING HOME WORK - THANKS**

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize all the musicians, artists, and speakers who provide entertainment to nursing- or enhanced-care homes across the province.

The ability to play an old song or help teach somebody a craft means a lot to nursing home residents. While many of these performers would love to provide this service for free, a lot of them cannot afford to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank these dedicated performers and ask that we all give them as much support as we can.

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



[2:00 p.m.]

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **PREM.: LACK OF GOV'T. TRANSPARENCY - EXPLAIN**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Fall is here and we're seeing our beautiful trees change colours. We've also seen a bit of the Premier's true colours in the last number of weeks as well. We have seen a government and a Premier who ran on an agenda of transparency, yet we've seen the opposite happen now that this government has taken office.

The Premier has used his majority to keep Nova Scotia Power from appearing at the Public Accounts Committee. The Premier called a story that was confirmed by his own office, manufactured by the media and overblown by the media. The Premier actually even refused to speak to reporters last Friday, which is the first time I've seen that in my 12 years in office.

I'd like to ask the Premier if he believes these are the actions of a transparent Premier and government.

THE PREMIER: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I disagree with a number of the examples the member has raised. Obviously, the issue - we can go through them if he wants to use his questions in that format. The Public Accounts Committee issue - Nova Scotia Power was before the NSUARB, a process with experts and professionals, for weeks on end. The Public Accounts Committee wouldn't be the appropriate place for a discussion on that. The NSUARB is the appropriate place for discussion on that.

The reality is that the purpose of the Public Accounts Committee is to look at the public accounts of the Province, our expenditures, to the benefit of the taxpayers of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be transparent with Nova Scotians, as we have every step of the way, putting up Action for Health. The most detailed health care information is out there for Nova Scotians to see. I make myself available to the media at every opportunity, no question.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy that the Premier brought up health care. In fact, last week he said to the media that he has been totally transparent on

health care stuff. I'll table that. He further stated that there are no examples of his government not being transparent because it's not the case. That's tabled as well.

I can actually think of a few examples on health care alone where this government has not been transparent. On multiple occasions, this government has withheld the Need a Family Practice Registry wait-list numbers. This government has blocked the Nova Scotia Health Authority's CEO from appearing on multiple legislative committees, including the Public Accounts Committee. This government has refused to give a timeline or cost estimate on the QEII development, the biggest health care development project in a generation in our province.

We also saw this government remove the weekly reporting on COVID-19 numbers. We still have 10 people dying a week from COVID-19.

My question to the Premier is: Is this really transparency and accountability?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, you'll forgive me if I consider this just a wee bit rich, coming from the member who sat in government for eight years. They blocked the Public Accounts Committee for even appearing for months on end. They shut down this Legislature for almost an entire year.

I will assure the member that the CEO of the health authority has appeared probably at the Public Accounts Committee, and other committees, more than any CEO probably in the time that I have been here, for sure.

There are times when there are other people who can more appropriately answer questions. If the Opposition would come up with some meaningful questions on any meaningful issue, they would know that different people have the right answers at different times.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier fired the Nova Scotia Health Authority, fired a leading medical administrator in the country, Dr. Brendan Carr. He fired other health care professionals within the health care department and replaced them with a partisan Progressive Conservative CEO, and refused to allow that CEO to actually present on many legislative committees to answer questions from the Opposition - questions that are critical to the public, questions that are important to have answers to because this government's main agenda is to fix health care.

These are not actions of an accountable government. These are not actions of transparency, and we'd appreciate it if the Premier would admit that today in the Chamber.

THE PREMIER: Well, Mr. Speaker, here's the reality: We inherited an awful mess in health care. I will hold myself to account on fixing that. I will hold myself accountable for that. By holding myself accountable to that, I put the team of people in place whom I

know can get the job done, led by the minister right here, and led by the CEO who, as much as the members of the Opposition will attempt to smear her reputation, is an incredibly talented person who makes wonderful decisions. I will stand by her, and I will hold myself to account every day. That's something the Leader of the Official Opposition would not be familiar with because he doesn't know what it means.

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

**PREM.: HOCKEY CANADA NDAs - ADDRESS**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier about his comments on the Hockey Canada scandal. The Premier said: "The leadership change at Hockey Canada is an important step towards accountability and meaningful change." He also said: "the work required to earn back the trust of Canadians needs to be transformational." I'll table that.

The survivors of the historic sexual assaults at the centre of this scandal were paid secret settlements by the organization and ordered to sign non-disclosure agreements that silenced them. They are calling for meaningful transformational change. When will the Premier deliver it?

THE PREMIER: I'm not sure if the member is insinuating that I have some authority over the actions of Hockey Canada. Of course, I do not, but what I would say is the change in leadership of Hockey Canada is a good step. It's seen as a good step by me, for sure, and many Canadians.

There is work to do. There are still ongoing investigations that will be conducted there, but from my perspective, I think the change in leadership was absolutely necessary. I think that was an appropriate first step.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The Premier called for change within Hockey Canada, but after that, the Minister of Justice said that banning the use of non-disclosure agreements in the cases of sexual assault is not a priority of this government. I'm not insinuating anything, but I am saying that this government does have responsibility for the administration of justice.

My question for the Premier is whether he is in agreement with the Minister of Justice that reforming the use of NDAs is not a priority of this government.

THE PREMIER: I thank the member for this important question. The voices of victims are incredibly important and must be respected and listened to, for sure. That is a priority of our government, Nova Scotians, and Canadians, for sure - listening to the voices of victims.

The specific question on NDAs is one that the government is taking very seriously. We are doing research on that. We want to make sure that any step we take is the appropriate step, for sure. I would encourage the Leader of the NDP, when thinking about leadership abilities on NDAs, maybe they could start with their own caucus and remove all of their employees and previous employees from their NDA agreements.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm glad the Premier gets his news for Question Period from Twitter. No one in our caucus and no staff member in our caucus has ever signed an NDA. They have signed the provincial government confidentiality agreement that all provincial employees in all of our offices have signed. Thanks for that bit of gossip-mongering.

The women at the centre of the Hockey Canada scandal are not the only ones.

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

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We've heard stories from many people who have not been able to access justice because they were required to sign NDAs. The minister says he takes it seriously and he's watching, but P.E.I. has acted, several U.S. states are acting, and this is just not an adequate excuse. NDAs that are used to cover sexual assault are wrong, and again, they are at the heart of this scandal. They perpetuate a culture of patriarchy, misogyny, and silence.

If the Premier won't act and it is not a priority of his government, then the question remains: Who is this government trying to protect?

THE PREMIER: I think we've been clear that the government is acting. We are in the process of doing the jurisdictional scans. We need to make sure . . . (Interruption)

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

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: The reality is that we need to get these things right. I've been in this Chamber, and I've seen legislation get to certain stages and decisions of government and had to come back.

As a matter of fact, I made one myself with the non-resident tax. We want to make sure that we get this right. This is a serious issue. We are respectful of the voices of victims. We listen to the voices of victims. We will do the work, and we will make sure that any decision we make is the right decision for Nova Scotians.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **DHW - DOCTOR WAIT-LIST DATA PERMANENCE - COMMIT**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, after pressure from the Opposition, the Need a Family Practice Registry was released late last week. The number of people who need a doctor in Nova Scotia has climbed since the last election by 45,000 people. However, Mr. Speaker, the Premier did bring into question the validity of these numbers.

I would like to ask the Premier: Why, when he used these numbers so specifically to paint his picture of a crisis in health care when he was in Opposition, is he bringing into question the validity of these numbers now that we have seen them skyrocket during his leadership?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We are looking at the list. The list was established in 2016. What I would say is that the functionality of the list is quite limited. We feel that there are people who maybe are not on the list who do not have a family practice. We also feel that there's no automatic way for somebody to come off the list, so it's important that we have that.

What we are looking at is how we can increase the functionality of that list. I think it's an important tool for Nova Scotians. There's no movement afoot at all whatsoever to take the list away. In fact, we want to improve the functionality of it and make it a better tool for Nova Scotians to be able to access primary care.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we have a Premier who says he's accountable and answers all the questions in this House in front of the media, yet here we have again today a refusal to answer questions about his quotes in the media.

We're very concerned about the approach to data-keeping of this government, particularly where we saw when COVID-19 got worse, numbers started to skyrocket. There was actually a limit and reduction in reporting. The weekly reporting was gone. We're very concerned that as these Need a Family Practice Registry numbers continue to rise, the government will take the same approach because they're not fixing health care, and just try to sanitize the data to meet their purposes.

Will the minister please confirm today that the Need a Family Practice Registry, which provides critical baseline data to understand if we're working or not, and also identifies people whom we need to connect practically with physicians, will remain in place in perpetuity?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I think I was quite clear in my original answer that there is no movement afoot to take away the Need a Family Practice Registry. It's a very important tool for Nova Scotians in order to register themselves and their families in order

to reach primary care. What we would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is look at the functionality of it. Over time, those numbers will change. Sometimes they may go up, and sometimes they may go down. As people attach to a primary care practice, they will actually be able to come off the registry in a more formalized way. There is no movement afoot to take away the Need a Family Practice Registry.

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

### **DHW: DOCTOR WAIT-LIST - VALIDITY**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: A CBC News article, which I'll table, notes that when the Premier was Leader of the Official Opposition and the Need a Family Practice Registry was at 71,000 people, the Premier used that figure to argue that the health care system was in crisis. Now that there are more than 45,000 more Nova Scotians on that doctor wait-list, the Premier brings into question the validity of that list. We have still not heard an answer from the Premier on why he questioned the validity of these numbers - numbers that he leveraged while he was in Opposition but that he brings into question now that he's Premier.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that if this list was such a necessary tool, I would have expected that the former government would have made a more functional tool.

The issue with the Need a Family Practice Registry is that it's quite easy to get on, but it's not as easy to get off. It doesn't look at health status. There's a number of different information that is not available. We actually want to make sure that the functionality is more supportive of the needs of Nova Scotians, rather than just simply a list of individuals. We want to improve the functionality and make sure that it's patient-centred.

ZACH CHURCHILL: When it comes to the functionality of lists, it's clear that the only functionality that the government cares about is its political functionality. That list is used day after day to say there's a health care crisis when there are 71,000 people on it, when there were 50,000 people on it. Now that that number is reaching close to 120,000 people, we have the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness bringing into question the validity of those numbers. Does someone not see the problem with this situation?

These numbers are not about politics. It's about being open and transparent with the public and ensuring that every single person who registers is attached to a primary care physician.

Will the minister please answer this question: If you have virtual care, is this government taking those individuals off that list?

[2:15 p.m.]

MICHELLE THOMPSON: That's the first clear question about virtual care that I've had.

When you get virtual care while you are on the Need a Family Practice Registry, you are not taken off the list. You are left on the list. In fact, when you receive virtual care through a virtual care provider, if that virtual care provider feels that in fact you need to be seen in person, they work to ensure that you have an in-person appointment on a triage level basis.

There is no movement afoot to remove the Need a Family Practice Registry.

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

### **SNSIS: QEII DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: And, finally, a clear answer, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister very much. We certainly will hold the government to that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said he is totally transparent on health care, but this could not be further from the truth when it comes to the QEII development project. Earlier this month at the Public Accounts Committee, we asked the CEO to provide us an estimate on how much the project will cost. She refused to answer. She stated: Not at this time. I'll table that.

The media asked the Premier the same question last week and the Premier refused to answer as well. We have heard that the costs have potentially doubled or tripled as a result of the government's delay in making a decision on the very same project that was approved over a year ago.

Can the Premier please give this House an estimate on the updated timeline and cost of the QEII development project?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for the health care redevelopment projects in our province, the QEII and HI expansion project is only one element of the QEII project that is ongoing.

This is a massive and very complex project that is being impacted, as within many other projects in our province, by a labour shortage, by inflation, by commodity price increases, and much more.

I can reassure the member that the team is working with the proponent, and we will move forward, as a government, with the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, we're just looking for a very clear and transparent update on the impacts that these factors have had on timelines and costs. Again, I'll remind the government that we know they delayed a decision on this for a year. This was there for approval on Day 1, when they were into office. What has happened over the last year is that inflation has shot up even more and the labour shortage has gotten worse, which is going to impact builds for everything from health care to housing.

We are very concerned that it is being reported now that the Infirmary development project could be billions of dollars over its initial budget. Could the minister please confirm whether that is the case?

COLTON LEBLANC: I will repeat what I've said publicly to media in the past: The previous number of \$2 billion is no longer accurate.

Mr. Speaker, as minister I recognize that there is a process to follow. I respect that process. There are conversations ongoing as it is an open procurement. There's confidentiality to that procurement. This procurement that we're going through is the exact same process that the Bayers Lake process has gone through, and we're seeing success with the Bayers Lake project - that is up to 71 per cent completion, with 150 workers on site.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

### **SNSIS: HARP THRESHOLD - INCREASE**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Heating Assistance Rebate Program is designed to help people with the cost of heating their homes, but the income thresholds and the refunds given out under the program - between \$100 and \$200 - haven't changed in almost 15 years.

The price of furnace oil hit \$1.98.4 cents per litre in Halifax last week and it has gone up about 30 cents since October. Dan McTeague, the President of Canadians for Affordable Energy, says; "I'm not so sure we're not going to see incidents of people literally freezing this winter."

Will the Premier raise the income thresholds and the refunds under the Heating Assistance Rebate Program to allow more people to qualify for the program?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I certainly understand the hardships that Nova Scotians are feeling at the price at the pumps and when it comes to heating their homes with home heating oil. The member is correct: that program did open up earlier this week,



with up to \$200 for eligible Nova Scotians. We continuously look at ways to improve this program, Mr. Speaker.

Again, on this side of the House, we're very concerned about the impacts of what's going to happen with the Liberal carbon tax and call on members opposite to join in opposing the federal carbon tax.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I thank the minister for that answer. I will say simply that if you are concerned, then you can do what I'm suggesting in this question and that is raise the threshold for this program because that is in your control.

Mr. Speaker, people cannot afford their bills. A Wolfville woman contacted us to say, simply put, a 10 per cent increase in energy costs would likely leave me homeless. I could not afford another apartment. There is no amount of cutting back or efficiency that could close the gap. I've already made use of Efficiency Nova Scotia programs. I already use the food bank and I already keep the heat too low.

I will ask again: Will the Premier or government expand the Heating Assistance Rebate Program?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, we're interested in targeted solutions and that's why earlier this year we topped up the Heating Assistance Rebate program.

All options are on the table. We're considering what we have to do to support Nova Scotians. Improvements to the program ensure that Nova Scotians were getting the money quicker into their pockets through direct deposit.

I'd like to remind the member we did create the Seniors Care Grant and there are actually provisions under that grant now - up to \$250 for home heating oil - and I encourage her to remind her constituents about that.

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

#### **DOJ: INCREASED PRIV. COMM. AUTHORITY - IMPLEMENT**

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, after the last election the Premier said when speaking with reporters, "We're going to work with the privacy commissioner to make sure that the proper authority is there so that Nova Scotians have access to the information that they rightly should have access to." I'll table that.

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

Mr. Speaker, we're now into the fourth House session under this government and still no legislation has been tabled. Is the Premier prepared to inform Nova Scotians that their right to access information still is not a priority for him?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, through you to the honourable member across from me, the department is looking at revamping the FOIPOP legislation. We're currently putting together a non-partisan team that can go through and look at the legislation and will be bringing back amendments before the end of this session.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I appreciate the answer from the minister. However, before the election it seemed like it might be a priority to be transparent for the Premier. These are the Premier's quotes and the Premier certainly had a lot of passion in saying that this government would be transparent. Now, after the election, the Premier is saying that he's not focused on it. Again, these are the Premier's words that I tabled.

Mr. Speaker, why is this Premier unprepared to table legislation to give the Privacy Commissioner order-making authority?

BRAD JOHNS: I would point out that 91 per cent of FOIPOP applications that are coming in have been on time and are proceeding on time within the last year, so we are doing all we can to make sure that any applications that come forward go out. Once again, we'll ensure that we're coming forward before the end of this term with a comprehensive review.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

### **DOJ: FOIPOP LEGISLATION UPDATE - COMMIT**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the reason the Premier doesn't want to keep his promise on the Privacy Commissioner is that he knows that he'll be held accountable.

In February, Nova Scotia's Information and Privacy Commissioner released two reports. In each, she found the Premier's Office violated Section 7 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which requires the office to make every reasonable effort to assist the applicant and to respond without delay to the applicant openly, accurately . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The remark that the member made before was unparliamentary, about impugning his commitments. That is unparliamentary. (Interruption)

Basically, what you're saying is that he doesn't want to keep his promise. That's the words that were used. That's impugning that he doesn't want to. I'm getting this from

the Clerk, so I'll just ask if you'll withdraw. (Interruption) Just reword the question, please. That would be the best thing to do.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: I'll get right to the question, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has not kept his promise. Is the reason that he has not kept the promise because he doesn't want to be held accountable?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I would suggest that once we came into government, what we did notice was that that legislation is over 20 years old. I do note that the previous government did have eight years when they could have addressed the legislation, and they didn't. Currently, we have legislation - I mean, we assume significant changes, Speaker, in technology. Twenty years ago, there weren't smart devices, emails the way they are today, and everything else. It's turning out to be a much larger job than I think anyone ever imagined, and maybe that's why it hasn't been done before now.

FRED TILLEY: I think smart devices and email have been around for quite some period of time.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier likes to say he is transparent, but he's showing Nova Scotians more and more that he isn't. Does the Premier believe that being found in violation of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act twice is the action of a transparent government?

BRAD JOHNS: Once again, what I would suggest is that when you have outdated legislation that needs to be updated, it's really hard to work within those parameters. We do have to additionally look at consulting well over 300 different bodies that are affected by FOIPOP. That would include universities, schools, school boards, all municipalities. It's a pretty monumental job, and we're hoping to update and modernize that legislation.

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

### **SNSIS: FOIPOP REQUESTS INCREASE - COMMENT**

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, this government portrays itself as open and transparent, but in reality, that couldn't be further from the truth. In the last year FOIPOP requests have gone up 43 per cent, meaning more Nova Scotians are having to request information from their government because it isn't being delivered to them. Nova Scotians are struggling to find the information they need.

For the Premier: If this government is open and transparent, why are Nova Scotians having to file more FOIPOPs for information they obviously feel is meaningful to them?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I want to inform the House that over 2,700 applications under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act were submitted last fiscal year. That's a 47 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. As the honourable Minister of Justice indicated, we respond as a government to 91 per cent and met those targets. That's quite impressive - an all-time high for government. That's because of the hard work of our civil servants, and I want to take the opportunity to thank them very much.

LORELEI NICOLL: We obviously know there's a high number of FOIPOP's, as the minister just reported. Why won't this government give Nova Scotians the actual information that they need so they aren't forced to request it?

BRAD JOHNS: Once again, 91 per cent of the time, we are. I think we're going a good job.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Since forming government, the PCs have used multiple tactics to restrict timely and fulsome access to information, including delays. Freedom of information requests are supposed to be . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We jumped the line there. That's my fault because I wasn't following the sheet right.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **EECD: ECEs UNDERPAID - INFORM**

SUZY HANSEN: Quite all right, Mr. Speaker.

Last week this government announced increases to early childhood educators' wages that the minister described as impactful and a bold leap, but which have left many in the industry disappointed. The scale of wages put forward has been called poverty wages. They would still leave many early childhood educators earning less than a living wage. To illustrate this problem, the average wage at Costco is \$26 an hour with benefits. Meanwhile, an entry-level job for someone with a college diploma in early childhood education would pay just \$20.81 per hour.

A pay increase for early childhood educators was long overdue but the announcement has fallen flat. Can the minister answer why this government is underpaying our child care professionals?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: We value our ECEs incredibly. They do amazing work, and they support our child care sector. They are the backbone and the heartbeat of the child care sector.

[2:30 p.m.]

An increase in wages for this sector was decades overdue and to respond to that we have invested \$100 million annually to implement raises for our ECEs. What does that mean for our individual ECEs? That means it went from the prior wage floor and we increased wages from 14 per cent to 43 per cent for our ECEs, from that wage floor.

Those are incredible increases, Mr. Speaker, and we're very proud to have made this historic investment in our ECEs.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm grateful that the minister has said they have done an increase, but numbers don't lie. When they say wages, this is just not a living wage.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear reports of daycare centres closing their doors due to financial and staffing challenges, removing much-needed child care spots that we definitely can't lose.

While earlier this year the minister claimed that no more centres were closing than normal, those working in the industry are suggesting that is no longer the case. For centres that have been struggling to keep their doors open and the families that depend on them, there was worry that the recent announcement may just be too little and too late.

My question to the minister is: What does the minister have to say to these daycares that are still struggling to stay open?

BECKY DRUHAN: I do want to continue and explain additionally what other elements of the compensation framework exist for our ECEs because it's an important part of the picture.

First, let me say that the operational costs of our centres, between 75 per cent and 85 per cent of those costs are staffing costs. Make no mistake, our \$100-million-a-year investment in ECEs is a significant investment in operational costs to support our operators to continue providing the incredible service they provide.

In addition to that \$100 million, let me also say that we will be coming in for our ECEs next year with consistent benefits packages across the province, and that will include retirement benefits.

In addition to that as well, and for the first time in the history of our ECEs in Nova Scotia . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

**SNSIS - FOIPOP: DELAYS - EXPLAIN**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Maybe the Premier wants to do a resolution about the Liberals giving all that money to the province for child care.

Since forming government, the PCs have used multiple tactics to restrict timely access to information, including delays. Freedom of Information requests are supposed to be delivered in 30 days, yet in the last year, 665 exceeded that requirement. I'll table that.

My question for the Premier is: Does he believe that delayed FOIPOPs are, in fact, a sign of open and transparent government?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, again, 91 per cent compliance rate, all-time high compliance rate for government since 2016. Come on, it can't get better than that.

I'll table the FOIPOP report that the members opposite can have a look at. Let's talk about what transparency and accountability looks like. It doesn't look like shutting down the Legislature. It doesn't look like shutting down the Health Committee. What it looks like? I'll give you one example in my time here: Action for Health. Go look it up on Google.

KELLY REGAN: Something's at an all-time high. Anyway, 665 delayed requests are 665 too many. Our office sees numerous FOIPOPs delayed, especially around those that contain information the government doesn't want people to see. For example, on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, we filed a request for records relating to carbon pricing, carbon tax, cap and trade. The FOIPOP has been delayed, wait for it, until March 3, 2023. An eight-month delay. I'll table that.

Could the Premier please explain why anyone should ever have to wait eight months to access information in this province?

COLTON LEBLANC: I can tell you what Nova Scotians decided on the polls after eight years of waiting for action. They elected a government on this side. Perhaps the 47 per cent . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services has the floor.

COLTON LEBLANC: Perhaps the 47 per cent increase that we've seen in the last fiscal year is an application submitted by the Opposition. That represents - last fiscal, 312,000 pages of documents were committed on this side to ensuring the FOIPOP process improves, and guess what? We showed it last year and we'll continue to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**SNSIS: FOIPOP REDACTIONS - EXPLAIN**

BRAEDON CLARK: The ministers are quite proud of their 91 per cent figure. Fantastic. It sounds so great. However, of the 2,767 FOIPOP completed last year, 91 per cent were either heavily or fully redacted.

I'd like to ask the minister: Is he still so happy about a 91 per cent blank page rate?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: What I'd say is it's probably a heck of a lot better than what they did when they were in government.

BRAEDON CLARK: Thank you to the minister for that compelling response.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Even the member's own caucus is making the noise, so I'm going to ask that you recognize the member for Bedford South. He has the floor.

BRAEDON CLARK: I could table all the FOIPOP that we have had come back redacted, but frankly, there would be no room left on the Clerk's desk and QP would be over by the time I tabled them. So I will just table some of the ones that have come back 100 per cent redacted.

A blank page is not what Nova Scotians meant when they said they wanted a transparent government.

I'll ask the minister again, and I don't really care about the last eight years, to be honest with you: What possible reason can there be for 91 per cent of documents to be 100 per cent redacted?

COLTON LEBLANC: I find it absolutely shameful that the member opposite doesn't really care about the last eight years of our province's history. The party opposite sat on their hands . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Certainly, wound up today, aren't we?

The honourable Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services.

COLTON LEBLANC: Perhaps the member wasn't there, but I'm sure he was there in spirit. The issues that we're dealing with today are serious issues, ones that we were elected as a government to take to this Legislature. We will continue to do so, acting for Nova Scotians, delivering results and solutions that they want us to deliver on.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**DOJ: NDAs REMOVAL - INFORM**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'd like to follow up in the questioning of the Leader of the NDP.

Personally, I've stood in this Chamber before and talked about some of the challenges that victims of sexual assault face. I'm curious to know: What is the position of the official government on non-disclosure agreements, and if they agree or not that they actually should be taking steps to remove them from even being allowed in situations where victims of sexual assault are being silenced, which is allowing, Mr. Speaker, the behaviour to continue by perpetrators in this province?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Nobody on this side of the House, as I've said before, wants to encourage sexual abuse or family violence or anything else. We do recognize the challenges the NDAs have.

As I've said before, what we're currently doing is we're looking at and watching other jurisdictions, of course P.E.I., having put theirs in just six months ago, and Manitoba and British Columbia looking at bringing some forward soon. We're going to keep an eye on other jurisdictions for now.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, victims of sexual assault should not be silenced. If we really wanted to change the culture around sexual assault in this province, it starts right here in this Legislature. (Applause)

My question to the Premier of this province is: Will he tell this Chamber if his own party ever asked an employee of their organization - of their PC caucus - to sign an NDA and if he doesn't know the answer, will he commit to finding that answer out and reporting it back to this Legislature? (Applause)

BRAD JOHNS: I don't personally know the answer. I will consult with our caucus and let the member know.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**SNSIS: INCREASE IN FOIPOP FEES - EXPLAIN**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, another action that the government can take to restrict access to information is through fees. Under this government, fees are often in the hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of dollars.



In the past year, the cost of processing fees for FOIPOP's doubled to over \$40,000. Does the minister believe that this is a sign of an open and transparent government?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Information Access and Privacy Services works with applicants to reduce or to actually eliminate fees whenever possible. Mr. Speaker, all applicants have the right to request a review of the fees by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner if they feel the fees are unwarranted or punitive.

BRAEDON CLARK: The fees can be a major deterrent. In fact, 181 FOIPOP's were abandoned last year because people couldn't afford the cost to access information. As I'm sure the minister will know, many other provinces and the federal government have eliminated all fees except for a nominal application fee.

In fact, our caucus introduced legislation in the last session, I believe, to do just that - to eliminate all fees other than a \$5 application fee. I wonder if the minister would be interested in taking us up on that proposal.

COLTON LEBLANC: I think what we've seen in this session so far is a government that's willing to modernize the chapter of Nova Scotia. I can also list a number of things that this government is interested in doing: a CCA wage increase; paying for the tuition of 2,000 CCAs; a record number of doctors hired; offering jobs to all graduating nurses; temporary license for paramedics; delivering on our daycare promises; implementing the MOST program, Mr. Speaker. I can say a lot more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

### **SNSIS: FOIPOP COST - EXPLAIN**

FRED TILLEY: It appears that this government is trying to modernize on the backs of Nova Scotians, because the cost of some FOIPOP's is ridiculous. Let me provide you some examples.

Information regarding the budget surplus, \$630; information regarding this government's plan for universal mental health, \$1,050; information regarding carbon tax and carbon pricing, \$4,590. You didn't hear that incorrectly, Mr. Speaker - \$4,590. I will table those documents.

Why do Nova Scotians have to pay huge fees to get basic information from this government?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I guess it's Question Period, and I don't really think it's appropriate for me to ask questions. But if I could, I'd ask the member opposite why his party while they were in government didn't reduce the fees, and it's now such a priority.

Applicants may request a fee waiver if it's in the public interest or if they are unable to afford the fees. That's a standard practice for the IAP services.

[2:45 p.m.]

FRED TILLEY: It's clear that a lot of those negotiations didn't happen due to the numbers of FOIPOP's that were abandoned because of the cost.

In opposition, the Premier said, "In democracy, transparency is a key driver of accountability. It enables citizens to judge for themselves how their tax dollars are being spent and to access whether the people they elect are following through on their commitments." I'll table that, Mr. Speaker.

If transparency is a key driver of accountability, as this Premier has said, then why is his government forcing people to pay thousands of dollars for that transparency?

COLTON LEBLANC: Only 70 of the applications, I guess, of the 2,700 applications were subject to processing fees in the last fiscal year. Some of these requests, as the member opposite has indicated, are quite substantial and I can inform the House that one of these requests spanned over 25 years. There's some energy and time required, and again, as I indicated in a previous response, applicants who want to submit a request to have that fee waived or reduced can do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

### **DOJ: PUBLIC RECORDS - MAINTAIN**

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, since this government has taken office, we've seen an increase in the lack of record-keeping and documentation, and I can table the exact numbers. The federal information commissioner has said that keeping records of a government's decision-making is at the core of democracy. I will table that as well. My question to the Premier is: Why is this government increasingly making important decisions about the lives of Nova Scotians without keeping the records?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I don't know that they are not, but as we look forward at modernization, I'll certainly take that into consideration and ensure that's not happening.

CARMAN KERR: The amount of FOIPOP's coming back without records is cause for concern, as we've mentioned. Since this government has taken office, more than ever there are no records of important government decisions. My question is to the Premier. Is this government trying to circumvent the obligation to provide public information by not keeping records at all?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I'd say no to that answer. When FOIPOP's come in and they're returned to the applicant, if the applicant doesn't agree with what's redacted or not redacted - as is a practice of any government regardless of the political stripe - they can apply to the OIPC. Last year, approximately 3 per cent of the 2,700 applications that were submitted were referred, or there was an application submitted to the OIPC. If the members opposite have that concern, they can go through the OIPC as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**SNSIS: ACCESS TO INFO. - EXPLAIN**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, we have seen and heard today this government's playbook to prevent Nova Scotians from accessing information: delay, redact, and charge. What advice would the Premier have for Nova Scotians who cannot get transparent information due to this government's delays, redactions, and fees?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I think for the last 20 minutes I've provided that response, and I'll repeat it again. There is a process to follow. We've talked about processes in this Legislature before. I talked about it earlier in another response. If an applicant has a problem or a challenge with the fees, if they cannot afford those fees, they can apply to IAP Services to have a reduction or waiving of that fee. If they are not satisfied with the content of their application, then they can go through the OIPC for a review from that office.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, how lovely it would be to go through the OIPC. Unfortunately, the wait-list is four years, the life of a government.

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

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, during Question Period a number of our caucus members saw the Premier communicate with the Clerk over whether a certain part of the debate was out of order. I just want to put on the record that it was noticed by a number of our caucus colleagues that the Premier was speaking to the Clerk during the discussion. The concern for us is that we want to make sure that we have the independence intact for the House.

THE SPEAKER: We will take that point of order under advisement and report back at a later time.

**OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS:**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Motions Other Than Government Motions.

**MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS:**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, for Opposition business today we're going to be called Resolution No. 391. I'll read the resolution, as required:

**RESOLUTION NO. 391**

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, that is the resolution.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise in my place to offer some comments on this resolution. You'll hear from some more of my colleagues, and I'm sure we'll hear from members from all parties in the House.

As we know, this was something that was of great concern not only for us, as a caucus, but for the general public. I can say this was something that when it came up in Cape Breton was of great concern, particularly around how, Mr. Speaker, you've conducted yourself as the Speaker of this House, with great integrity, with impartiality,

with fairness. I can say, as one of the House Leaders, that any time we needed to navigate a particular session of the House or we needed to make decisions on the fly, when it came to the pandemic, you have always been great to ensure that we had all the information necessary to make the decisions to bring it back to our caucus.

You've always been great and collegial when it came to all of us making sure as House Leaders that we could get through the session. This resolution, really for us is . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I just need to do this as soon as possible afterwards so I'm raising this point of order now.

During Question Period the member for Northside-Westmount alleged that the FOIPOP Commissioner said that the PC Government violated Section 7. I want to clarify that had the member looked at the dates covered by those requests that he would find it was actually the previous . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. That is not a point of order.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: A good try, to the minister. A good try to throw us off, but anyway, we have an afternoon to talk about this.

Again, this is something that's important, not only for our caucus, but for everyone here - and should be - and for the democracy and the future of the Legislature. As I said before I was interrupted, it has always been a really great environment of the House Leaders getting along, having open debates, and getting to a point, as I said, where we were trying to navigate around the pandemic what a virtual or a hybrid sitting looked like. That was all really directed by our current Speaker, who has done such an excellent job in the role.

As a Cape Bretoner - I said this last night - people are very proud of our current Speaker, not only as a Speaker, but as an MLA, a volunteer, and someone who has served his party for well over 13 years. He has served the Island for even longer - not just as an elected representative, but as one of our greatest ambassadors. I'm really proud of him for that.

When you start looking at what has transpired over the last two weeks, or at least since we came in here, the Premier's Office obviously played a role in determining the fate of the Speaker. They came out and said that publicly. A statement was released from the Premier's Office indicating that.

We have seen through the media in multiple stories that the Speaker, who was trying to be independent and impartial in doing his job, was brought in - again, I'm going off everything that has been in the media - and was told that some of the decisions that were made put the government in a difficult place. He was asked to leave the seat.

That is a terrible exercise to go through for someone who was elected by the House. The Speaker is elected by the House. Everybody voted for the Speaker. Everybody voted for the deputy speakers. It's important. It's democracy. Mx. Speaker, you sit in that Chair because we selected you - all of us, impartially - to be one of the people who sit in the Chair.

When we see and we hear what took place, and the media coming out - the Premier obviously wanted him to leave. The Speaker confirmed that himself publicly. He was very forthright about it. I will say this: He kept his integrity through all of this. He has been through a lot that he doesn't deserve. He doesn't deserve any of this. As I have said, he's a man of outstanding character. He has been an excellent representative of this House and of the people of Victoria-The Lakes and Cape Breton as a whole.

We bring this forward because we think it's important. We think that there needs to be an independent review. We have the ability to do that through the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

In my opinion, there's a lot of evidence and there's a lot of information. There has been a lot of conversation publicly about what has transpired. I think that it's important that we review it. I think that we do this now for the future.

As I said, I think there's more than enough evidence that people are going to talk about as we move forward. For me, really, it's a case of obviously, there was interference. In this case, it was confirmed by the current Speaker.

It was also confirmed by the Premier's Office, which literally put out a release saying that they asked the Speaker to leave. They confirmed it, and then tried to deny it, and then said it was fabricated. But the evidence is there. There's enough evidence to bring in someone who can independently look at this case and make a ruling.

We have had points of order and points of privilege in the House already. Of course, there have been rulings on that, which we support. We support the independence of the Chair, but those rulings can only go so far based on the mandate that you, Mx. Speaker, or your colleague, the member for Preston, or the current Speaker, would have.

Again, I reiterate for us as a caucus that we see the importance of this. We see the importance of how the Premier's Office directly interfered in decision-making. What we know as well, and why we want to bring in the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, is we

also learned that there was negotiation happening at a time when the Speaker was just trying to do his job.

[3:00 p.m.]

He's impartial, and he has kept that integrity through it. When you're in a situation where you have the Premier's Office issuing statements saying that there was a request for the Speaker to step down.

When you have a situation and then they reverse course and say that the story was fabricated, when you have the Speaker come out and, keeping his integrity, told the media what happened, that he was asked to leave and it was based on decisions that he made that put the government in a tough spot, when you see all of this - like, all of the pieces are there to say that for the integrity of the Chair, for the integrity of the House, for the impartiality, regardless of who's in government, the current government of the day or the next government.

Governments change all the time, but we have the ability through the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to come in and look at this - and not just lay blame. It's not just about laying blame on this. We know what happened. It couldn't be more clear what happened, but we need to, as MLAs, for the future look at this and ask what steps we need to put into place to ensure that this doesn't happen again. That's really it. We believe as a caucus in the election of Speakers. You were elected, we chose you, Mx. Speaker, and we chose the member for Preston, we chose the member for Victoria-The Lakes. You're all doing an outstanding job, and you were elected to do that job. That's what we want to keep intact.

The Conflict of Interest Commissioner is independent of all of us, right? It has a different mandate that maybe could be ruled on in the Chair - put a larger lens on the situation.

With that, I know there's going to be a lot of conversation on this this afternoon, but it's been a really interesting few days in the Legislature. I never thought we'd get to a point where we would see the Premier's Office come out with a release saying that the Speaker was asked to step down, confirm it, and then have the Speaker have to explain.

Like I said, I feel terrible for what he had to go through. He didn't deserve any of this. He had to explain himself, a man who has served so proudly the Island and was so proud - I know, because he's been around longer than I have, and to see him take the Chair after his commitment not only to his party for as long as he did - well over 13 years - but his commitment to the Island.

As a Cape Bretoner, I'm saying, look at that. He earned that. He earned that over 13 years to get to that point, and the only thing that he did was the right thing. That's all he

did - the right thing. There's nowhere or there's no how that anybody can question his decision-making. It's been fair and impartial from the beginning. He took it very seriously. Listen, he threw a few of us out along the way, too - the member for Halifax Atlantic sitting next to me - but he was always fair.

I said, as a Cape Bretoner, I was proud of him. I was proud of the Speaker. He earned his right to sit in that Chair, someone who is one of the longest-standing politicians that we've seen in Cape Breton in history. I've seen him do it all. I've seen him drive a man two and a half hours to get blood work at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital and drive him home. That's the kind of guy the Speaker is, and he earned his keep, and we're all proud of him.

I'll tell you the other thing we were: We were heartbroken for him. There's nothing more heartbreaking than to watch him have to defend himself in the media, in a scrum, for doing the right thing when it was confirmed by the Premier's Office that they wanted him to step down. He had to confirm that the Premier's Office wanted him to step down because of decisions that he made that put them in a tough spot. I don't care who's in government - you're in government, I was in government, every party is represented - that is a dangerous place when - and we all know what happened - that he was asked to step down because of decisions that were made that put the government in a tough spot.

Let's talk about the tough decisions. I talked about this last night a little bit, too. There was an emergency debate this Summer on the cost of living. (Interruption) We had the emergency debate on the cost of living, and we went back to the House on the pay raise. The member for Halifax Atlantic is right: He didn't want to do that. We're legislated to do that. We had to go back at some point and deal with it because the government didn't deal with it in the beginning. They put themselves in that position, where we ended up back here in the Summer, because they just didn't care. They just didn't care.

He's taking the blame for something that should have been done within, I believe, the first 90 days. It's within the first 90 days that you have to bring that forward. Again, that's not a tough spot that the Speaker put them in. The Speaker just did his job.

According to the government, because they had to come back in, they took a couple of lumps along the way when it came to the conversations which were important at the time. Inflation started really skyrocketing. It's not going away. The cost of living on everything is incredibly hard on Nova Scotians and we knew that we needed to bring forward ideas. We brought forward school supplies. We brought forward a few other initiatives and so did the NDP. That was an important conversation.

Again, I go back to the resolution, why I think it's important that we have an independent view on this. It's because of decisions like that. That's what the Premier's Office was upset about, because they didn't deal with it.



The other issue was around the pandemic. I've heard a few times the current government saying that you closed the House down. We closed the House down because we were in the height of a pandemic and Public Health was involved with this. We took our advice from Public Health from Day 1.

It's true, and we negotiated. I wasn't the House Leader at the time. I was the Deputy House Leader of government at the time, but I wasn't involved in negotiations. We went through negotiations to get to these hybrid model scenarios. All the parties were involved. We negotiated all of these. That's what we were doing again when we were negotiating what the sittings were going to look like when the current government took office. He was in trouble for that.

Those were decisions that were mutually agreed upon by all of us. He's taking advice from Public Health. People are contracting COVID-19. We have to look after the health and safety and well-being of everyone. Some people may be compromised. We have to take all of that into account.

He made decisions which were not political decisions. These weren't political decisions. These are decisions that were made to protect people. We have staff in the Legislature. We have media. We have our MLAs. We were just trying to protect folks. We know that it's the right and the human thing to do. That's what we do.

Some of those decisions may be uncomfortable and some people may not like them, but we didn't make decisions around the pandemic because people didn't like them. We made them because they were the right thing to do. We did it with schools. I was the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development when we had to close some of the schools during the height of it.

We made specific decisions at the time because we saw epidemiology and we were making those calls, whether it was Halifax or Cape Breton or anywhere in between, or the South Shore. That's what the Speaker was doing in those conversations. We're coming back into the House and we need to make some decisions around the health and well-being of people. Masks were part of it. They didn't like that. That was one of the other decisions that the government didn't like. I'm scratching my head. We're just trying to look after people. It's the right thing to do.

Again, here we go. I have 22 seconds left, so I'm going to close with this. There's going to be lots of conversation on this today. It's obvious what happened. The media has reported it. Government confirmed it. The Speaker, the gentleman that he is, confirmed with the media. I'm proud of him as a Cape Bretoner, and I think moving forward we need an independent look at this.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mx. Speaker, the current Speaker of the House and I have often had our differences on the subject of words and on what words are or are not appropriate in a parliamentary setting.

As we debate this resolution this afternoon, which our Liberal colleagues have brought forward, I would like to put before you, Mx. Speaker, just a few words for a few moments, a few words that I think you will find easy to accept as parliamentary, and as having a fitting place in the discussion we're having about this resolution.

I want to put before us first the simple word "respect," which, as the previous speaker outlined from several points of view, is the thing which is so generally commanded by the present Speaker of the House. The present Speaker of the House is the only Speaker of the number of Speakers under whom I have served, who has ever expelled me from this Chamber, but this in no way diminishes my respect for him. In no way does it diminish my respect for his judgement. That is to say that even though the Speaker and I have had serious, substantial disagreements, our serious, substantial disagreements do not compromise the respect that is ingrained in the relationship within which we work.

Now it seems to me that this is precisely what is lacking in the Premier and in the government: that they do not seem to know how to respect people with whom they have serious, substantial disagreements. This is a grave shortcoming, the inability to respect those with whom you are in contention. This is a grave shortcoming in a government formation, and it's a grave shortcoming in a leader.

I want to put this word, respect, before us as we debate this resolution. Secondly, I'd like to put before us the word - and here the previous speaker alluded to this as well - I want to put before us also the word "unseemly." In my view, the type of treatment which has been shown to the present Speaker of the House, making a public and shameless parade of the government's disregard for his considerable contributions throughout his career, this has been in a word, I think, unseemly.

One cannot help but ask, this is how they treat their own? I hate to think what level of disregard is reserved for those who are not actually within their circle. I want to put this word "respect" and I want to put this word "unseemly" before the House as we consider this resolution.

Third, I would like to put before us the very simple word "regard." I'd like to register in this debate my very high regard for the work of the current Speaker, about whom I want to say this: After years in which this was a request that had been denied out of the Speaker's Office, it was the current Speaker who had the vision and the leadership to direct earlier this year that a portrait of Yvonne Atwell, the first female African Nova Scotian MLA in the province, be placed in a position of prominence here in Province House.

[3:15 p.m.]

It was under the direction of the current Speaker, after some years when this had been denied out of previous Speakers' offices, that earlier this year that portrait be placed in a position of real prominence, alongside all the previous Premiers of Nova Scotia. That was a decision of the Speaker's Office, which was taken earlier this year, and with appropriate ceremony and sense of the importance of the symbol and the occasion, that portrait was unveiled earlier this year, during Black History Month.

Last week I had the privilege of guiding a tour of Grade 9 students throughout the House for the first time since that portrait was unveiled. It's a different lay of the land to take young people through the foyer. You can speak to them now in kind of a sequence about Viola Desmond, the importance of her portrait and that free pardon, which is on one wall of the foyer. They you can turn around and speak about the portrait and the free pardon of Chief Gabriel Sylliboy across the wall. They you can take the group a few steps down and speak to them about the historic place and accomplishment as they take in the portrait of Yvonne Atwell.

In the NDP, we do not like to see the Speaker, who made this important decision and showed this important leadership - we don't like to see him diminished because we think, in this as in other things, he is a person who has executed the work of his office, not just in the Chamber but in the organization of the precincts of the House, where that portrait is. He has done this in a way that is deserving of all of our regard.

I think that we should have the word "respect" in front of us. I regret that we have to have the word "unseemly" in front of us. I want to have the word "regard" in front of us. Lastly, I want to place before us the word "independence."

The current Speaker's problem is that he is not a trained seal. The current Premier's problem is that trained seals are the only people with whom he knows how to do business. What this unseemly episode reveals is that this government cannot hold regard for, cannot respect, anyone who will not balance the balloon on their nose when they are told to do so. The Premier is . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask the honourable member for Halifax Chebucto to remain parliamentary in your speech.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: The Premier is the P.T. Barnum of Nova Scotia politics. As his will is carried out in this case, we may expect to hear the applauding sounds of 30 sets of flippers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Normally, I'm really excited to speak in the House because we're talking about things that Nova Scotians call my office about every day. But I am surprised that we are talking about respect and regard for decisions and supporting rulings when, just yesterday, the deputy speaker made a ruling that obviously the Liberal caucus did not respect, because they brought a motion to try to take another kick at the can.

The motion says, "Whereas the Office of the Speaker acts independently of the Premier, the Office of the Premier and the Government of Nova Scotia." Then in the resolution, it says, "Therefore, be it resolved that the Conflict of Interest Commissioner . . . reaffirm that the Office of the Speaker is independent from and not answerable to the Office of the Premier."

We already know, because it's in their first whereas clause: "the Office of the Speaker acts independently of the Premier, the Office of the Premier, and the Government of Nova Scotia."

During the debate here now, the member for Sydney-Membertou said in his opinion there is lots of evidence. I'm assuming what he said is that there's lots of evidence that he does not agree with the deputy speaker's ruling yesterday. He said that there was interference. I wrote it down as he said it. To refresh the members' memories of what the decision was read out in the Legislature yesterday, by the member's own party member, the deputy speaker: "Whatever one may think of the Premier's request that the Speaker resign, I do not think the Premier's actions can be construed as an attempt to intimidate the Speaker or as having had that effect."

That was the Deputy Speaker from the Liberal Party, who said, "whatever one may think" and, clearly, Opposition members think differently than their own Deputy Speaker who made this ruling, "Whatever one may think of the Premier's request that the Speaker resign . . ."

THE SPEAKER: Order, order. The honourable minister has the floor.

BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Mx. Speaker. You are correct, these are elected deputy speakers of the House, the first African Nova Scotian deputy speaker, the first non-binary deputy speaker elected in the House. We are all extremely proud of that fact, and I extremely respect the fact that this was a decision rendered yesterday.

I want to read it again to make sure that everyone understands what was said by that deputy speaker: "Whatever one may think of the Premier's request that the Speaker resign, I do not think the Premier's actions can be construed as an attempt to intimidate the Speaker or as having had that effect."

For the members opposite to say I do think that the Premier's actions can be construed as an attempt to intimidate the Speaker, or as having had that effect, suggests

that they do not agree with what the deputy speaker wrote yesterday. There is no other way to conclude.

The next statement is, “There is no indication that the Premier’s statements toward the Speaker sought to or had the effect of coercing or compelling the Speaker to change his conduct.” I’m assuming by this motion that the Liberal Party does not agree with that statement either.

Another statement that was in the decision, which I’ll table when I’m done, “Having considered the representations of the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Premier, and the Speaker, there is no indication of coercion or compulsion.” No indication. People across the aisle, Mx. Speaker, are shaking their heads. I’m not sure whether they just don’t understand what was written or they don’t agree with it, but the deputy speaker said there is no indication of coercion or compulsion. You can disagree with that all you want, that is your democratic right, but the rest of it says, “no basis on which to establish even a prima facie case that the Speaker’s privilege has been breached.” No basis. You can say what you think, but I’m going to respect the deputy speaker’s decision.

“Before going further”, the deputy speaker said, “I should make something clear. The Speaker does not answer to the Premier, and the Premier has no power as Premier to dismiss a Speaker.” This is a thoughtful decision that could not be more clear. I do not think the Premier’s action can be construed as an attempt to intimidate the Speaker. Either the Opposition agrees with the deputy speaker’s decision, or they don’t, and I would perhaps encourage them to stand up and say we read the decision, we didn’t like it so we’re going to try something else.

Sadly, it is clear to me that the Liberals do not agree with the decision the deputy speaker rendered yesterday. Instead of talking about the cost of living, they’ve decided to use their time to second-guess a decision that was made yesterday. We don’t like the ruling of October 18<sup>th</sup>, so we’re going to try another one. That is sad. We have very limited time in this House, Mx. Speaker, and the ringing of the bells by the Opposition to delay debate is a tactic as old as time. What my constituents would . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable minister has the floor.

BARBARA ADAMS: As both Opposition members who spoke about this said, they wanted to talk about respect. This is the same party that assassinated the character of a member on our side of the aisle yesterday when she was speaking, and he used a word to describe her that I will not use.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The word “assassinated.” Character assassination? (Interruption) Come on, guys.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I have considered the meaning of “unparliamentary” as we have generally interpreted it, and in fact I do think that “assassinated” is unparliamentary language.

The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

BARBARA ADAMS: If that’s not an appropriate term, then I would say, to disparage the character of a member on this side of the aisle. I’m going to carry on . . . (Interruption)

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: The member for Eastern Passage is creating revisionist history when the issue of character assassination or discrediting of a member or anything negative against a specific member in this House by the member for Sydney-Membertou was ruled on, and not the actual case.

I would ask the Speaker to ask the member to retract and to keep her points on fact.

THE SPEAKER: Order. That isn’t a point of order. It could be addressed in remarks later on during the session.

The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care.

BARBARA ADAMS: The terminology used by one of the members: “Trained seals are the only people with whom the Premier knows how to do business.” These are the kind of comments we’re dealing with on this side of the House. For those members who are looking puzzled right now, I wrote it down word for word.

Mx. Speaker, the Opposition just said that this was an issue ruled on yesterday and that therefore it should be respected. Well, that’s a very good point. The issue was ruled on yesterday by the Deputy Speaker, and yet here we are again today, having an entire debate and a motion about something that the Liberal Party clearly disagreed with. We have disagreements of facts all the time, so I would like to remind the House that the deputy speaker went to a lot of trouble. It was detailed at length in her decision.

She met with the three House Leaders, the Independent member for Cumberland North, and the Deputy Premier. She indicated that she would meet privately with the Premier and the Speaker to give them an opportunity to provide information in relation to the question of privilege. Returning to the Chamber, she found - and let me quote it again, just to make sure that the facts are entered correctly, “Whatever one may think of the Premier’s request that the Speaker resign, I do not think the Premier’s actions can be construed as an attempt to intimidate the Speaker or as having had that effect . . . there is no indication of coercion or compulsion.”

[3:30 p.m.]

The Opposition would like to rewrite that narrative in a way that is favourable to them, but the deputy speaker ruled. I respect that ruling.

I am also very sad that in this Legislature, we are - I'm trying to find the right word - calling into question the personal reputations of certain Nova Scotians.

What I would like to debate in this House is whether the Opposition thought that a 23 per cent pay raise for CCAs turned the sector around? We have, historically, 1,270 students in the CCA program this year.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I would ask the minister to speak to the resolution at hand.

The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care.

BARBARA ADAMS: Sure. Thank you, Mx. Speaker. I appreciate being reminded to stay on topic.

The issue here is about respect and respect for the deputy speaker's decision yesterday. It is clear from this resolution where the very first words in it are, "Whereas the Office of the Speaker acts independently, therefore be it resolved that someone else reaffirm that the Office of the Speaker is independent." The deputy speaker ruled on that yesterday. There are a lot of other things that we could be talking about today, Mx. Speaker.

The language that I heard during Question Period and when other members were speaking made me really sad. "We're talking about supporting rulings." That was a quote from the person who introduced the motion. He said he supports the ruling and yet here we are. I can't reconcile those two. If you support the ruling, then you support whatever one may think of the Premier's request that the Speaker resign, that you do not think that the Premier's actions can be construed as an attempt to intimidate the Speaker or as having had that effect.

That member who introduced the motion says clearly that's not the case. He said, "the Premier directly interfered." I'm quoting him now. The deputy speaker yesterday said, "There is no indication that the Premier's statements toward the Speaker sought to, or had the effect of, coercing or compelling the Speaker to change his conduct in the discharge of his duties or deter him from making rulings unfavourable to the government and thus no breach of the Speaker's privilege that impaired his abilities to act impartially and independently."

The member is calling for an independent review. Does that mean that the review the deputy speaker did was not sufficient?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you, Mx. Speaker. I'm very happy to stand in my place.

The first thing I'd like to do is explain to the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care and the government caucus the difference between this resolution and the point of privilege that was brought forward. There are two very different things happening here.

First, the point of privilege that I brought forward was that my privilege as a member was potentially being jeopardized as a result of the events that took place between the Premier and the Speaker, which the deputy speaker did rule on. We certainly support that ruling and appreciate her objectivity in doing that. I do think it's very important to clarify the specifics around that ruling. I will table the ruling itself, but there are some excerpts I'd like to read.

“The role of the Speaker on hearing a question of privilege is not to adjudicate the question by finding facts and make a determinative ruling of whether an individual or corporate privilege of the House has been breached; only the House itself may determine whether a breach of privilege has, in fact, been committed.”

Another reason why we would have a resolution in front of the House. We have this resolution in front of the House in part because the Premier has also refused to answer questions on this. We were ruled out of order in Question Period. Our only ability to debate this is through Opposition resolution.

I will bring the member's attention to more points of the ruling. What the deputy speaker did very well was go through the facts and the events. I'll quote this: “Because the Premier chose not to state his version of events,” - again, a concern that we should all have - “my determination will be made on the basis of the Speaker's statements to me, which I summarize below.”

“I emphasize that what follows do not purport to be findings of fact.”

“According to the Speaker, approximately five weeks ago, the Speaker was asked to meet the Premier. The Premier asked the Speaker to resign from the Office of Speaker or risk the Premier having him removed from office. He was told by the Premier that the Premier was unhappy with the Speaker's decision to require that masks be worn to impede the spread of COVID-19 . . .”

The Premier didn't like the health and safety recommendations that the Speaker thought were important to protect us, our constituents and our family members. He didn't like the Speaker's decision to appoint a panel to inquire into certain rates of remuneration payable to members of the House, which is required by law in the House of Assembly Act



itself. These are the two reasons that the Speaker gave for the potential removal of his office - following the laws of the House and following health and safety practices that have been advised by Public Health. Isn't this a government that has always said that we follow the advice of Public Health? Now we're going to fire a Speaker because he followed them?

The Speaker did not provide an answer to the Premier's request. Here's where we get to the important part and why this resolution is still applicable and important for us to consider. There was a follow-up call sometime later which did not end conclusively. Finally, this past week the Speaker was asked to sign an unaddressed, undated paper stating that he was resigning as Speaker, effective April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Speaker did so and was told by the Premier that the letter would be held in confidence until April, at which point it would be acted upon. Again, that was announced the very day, or the day after, by the PC caucus office, as is stated in the deputy speaker's ruling.

However, on October 13<sup>th</sup> the public announcement was made by the PC caucus that the Speaker had provided his resignation, effective April 1, 2023. Similarly, the Speaker indicated that he has not and will not change his conduct in office to appease the Premier. This is the important part of the ruling. The Speaker was unequivocal in indicating his commitment to ruling impartially, in accordance with the rules, precedents, practices, and customs of the House and to being fair to all members.

This is the main point of the ruling. The deputy speaker did not rule on whether the Premier did something wrong or overstepped his own power and privilege. What the deputy speaker's ruling was based on was the fact that that did not impact the character, integrity, and decision making of the member for Victoria-The Lakes, who refused to bend, who stood up for himself and for this institution, who stood up for his community members, and for us all. That is very different than the narrative of events that the member for Eastern Shore has presented, whereby the Premier has been absolved of doing any wrongdoing. That is not the case.

The major point to remember from this ruling is that it was actually the member for Victoria-The Lakes and his integrity and his strength of character that led the deputy speaker to her conclusions, which again, we respect. She is very specific about this. There is no indication that the Premier's statements towards the Speaker sought to or had the effect of coercing or compelling the Speaker to change his conduct in the discharge of his duties or deter him from making rulings unfavourable to the government.

That does not mean the Premier did not try. I think you can look at the facts of this situation, where a Speaker - who is not answerable to the Premier - was brought into the Premier's Office, told to either resign or we'll have a confidence motion put against you. By the way, if the members are curious as to why this is so important to this Chamber, this hasn't happened since 1875. This is a big deal and it's fundamental to everything we do. It's fundamental to our jobs. It's fundamental to our ability to represent our parties, our constituents, our ideas, and hold the government to account.

I want to give kudos to the Speaker for standing his ground, for doing what is right, for acting admirably, fairly and justly, as he always has, because he knows he is not accountable to the Premier. He is accountable to this House. That's precisely why we think he should stay in that seat. What strength of character that was.

That said, one cannot deny the events as they have been reported, as much as the Premier has tried to. Let's go through those events because they are well-documented.

The Nova Scotia government confirmed that it is considering ousting the Speaker of the House. This is from a story on October 5<sup>th</sup>. It has been reported, "The Progressive Conservative caucus had a meeting Tuesday evening to discuss the possible removal of their colleague, Keith Bain" - this is after the story initially broke. They talked about succession planning. I believe it was the very next day, or the very next week, where the Premier himself said that story was being manufactured by the media, for which he later apologized.

Then he told the media that the story is actually overblown; this is all quite normal. We know, in fact, if you look at the history of this House, this is not normal. This is a very rare, historic situation that has occurred here.

The Premier then literally ran from the press on Friday afternoon. I have never seen that in 12 years. The reason he did that is because the Speaker spoke honestly about what happened to him - because he's an honest person. He said, "Yes, I was called into the Premier's Office. I was asked to resign because I followed the law in one case and because I followed the advice of Public Health in the other." I also think there's more to that. I noticed how upset the Premier was when the emergency debates were approved by the Speaker in the Summer. I wonder if that had something to do with it.

Furthermore, the Speaker did say that he was in negotiations. We have heard rumours about what those negotiations were, which included big dollars, allegedly for the member for the Victoria-The Lakes' riding. I'm not sure if many members opposite heard that. That is a rumour that has been circling. Again, that's a rumour until proven true. I will say that the Speaker indicated that he did not receive such offers. I do question that.

The fact of the matter is that the Premier has been very evasive on this. We have not been able to ask questions in this House on this very issue, which is fundamental to everything. That is indicative, I believe, of the culture of the government in place in the Premier's Office, which is not isolated to this one event with the Speaker, as I have mentioned before.

We are seeing this sort of behaviour - do as I say, or you're gone - all across the public sector, all across Crown corporations where independent boards who have demonstrable resumés of success, independent CEOs with equally impressive resumés, three of which got grabbed up pretty much immediately by national organizations. They're

not good enough for the Premier, but they're good enough for national organizations - two of Nova Scotia's leading female CEOs as well. All of these folks have been let go.

Again, it's one thing to make HR decisions. That is the purview of the Premier. Deputies work at the pleasure of the Premier. But to see so much of this happening and to hear the reasons why is what's concerning.

This is why we believe an independent investigation is necessary, because first and foremost the deputy speaker's ruling on my point of privilege didn't say that something wrong didn't happen. In fact, if you look at the evidence of what has been reported and what has been said publicly, particularly by the Speaker who has been the only one being open and honest about this, it seems like something potentially very wrong has happened.

Again, we mentioned this yesterday in debate. How can any new Speaker who sits in that Chair, looking at what has happened to the current Speaker - a loyal Tory party member, good person, not hyper-partisan, although he's referenced as saying he bleeds blue. If that gentleman is going to be treated that way, every single new person in that Chair is going to know what's expected of them. They're going to know what the consequences are, just as the deputy speakers are learning, and just as the CEOs and the independent boards are learning: if you're not on my side, you're not here at all.

We have also heard that we're seeing some really serious potential patronage appointments: former candidates being hired, Progressive Conservative insiders being hired, personal friends of the Premier. He has said that publicly. This is a concerning trend, folks. The situation with the Speaker, your Speaker as well as mine, is but another example of this very thing.

The reasons we are asking this House to consider this resolution is to air out the room on this, conduct an independent investigation with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to see if there has been a breach of influence or power because that was not determined in the point of privilege. The only thing that was determined in the point of privilege was whether my privilege as a member was impacted, and, again, it wasn't because of the character and integrity of the Speaker, not because the actions of the Premier were right. That's a very important distinction, I think, that we need to make.

It's been very odd, actually, that the only people really sticking up for the Speaker are members of the Opposition. That's something that I'm sure must be a bit hurtful for the Speaker, because he's served here longer than I have. I know he's got very close friends on all sides and is a good person, and I'm just very surprised that we didn't see more public support by the members opposite. I understand why that's the case - again, another indication of what's happening. People are actually scared of the Premier, scared, potentially, of his retaliation, or what he's going to do, or what the impacts are going to be in terms of each member's career within the caucus or the government.

[3:45 p.m.]

I can't say I blame them, but sometimes we just can't let our fear guide our actions. We have to let our morals and our personal principles guide those actions, and to stand up and do what's right. I certainly believe what's right is defending our Speaker and ensuring that there is a proper, independent investigation whereby the Premier will be compelled to actually speak about this instead of obviously evading the questions related to it.

“It's a private conversation. I have private conversations all the time with all kinds of Nova Scotians. It's just like that. I had private conversations this morning, I had private conversations this afternoon. This is no different than all those other private conversations.” Come on - that's absolutely ridiculous, and none of us should accept that. We all deserve better in here, and having an independent investigation on the matter will ensure we do. I think the Speaker is owed that, I think the Chamber is owed that, I think our democracy is owed that, and we certainly hope that we can count on the support of the members opposite.

Again, if nothing wrong happened, then why are you scared of this, right? What I've experienced is people don't run away unless they're scared, and in politics, they're not scared unless they've done something wrong, so, folks, let get to the bottom of it. Let's see what happened, and let's let the Conflict of Interest Commissioner look at this situation.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mx. Speaker, I would like to rise and say just a few words to this motion. I think much of what there is to say is, in fact, in the public record. I think that this motion makes sense and has not been canvassed by the deputy speaker's opinion.

Before I get to that, I want to note that there are things we should be discussing in this Chamber. We should be discussing the 1 in 4 Nova Scotians, according to Statistics Canada, who don't have a family doctor. We should be discussing why the government is blustering about the Opposition not supporting the carbon tax, instead of actually negotiating with Ottawa and doing something about carbon pricing. We should be discussing the skyrocketing cost of everything and how we can help Nova Scotians during this difficult time, but we are not discussing this, and that is at the heart of this motion. We are not discussing these because we are not able to properly debate issues, because a pall has fallen over the role of the Speaker in this House of Assembly.

Is it appropriate to attempt to pressure a Speaker to step down? That's what is at the heart of this, and that has not been canvassed by the deputy speaker's opinion that was released yesterday. The answer is no, it is not appropriate. I think we would all agree that it is not appropriate, and I agree with some of the comments that have been made about the Speaker's stature and his friendships in this House, and I hope that there are members of the government side who are at least privately reaching out to the Speaker to voice support.

I hope that one of the reasons that the Speaker is still in this Chair is because there is dissension in the government ranks about this decision and the conduct of the Premier as it relates to the Chair. We will likely never know the answer to that question, but I would like to say that I hope that is the case.

The role of the Speaker is independent, by design. I think it's important to note, and this was canvassed in the deputy speaker's decision yesterday, that in actual fact a Premier in a majority government environment can remove a Speaker, because of the way that this Legislature works and the parliamentary rules. A Speaker is elected on a simple majority. So a simple majority will be present in the case of a majority government and that simple majority can vote for a motion to remove a Speaker. Those are the facts. A Premier can direct his caucus to remove a Speaker. He can do it, but he shouldn't.

I think this is at the heart of what we are talking about, because there is what I would call a loophole that is not intended but it exists in actual fact in our procedures such that a Premier can remove a Speaker. It is therefore even more incumbent upon a sitting Premier in a majority environment to preserve the independence of the role of Speaker.

What we have seen is the exact opposite of that - what I would call responsibility that is placed with a Premier in a majority government environment in Nova Scotia. The Premier has eschewed that responsibility and continued with his "my way or the highway" approach that we have seen with everything from appointments to Crown corporations to legislative sittings, to deputy speakers and anything else in his path. So here we are.

I think it's important that we understand that if we cannot, in good conscience, have some sense that the role of the Speaker is independent, it will impede us from debating any of the important issues that our constituents send us here to debate. It will prevent us even more so than some of the procedural changes and the hours and the ways that the government has been conducting itself, from being able to properly do the work of an MLA in this Chamber. That is why this is so important. That is why I support this motion. I think we need to understand that this role is independent.

I will add that the motion that is still currently on the Order Paper regarding the deputy speakers further supports this point. That motion directly contemplates the resignation of a Speaker. Why do we have a motion on the Order Paper that contemplates the resignation of the Speaker? Section 2 of that motion appoints a deputy speaker within the meaning of the Act. It is further evidence of pressure, not intimidation.

I would echo the comments of some of my colleagues that it is not intimidation precisely because the current Speaker refused to be intimidated. That decision speaks volumes about the integrity of the Speaker and very little about the conduct of the government, so I don't want that to be in the statement.

Mx. Speaker, with those comments I'll just conclude by saying we need to preserve the independence of the Chair. It is very likely we will see another Speaker in this session, and it seems increasingly likely that we will see one soon. Unless we have some assurance that there will be independence in that Chair, we will move forward with the assumption that the Speaker is partisan. That is bad for this House, that is bad for Nova Scotians, and it is bad for democracy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: I'm also sad but happy to speak on this notice of motion, sad because it has to take place but happy to stand here and defend the Speaker of this Chamber. When we look at this notice of motion - and I'm going to read a little bit from it:

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

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

The ask, Mx. Speaker is to have the Conflict of Interest Commissioner do a review of the way this government and this Premier interfered with the Speaker.

There's a couple of very important words in this notice of motion that several of my colleagues have mentioned. I want to start - when I go back in my mind and I listen to the comments of the member for Eastern Passage, one of the words that was used in that passage was “respect.”

Respect is a very, very, very important word. When I think of respect, I think of it as a deep feeling of admiration for someone or something that is brought about in me based on their skills or their abilities or the way that they conduct themselves. When I think of the Speaker of this House, that is one person who has the respect of me and everybody in this room. Why does the Speaker have that respect? (Interruption) The government definitely needs help. Mx. Speaker, even Siri knows the government needs help.

Why does the Speaker of this Assembly have the respect in this room - not only in this room but in his constituency, in all of Cape Breton Island, all of Nova Scotia, and I would argue across this country. I'm just going to talk a little bit about the Speaker of this Assembly. He was first elected in 2006, 2009, 2017, and 2021. That is an amazing track record of someone who has been representing their community and that the community continues to place their trust and respect in him to have him in this Chamber.

Over and above his provincially elected responsibilities, the Speaker of this Assembly was a member of the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board for many, many, many years. I had the honour of serving with him during those years. The Speaker

of this Assembly served as Vice-Chair to that organization for many, many years. He had the respect of everyone in that room, all the employees, the entire school system in Cape Breton. He's conscientious, he's humble, and he's deeply committed to his role as Speaker. That's why he earns our respect.

[4:00 p.m.]

During his time here, he has served in many roles within his own caucus. He was a deputy speaker, Chair of the Progressive Conservative caucus at one time. He has been on the Public Accounts Committee and on numerous committees in this House. That, Mx. Speaker, is why the Speaker of this Assembly has the respect of everyone in this room. I'll bring you back to the skills and admiration. He has the skills, the knowledge, the commitment, the integrity, and the professionalism to be Speaker of this Assembly.

A second word that I would like to bring to our discussion is the word "independent," which is also very prominent in this. Independence - what does it mean? Free from outside control, not depending on another for their livelihood. In this particular case, can we argue that there's independence for the Speaker? Because at the whim of a Premier, a Speaker can have a major portion of their livelihood removed. If that's held over your head only because you have integrity and only because you are the person who has the respect in this room, can you maintain your independence?

This Speaker has shown by his rulings, his abilities, the way that he interacts with members in this Assembly, and by the comments that he's been making to media that he is able to maintain his independence for now, Mx. Speaker. But we see more and more interference from this Premier.

A prime example: Today during Question Period, the Premier is jabbering at the Clerks. The Clerks are independent of the government. They do not work for the government, they work for this Assembly, and it's important that they are able to maintain their independence. The Clerks in this Assembly are also individuals who garner so much respect from most of us. The reason they do is because of their skills and the way that they've conducted themselves in this Legislature.

A third word that I'd like to bring into the discussion today - and, again, it's very prominent in this notice of motion - is the word "integrity." A quality of being honest, having strong moral principles, and moral rightfulness, acting in a way that is truthful. Mx. Speaker, I can't think of an individual in this Chamber who has more integrity than the Speaker of this Legislature, the member for Victoria-The Lakes.

I want to give you a couple of examples related to this situation where integrity may or may not have been breached. Let's talk about the Premier for a second and his handling of the situation. The Premier said to the media, you're manufacturing this story, you continue to bring this story, there's no story, it's rumours. The Speaker of the House, when

questioned - Mr. Speaker, have you been asked to resign by the Premier, and why? Yes, I have been asked to resign from the Speaker, and it's because I may have put him and the government in a tight spot. A tight spot.

As my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, had said, the tight spot - one of which was on the advice of Public Health, and another based on the law. If those two things can put a government in a tight spot, so be it. You should be in that tight spot. It's your job as a government and as a Premier to work your way through those things and accept the rulings of the Speaker, and not to provide your own commentary or your own "my way or the highway," which has been very common with this Premier. Firing CEOs of health authorities. Again, go back to the word "respect." Very well-respected professionals, replacing them with partisans. Firing entire boards. Removing arms-length organizations and replacing them with your buddies at \$1,500 per day. Sign me up.

We talk about respect. It's hard to respect those decisions. Are those decisions made with integrity? Are those new organizations that are being developed going to be independent? I think not, Mx. Speaker. As a Premier, we're putting people in control of those organizations who are going to do what the Premier wants, when he wants it, how he wants it, and whatever it is that he may want because, as was previously mentioned, it is leadership by fear.

This is not the 1950s, when we can lead and people will follow us, just because we say so. We need to earn the respect. We have to have that integrity so that people will want to follow.

As previously mentioned, we have been standing up for the Speaker of this Legislature, which is quite odd when you consider that we are the Opposition on both sides over here. Why would we do that? Why would we stand up for the Speaker of this Legislature? It's because it's the right thing to do. The Speaker of this Legislature is respected. He's independent, and he has a ton of integrity, unlike some other folks.

I would like to also say that I am very disappointed. I'm disappointed, as are many of us, that others have not come to the defence of the Speaker. Again, that speaks to respect and integrity. You may notice that I'm wearing my Cape Breton tie today. As Cape Bretoners, we are very quick to defend and to defend our own - too quick sometimes. The Speaker of this Legislature is a proud Cape Bretoner. All of Cape Breton is proud of him for standing up for what's right and not being intimidated, for not being pushed around, and for not succumbing to the whims of this Premier. Because of that, the respect that I have for this man has grown enormously over the last four weeks.

I hear in my community all the time, what are they doing to Keith? What are they doing to the member for Victoria-The Lakes? Why are they doing that to the member for Victoria-The Lakes? It doesn't make any sense.



As was stated, this government has a majority. They have the ability to take the Speaker out, and we see that they have already set up the farm team. They've announced their three farm club members. We'll see which one can be the most partisan, because that's the one who will replace the Speaker. I have my ideas on who that could be, Mx. Speaker.

The intention to replace this Speaker would have been done, in my opinion, but perhaps there is some dissension in the ranks. I just wish that dissension would become a little bit more public. You want to know why? Because the Speaker of this House deserves it. He deserves your respect. He deserves your support. We support the Speaker. His own team does not support the Speaker, and that is a terrible, terrible shame.

With that, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mx. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand up and offer a few comments on this resolution. I think that it's important to remind the House that we are debating a resolution, a notice of motion. The notice of motion is about the Conflict of Interest Commissioner being directed to conduct an independent review of this issue that we are all talking about.

I want to begin by echoing some comments that I have heard. I want to begin by saying I too think the Speaker, the member for Victoria-The Lakes, is an upstanding member of this House. When I was elected in 2017, and we were both on the Opposition side, I enjoyed working with him greatly. As he and I were both named deputy speakers at the same time, I enjoyed working with him very much. As a Speaker, I have found him very fair. I just want to be on the record saying that.

I appreciate the impassioned plea from the member for Northside-Westmount about respect for the Speaker, and about how Cape Bretoners come together, and we are an island. That is all very important stuff actually. I feel like all of that is essential to reiterate.

What is also essential to reiterate is that actually, this debate should not be about the character of the Speaker. Unless he has done something egregious, his role should not be coming into question in this Legislature.

I'm hearing agreement from the other side, yet I wonder then why we are in this situation. Why are we in this situation where the Speaker is facing essentially dismissal? He will go from being the Speaker of the Legislature of Nova Scotia, a very esteemed position, presumably to a member of the backbench of the governing party, and maybe he may decide something else. It's shameful. We sometimes do see people getting shuffled out of Cabinet, but it has not been since 1875 that we have seen someone shuffled out of the Speaker's position. It is a shameful thing.

What is more shameful about it is that it is not the Premier's job. It is not the Premier's job to choose whether the Speaker remains in his Chair or not. The Speaker was elected by all of us, by a majority and, as it happens, the governing party has a majority of members, and so they voted for the Speaker. Great, fine. That's their prerogative. But it's also possible that in the election of the Speaker that doesn't happen because it's a secret ballot, and presumably everyone in this House can vote the way they see fit.

We know that the Speaker was asked to step down by the Premier. We know that some decisions the Speaker made put the Premier in a hard spot. We have heard this several times. I want to emphasize that it is not the Speaker's job to not put the Premier in a hard spot. I'm pretty sure that is not in the job description of the Speaker of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia.

Then what are we doing? Why are we doing this? He's doing a great job, by all accounts. It's not the Premier's business to ask the Speaker to step down. It seems like the majority of Nova Scotians are behind the Speaker in this situation. So why is this continuing? What is it about this decision that the Premier has decided, well, it's my way or the highway? I've decided this. I have gone down this road. I'm going to keep going down this road come hell or high water. I don't know if I'm allowed to say that - you can't say hell or high water. All right.

I'm going to go down - I'm wondering - I retract that statement, Mx. Speaker. I wonder why the Premier is saying - why the Premier is going down this road no matter what.

Could it be a distraction? I don't know. Could it be a distraction from the anti-democratic House hours that have been set? Could it be a distraction from the fact that this government wants us to get in and get out so quickly so that we can pass a bunch of legislation at midnight while our families are sleeping at home and while the media is sleeping at home? (Interruption) No, maybe not.

Could it be that this is a distraction from the fact that this government still will not offer up a parliamentary calendar so we can know when we're going to be sitting? Could it be a distraction so that we forget that we don't have a climate change plan? Could it be that we don't have a deal on the carbon tax yet?

There are all kinds of things that this could be a distraction about, and as my honourable colleague, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, stated, there are plenty of things we should actually be debating in this House. It's an insult that we have to be debating a resolution about the integrity of the Chair of the Speaker.

I would also like to echo and, of course, I say this sometimes - this gives me the shivers to echo the Leader of the Liberal Party - but I will. That is, there is no reason why the government need be afraid of this resolution. All that this resolution is doing is calling

in the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. If there's no conflict of interest, what's the fuss? Maybe they're all sitting over there and they're all going, "oh, ho, ho, she doesn't know that we're going to vote yes to this," and we're going to call it. I would love to see that. I would love that to be the way the debate on this resolution ends. I have a feeling it won't, but I really hope it does.

[4:15 p.m.]

There is no reason not to call in the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. But here's the thing. Why are we talking about this? Why is all of this important? The Speaker - as you know, Mx. Speaker, being a deputy speaker - the Speaker's rulings are important. They hold water. They are based on legislative law, they are based on profound and educated advice from the Clerks, they are based on precedence of not only this House but Houses across Canada, and even the Parliament in the U.K. They generally should be sound rulings. We happen to be waiting for a couple of those rulings.

We're waiting on rulings of the Premier's behaviour. We're waiting for two rulings that were brought up, I believe, in the Spring Session or the Summer Session, and we haven't heard what those rulings are yet. The cynic would suggest that perhaps the Premier wants to have the Speaker out of his Chair before those rulings come down. I think that's a question for the Premier, folks.

Those rulings on the Premier's behaviour. I will say - and I don't want to dig up old wounds, Mx. Speaker, but I myself have stood up in this House and talked about the way the Premier's behaviour toward me personally has been a problem and has affected the way I've been able to perform my job. Now, in that case, the Speaker ruled that that was not the case, that I didn't have a point of privilege to bring forward, and I respect that decision.

What I want - the reason I'm bringing it up is because I'm not the only one who has brought up a point of privilege about the Premier's behavior in this House. It is a pattern, I would suggest. A pattern of people feeling not heard or disrespected by the Premier, and this continuation into the removal of the Speaker, because he's put the Premier in a hard spot, is also part of that pattern of disrespectful behaviour.

I will leave it there, Mx. Speaker, and I guess wrap up by reminding the government that there is nothing to fear in this resolution, there is nothing to fear in the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and there is nothing to fear in the Speaker and the role of the Speaker. If we want our democracy to work well, we need to have a good, effective Speaker who rules based on facts, on precedence, on the advice of legal experts, not on whether or not the ruling is against the Party that they were elected from. I will leave it there.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: First of all, I want to apologize for last night. I referred to you twice using the incorrect pronouns. You weren't here but as the night got later, I got tired and I want to apologize.

THE SPEAKER: Order. You are not supposed to comment on somebody's attendance, but thank you for the apology.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: You weren't in the seat, is what I meant to say. You were here. I don't know, but anyway I'm just putting my foot further and further into my mouth. I would just like to apologize.

Mx. Speaker, we heard a lot of word salad from that side of the House on this issue. Actually, you know what? We haven't heard any word salad. We haven't heard anything from that side except for a few flimsy arguments and misdirections. We've heard from those members, some of them said, well this is an important issue we should be discussing, and they're not hearing from anyone.

I could tell you that I've heard from people all the way from Glace Bay to Eastern Passage to Lunenburg and beyond. Right across this province people are wondering what's going on here and they are not hearing back from the government side on this stuff. People don't want to have this discussion with their members.

I see the member for Lunenburg chatting back at me and I hope she takes her place in this House and speaks on this. It's one thing to sit there . . .

THE SPEAKER: Again, order. You are not allowed to comment on someone's presence or absence in the House.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I see members on the government side making facial expressions and commenting under their breath toward me and I would hope that they would have the courage to stand up and do something they have yet to do, which is explain why you are throwing your own colleague out of that Chair. They are saying they are not, but they are. We know. We've heard from the Speaker himself and everybody over there is just complicit in this whole thing.

What I would say to all of you is that some day, I suspect, under this Premier, your day will come too. Your usefulness will be gone. That's what has happened here - didn't follow the rules that the Premier put forward, even though it is supposed to be a non-partisan position. Because the member for Victoria-The Lakes didn't listen, they'll burn it all to the ground.

This isn't about the character of the Speaker. This is about the character of the Premier of Nova Scotia and what it says about the character of the Premier is that he has a handful of favourites back there that he is going to appoint because I think they did some of the work on committees and things for him. So now they get a little bit of recognition and a little bit of a bump and they replace yourself, Mx. Speaker, because, you know - I mean you won't say, Mx. Speaker, and the member for Preston won't say, but we know that they will not cede the seats for anything important.

We know that more than likely - we've heard the rumours that the member for Eastern Shore will be made the new Chair when the time comes. We all know that. I'm not good at predicting the future but this one is a pretty good slam dunk. Rulings are being delayed, very important rulings in this House.

We saw the member for Preston rule on something extremely important in this House that impacted the government. She ruled fairly and to the letter of the law.

Do we have the confidence that these new members will do that? I know the current Speaker well. I know the current deputy speakers well because they've proven they will. Why remove individuals who have proven that they can get past the partisanship of politics and make the right decisions and appoint new people? What are they bringing to the table that the others aren't? That's the question.

I would ask that those members who have been named as successors, that they would stand in their place today and explain why, or at some point explain why, instead of hiding back there and riding out the storm and hoping that nobody notices. At the very least, give us an explanation why. Instead, some of them stand up and insinuate, Madam Speaker, that you can't do your job. We heard that from one of the members yesterday that you can't do your job effectively. How insulting that is when we just saw you give a very complex . . .

THE SPEAKER: I just ask the member to refer not to "you."

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: No "you." We saw the member give a very complex ruling, but for some reason, the Premier of Nova Scotia has decided to take his ball and go home, that he no longer wants to play in the same sandbox as everybody else. We see that not just with this decision. We see this with a Premier who flat out refuses to answer questions put to him in Question Period.

We see this with a Premier who refuses to answer questions to the media, and then stands in his place and denies it. We're just asking for an explanation. Surely, of the 33 brilliant minds on that side of the aisle, somebody knows the reason why. Somebody has the courage to stand up and say something, and say: This is why. We heard from one of the members in a media scrum where he said essentially that the Speaker was too old and they needed a plan to remove him because of his age. It was a succession plan.

I heard a reaction over there. It was a succession plan for the Speaker. That's what was said. If somebody else can give me an explanation on what that means on a Speaker who said he didn't need a succession plan. Who decides who needs a succession plan? Is it the person who's in the position, who's non-partisan, or is it the Premier of Nova Scotia? Apparently, it's the Premier of Nova Scotia and the people across there who refuse to stand up for a supposed friend.

We heard one of the ministers in an interview say he's doing an all right job. It's okay. It's fine. This is somebody who's known that member since the moment he took this position. I can't imagine how heartbreaking that was for the member for Victoria-The Lakes to hear those kinds of words, and also the silence coming from that side. The lack of support from his fellow Cape Bretoners on that side. All I hear for him on this side is how close Cape Bretoners are. Sure doesn't seem like it on that side. Politics before the causeway. We're seeing it over and over.

Again, all we ask is just stand up. For the love of God, stand up and give an explanation on why you're doing this. What is the benefit? We heard the member for, I think, Hants West, say because the current Speakers are inefficient. We heard the member for Eastern Shore say it's because the current Speaker is too old. We're hearing from the Premier nothing. He refused to answer questions. We know that. Then we hear from the Speaker himself that it was because of COVID-19. Imagine that. It was because he was doing his duties under the law that he had to do. It was because he was calling debates that they didn't agree with.

I mean, I won't get up for the rest of the session if somebody over there stands up and gives a legitimate reason why this is happening - a legitimate reason. Explain it to us.

Everybody I know on that side are - and that's what's puzzling to me - good people. I think they're all in it for the right reasons. And yet right now, Madam Speaker, maybe two of the whole crew over there are looking and listening. The rest have their heads down. Is it in their phone, or is it because they're ashamed? They don't want to hear it. I think it's a bit of both. (Interruptions) No, no. Well, the member for Glace Bay-Dominion is over there. He can stand up any time he wants. This is the second time . . .

THE SPEAKER: I'll call order. The member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'd like to stand on a point of order. Sorry.

THE SPEAKER: I'll just caution the member for Halifax Atlantic that you aren't able to call into order the presence or absence of another member - when you mentioned the member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

[4:30 p.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So on my point of order, Madam Speaker, in the last 24 hours, the member for Glace Bay-Dominion has screamed two unparliamentary things at me or screamed over at me as I was speaking. I ask that, as the Speaker - and I see some people over there are laughing, as if it's funny - I ask that the Speaker look into the microphones and the audio to listen to what is said and have it addressed, please.

THE SPEAKER: Your point of order will be taken under advisement.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Also, if I could get some clarification from the Chair, that just ate up three and a half minutes waiting for the ruling from the Clerk, it ate up three and a half minutes of my time so I would like to have that time added back on, please.

THE SPEAKER: In light of the amount of time that it did take, the member for Halifax Atlantic will have an additional two minutes put on.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That's an old trick I learned from the member for Inverness. Sometimes you learn things when you're on the other side.

I just want to say, you know, I think it's appropriate for somebody on that side to stand up and just give us an explanation - a real explanation. We saw the member for Eastern Passage stand up and talk about the decision that was made, but the decision wasn't about this. It was actually about the member for Yarmouth's privilege being impeded. That decision was made, and we respect that decision. For anyone to say that we don't respect that decision, it is simply not true.

What we're saying here today and what we want to talk about is the why. Why somebody who is an extremely capable Speaker, somebody who has been in this House for a long time, who has won, no matter the political climate, for the most part, and is extremely well-respected in Cape Breton, why is that member being removed and kicked while he was down by the members of his own caucus and members of the government? I think it's important to know that. I can tell you that it looks bad; it looks really bad.

What I will say is that this stuff spirals. This is the third member of the Progressive Conservative party that we know of that this has happened to. There are all kinds of different stories on why some of these things happen. In the end what it always came down to is the current Premier of the province says it wasn't me, I didn't do anything wrong. This time, Madam Speaker, he got caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

The Speaker of the House was brave enough to say there was a meeting five weeks beforehand and pressure was put by the Premier of the province to step down. We know that a letter of intent was signed, supposedly that was confidential, and it was released almost as soon as he signed it, to the dismay of the Speaker, who was caught off guard. How many times can you kick a colleague? How many times can you insult a colleague?

I ask all of you, if this was you, you were at home, this stuff was happening to you - Madam Speaker, I would ask the members, if members were at home, and these kinds of things were happening to members of the government, how would you feel if nobody came to your aid or your support publicly? Maybe they're calling him privately and saying, you know what, I don't agree with it. I would ask that they have the courage to stand up and tell us why they agree with it.

I'm outspoken. I'm passionate. I wear my emotions on my sleeve. The Speaker of the House has thrown me out twice. I'm no Manning MacDonald, but I'm getting close. (Interruption) Manning got kicked out, like, every Friday. (Interruption) On purpose. Just joking.

What I would ask is that they - if I'm coming to his defence, as someone who has been removed twice, who has butted heads a little bit with the Speaker of the House, it says something about his character. I would just say one person stand up on that side - do you know what not a single person on that government side has said? This is a man of great character, a man who has done an outstanding job as Speaker of the House. That is shocking because that's the simplest thing you can say for him.

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

**KENDRA COOMBES:** Before I start my true remarks, I want to make a few comments, one as a Cape Bretoner. I want to say to the member for Northside-Westmount and to the member for Sydney-Membertou and to our colleague for Victoria-The Lakes, we have your back. We have your back, because Cape Bretoners are supposed to have each other's backs, Madam Speaker. We are supposed to have each other's backs because what we are trying to accomplish when we come to Halifax is, as my colleague for Sydney-Membertou says, to bring something for home. We're supposed to be working together to do that. We have his back.

The other thing I want to say is there was a comment made by, I believe, the member for Halifax Atlantic, that discussed that one of the reasons to get rid of the Speaker was succession planning because the Speaker is too old. If that is the case, if that was true, that is ageism, and it is discrimination. It was wrong.

If somebody did make that comment, I do hope - and that is what I said before, if people would just stop talking while I am talking - if someone did make that comment I would hope that they would apologize and really, truly think about those comments,



because it is ageism. Nobody wants to be discriminatory or discriminated against. Again, we should check our language and how we use it.

What I want to say, Madam Speaker, and this is before I talk about the resolution, I want to review again how we got to this point. Roughly four weeks ago, over a month ago, the Premier came to the Speaker to request - maybe I'm putting that kindly - that he resign. I have a problem with that first line there.

The Speaker does not serve at the pleasure of the Premier. Ministers serve at the pleasure of the Premier. Deputy ministers serve at the pleasure of the Premier, but the Speaker does not serve at the pleasure of the Premier. The Speaker serves at the pleasure of this elected House of Assembly by an election.

That first line where the Premier even makes a phone call to suggest that the Speaker resign is egregious. It is, in my opinion anyway, and I am no lawyer, but I would say that is interference on behalf of the Premier's Office.

According to what else we know, and it was because the Speaker actually came out and said these things, that he put the Premier in a hard spot a few times with some his rulings. Good. That means he is doing his job. If every party has disagreed with one of his rulings, he is doing his job because he is not supposed to make all of us happy, or one side happy. He is not supposed to make one side happy over the other. The fact that he upsets everybody means that the Speaker is doing his job.

The member for Victoria-The Lakes is an individual of integrity. You've just got to look at his Facebook page, Madam Speaker, to see that he is truly a man of integrity and kindness. He is doing what his job set out for him to do. His job is keeping decorum in this House, which we know can be rough. It can be hard to do sometimes. Some of us can get unruly.

Protecting the rights of every member is part of his job, protecting the rights of staff is part of his job. Let's examine that part of his job and where interference seems to have occurred or upset, the Premier's upset has occurred.

The ruling of masks, coming into the Legislature and wearing a mask apparently was an egregious offence (Interruption) Me too, I'm sorry as well, I wear a mask often in here. His job is to protect the members, his job is to protect the staff. And at the height of a pandemic to say that you will be wearing masks in here, we are going to protect each other, is part of his job.

To close the gallery when COVID-19 ran rampant in this Chamber was part of his job of protecting the Legislature and protecting the staff. He was doing his duty as Speaker - and for this he is asked to resign? That seems to be interference from the Premier's Office.

[4:45 p.m.]

His other job is to champion the Legislature. The Speaker's job is to champion the Legislature. What does that mean? It means everything that is part of this Legislature is under his responsibility, and he is going to defend it. For the Premier to have interfered with the Speaker to say that the Speaker should not have made rulings on masks, made the rulings on closing the Gallery, and put government in hard spots, is just shameful. Again, I will say, the Speaker has been doing his job in an impartial manner. He's been fair to all of us, and he has held himself with the greatest of integrity during those times.

I've been known to watch not just our Legislative TV - great job, by the way - but the Canadian House of Commons, and I'm a big fan of the U.K. Parliament. Big fan. I watch it a lot. I also watch Australia. I have observed the styles of Speakers, and I can say that the Speaker from Victoria-The Lakes is indeed a great Speaker. He does his job, and he does it in a way that is independent. If that is upsetting to the government side, if that is upsetting to the Premier, then so be it.

In the U.K. Parliament, for example, there was a Speaker who, the day he became Speaker was the day he gave away his card for the party that he belonged to. Why? To ensure the integrity of the office, to ensure the independence of the office, and to ensure that the Prime Minister's Office could not interfere with the proceedings of the House.

I'm not saying that in Nova Scotia we should adopt this concept, but what I am saying is that in that case, there is no question of a Speaker's independence. There is no question of a Premier interfering, threatening, what have you, a Speaker to resign, to use a majority vote to overrule the Speaker, to oust the Speaker. The Speaker resigned; that Speaker in the U.K. let go of his membership and became an Independent who's truly independent, and that is one way that this can be done, because here it is:

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

The member for Victoria-The Lakes, our Speaker, has shown integrity by not resigning, by coming forward, by telling what occurred. What about the next Speaker? Will the next Speaker have that integrity? Will the next Speaker have that forethought? Will the next Speaker have that strength of character to ensure the independence of the Speaker's Office? I certainly hope so, but hope can be fleeting. Hope is not a solid “of course they will.”

When I look at this, to have the review to affirm the independence of the Speaker and that it's not answerable. This could be, from the commissioner, a ruling on how future Speakers are to conduct themselves, and that is important that we have that. That is an

important ruling that we should have, because we never know how things can turn out in the future. We don't know who's going to be in that seat next. I certainly hope it's the member for Victoria-The Lakes in April.

I want to see the member for Victoria-The Lakes in that seat. He deserves that seat. He's earned the respect of this House, and that is how you become Speaker, by earning the respect of the House. That's how you stay a Speaker, and that's why you have people standing up and saying what a great Speaker he is, because he has earned our respect on this side of the House. I don't know about that side. I can't speak for them. Maybe they'll speak for themselves, maybe they will tell us what's happening here, why we're here.

The Speaker's Office, again - I'm going to reiterate this - is supposed to work independently of the Premier and the government. The interference that we're seeing is deeply troubling. It is clear that the Premier was trying to force the Speaker from his position. Interfering with the Speaker's Office and trying to oust the Speaker is damaging to our democracy, and if you don't take that seriously, then what are we doing here?

Democracy is important and the independence of the Speaker is one of the most important parts of that aspect because we - and this has been a theme today for me - we need to be able to trust that the Speaker's ruling is independent from government. We need to trust that the Speaker's ruling was not interfered with by government. I believe that the Speaker from Victoria-The Lakes - his rulings have been independent from government, they have been without influence, but do I think that the Premier and others have tried to interfere with the Speaker? I think so. I think we've seen it. I think we heard it. That's not intimidation, but interference isn't intimidation.

I'm going to leave you with this: The Speaker must remain independent of the Premier's Office, must remain independent of the government, and the Speaker does not serve at the pleasure of the Premier - the Speaker serves at the pleasure of this elected Legislative Assembly.

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I beg leave to make an introduction.

In the West Gallery is Dr. Paul Doucette. He is the current President of the Nova Scotia Liberal Party. Paul has dedicated his life to helping those in pain, and then volunteered his time to inherit a bunch of pains in his posterior. I'd like him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: As always, we welcome people to the Legislature, so welcome, Dr. Doucette.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

HON. BEN JESSOME: As this debate has been taking place, I have been trying to understand the best way to approach this debate. I know that it was not so long ago that we on the Opposition bench were on the government side of the House, and many on the government bench were on the Opposition side of the House. Much of the general frustration is consistent. The stripes have changed sides, the banner, the pictures of former Leaders on either side of the wall have changed. But some of the, I guess, foolishness that goes on in this House hasn't really changed, which is, quite frankly, disappointing.

I have played my part in it over the years. I have supported different things and believed in what I supported and wondered why Opposition members got on their feet and opposed certain decisions that we made as a government. Now being on this side of the House and getting to my feet to try and do what I can as a member of the now-Opposition to hold the government to account, I see a similar expression on a lot of the faces of members of the government that I probably had not so long ago.

We're here today, and I'm still trying to get my feet under me as a member of the Opposition and try to discover new ways to hold government to account. It is, as people always say, an important role. As members of the now-government have said, it is an important role, through the function of government, to have an Opposition that will be confident and willing to stand on their feet when they believe that something disagreeable is taking place, something wrong is taking place. Despite the frustrations from the government, that's our job now. We'll do our best to deploy whatever tactics we can to raise the questions that we need to raise, as many of the now-government members did when they were on this side of the House.

With that being said, one of our tools is a resolution, the resolution that's before us today to bring about an independent review of the circumstances that presently exist amongst the Premier's office, the government bench, and the Office of the Speaker. We acknowledge that there was a decision made with respect to the Leader of the Official Opposition's question of whether his privilege was impugned or not. Based on the details of the ruling, we found that the Speaker was not explicitly intimidated to such a point where he decided that he would no longer be able to fulfill his duties as the Speaker in an impartial way, which from our perspective as a collective, doesn't necessarily mean that what we know to be true did not happen.

That just means that, as many have said in the House, the Speaker is a person of integrity, he is a person of principle who does have a backbone, who does, when an attempt is made to damage his reputation, to call into question his ability to do his job for the right reasons, he's there to stand up for himself, and I appreciate that and respect him for it.

That ruling aside, we now have before us - I'm sure that if this particular instance is unsuccessful, there are probably other methods that can be deployed as a member of the Opposition, as an Opposition party, to hold the government to account, to hold the Premier to account for these circumstances. It doesn't mean that - I know that the members of the

now-government would appreciate that when you disagree with the government, you don't just sit down and quit. When something wrong is taking place, you find as many opportunities as you can to uncover the truth, to call people out for wrongdoing.

[5:00 p.m.]

When you disagree with something even philosophical, you try to prove your point in a variety of different ways. That's stuff that members of the now-government did quite liberally while they were on this side of the House.

We know it to be factual the interactions that took place whereby the head of state, the Premier, took it upon himself - he was in the room, he was part of the discussion - took it upon himself to look at the Speaker, the proud member for Victoria-The Lakes, and say listen, pal, that's enough. I've had enough. You've caused me too much grief. The decisions that you've made, despite being in the best interests of the people in this House and in the best interests of our democracy in this House - that's enough, he said. I'm done with you. You can either resign and go quietly or we're going to line up our team - so-called team - line them up in a row and they're all going to vote to toss you from the Chair that you have so effectively served in.

It is really disappointing to see that happen. That's the scenario that initially took place. Then fast-forward a few days, a couple of weeks, whatever the timeline is, the Premier gets asked questions from the media on this. A time at which he remarks that the media was manufacturing a story, accusing the media of not using integrity in their profession. Their jobs are dependent on speaking the truth.

I have a long line of family members who are members of the media and historic members of the media. Their success in doing their job depends on their integrity and their willingness to tell the truth. For a Premier to suppose that the media is not being forthright about the truth, particularly in a circumstance where the very next day the Speaker comes out and speaks the truth directly to the media, shortly after the Premier indicated that the conversations were private and that we have these types of discussions all the time.

Evidently, the Speaker was put in a terrible spot and felt that the truth needed to come out, particularly when the facts were not being relayed outside of this Chamber. We all know the situation at hand, so this is why, this is in part why we are now deploying another tactic, as members of the Opposition, to try and get the head of state to answer some questions around this.

He did not oblige the deputy speaker to tell his side of the story when she invited him to do so, through the Chair, which if there was no wrongdoing then, if it was just standard operating procedure, as the honourable Premier has alluded to, then why not get in front of a microphone and put this all to bed? I'm not clear on that.

Frankly another reason that we're instigating this investigation, this arm's length investigation from the House, is because this seems to be a pattern that the Premier has established over the last several years - a pattern that many of the government members appear to be okay with. We've watched members of the Progressive Conservative caucus be tossed from their ranks. We've seen presidents of riding associations be forced out when they disagree with the now-Premier.

Now we've seen a Speaker - let's call a spade a spade. He's being forced out of his seat. It's not today, it's in April. They've already got his replacement waiting for his chance to take that seat, and he, like many others ...

THE SPEAKER: If the honourable member of Hammonds Plains-Lucasville could just refer to members and not he or she.

BEN JESSOME: The member is now lined up, ready to go, waiting for his seat in April. I see a shake of the head, but it's in the resolution that the government's presented. Feel free to correct me if I'm wrong, but they're named by riding. I'm not sure how else I'm supposed to interpret that. Yes, the member for Eastern Shore is listed as the incoming deputy speaker who will take the Chair upon that seat becoming vacant.

Anyway, that's enough from me. Again, Opposition members are here to try to call truth to power, and that's what we're going to continue to do.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I'm just going to speak for a few minutes, but I want to offer my own reflections on this discussion and on these questions before us. Like many of us, before being elected, I had lots of experience at lots of different diverse organizations. They ranged from very formal settings, such as the Dalhousie University Board of Governors, to non-profit boards at the federal and provincial levels, and acting as Chair. It also included a lot of community and youth engagement in really diverse contexts. That means that often we would come together without a set of principles, a set of rules that guided the interaction or the engagement. In fact, those were co-created and generated from the group that gathered together.

Despite this, ranging from having rulebooks, like we have here in this House, to building with community and in community processes of engagement and reflection, what was really important about all those collective exercises was, in fact, a set of rules and principles to guide the work together. I would love a chance to take you all out and put you in a circle and do some co-creation of our principles together and do some open space. It would be really great. I actually think we would probably have better decisions. We can't do that; that's okay.

I think that we need to respect the shared principles that we have that guide our work together. They're important for our collective well-being in this, our workplace. They're important for the collective well-being of Nova Scotians who have elected us, who expect us to act in a certain way and expect to have decisions made in a certain way. They have access to the rules that guide us as well as we do.

We need processes that ensure fairness, respect, rational discussion, and problem-solving. I think so many people have spoken to those principles today. I think that in our case, a key part of those principles that give us the basis for our rational discussion and decision-making is, in fact, the role of having an impartial Chair, of having in a Speaker an impartial Speaker.

When I came last August 2021, like many of you as a new MLA - honestly, maybe I didn't know as much about the process as I thought I did before I came. But that's okay, we all learn together. One of the things I did know is that the Speaker was really important, that the Speaker was impartial, and that that was the person who was going to guide us through our days.

That is what I continue to expect from the role of Speaker: the impartial guidance of taking us through our days in a way that respects the collective well-being, in a way that implements the procedures that we have accepted as an organization, as a province, that guide our decision-making here.

I think that, obviously, respect for the role of the Speaker in particular was emphasized after being appointed by the House as a deputy speaker. That it was very important that when in the Chair that role was borne out by us - that we discharged our duties with the same level of impartiality, with the same commitment to principles, with the same commitment to fair process as I expected and also saw from the current Speaker.

I think we all really need to take a moment and think about this. If this has not actually happened since 1875, then I think there's a good reason for that. We really need to have respect for the people of Nova Scotia and respect for each other in acknowledging the important role of the Speaker being impartial.

One of the things that I was able to do last Fall was some online training around polite parliaments. That was great and useful to be connecting with Speakers and deputy speakers and people in similar roles from across the country and around the world, in terms of how they handled their process and their duties in a way that creates polite parliaments, creates polite settings, really recognizing the role of the Speaker or the Chair or someone who's deputized in that role as being at the heart of that.

I will say that my other reflection at the polite parliament training was: Wouldn't it be great if we did have to have training on how to manage a polite parliament and we were actually all respectful to each other - I was going to say nice to each other - in the exchange

of debate? I will say that I have seen many settings, different types of community conversations and collective decision-making where, in fact, there has been a lot more care with one another and a lot more respect.

I would actually say, of course, that we do need a strong Chair and a strong Speaker in this role. We need a trusted guide who is listening and will bring us back to our process and will also remind us of our principles of being polite and respectful to one another.

I also think it's important right now in this House that we consider the issue of stability. There are a lot of reasons why Speakers are appointed by the House, obviously - that they don't become part of the rotation in and out of Executive Council, they don't become part of a Cabinet shuffle. That's for the impartiality, but it's also really important for the stability of this House. To have someone who over a period of a whole session is watching how this House works together, is remembering the rulings and issues that have come before, and is able to draw upon those as well as more historical rulings to guide their decision-making and guide their direction.

We need to have confidence in the role of the Speaker. Nova Scotians need to have confidence in the role of the Speaker. I think the facts and events of the current situation have been well-documented publicly and in here today, so I won't go into them. But they're greatly concerning. We need an independent Speaker whom we can trust to provide the stability and guidance that we need here in this House.

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

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'll just say a few comments here to close debate on the resolution. I appreciate the comments from all of my colleagues on this side of the House.

This has been - it's a passionate issue for all of us. It's one where we have a Speaker who, as the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier said, is a Cape Bretoner. He's respected, he's adored by the Island, and he's spent a big part of his career as a strong and passionate representative of the PC party. As someone who really was proud, as his family was very proud, and as his community was - I remember when he was appointed Speaker of the House, that day we had the vote. It was a really special time for him and his family.

He's done an exceptional job in the role, being fair and impartial to all of us here in the Legislature, and I'm really kind of heartbroken for him, to be honest. As somebody who's known him a long time, I don't think he deserved any of this, and I think we all knew for years with the Speaker that his integrity is intact. That's for sure. His passion to do the right thing, his commitment to do the right thing shone through in what I would argue would be probably the most difficult time in his political career in the last few weeks.



He didn't deserve any of this. Like it's been talked about this evening, and as the Leader of our party articulated, this was very different from your ruling. There were a lot of differences between what we were asking for here and the ruling that you provided yesterday, Madam Speaker, in regard to his point of privilege.

[5:15 p.m.]

I really appreciate the comments that have defended the Speaker's character, and I can say this - in Cape Breton, this really matters. This matters to people. It's been said here before; I've said it before myself. Cape Bretoners have always had a strong relationship in caucus. They've always - we have unique challenges on the Island, as other communities have across Nova Scotia, that are deep, but I've been involved with politics since my student government days and I remember coming here and meeting with Manning and meeting with Rodney and meeting with Dave Wilson and meeting with all of the - Keith Bain, Alfie MacLeod, Eddie Orrell. I could talk about Vince MacLean. The list goes on and on of MLAs who were of all political stripes who, whenever an issue happened on the Island, looked after one another - they supported the communities.

We've done it through the hurricane, we've done it through other weather events, and for me, when I see a fellow Cape Bretoner, politics aside, my heart's broken for him. He doesn't deserve this. This world will end, this political world will end, but your buddies are always your buddies, and you always stand up for your buddies. That's - thank Mum and Dad for that. No matter what, you look out for your buddies. I'm proud of the comments that people have made to defend him. People from Cape Breton are rallying to him, so it's great.

But now I have the opportunity to close debate, so I'll close debate with a question. I'm going to call the question on the resolution, the resolution that I've presented today.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to carry Resolution No. 391.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[5:19 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The Clerk will now conduct the vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll]

[6:21 p.m.]

**YEAS**

Hon. Patricia Arab  
Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Hon. Kelly Regan  
Hon. Derek Mombourquette  
Hon. Iain Rankin  
Claudia Chender  
Kendra Coombes  
Suzy Hansen  
Gary Burrill  
Lisa Lachance  
Rafah DiCostanzo  
Hon. Tony Ince  
Lorelei Nicoll  
Hon. Ben Jessome  
Hon. Keith Irving  
Ali Duale  
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
Carman Kerr  
Ronnie LeBlanc  
Fred Tilley

**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 Balser  
Trevor Boudreau  
Hon. Greg Morrow  
Hon. Becky Druhan  
Hon. Larry Harrison  
Chris Palmer  
John. A. MacDonald  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
John White  
Danielle Barkhouse  
Tom Taggart  
Nolan Young  
Kent Smith

THE CLERK: For, 20. Against, 29.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

We now have reached the moment of interruption. The Adjournment notice was submitted by the member for Halifax Atlantic and reads:

“Whereas the top concern of Nova Scotians is still access to primary health care, and 116,000 Nova Scotians are now without a family doctor; and

Whereas the Need a Family Practice Registry gives an accurate reflection of Nova Scotians that still need a primary care provider; and

Whereas the government has demonstrated a reluctance to update Nova Scotians with accurate and consistent Public Health data;

Be it resolved the government must continue to update and keep the Need a Family Practice Registry.”

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

### **GOV'T (N.S.): NEED A FAMILY PRACTICE REG. - UPDATE**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I think it's an honour to stand here on my feet tonight and speak to this late debate topic. I would argue that it's the most important issue right now in Nova Scotia for most people. If not the most, it is definitely in the top two or three.

We are at 116,000 and counting. There was a report out recently that said we're probably closer to 200,000 Nova Scotians without a family doctor. That would be one in five. I know that the government doesn't want to hear this, but the truth is that I speak to more people in the run of a day who don't have a family doctor than do.

My own personal experience: My family doctor unfortunately passed away and that left thousands and thousands of Nova Scotians without a family doctor. I recently visited a family clinic in my community where two of the four doctors are now retiring and the reason for their retirement, what they've said to me - I met with all four of them - was that over the last year health care has never been worse. These were their words, not mine. They were retiring with a third one retiring in the next few months.

They are telling us that they are not getting exit interviews, not getting exit interviews on the way out the door. Why are you leaving? I talked to Doctors Nova Scotia, the same thing, no exit interviews. Why are you leaving? Why are you retiring early?

This government has had a year, and they'll tell you that we can't do much in a year, but they certainly promised a lot during the election. They ran on health care; they promised 24/7 surgeries. They are nowhere near that. They promised to decrease the family wait-list; they've almost doubled it. If you go by some of the experts, potentially tripled it.

In Question Period all we hear is from the Minister of Health and Wellness and the Premier himself and all they do is blame and point fingers - it's your fault, it's your fault - never once taking responsibility for their own actions.

They tout the infrastructure builds, the historic infrastructure builds that are happening in health care, but in Opposition it was the worst thing to ever happen. Now they are cutting ribbons and smiling and putting a face on it.

They brag about the number of nurses they've just hired. They hired 50 per cent of a graduating class. If they hired one less nurse, they'd have a failing grade on that. When asked why they didn't hire the other 50 per cent, no answer, no clue, no interviews.

They are not asking the nurses. How do I know that? I know some personally. I've had some reach out to me. Nobody talked to them. They said they heard in the media that the Premier made some - you know, we'll hire every single nurse - but they're not actually doing anything.

They'll say that they are doing something, but if they think that 50 per cent is a good mark - and then they'll say, well, we did better than you. No, the last few years, the number of graduates who were hired from the nursing school was higher, was actually higher, both in percentage and in numbers.

They tout the number of doctors they've just hired, as if that hasn't been planned for the last two or three years with investments by the previous government.

Every statistic in health care has gotten worse. Everything. If they think it has gotten better, then they've got their heads in the clouds and they haven't spoken to a single Nova Scotian.

It's not the fault of the health care workers. If you talk to the health care workers, they are exhausted. They will tell you that this government pretended that COVID-19 didn't exist. How do we know that? The first meaningful thing after dismantling the health care board that they did was to dismantle the resources for COVID-19.

You don't believe me? Listen, the member for Eastern Passage can heckle all she wants, Mx. Speaker, but try to get a test at Bayers Lake, where it used to be. You can't get a test. They have to come to the MLA offices for the test. Try to get a booster shot. They're shaking their heads over there. If they don't believe it, then they're out of touch. They're out of touch.

What they did was dismantle a COVID-19 system that could have been used for any other infectious diseases. It could have been used for the measles, chickenpox, or mumps. The Minister of Health and Wellness just sits there and laughs as I talk about serious health care issues.

[6:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor and I would ask you to speak in a parliamentary way. (Interruption)

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: For anyone to sit across there in government and laugh as we talk about serious issues - people not being able to find a family doctor. The family doctor list doubled and tripled, and then act like we need to do some rejigging to the family doctor list because we don't feel that people are coming off it fast enough.

They tout a virtual care system that, when they were in Opposition, they laughed at and mocked. It takes only seconds to go through the records to see what their Premier said about the virtual care system. It will take seconds for them to go through and look to see what their Premier said about COVID and the number of people who were impacted by and caught COVID.

Now that he's Premier, those numbers don't matter. It doesn't matter anymore that people got sick. It doesn't matter that people don't have family doctors. They have virtual care. I bet you that no one on that side of the aisle has ever called virtual care. I have because I don't have a family doctor. Good luck.

We have members who stood on this side of the aisle and talked about being the only constituency that didn't have a family doctor. They still don't have one. They left. But mum's the word. They're not saying a peep now that they're in government.

So I do get offended. I wasn't going to get agitated, but I get offended when I see people laughing about very serious issues. People die when they don't have family doctors because they get sick and they have nowhere to go. They're going to say that it's all our fault. Never mind the fact that it has exploded under them.

They touted all these billions and billions and billions of dollars that they spent on health care, yet the list has gotten worse. We don't hear a single peep from them about their promise of 24/7 surgeons. You know why? Because when you talk to the world-renowned surgeons in this province, they say that it's not possible. That's what they tell us.

Where are they going to get the resources? Where are they going to get the doctors? They're going act like this is some kind of attack on the health care workers. It's not. It's about a government that purposely overpromised to get elected knowing that they could not deliver.

Instead of doing what's right for the system, they're going to manipulate the numbers, just like they did with COVID, Mx. Speaker. They stopped releasing the

numbers. They wouldn't tell you who got sick. They wouldn't tell you where they got sick. They limited access to tests. They can deny it all they want, but the facts are the facts. They stood on that side and accused the former Minister of Health and Wellness of murder. Their words, not ours.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I think if you have referred to a specific quote, we would like you to table that.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: They know that they cannot fix this and they overpromised and they don't have the ideas. You know how I know that they don't have the ideas? Because all their ideas have been extensions of the previous government. All the builds and the great news stories - the QEII for example.

We know that it's a boondoggle, like they used to say about the *Bluenose II*. It's double, triple, quadruple the price now. I heard one of the members tout the Bayers Lake Centre. In Opposition, they hated that idea. Now it's the greatest idea ever.

The truth is they had no ideas. If they did, they've run out of them, and health care is worse today than it was a year ago.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am pleased to rise after a heated few, very long days in this House and talk about something that I hear about from my constituents every day, and that is the number of people without attachment to primary care in this province.

Years ago, Premier McNeil promised a family doctor for every Nova Scotian. That didn't happen. Our Premier then ran a successful election campaign on fixing health care. That didn't happen.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yet.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Okay, let's see if we all agree that you fixed health care in two years. My guess is no, but I hope so, for the sake of my constituents and for the people of this province. What I want to say is that the idea that there's a quick fix, that this is an easy situation, is fundamentally wrong.

That is why we talk about not a physician for every Nova Scotian, but how we can attach more Nova Scotians to continuous primary care. This is why we become very upset when we hear the government say things like, people are happy with virtual care, people can access care at a walk-in. They might be able to access some care, but make no mistake,

that care is no substitution for attachment to a continuous primary care provider. We would suggest the best way to do that is collaborative health care.

We were pleased to see a small step in that direction from the government. We will continue to press for more and I hope that it comes. In the meantime, I think we have to be really clear that we're working with what we have and that what we have is wholly insufficient. It is against that backdrop of 116,000 people on the list who need a family doctor, and the 220,000-plus people who, according to Statistics Canada - and I tabled this earlier - are in need of a family doctor in this province.

If we split the difference and say maybe one in five Nova Scotians doesn't have a family doctor, then the fact that this government chose to remove the incentive for existing family doctors to take additional patients in the Central Zone, as one columnist put it, boggles the mind. It boggles the mind, Mx. Speaker, especially in an environment where one of the signature moves of this government is to say that they want to double our population, but they don't want to put in the infrastructure or the incentives or the systems or the policies where we can accommodate that kind of population growth.

This is a great example of a fundamental miss. The Central Zone of Nova Scotia has over half of its residents. When this government took office in 2021, there were 4,000 patients on the Need a Family Practice registry in the Central Zone. There are now 46,000 patients in the Central Zone. That is an astronomical increase. That is the context in which this government cancelled the incentive for doctors to take more patients. Mx. Speaker, it boggles the mind.

The idea that people are happy with virtual care or a walk-in - let's take that, because that is all we have. Before I move away from this truly incomprehensible decision of the government to cancel this incentive, let me also say that when I asked the Premier about this in this House, his response was telling. It was divisive. I said to the Premier: Do you agree that it was a mistake to cancel this incentive in the Central Zone? He said: We're improving health care in Parrsboro, we're improving health care in - and then he listed off a litany of Tory ridings across the province where he is improving health care.

I have no doubt that that's true. I believe that this government, that all of us, that all Nova Scotians want to improve health care, but that is divisive. That is fundamentally divisive, and it doesn't address the question. Yes, rural Nova Scotians need access to health care, and urban Nova Scotians need access to health care. We all need access to health care. The fact that that would become a binary, that that would become an either/or - it's like saying, why didn't you have any red candies? Don't you want blue candies? Like, what are you talking about? It doesn't make any sense.

I continue to be perplexed by that, and also the notion that virtual care or a walk-in clinic, number one, takes the place of that, but number two, is even available. The reality is - and, again, I think virtual care is better than nothing. I think it has to exist because of

the number of people in Nova Scotia - and I'll remind people that the population of Nova Scotia is among the most complex medically, and the oldest in the country.

We need health care. Our constituents need health care. If virtual care or walk-in care is all that's there, well, it's better than nothing. But if you talk to people about trying to access virtual care or trying to go to a walk-in clinic, they will tell you it's almost impossible. I hear from constituents almost every day who say, "I've logged in every morning, right away, and the slots are full for the day. I can pay if I want to, but the slots are full," or "I go to a walk-in and, again, the options are full. It's not even that I have to wait a few hours. It's no, there is no care here."

Again, we're glad that this exists. If they're full, it means people are using them. That's great, but they are wholly insufficient. People want regular access to health care. They want to know that when they get sick, there is an avenue for them to get better, and in particular, to access specialists.

I have a friend who was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's. She doesn't have a family physician. Her journey has been excruciating - tests, specialists. She's now being followed by someone in neurology because they didn't have the heart to release her as a patient because she needed someone to follow her chart. Virtual care does not follow your chart.

There are so many people in this situation who have a diagnostic test that reveals an abnormality, they have a diagnosis of cancer or some other disease, but there is no one following their case and there's also no one advocating for them. We have many people who live alone, who don't have an advocate in the form of family. But in addition to family, in an overburdened health care system like ours, a family doctor is an important advocate. They will send a referral. When it comes back and says you can see the specialist in three years, if they're good, they will hopefully send again and they will get you on a wait-list and they will help to advocate for you in the health care system. Without an advocate, your chances are worse, your outcomes are worse, and it's scary, frankly.

The point that I want to make here - and I'm so glad we have the opportunity to talk to this issue - is to say, first, I know there's work being done. I'm not saying there's not work being done. But it's not working. What's happening right now in the health care system is not working. It's not working for families. It's not working for seniors. It's not working for my constituents. It's not working for anyone.

I would ask the government to look at how these systems are set up, because what we've seen, from what little window we have, is that the independent board was fired, the CEO was replaced, the physician lead is gone, the power is centralized - and presumably all of that was done so that decision-making could happen more quickly and more effectively. But I think Bob Martell, a retired physician, recently wrote a column - and I'll



table this - entitled "Time for 'martial law' to end in health care." He made the argument that that might have been necessary at the beginning, but it's not necessary now.

We need a more robust system that can act on this very difficult and complex matter as soon as possible, and above all else, Mx. Speaker, people in Nova Scotia need family medicine. They need to know that when they are sick, they will have a health care professional who can see them, who can follow their chart and who can advocate on their behalf.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mx. Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleagues for their comments, particularly the thoughtful and helpful and collegial comments. In addition to the documents that you've asked for, I would ask the member opposite if he would table the document where the PC member mocks virtual care. I would appreciate it if that was tabled.

There's a lot to say in 10 minutes about what is happening in health care. First of all, I want to talk about the Need a Family Practice Registry, and I was very clear in Question Period today that there is no attempt to diminish or change the numbers. What we want is a tool that has increased functionality. The reason that's important is because the list began in 2016 and it merely is a list of individuals. It doesn't allow us to easily - and to the member opposite's point - identify people who are on the list with minimal or no health concerns but do need a family doctor versus those who have more complex care needs.

The functionality of that list is really important. We need to look at how we do that in order to attach people to a primary care provider, not always a physician. Sometimes a nurse practitioner and preferably a team. In the interim, this list is what we have.

One of the things we have found is that recently, as an example, we have been working with Dalhousie Family Medicine. Through a team of individuals to optimize clinic functions, we were able to support that team in recognizing that they can bring 3,500 people off that list into that practice, with some support, which is a pretty incredible feat.

In addition to that, we can bring new physicians into that clinic, and we can panel those physicians up 1,350 patients at a minimum and then transfer them out into the clinic and we can do that four times a year, Mx. Speaker, and it is a constant recurrence.

I want to talk about the health and human resources because I'm going to tell you, we have known for 15 years that this is where we were going to be today. I know that as a nurse, and I know that as a nurse manager. We hollered from the top of our lungs that the decisions that were made were negatively impacting the care of Nova Scotians, and nobody would listen to us.

[6:45 p.m.]

We do have virtual care. It is not the answer for everyone, but it does allow people to have access and that's what we really are looking for. We know there is a variety of ways and access is not perfect yet, but we continue to recruit physicians and nurse practitioners to this province in order to provide access to people here.

We need to make sure that people with complex care needs are seen by a team and we've looked at things like increasing nursing seats. There were temporarily funded nurse practitioner seats, which we have decided we will fund into perpetuity, Mx. Speaker, in order to make sure that we have the workforce that we require.

We are exploring with universities different ways to expand our workforce and looking at what the capacity is and places like the CBU. We have an MOU with Michener and all Michener Institutes to look at our allied health care professionals, and all of these things take time and we appreciate that.

In order for us to fix and to address the issues around access we need to look at the people who are working in our health care system. We have very good relationships in terms of how we recruit internationally educated nurses and physicians to come to this country and come to this province. We've been working really hard and the colleges and have been excellent partners with us. They have streamlined their processes. They have looked at things that historically we haven't had to look at.

We've increased the number of seats for the family medicine residency program. That could have been done a number of years ago, Mx. Speaker, but it was not. What I will say is that there are a number of things that are happening.

The other thing we need to do in relation to specialist care is, while we do want to recruit specialists, we have to really look at the infrastructure. We had some wonderful announcements. We have robotics, the first in Canada, which attracts people. This week we announced an Ethos radiation therapy unit that takes the best 3D imaging in the world and allows us to have tumour-specific radiation.

We continue to look at ways in which we can make sure people have access. We have clinics that are out in communities where nurse practitioners and pharmacists work to the fullness of their scope for the very first time in this province, providing primary care to people in communities. We have that in Cobequid, we have it in Truro, we have it in New Glasgow, and we had one open in New Minas on Monday, Mx. Speaker. We are continually looking for solutions.

In the wake of Hurricane Fiona, within 24 hours, Nova Scotia Health Authority employees and the Department of Health and Wellness were able to stand up a mobile unit where primary care was delivered to people who had lost medication through the hurricane

and needed a lot of different supports. That is probably the most inspirational worksite I have been on in the last 10 years.

Minister Comer and I had an opportunity to go down there and meet with people. We saw a variety of individuals across all ages. Every person had an exit interview about their experience and what that mobile clinic meant to them.

The staff will talk about a gentleman who got such good care that he came back the next day with treats for the staff. He actually asked to have his paper back so that the government would know what a meaningful and important experience that was - the excellent care that he received, and that there should be more mobile units across this province. Mx. Speaker, we're going to deliver on that.

The other thing that we've done is increase the scope of our pharmacists. There are some things that are simple but important, like where we need to go to have episodic care. The pharmacists across this province have been unbelievable partners in the rollout of the immunization program. They're actually going to support more flu immunizations. They can also look at things like urinary tract infections. They can do prevention for Lyme disease. All of these things were not in their scope in the past. We've been able to expand and work with PANS, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, in order for people to do that.

I know that's not comprehensive and coordinated care, but we are all in. Recruitment is really important, and it's not only money. We look at money, but it's really important how we match primary care providers with communities so that they are a good fit.

We work with the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration and we work in communities with navigators to support communities in terms of how they settle people who don't talk like them, look like them, pray like them - all of those things - so that when they come into a community, they feel welcome and warm and that this is their new home. We're able to work and make sure that people have access to primary care through those avenues as well.

In regard to accountability, I feel - appreciating that I am biased - that we are a very accountable government. I have worked in health care for 30 years. I have never had the opportunity to speak to a Minister of Health and Wellness in this province and have that person stand in front of me and hear my ideas, value my ideas, and bring those ideas back to a department. I have never, ever had the opportunity in community as a nurse to speak to a deputy minister or the CEO of the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Those views, no matter what anyone says, were not wanted and were not welcome when I worked . . . (Interruption)

Despite my political affiliations, I think we can all attest to the fact that I have a fairly big mouth, and I can assure you that had anyone been willing to listen, hear and value the lived experience of me and my peers - we were dying to help the former government. We were dying to show them how we could help and inform the decisions that were made. We never had that opportunity, ever.

I have to say that if I'm proud of anything, it's that I show up in the hospital. I show up in community, and those conversations are not easy. When we did that tour - I remember it - we were in Truro, and we were in a big circle. There were nurses, paramedics, CCAs and every other health care profession you can find. They're leaned into the conversation and the Premier of our province is leaned in listening, and that matters. To be heard and seen at that level is very important.

I know that health care needs a lot of work. We are committed. It is going to take time. My colleagues at TPB know that I always have my hand out and that money is not necessarily the issue. We have to focus on work environments. We have to look and listen to our health care providers - our paramedics, our nurses, our physicians. We need to work with them and find solutions that work for them and that work for Nova Scotians.

I promise. The Premier has given his word and I give mine that we will never stop until we improve health care. There's a ton of work to do. We are committed to that work. It's a big promise and I can guarantee you that we will deliver for Nova Scotians over time.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allotted for late debate has elapsed. I wish to thank all members who participated in this debate.

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mx. 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: Mx. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 211.

### **Bill No. 211 - Builders' Lien Act (amended).**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mx. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 211, the Builders' Lien Act (amended), be read a second time. I'd also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge my Cabinet colleague, the Minister of Public Works, Kim Masland, who shares in this legislation.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I would ask you to refer to other members by their titles and not their proper names.

BRAD JOHNS: Sorry about that.

This important legislation is to advance jointly the Departments of Justice and Public Works. The Province is ensuring members of the construction industry are paid promptly for the work they do. This legislation will build on amendments made in 2019. The amendments we are proposing today will further support thousands of workers and businesses in Nova Scotia's construction industry.

The construction industry is important to the economic growth of this province, including the well-being of the people who work in the industry and the communities we all live in. In 2021, there was a direct employment of 28,500 workers who were in the construction industry, more than 6 per cent of the province's total. Many other businesses and workers benefit from this sector. These are the hands that build this province, and that is why it's important we show that we support them.

Delays in payments to contractors impact efficiency and productivity, and that increases the cost of doing business. In 2019, amendments introduced rules to enable contractors and subcontractors to be paid based on clear timelines. These amendments provided for an adjudicated process to resolve disputes faster when payment timelines are not met, avoiding the often slow and expensive court process.

The amendments we're proposing in this bill provide added authority and are the important next step in establishing a model that will expediate how disputes are resolved in Nova Scotia. This bill will provide authority to establish an arm's-length agency to adjudicate disputes between developers and the contractors and subcontractors. These amendments will allow for new authority to administer and collect fees to cover the adjudication costs. When we move into developing the regulations, the Province will continue to engage with stakeholders, including municipalities and the industry.

I'd like to share that the Construction Association of Nova Scotia welcomes this legislation. The construction industry is essential to the economic growth of our province. Their engagement will help us determine much of the details to inform timelines and other specifics for the adjudicative process. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues as this bill moves forward.

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

[7:00 p.m.]

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mx. Speaker, I'm happy to stand here just to say a few short words in support of these amendments. We're happy to see that this legislation is hitting the floor in the House. It's another step in the process. As the minister pointed out, this bill is one of the amendments that were implemented in 2019, and really, the previous government introduced the prompt payment a few years ago, so it's a necessity for the construction industry.

Being paid promptly in the construction industry means that you're hopefully building more promptly. This is a tool that could be used to address our housing shortage and really work towards the betterment of some of the downfalls that we're seeing in our province at the moment in terms of housing in particular.

The Prompt Payment Coalition, I would just like to note, is calling for this to be fully implemented by the end of this year - so the end of 2022. We echo their call for that action. We want to see this implemented. We hope that regulations get implemented swiftly, and look forward to hearing from any more stakeholders at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mx. Speaker, I'm glad to rise to speak to these amendments. I understand these amendments come from extensive work done with those in the construction sector and reflect years of work to accomplish such tasks. I understand some of the measures have already been implemented in other jurisdictions. I appreciate this step to ensure the protection of Nova Scotians who work in this sector.

Delays in payments have impacts that trickle down to all workers in the construction sector. I'm glad that the concerns of those in this sector are being acknowledged.

I look forward to hearing from stakeholders at the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Since becoming the Minister of Public Works last year, I have had the opportunity to participate in several meetings and functions with various organizations and businesses in the construction industry. This ongoing engagement is valuable because the industry is an important partner in our work to advance infrastructure projects and continue growing a vibrant economy.

Through my discussions with members of the industry, I know that prompt payment is a major concern in the construction sector. These businesses employ thousands of

workers and inject millions of dollars into the province's economy. Guaranteeing that they are paid in a timely manner for their work matters.

Department of Public Works staff has worked closely with colleagues at the Department of Justice, as well as industry partners, like the Construction Association of Nova Scotia and other members of the Nova Scotia Prompt Payment Coalition to understand how this issue impacts businesses big and small. Public Works staff have also been leading a prompt payment working group under the regulatory reconciliation and co-operation table. This table includes representatives from provinces and territories and the federal government.

Prompt payment is an issue across this country, and it's an issue that this government is committed to addressing. I thank my colleague, the Minister of Justice for the introduction of this bill.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mx. Speaker, I rise to close debate on second reading of Bill No. 211.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 211.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

We will ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[7:03 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Are the Whips satisfied?

The Clerk will conduct a recorded vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[8:03 p.m.]

**YEAS**

**NAYS**

Hon. Brad Johns  
Hon. Tory Rushton

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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  
John White  
Danielle Barkhouse  
Tom Taggart  
Nolan Young  
Kent Smith  
Hon. Patricia Arab  
Angela Simmonds  
Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Hon. Kelly Regan  
Hon. Derek Mombourquette  
Hon. Iain Rankin  
Susan Leblanc  
Claudia Chender  
Kendra Coombes  
Suzy Hansen  
Gary Burrill  
Rafah DiCostanzo  
Hon. Tony Ince  
Lorelei Nicoll  
Hon. Ben Jessome  
Hon. Keith Irving  
Ali Duale



Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
Carman Kerr  
Ronnie LeBlanc  
Fred Tilley

THE CLERK: For, 50. Against, 0.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mx. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 210.

**Bill No. 210 - Regulations Act (amended).**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I want to run back to my office and get four more of these because it seems like we're all in a good mood tonight.

I move that Bill No. 210, amendments to the Regulations Act, be now read for a second time. I'm pleased to introduce legislation that will improve the way government makes official notices of important legislation and regulatory changes available to the public.

We are amending three pieces of legislation: the Regulations Act, the Communications and Information Act, and the Evidence Act. In the future, online versions of the *Royal Gazette*, which publishes notices of law, proclamations and other important government and legal information, will be considered official - currently only the print version, which is available through a paid subscription, is considered the official version of the *Royal Gazette* - and will now be free. The savings for subscribers to the *Royal Gazette* will range from \$300 to \$930 per year. There will be no job losses at the Office of the Registrar of Regulations arising from the move to a digital format of the *Gazette* and there will be a net savings to government of approximately \$18,000.

These amendments essentially move the access and storage of provincial regulations from a paper-based system to digital. Going forward, official versions of regulations will now be available virtually, replacing hard copy versions of the Registry. The regulations that govern the laws of Nova Scotia impact everyday lives of Nova Scotians. It is important that they are easily accessible to the public and the legal community.

These amendments streamline the regulation-making processes inside government by allowing e-signed documents to be filed by departments with the Registry of Regulations.

The changes will allow government to update regulations more quickly and efficiently in the future. It means faster access to the public and government notices and regulations. Making these services more convenient to use is just one of the benefits. It will also save money for government, businesses, and not-for-profit organizations which need this information for the work they do.

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues as this bill moves forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I am happy to support this bill. This is just a simple housekeeping bill, so I'll just give some very short remarks on this.

I have no issues with this piece of legislation. I believe it's important to update and modernize the language that we use to reflect the people of Nova Scotia and consistency through evolving methods of technology and filing mechanisms.

I would say I especially want to highlight the importance of the use of gender-neutral terms, which I'm excited to see that it's going to be outlined several times throughout this piece of legislation. It will be good to see that. With that, I will take my chair and pass it on to my colleague for Halifax Needham.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm glad to rise and speak to these amendments. I do agree, as well, that it's important to modernize and streamline a number of things. I understand these amendments have been proposed to improve accessibility under the Act and to reflect similar measures taken in other jurisdictions, moving from paper-based to digital, streamlining those processes.

We look forward to asking these questions, and I'm happy to hear that access to the public will be more convenient and useful for all users. Like I said, we look forward to asking questions to ensure these amendments meet the objective, and to hearing from stakeholders at Law Amendments.

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

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I'm proud to stand here today to support Bill No. 210. The legislation introduced October 18, 2022, will improve the way government makes official notice of important legislative and regulatory changes available to the public. The

regulations that govern the laws of Nova Scotia impact the everyday lives of Nova Scotians, and it is important that they are easily accessible for the public and the legal community.

Under amendments to the Regulations Act, the Communications and Information Act, and the Evidence Act, the online version of the *Royal Gazette*, which publishes notices of law, proclamations, and other important government and legal information, will be considered official. The proposed changes are consistent with a general move toward electrical legislative information in other jurisdictions, including the online publication of the federal *Canada Gazette*.

It's nice to see modernization to this bill, and with that I will take leave.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: May I make an introduction? In the West Gallery here, we have a young Nova Scotian who has been here the last couple of nights. He has chosen not to stay at home and be on the screen, and not even be on the screen and watch Legislative TV. He's come to watch the proceedings in person. I've gotten to know him over the last year or so. He has a keen interest in politics, and I think we are honoured to have him here because the Gallery does not often get a young Nova Scotian at this hour of the night to share in the proceedings. Please welcome James Stewart.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I rise to close debate on Bill No. 210.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for second reading of Bill No. 210.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

The bells will ring until the Whips are satisfied.

[8:13 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order please.

The Clerk will conduct the recorded vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[9:14 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. Susan Corkum-Greek  
Hon. Brian Comer  
Hon. Colton LeBlanc  
Hon. Jill Balser  
Trevor Boudreau  
Hon. Greg Morrow  
Hon. Becky Druhan  
Larry Harrison  
Chris Palmer  
John A. MacDonald  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
John White  
Danielle Barkhouse  
Tom Taggart  
Nolan Young  
Kent Smith  
Hon. Patricia Arab  
Hon. Derek Mombourquette  
Hon. Iain Rankin  
Susan Leblanc  
Kendra Coombes  
Gary Burrill  
Rafah DiCostanzo  
Lorelei Nicoll  
Hon. Ben Jessome  
Hon. Keith Irving  
Ali Duale  
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

Carman Kerr  
Ronnie LeBlanc  
Fred Tilley

THE CLERK: For, 43. Against, 0.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mx. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 208.

**Bill No. 208 - Environment Act (amended).**

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

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mx. Speaker, I now ask that Bill No. 208 be now read for a second time.

Mx. Speaker, the federal government is requiring all provinces and territories to put a higher price on carbon. I want to begin my opening remarks with an analysis of some of the facts and to go over some of the foundational parts of the amendments that are being proposed here in Bill No. 208.

Nova Scotia is committed to reducing our carbon footprint. We are leaders in this area. That leadership has been achieved by the contributions of all parties in this Chamber. That didn't happen overnight. That was a lot of work over the last 15 or 20 years.

Nova Scotia wants to continue to reduce our carbon footprint because it's the right thing to do. It's the necessary thing to do for our communities, our province, and our planet.

The Nova Scotia government has a solid plan to reduce our carbon footprint and our plan is threefold. First, last Fall we introduced the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, an Act that contains 28 goals to address climate change and ensure the health and sustainability of our environment. Many of the goals in this legislation will help Nova Scotia reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

For example, the legislation commits Nova Scotia to closing coal-fired electricity plants by 2030. That legislation commits us to work towards sourcing 80 per cent of our energy from renewable sources by 2030, as well. The legislation also requires the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables to work with partners and Nova

Scotians to place more hybrid and electric vehicles on our roads, and there is much, much more.

Action is well under way across government on many of these goals. In addition to the legislated goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, we're also amending the Environment Act. These actions will create a new system called the Output-Based Pricing System. This will require an incentivized industry to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

To be very clear, Mx. Speaker, this is not a tax on industry. What this is is not a tax on consumers, either. The output-based pricing system places a compliance cost on industry. To call it a tax on industry is inaccurate.

The third part of our plan is the climate plan, which we will share later this year. It will have more granular details on the actions we will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach our legislated targets here in Nova Scotia.

Mx. Speaker, together with these three initiatives, we will exceed the new federal requirements aimed at reducing carbon. They will also meet or exceed our 2030 target, which is the most ambitious in Canada.

Those are some fundamental facts. About 50 per cent of our greenhouse gas emissions emitted each year in Nova Scotia are from the electricity sector and large industry. I'd like to emphasize that the proposal we submitted to the federal government is focused on these large industries and only on industry.

However, we continue to say to the federal government that now is not the time for a federal carbon tax on other sources of greenhouse gas emissions, which would increase the cost at the pump and for home heating at a time when Nova Scotians can least afford it.

Again, Mx. Speaker, the Output-Based Pricing System proposed in Bill No. 208 is not a carbon tax. It is a price on carbon for industry to hold them accountable for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. There is nothing in this legislation that covers or taxes emissions emitted by consumer gasoline or consumer home heating fuels.

It is possible that the federal government will still choose to implement their consumer carbon tax on gasoline and home heating fuels. The federal government needs to speak to their choice to penalize Nova Scotians in that way, should they choose to do so.

Our government's position continues to be that Nova Scotia does not need a federal consumer carbon tax to motivate Nova Scotians to reduce their carbon footprint. Nova Scotians are motivated to do this because they want a better today and a prosperous, clean future.

Mx. Speaker, the Output-Based Pricing System we are proposing is not an alternative to a federal consumer carbon tax. It is designed specifically to hold industry in Nova Scotia to account. If the federal government imposes a carbon tax on consumer gas, diesel, and home heating fuel, Nova Scotia still plans to proceed with our Output-Based Pricing System for industry and Nova Scotia Power, because holding them accountable for reducing their emissions is a necessary part of our plan to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Bill No. 208 does not propose or include a consumer carbon tax. I want to assure all Nova Scotians that we continue to make it very clear to the federal government that a federal consumer carbon tax on gasoline, diesel, and home heating fuels is not needed in Nova Scotia to meet our greenhouse gas emission targets.

Mx. Speaker, Nova Scotians from Sydney to Yarmouth are committed to reducing their carbon emissions because it's the right thing to do for our planet. It's the right thing to do for our province. It's the right thing to do for our quality of life today, and because Nova Scotians want to ensure that their children and grandchildren have a livable planet.

Nova Scotians don't need a harmful federal carbon tax to motivate them to do the right thing. Rather, Bill No. 208 focuses exclusively on holding industry accountable for reducing their carbon emissions. These amendments will allow us to create this new system for Nova Scotia industry. It will allow us to develop the supporting regulations and standards that industry needs to participate in the new system. These regulations will also provide the details of which facilities can participate on a voluntary basis.

This will also create the Nova Scotia Climate Change Fund to help the province respond and adapt to climate change. This new fund will have more flexibility, include an equity lens, and be broader in scope than the Green Fund so that we can invest in climate change priorities.

It will repeal the cap and trade program after all companies participating in that program have completed their compliance requirements for the 2019-22 period.

Our plan will hold Nova Scotia Power and industry accountable to do their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to do so in a way that aligns with and supports our provincial targets.

Bill No. 208 sets up emissions reduction targets for industry, and these are also called facility performance standards. If emitters do not meet their target, they will have to pay a carbon price. The price has been established by the federal government at \$65 per tonne of greenhouse gases in 2023, increasing by \$15 annually to \$170 per tonne of greenhouse gases in 2030. Our goal is to have large industrial emitters reduce their emissions by switching to clean energy sources and by making their operations more energy efficient.

The new system is in addition to other existing climate policies for the electricity sector, namely phasing out coal, producing 80 per cent renewable electricity and reducing electricity sector emissions significantly by 2030. Together, these policies will reduce electricity sector emissions by at least 85 per cent to 90 per cent by 2030.

The alternative to a Nova Scotia-designed Output-Based Pricing System for industry is a federally imposed Output-Based Pricing System for industry. They both focus on industrial emissions; however, the federal system will have a higher impact on power rates, about an 8 per cent increase. In contrast, Mx. Speaker, Nova Scotia's designed and implemented Output-Based Pricing System will achieve the emission reductions that would be achieved under the federal system but at a significantly lower cost for our province.

In summary, the 28 goals and targets in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, together with our forthcoming climate plan and this proposed new Output-Based Pricing System for large industrial emitters will cut Nova Scotia's total emissions by at least 53 per cent from 2005 levels by the year 2030, and it will set us on a pathway to net zero by 2050. This 2030 target is the most ambitious in Canada, and Nova Scotia is proud of that leadership.

Our government's plan does not include and does not require a consumer carbon tax at the pumps on the fuels that Nova Scotians depend on to heat their homes. I want to be crystal clear that the consumer carbon tax is a Government of Canada policy that they need to answer to.

We remain confident that we are doing the work here in Nova Scotia to exceed the new federal targets to reduce carbon pollution, and we can do so in a way that is less costly to Nova Scotians than a federal consumer carbon tax at the pumps and on home heating fuels.

We are confident that the federal government will accept our Output-Based Pricing System proposal for large industry, which covers about half of our greenhouse gas emissions, and truly hope that they won't impose a federal carbon tax on the other half.

Mx. Speaker, I look forward to hearing the comments from my colleagues on Bill No. 208.

**THE SPEAKER:** The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

**HON. IAIN RANKIN:** It's a pleasure to rise to speak on this bill. I think it is sad that we're at the point that we are now. After a year since this government has taken over, they have shown no progress in negotiating with the federal government on how we move forward on climate change - one of the defining issues of our time, and certainly my generation.



[9:30 p.m.]

I want to start by tabling for the benefit of the House the agreement to which all provinces - the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, which I know the minister is up to speed on. I respect the minister and his work. I'll preface with that. I know he cares about the environment.

But this change does bother me, and specific to this, which is a cornerstone of this agreement that we signed in 2017 when I was Minister of Environment, on Page 7 it's very clear that the requirements we signed on were to look at options. It's not very complicated. "The benchmark outlines that jurisdictions can implement" either "an explicit price-based system" - and this is the pricing on carbon - requirement. This is important, because any reputable economist that I've ever read on anything to do with the environment knows that the most effective way, if you believe climate change is real, to reduce carbon emissions is carbon pricing. That's why it's a cornerstone of this agreement.

The benchmark outlines that jurisdictions can implement an explicit price-based system, which is either "a carbon tax or a carbon levy and performance-based emissions system" or cap and trade. Very simple. I'm going to table this.

I think it's important Nova Scotians know that the prior government chose cap and trade after vigorous, tough negotiation. My predecessor in the Department of Environment actually walked out on a meeting. The Premier at the time said that there would be no carbon tax in Nova Scotia. There was a line in the sand.

Regardless of what members think about carbon pricing, in Nova Scotia we realized it was happening. Our legal opinion said that constitutionally it's going to happen. So we chose to try to find what was in the public interest of Nova Scotia. That is the duty of the Nova Scotia government when you're elected as an MLA and especially as a minister of the Crown.

It's important, because the other option from cap and trade is an explicit carbon price - what they call broad-based carbon tax, which we see in British Columbia. They had it there before this agreement existed, for some time. It's a revenue-neutral carbon tax.

I'm not going to go over the merits and all the pros and cons of all the different systems, but the other option within that explicit carbon tax is performance-based emission systems with a carbon levy. What we have here with this bill before the House is the performance-based system with a carbon levy. They omit the carbon levy part. They continuously talk about "if" the federal government wants - it's not "if." That was five years ago; that was three or four court challenges ago.

The PC government is choosing the hybrid system because it's clear - and I'm tabling this tonight - they're choosing carbon levy and performance-based emission

systems. I'll table that for the benefit of the House. There's much more important stuff in that document, but that is speaking to the exact point of the bill tonight.

Now, climate issues are tough. We have an existential threat that we're dealing with here in this province, especially a coastal province and the country. There's a lot of work to do, and it's going to cost consumers some money. When the federal government was elected, they made a priority out of this, of fighting climate change, as did I, when I ran for Premier.

This bill is a step backwards. They're abdicating the responsibility to be able to do that in the most cost-effective way. They're doing less for the environment in fact, and they're costing consumers more because they're choosing this hybrid system. They can blame it on whoever they want. They can blame it on Trudeau. They can praise Trudeau when he's doing stuff for child care, praise Trudeau when he's giving money for a myriad of programs that benefit all of your constituencies, and then bash him when it's politically convenient. This is nothing but politics that has been played out every year, reminiscent of the Harper years, reminiscent of Stéphane Dion's election when he broached the topic of carbon taxes in the mid-2000s. That's the challenge we have here tonight.

The provincial government would have you believe that this performance-based system is a so-called made in Nova Scotia, when the legislation is removing the made-in-Nova Scotia cap and trade system that we negotiated, that took into account where the cap is, that took into account the work that Nova Scotians have done over all three parties' governments - NDP prior to us and the PC governments - because we had an increased cost in our power, in our electricity especially, and that took some time, as I said, to rigorously negotiate.

I remember being the Environment Minister and trying to figure out which option we would choose and my Premier at the time, Premier McNeil, was clear with me, no carbon tax. That was hard for me to try to figure out, how am I going to find a system and negotiate with staff who recommended that a carbon tax would be the way to go, which I think other provinces have seen as well? Cap and trade is not easy, it's a complex system that involves trading, it involves setting up a system, it involves signing agreements with a reputable organization, which we did - the Western Climate Initiative.

The reason why we landed on that is because the federal government agreed, ultimately. It took some evidence showing where we've been, the cost of electricity, the fact that we don't have access to hydro power the way that Central Canada does, the cheap hydro power that Québec has and Ontario. We have a challenge to get off coal so carbon pricing hits us harder.

Beyond the principle of whether you agree on carbon pricing or not, you have to be a pragmatic government and understand that your role is to look out for the public interests and general welfare of the people. We managed to find a program that protected the

pocketbooks of Nova Scotians, that allowed us to invest in the environment, and which this government will continue to incur roughly \$30 million each time there's an auction. That's the kind of program that the Premier called some kind of fake program, or something like that. "Oh, it's not even a program, it's a stopgap." Well, I can tell you that tens of millions of dollars in efficiency programs, and all these programs, make a real difference to reduce emissions in this province and have been.

It's funny because some of these programs, like incentives for electric vehicles, I was ridiculed for. I and the member for Kings South announced them on Day 1, and now they're using the very funds that came out of the auction to make announcements.

I'll mention some of the programs that are at risk with this legislation going through and deleting the Green Fund: the SolarHomes Program, offering rebates to homeowners installing solar panels; Affordable Multi-Family Housing Programs, which provide incentives of energy efficiency upgrades in affordable housing projects; the Small Business And Non-Profit Energy Solutions Program, which offers incentives for energy efficiency upgrades in small businesses and non-profits; and \$2 million over five years for the Clean Leadership Summer Internship Program that allows youth interns to work on climate change projects across the province. That was early in February before - this is while the leadership race is going on, I guess - Minister Wilson announced that. That was \$18 million from the Green Fund.

Then within weeks after that, we announced another \$19 million that came out of the cap and trade program in rebates to support low-income families. This is where we put even more money into the HomeWarming program, and even more money into the Affordable Multifamily Housing energy efficiency program. This is targeted at people who need it the most, the people who were disproportionately impacted by climate change. This is where targeted funding should be going when you're raising revenues from polluters, fossil fuels.

Then we were pioneers in bringing in rebates for e-bikes, and not only electric vehicles but also used electric vehicles. Again, I remember in the election there were letters sent out to strategic ridings where the Premier thought that that would not be popular, and yet now they have a target that looks at increasing electric vehicles in ridings, but I'll give credit to the government. They have certainly shifted their language around the climate. I don't know if there are climate deniers in the caucus; there certainly were before, when I heard the rhetoric before the election.

The bottom line is this legislation removes a program that did more for the environment, that raised revenue for the environment, that this government will not be able to raise. I know the minister - benefit of the doubt - there's a new fund, a climate change fund. Where is that revenue coming from? Are these performance-based standards? How does that compute? Does it cost anyone any more money? Our programs cost the consumers one cent a litre at the pump, 1 per cent on electricity bills, and yet millions of

dollars targeted at low-income Nova Scotians - again, the people who are impacted the most. That's the principle behind it. (Applause)

Now they have a new fund that's supposedly more flexible. I don't know what that means. I suppose that means that politically they can put it off to whatever projects that they want instead of having strict parameters that make sure that it protects the environment and has the principle of helping people who need it the most.

I can't support something that does less for the environment, that only takes up 40 per cent of emitting sources, by the admission of the minister. It completely ignores the rest of the emitting sources in the province. The cap and trade program covered 80 per cent - double - and minimized the cost to consumers.

It's hard to fight climate change and realize that there is a cost, but we struck that balance - I believe perfectly - with our negotiations. It took hard work, and it was strained relations. Look, we're the same parties - federal, provincial government - trying to find a way that we endorsed a climate carbon pricing plan, and then you had Conservative provinces that were not willing to sign on to that agreement that I tabled earlier. In fact, the last two holdouts were Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Manitoba signed on at the eleventh hour and brought in carbon pricing because they knew they wouldn't win in court. Saskatchewan held out and said, we're still going to fight it in court, and they lost.

So what's happening today? The Province of Nova Scotia is supporting a carbon levy. It's de facto, but they are implicitly saying a carbon tax is coming by choosing the hybrid option and bringing in these performance standards. Carbon levy is coming, and it's very interesting because the federal Conservatives, which I don't know if they're aligned with - sometimes I guess they pick and choose whom they're aligned with, but the new leader of the federal Conservatives keeps talking about how the carbon tax is tripling, it's about to triple with the new guidelines.

Well, guess what? Here in Nova Scotia, heh, we wish it was tripling. It's going to be times 10. We're at one cent a litre; with this new government's policy, 10 cents a litre, 11 cents a litre starting off in 2023 and going higher than that, and I'm not okay with that. These ministers are okay with that. The Premier is okay with that for political gain, so he can have a fight instead of doing the work, sitting down, and trying to negotiate a better deal.

I know there are critics who want to say, well, this is cap and trade, it's complicated, maybe the system will have some challenges going forward. We're at \$50 a tonne. I don't accept that there will be any more challenges when you go to \$65 a tonne in 2023 that can't be mitigated. I just don't accept it. When you go to \$170 a tonne in 2030, let's talk about that then. We're eight years away from that. Why not protect consumers right now? Why not make sure that they only pay one cent a litre in 2023?

[9:45 p.m.]

What they're doing is actually saying, bring the carbon levy in. We're just going to call it the Liberal carbon tax. We'll all be fine. We'll all be fine as long as we just label things Liberal. We'll be fine in the next election. All these low-income Nova Scotians will be fine. We have a new plan. We have a new fund. We'll find some money somewhere. We have this made-in-Nova Scotia option for performance standards.

It's so made-in-Nova Scotia that in 2007, Alberta brought in the same God-darned thing - specified gas emitters regulation is what it was called. It was a PC government in Alberta. Funny how Progressive Conservatives out that way (Interruption) Prentice was the Leader, actually. It's funny to go back in history. It's almost like the government thinks people aren't really paying attention to the whole discussion around carbon pricing and how far it has gone in five years.

They had those - what are they calling it here? - output-based performance standards. It's all the same thing. The plan is to reduce the impact on Nova Scotia Power and industry, which is fine. It's actually better than a broad-based carbon tax. It saves what it would have been on power bills, I think they said in the release. It would have been 8 per cent and now it's 2 per cent. Our plan was 1 per cent.

Because of their plan, they're going to make sure that every Nova Scotian, every time they fill up at the pump, is going to pay a double-digit increase at the gas pump. What does that do to groceries? What does that do to small businesses? What does that do to seniors? That's why I'm not okay with it, and that's why I'll never support this.

They have completely given away our negotiating position. There were articles talking about how Nova Scotia had an insanely lower price than New Brunswick. That's because we did the work and we negotiated, and the federal government recognized that. How can this government bring in something like this and stomach the biggest increase to fuel and power in the carbon pricing regime in the whole country under their watch? As I said, this is half of the hybrid option. It's very clear. It's a de facto endorsement of the carbon levy that will come in and add costs to fuel.

That is why, in fact, Alberta had the carbon levy after 2007. In order for them to sign on to that agreement, they had carbon levies at the fuel pump.

It's interesting that we asked in Question Period, I think, every sitting as we started off because we knew that this was coming to the forefront, what's happening? What are the discussions? All we heard was politics around your Liberal people in Ottawa, blah, blah, blah. Why not talk to the neighbours here in Atlantic Canada with an Atlantic approach around a cap and trade system? Show them the success that we have had. Show them that we bring in tens of millions of dollars per year and still protect consumers in

these dire inflationary times. Why not entertain talking to other jurisdictions that have cap and trade, as I did?

I'm pretty sure the minister is doing these types of things. Maybe he can elucidate on those discussions in the response. But certainly Quebec has cap and trade. California, the biggest economy in the United States, has cap and trade. It's a system that is designed to find the lowest cost reduction, and that's where the trading comes into place. The criticism is there was no trading in Nova Scotia. So what? You still save people money.

Don't you think Nova Scotia can continue to be a leader, and talk to our neighbours about how successful it has been here? Don't you think that it's a positive thing that the fuel suppliers bought their credits at an auction, and it only cost consumers one cent a litre? Why aren't we all celebrating that? But it doesn't surprise me because that caucus voted against cap and trade. The reality is that if they were in government in 2017, this is the system we'd have, the same as you see in other provinces, where Nova Scotians would be paying way more at the pump and their power bills would be higher. They're proving it here tonight with this legislation, because they're more interested in having a political battle that has already played out on the national stage.

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled on this - even Saskatchewan after they lost. I don't understand it. Saskatchewan, when they asked Premier Moe, what are you going to do now? Well, I guess we're going to have to figure out a system. Because it's clear in Section 164 in the federal Act that only provinces with their own plans can decide what to do with the revenue. It's funny, I hear the government say they still want the revenue. We're going to fight them and we're going to call it Liberal - we're going to bring in half of what they're asking for, and then they're going to ask for the money.

That's the challenge here. We're all provincial politicians who are supposed to be looking out for provincial public interest, not trying to play these kinds of games. I guess the only advantage they have is that there's a different party in office in Ottawa. That is the challenge, but mark my words: propane, natural gas, oil - and by the way, Nova Scotia after P.E.I. has the highest percentage of people heating their homes with oil. Gas, diesel, all these things will be open to the carbon levy that is coming because there were three options: carbon tax, hybrid, and cap and trade.

We know cap and trade is eligible. We've established that. We know the government has removed cap and trade, which has existed for five years and has been successful by all accounts. We know this government is complicit in bringing the carbon levy here to this province. So every Nova Scotian, remember when you're fueling up at the pump, when you see that you have to spend an extra 10 cents a litre in 2023 - and that's going to go up more and more - know that there was another option.

This government lacks vision. They are harming the environment by pulling away the revenue in the Green Fund. They are harming consumers, small businesses, seniors, the

people who have contributed the least to climate change, living in low-income scenarios. They are going to be hurt the most because of this de facto support for the carbon levy on top of performance targets.

For that reason, cap and trade is the way to go in this province right now, and until the minister can prove me wrong - I don't think he can. The staff may want carbon tax, which they did in 2017, which is the preferred option for some, even some on the environment side. But in Nova Scotia you have to consider our unique position and our unique disadvantages for having access to clean energy.

It is only recently that wind and solar have come down so much in price. My colleague would know. That's why we started the tender that the new government has successfully gone through with the 350 megawatts of winds, 5.3 cents a megawatt, I think, for pricing.

We have to understand that this is going to impact Nova Scotians big time. So I think we should put politics aside, go back to the negotiating table, tell them we want cap and trade and, if it's \$65 a tonne, so be it, the cap will come down. Maybe we pay 1.5 cents or 2 cents - not 11 cents in 2023. They want to give the extreme example to what it is going to be in 2030, when they are out of government - hopefully far out of government.

We've got a long way to go to 2030, and yes, we should prepare, we should model. I knew the modelling was happening before, but what is this rush to have this political battle that has already played out in western Canada right now?

Why give up all this revenue? Why renege on the agreement that was signed by virtually every province in this country to tackle the defining issue of our time?

I was actually shocked that they continued with my commitment to get off coal by 2030, but sometimes I wonder if they are just happy with putting those things in legislation and just leaving it there with goals. We see that with protected areas, for sure, but with coal and everything else, I don't see any effort. In fact, the two Langan plants are delayed again with when they're going to close down. They have no plan to get off coal. Do you think the federal government is going to give any money when they're fighting them in court?

Do you think there is any leverage now with them going with this half-hybrid approach to try to get the Atlantic Loop built, and other infrastructure built to upgrade the line in Salisbury, New Brunswick, to ensure that we have more capacity, more battery storage? Do you think the federal government is going to be a good partner when you are trying to fight these old battles?

You can say what you want about it not being a battle and not being partisan, but I guarantee you that none of them are going to make a speech without saying the word

“Liberal” every time they talk about carbon pricing over there. Because they know it’s a weapon. It’s the smallness of politics.

[10:00 p.m.]

They know it invokes feelings about Stéphane Dion and the erroneous belief that Stephen Harper had with not explaining to the other side that Stéphane Dion was actually going to reduce income tax by the same amount and have it be revenue-neutral.

I’m not going to get too far into the carbon pricing. That’s for another night. The main point is that this bill covers half of what our system did. It does less for the environment. It exposes consumers. It hurts our energy-intensive businesses - businesses that support carbon pricing and the way that it has been operating in the Pan-Canadian Framework, like Michelin, one of the biggest employers in our province.

Our ask is to get back to the table. I can’t really figure out when the negotiations started or if they even started at all, or if they knew they would have this battle the whole time.

But the battle is five years too late. It has been established. There’s only one way to stop this impact, this sticker shock to Nova Scotians, and that’s by getting back to work. As it is now, the only people responsible - don’t blame the feds. This was established five years ago. This is what the courts have defined. The only people responsible for all your constituents who will pay more at the pump, more on their bills and home heating, are all those MLAs on the other side of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I’m somewhat pleased to get up and speak to this bill. I have a great deal of respect for my colleague - the former Minister of Environment, the former Premier, the member for Timberlea-Prospect. I know he understands this file deeply and cares about our province and our environment deeply, so I have a deep respect for the remarks that have just been made. I will just try to add a few other points.

The minister began his remarks by saying that this government has a solid plan to make sure that we do our part to participate in climate change mitigation. He outlined the fact that they introduced the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act - EGCCRA. I can never remember the full name of it, but the big environmental goals bill last year. He outlined that they are introducing this piece of legislation tonight, and he outlined that there will be a climate plan sometime later this year.

Mx. Speaker, this is not, in my opinion, a solid plan. The Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act is a good piece of legislation, but people in this House may recall that when we debated it, the Liberals and we in the NDP introduced several



amendments. In fact, on the night that the piece of legislation was introduced, there was a rally outside with many respected and learned people from the environment and climate change community - sorry, I hope I'm not keeping anyone up over there - who were yelling outside the building to amend the legislation. So we in the NDP and the Liberals introduced many amendments to the legislation - I think 19 from our side. I believe two, one from the Liberals and one from the NDP, were passed.

Although it was a good piece of legislation, most of what we wanted to amend about it was to give it some more teeth, to give it some benchmarks, to give the goals some places to go, to sort of implement a plan in the legislation. None of that happened.

Tonight's piece of legislation is a half of a hybrid model. I guess that's a quarter. I don't know. If you think of a hybrid being half and half, then half of a hybrid is a quarter. So we've got a quarter piece of legislation on carbon pricing, and then we have a climate plan that is, frankly, nowhere to be seen.

I will say right now that I have deep respect for the people who are writing that plan and working on that plan in the department. I know they are deeply committed to the environment. I really do. They've spent years and months working on this - but we need to see it. We need to see what the plan is that is going to come into place to implement this flagship piece of legislation that makes us the "leaders" in Canada.

I just want to start with those remarks. That's our solid plan. We've got a piece of legislation with no regulations and teeth. We've got half of a a hybrid, and we've got no plan. That's our solid plan.

Frankly, one doesn't blame the federal government for rejecting the made-in-Nova-Scotia proposal that's better than a carbon tax, but on behalf of the federal government. When I heard that, I thought this is never going to be accepted - and guess what? It wasn't accepted. The next thing that the government does is talk about how we're going to have this output-based performance system. Big press release, big press conference about it, and it doesn't encapsulate anything about carbon pricing except for large emitters.

Now I will say that to have a plan for large emitters, for Nova Scotia Power and Lafarge, and hopefully other large emitters that choose to enter the plan, that's great. We need that. It will cover around 40, 45 per cent of emissions in Nova Scotia. That's good, but as my colleague has said, what happens to everyone else? What happens to home heating fuel? What happens to the price of gas at the pumps? This government and this minister are set to cause a political war in Nova Scotia between the Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals, frankly, on this issue, and it is the fault of this government for not doing anything about it.

The minister said in his opening remarks it is possible to not have a tax. The federal government needs to speak to their choice to burden Nova Scotians. I'm sorry, I take great

issue with that. Not that I'm a big fan of our federal government by any stretch, but the fact is that this government has to bear the burden of inaction on this plan. They have not proposed a plan that was in any way a plausible plan that was going to be accepted by the federal government. The federal government has a legislated price on carbon.

We need some kind of way of combatting the climate crisis, and there are many ways to get at that. My learned colleague next to me has outlined many of them - I know, that's maybe a stretch. The fact is that this political bantering is smoke and mirrors. This government is going to blame the Liberal federal government for its inaction on the climate. It doesn't matter how great our plan is, it doesn't matter how great our legislation is, we have to be doing something practically, and they offered the government a half a plan.

The government has had over a year since it has taken office, and five years since we knew that this was going to have to happen. The government has had over a year to put together a plan that would meet the requirements of the federal government, and because of this government, Nova Scotians will be facing a carbon tax. This government is now trying to blame everyone else for what was very clear would occur and has occurred in other provinces, as we've heard tonight. It's excellent and well and good to have an environmental goals bill with lots of targets, but with no plan to explain how we will get there that meets federal requirements, it is simply not good enough.

This government is pretending to be surprised and outraged that the federal government won't accept a plan that says let us keep doing what we've been doing, and we were going to do it anyway. There's nothing new in the plan that was introduced to the federal government. This government wants Nova Scotians to think that it is only an either-or, they can afford their bills or they can tackle the climate crisis. We know, and Nova Scotians know, that it isn't true. A real climate plan from this government would set out how we meet our targets and help people afford their bills.

It can happen through rebates, through people electrifying their homes and making them more efficient, and getting Nova Scotia Power off coal, but getting homes more efficient and thereby lowering their bills. There are all kinds of other things that can happen.

But it requires a plan and a government with a vision, instead of a government that is having knee-jerk reactions to federal regulations. The government says that we in the Opposition won't help them oppose a carbon tax, that it will be our fault if there's a carbon tax imposed on Nova Scotians.

What we in the NDP won't do, Mx. Speaker, is participate in the tantrum about something they knew was coming all along but simply failed to prepare for. We will participate in putting forward good ideas and planning for the future of Nova Scotia, where people can afford to live, pay their rent, pay their bills, be comfortable in their homes, and also live in a sustainable environment that is protected by good policy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: It is again an honour to rise in this House and speak to Bill No. 208 tonight. I have had the opportunity to speak on my friend, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's previous bill last Fall. It was an honour to do that, and I'm very honoured to do it again tonight.

I want to thank the minister for his leadership in putting this bill forward. I believe that as we get into the discussion about this as the legislation goes through, this will give Nova Scotians an opportunity to see that this is a good plan, for sure.

I also want to recognize the former Premier and former Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the member for Timberlea-Prospect. He is very passionate, and I appreciate his passion in his remarks tonight. I do want to recognize that. Just for your knowledge, I will not say the word "Liberal" in this speech once tonight. (Interruption) Oh, I did, okay.

In my short time here, I have come to recognize that there are times when we put legislation forward where we all come together and we all agree, but there are also times when we have legislation that we're going to disagree on. That gives Nova Scotians an opportunity to view different perspectives. I'm here to rise in my place tonight to represent many voices that I speak to in a rural constituency like Kings West.

Mx. Speaker, Nova Scotians want action to address climate change, and I think each of us in this chamber shares this desire. We are seeing the impact of climate change in Nova Scotia now. Stronger storms, rising sea levels, droughts, and other impacts are being seen today, and these will become more severe in the future. In response, we passed bold new legislation last fall, the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. That is our framework to address climate change and reduce our carbon footprint.

Nova Scotia's future is clean energy, and industry has a critical role to both cut through emissions today and speed up their transition from fossil fuels to clean sources of energy to fuel their operations. The Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act commits us to closing coal-fired power plants and reaching at least 80 per cent renewable energy in the province by the year 2030. It commits us to doing more to transition away from gas- and diesel-fueled vehicles and get more hybrids and electric vehicles on our roads, including the buses we use for public transportation. We need to move people from oil furnaces to heat pumps and other forms of energy to power our homes and businesses. We need to make our homes and buildings more energy-efficient, warmer, and more comfortable.

At this point, I would like to speak about a few of the initiatives happening in Kings West, as we see a lot of great initiatives happening in regard to the transition to greener, cleaner energy. I would like to mention a new solar farm project happening in the Berwick

area - 12 acres of solar panels will be on the side of Highway No. 101 very soon. It will be a great sight to drive down Highway No. 101 and look and see 12 acres of solar panels. That's going to create a lot of power for the community.

[10:15 p.m.]

I also want to mention that Berwick will partner with towns like Mahone Bay and Antigonish in the area project - great initiatives, community-based initiatives to provide alternatives like wind power to allow people to be off the grid from Nova Scotia Power. These are initiatives that my community is a leader in in Nova Scotia and I am proud to speak about them.

This legislation, Bill No. 208, combined with the coming climate plan, the Coastal Protection Act, the regulations and the new, Output-Based Pricing System for industry, as outlined in Bill No. 208, will ensure that we are well-equipped to respond to climate change.

In contrast, while we want to hold industry and Nova Scotia Power more accountable for reducing their carbon emissions, the federal government wants Nova Scotians, families, seniors, students, people trying to get to work, to pay more for gas, as much as 14 cents or more to start. Our government wants to hold industry and Nova Scotia Power accountable to do more to reduce their carbon footprint. Bill No. 208 will do this.

In contrast, Ottawa wants seniors and families and students to pay more to heat their homes by imposing their carbon tax on the people of Nova Scotia. Ottawa wants to force a carbon tax that will go up each year on Nova Scotians, a very punitive tax on everyday people like the people I represent in Kings West.

Ottawa's carbon tax will not only increase the price of gas, diesel, and home-heating fuel but also the goods and services that every Nova Scotian depends on - groceries, clothing, building materials, school supplies and much more. Many farmers I speak with in Kings West are very concerned about this.

This tax will force businesses to increase their prices. A federal carbon tax will hit all Nova Scotians - single parents, families, rural Nova Scotians like those I represent and who must drive to get to work, seniors who rely on taxis for appointments or to shop for groceries.

The federal government says Nova Scotia needs this carbon tax to lower our carbon footprint. On this side of the aisle, we do not believe that. Nova Scotians have been reducing their carbon footprint and fighting climate change for years without a harmful carbon tax. We are leaders. We have been taking action because it is the right thing to do, because climate change is impacting our communities now and we want to leave a livable planet to our children and grandchildren.

Nova Scotia has a record of success. In 2020, our emissions were 36 per cent below the 2005 levels - the second-highest reduction in the country. We did this by investing in renewable energy and energy-efficient program becoming national leaders.

Mx. Speaker, Nova Scotians know what to do. They can be proud of the work they are doing to reduce their carbon footprint and fight climate change for years without a harmful federal carbon tax. They also expect their government to stand up for them and find solutions. Our government has been fighting back and standing up to Ottawa on their consumer carbon tax.

The plan that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change has developed with his staff in this legislation is not a consumer tax. It is a new system to replace cap and trade that is only for industrial emitters. Our government's plan for reducing our carbon emissions, the goals in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, the coming climate plan, the Coastal Protection Act, regulations in this new system for industry, are better than the consumer carbon tax. Our plan creates opportunities for Nova Scotians rather than forcing them, through a financial penalty, to lower their carbon footprint.

Our plan will create jobs and businesses and export opportunities in the green economy and green efficiency sector - wind, solar, tidal, offshore wind, and green hydrogen. We will stop burning coal by 2030 and put more affordable electric vehicles on our roads. We will make our homes, businesses and other buildings more energy-efficient, bringing down power bills.

Our plan will cut Nova Scotia's total emissions by at least 53 per cent from 2005 levels by the year 2030 and set us on the pathway to net zero by 2050.

In comparison, the federal 2030 target is only 40 to 45 per cent. In other words, our plan will exceed the federal government's 2030 carbon tax goal and do it without a harmful new federal consumer carbon tax targeting Nova Scotians.

In closing, Mx. Speaker, Bill No. 208 lays the groundwork for a truly made-in-Nova Scotia solution. This solution is better than the carbon tax. It is important for Nova Scotians to know that this government has their back on energy prices, and they'll continue to have their back in the legislation before this House.

With that, I will take my seat, and I thank you very much for the opportunity to represent the people of Kings West.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I just wanted to make a few comments, just hearing the conversation. Really appreciate the comments from the other side. I've always

had a good relationship with the minister and them both, but I just want to get on the record a couple of things. I apologize, I forget the official name of the member's riding. Kings West, okay.

Again, I appreciate the comments from the member from Kings West, too, but the member from Kings West just essentially talked about what we did over the last number of years and made the argument for us. Berwick was part of the Antigonish project I signed off on when I was Minister of Energy and Mines. That was all done through the funds that we generated through cap and trade. Our relationship with the federal government was exceptionally strong when it came to building all of these efficiency programs. We expanded the efficiency program just from electrically heated homes into homes from other heating sources. We built the best solar program in the country, we saw an increase in solar installation companies from the tune of 13 to 70 in a year, and the list really goes on and on.

This was all as a result of the hard negotiations from my colleague and others, and I want to recognize staff, too, as well, because I believe some of them went to the Department of Environment and Climate Change and some of them are in the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, and they were fantastic. They were wizards when it came to this stuff, and their function always was to do what was in the best interest of our most vulnerable Nova Scotians. That's why we expanded all of the programs. That's why we built the incentives. They worked day and night on this stuff - the retrofits of 28 and 400 Mi'kmaw homes in communities across the province.

These are historic investments with a strong relationship with the federal government, after tough negotiations to get to the cap and trade program that was in place that generated millions of dollars that's going to be gone, that funded all of these programs that have been so beneficial to Nova Scotians, from Yarmouth to Sydney.

That's my concern with this, and the member really made the argument for me. He used - again, we're in a debate, right? Those were programs that were designed based on the hard negotiations and the strong relationship we had with the federal government over the last number of years. What I see concerning - and I actually think the minister is in a tough spot, because I know him and I know the staff that works with him, and they're trying their best in a political environment where I believe the Premier's Office wants to fight. They want the fight. They want the fight with the federal government.

I've seen this transition from when the government first took office, to distancing themselves from the federal Conservatives - they wanted to work closely with the federal government. The Premier was referencing the Prime Minister by first name, I think, at their first official meeting - one of their first official meetings - and now we're fast-forwarding to now. I've said this to the federal MPs in the province, that the goal now is that we went through years of stability, we went through years of hard negotiation, we kept the price off consumers. As my colleague has said, this plan is going to add 10 cents a litre,

approximately, to gas and diesel and furnace oil - but now they want the fight. You see it in the messaging. I'm not up here with a script or anything, I just want to provide some history here. This is important.

Nova Scotia was a world leader, can still be a world leader. One of the reasons why we were is because we had such a strong relationship with the federal government and we negotiated cap and trade, which generated millions of dollars of revenue, and as the Minister of Energy and Mines at the time, we used to build all of these programs. We were an international leader. Hey, the NDP played a part in that as well. We had an emergency debate on this a few years back, where we've always said that the goals from Nova Scotia transcended governments. It didn't matter at the time - this government putting forward a plan - we had a plan, the NDP at the time.

We were all looking at the potential of the Bay of Fundy - I'm sure this government still is - when it comes to generating clean energy. The infrastructure that's necessary for the intertie, that's all stuff that we championed and talked about as well. They're doing the same thing, and it's great.

I did want to get on my feet because I was hearing the comments that were coming, and particularly when you mentioned Berwick. It sparked something with me, because that was a program that involved a few communities. Those programs and projects and initiatives were all based on such a strong relationship with the federal government and a cap and trade program that generated money that allowed us to leverage even more money from the federal government to build these solar farms. It was such a great day when we had the 13 Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia sign on to this historic - the first time in Canada that something like this has happened. We're retrofitting 2,400 homes. This was all built on these programs, the expansion of everything.

I'm starting to ask, where does the money come from, from here? We have built all these programs and we have kept power rates low. We kept gas prices low. We kept furnace oil low. We kept, to the best of our ability, keeping these levels low for folks and expanding the programs so they could continue to save money.

We talked about the number I used to use, that all of the incentive programs that we put in over the years saved Nova Scotians \$900 annually on their power bills because they were able to access a lot of these programs. People were taking up solar. It was awesome - 13 to 70 companies in a year, based on the incentives that were put in place. I'm happy to see the government continuing down the path they see the importance of.

The ability to expand all of our efficiency programs, that a lot of homes never qualified for, we had the ability because of these funds and a strong relationship and cap and trade that we were able to do a lot of this stuff. Government is continuing with it. They see the importance of it.

That's good, but I had to get up because I'm kind of inspired by my friend here - you won't find somebody probably in Nova Scotia who has more knowledge on the history of this stuff. He got it when he was the minister and when he was the Premier. This was important to him. It mattered. He knew, as he says, this is one of the issues of our generation and the generations to come that we're going to be continuously battling.

I see the fight coming. I see the messaging coming. I see the script, the Liberal carbon tax, go to Ottawa and fight for us. It's almost like they're still in Opposition again. I had flashbacks when I hear that. You have to support us or else. You have to go to Ottawa and tell your friends that this is wrong. Well, we did. We went and negotiated a new deal. We knew it was wrong. We knew it was wrong and we went out and negotiated a deal that kept consumers really off the radar when it came to the costs of pollution.

Now you're asking us to do it again, but it's your turn. It's the government's turn to come up with a plan. This plan is one that's going to add more cost. They're using the same targets that we used for their 2030 goals. It's the same targets, same thing.

I see the fight coming. That's what I'm concerned about, because I think on the energy front, there's so much potential. I'm sure the green - there's so much, and I love being there. It's so interesting. Every day was different on the energy file. I love my conversations with the minister because I can talk a bit about my time.

He's into green hydro. I wasn't into that. He's into green hydro. That's great. That's fantastic. That's a fantastic opportunity, especially in the Strait area, Cape Breton, the potential that's there for companies and for the communities. It's wonderful. He's got a whole different pile of interesting things that he's probably talking about and debating on a daily basis, but I'm seeing this fight coming, and the relationship can get strained very quickly.

Ultimately, who loses in that are Nova Scotians, and our most vulnerable Nova Scotians. Programs that we built over the years were funded by this money. Where is that money going to come from? The Berwick solar farms, the Antigonish solar farms, the retrofits, the solar program, all these things that were put into place - the money's got to come from somewhere.

With that I will take my seat and I look forward to comments from my colleagues.

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

**HON. BEN JESSOME:** I appreciate the opportunity to get up and chat a little bit with the House about what is one of the most significant, if not the most significant, discussions of our lifetime.



[10:30 p.m.]

When we put our name on a ballot, we make an oath, we take a commitment when we get elected to have these important conversations that affect the lives of all Nova Scotians and beyond. Little did I know that we'd be having a conversation today about - I guess it was on the agenda, so I did have some idea - but I was sitting here and I was, in fact, inspired by the remarks of the member for Timberlea-Prospect and thought that this is a dialogue that all members of the House should be a part of. They should share their thoughts, share their experiences about what their constituents are saying to them, why this discussion around carbon pricing and what variation of a program is most suitable in the context of our respective communities.

When I got elected, I made that commitment to come to this House. I mightn't be the most knowledgeable about every subject, but one of the cool things about being in this Legislature and having the ability to interact with so many Nova Scotians - whether they're in your community, whether they're across the province, whether they're representing an organization, a business, a not-for-profit - by title, MLAs get the ability - the privilege, I should say - to interact with so many different people, so many people who have a great deal of expertise. There are those particular moments - and it's not everyone. You do your best to treat all the issues that come across your desk or the people who come into your office with the same level of energy and intensity and value regardless of what the issue is.

Once in a while, you meet somebody or you interact with somebody who talks about something and tells you something that really lights a fire. This is a conversation that unequivocally is one where a fire has been started, quite literally, not limited to this part of the world, but across the world. Much of the support that has been realized of late has come from youth.

I have been fortunate to grow up in an era where, over time, the way and the ability for us to access information has profoundly changed to such a point where we are walking around glued to a device that we can get a ton of information from, endless information, information that can tell us about finite corners of the world. In that scenario where we have access to that information and where our friends and neighbours and communities and people across the world have access to that information, there's a generation of young people who have come forward and not only utilized the information that they've acquired but have used the technology to inspire action, to inspire activity and a requirement, an obligation for the decision-makers - that's us - to come to the table and react.

To some extent, I guess, depending on your perspective - and I'll try to make an optimistic one - there is still time to react, there is still time even to do proactive things to fight climate change. If nothing else we do in our jobs as members of the Legislature, representatives for Nova Scotians, it is of paramount significance that we come to this House and conduct ourselves in a way that leaves a positive, lasting, consequential impression and situation for the next generation.

We're here talking about carbon pricing, and we've got some information in front of us here. We hear about the last - the milestone I will use is the last year approximately, where the Progressive Conservative government, the government of the day, has walked through cold molasses and come up with a so-called solution to an issue that should have been the first thing on their radar.

Mx. Speaker, I know they came to the table with this paramount piece of legislation in sessions past, where they laid out a set of admirable goals for our province to build on the success that Nova Scotians for generations have to be proud of. So that's a positive thing, you've got to set benchmarks, you've got to give people something to aspire to, and on paper that's what that piece of legislation did. We acknowledge those benchmarks as ambitious and agree in principle to try to achieve those things so that, as I said previously, we can leave this world better for the next generation.

The issue with something like that, that particular piece of legislation, is that there really wasn't much in the way of strategy on how to achieve said goals, how to back up our collective ambitions and support the work of these goals. We're not clear on what the government's intentions are behind actually strategizing how to get there.

When we're talking about the scenario that we're in now, it creates a challenge for me personally because, previously, we had a scenario in Nova Scotia whereby the monies collected from the cap and trade program - an actually made-in-Nova Scotia solution to carbon pricing, one that is legally acceptable in our nation - we had a whole series of programs that were made possible by the Green Fund.

We've heard tonight from a number of people that the Green Fund was something that was very consequential for a lot of people in Nova Scotia - and not just a lot of people in Nova Scotia, Mx. Speaker. It was consequential for our most vulnerable people in the province. Once again, if we do nothing else in this House, it's to leave things better than when we showed up. What more appropriate way to aim decisions than to help the people who need it the most throughout the province.

We try to understand why there's not much of a solution before us today. Again, government took office a little over a year ago, had this looking down the barrel of it, looking down the pipe here. We know that these parameters were set out for us five years ago.

I can distinctly remember over the years, having sat at committees on the government side of the House, listening to members of the now-government, particularly in the year or two preceding the last election campaign, that they had the solutions. They had the plan. They drove around on a bus that they called the Solutions Express. They're solutionists, they said. Yet it's clear that when they got off the bus and stepped into government, they didn't have those strategies.

[10:45 p.m.]

They spent a year coming up with what is half a plan, which does in fact put a price on carbon, so check that box. But where is the support for the people who need it the most? And for people across the province, where is the protection that Nova Scotians expect in terms of keeping stability around the costs associated with fuel -the costs associated with energy that were made possible because of the balance that was struck through the cap and trade program?

It is certainly becoming abundantly clear as I tune into these discussions coming from both sides of the House and I try to read between the lines a little more, I wonder why the government waited until the eleventh hour to submit anything. One can only draw the conclusion that there is political motivation behind this.

We have a federal Liberal government. You can say Ottawa. You can say federal. You can say Liberal. It's all the same thing but there is a clear and concentrated plan of attack that stems from the government bench here in Nova Scotia and their sights are set on the federal Liberal Party, which is all too convenient or questionable given the enthusiasm we've seen from this Party around the funding, for example, for child care.

They were very excited about this monumental story to tell around child care with money that comes directly from the federal government, and we were, too. We signed the deal. We left room for the private sector, but that's a story for another day. There just appears to be this inclination for a quarrel that has already been settled.

It's been settled in every other jurisdiction in Canada. It's been settled when other provinces have tried to address this through the Supreme Court of Canada and have failed. They were unsuccessful in getting any wiggle room around this. We have a scenario where the parameters are agreed upon. You can have a tax or levy, you can have a hybrid system, or you can have a cap and trade agreement.

The one that our government, Minister Miller, and the former minister from Timberlea-Prospect - the one that they fought for was a balanced approach to the requirement to have a price on carbon and also was very intentional about protecting Nova Scotians who needed our help the most. The average Nova Scotians. To every Nova Scotian when it comes to the cost of fuel and energy.

It makes one wonder because this government continually tries to distance themselves from the national Conservative Party - the Nova Scotia Progressive Conservatives. Who are they going to get along with? If there's a national Conservative Party that's in office in Ottawa someday or if there's a national NDP in office someday or if the Liberal government remains, who are they going to collaborate with if they are going to be vocal about not getting along with anybody?

My guess is that when the next national election rolls around, as progressive as the members indicate they are, you'll see them out there on doorsteps, knocking on doors with the national Conservative Party candidates. It's small circumstances such as this - feeble attempts at taking shots at our national government, the Liberal Government - that to me indicates the start of something that is progressive, a progressive opportunity to take out the national Liberals.

I wish that we weren't part of this really. It goes back to some of the things that we've been talking about in the House for the last couple of days. The bar hasn't really been lifted in terms of setting expectations that are higher for ourselves and elevating above partisan politics.

By his own account, the Speaker said he forgot my name. He was like, I forgot your riding because you don't stand in the House that much and say a whole lot. The news called me Silent Bob the first two years. I got the Silent Bob award in *Frank* magazine. Rest in peace, *Frank* magazine.

This is a conversation that needs to be continued. This is a conversation that needs to be delayed. I don't know if I always make sense. I do my best, but the point of me standing up here tonight and trying to push this down the road is so that this important conversation can continue.

I hope that Nova Scotians will have an opportunity to really take a look at what's transpiring here. Nova Scotians will have an opportunity to discuss this at the Law Amendments Committee, assuming that there are no measures taken by the government to minimize that committee.

We're the only province in Canada that facilitates that opportunity for Nova Scotians across the board and beyond. We've seen people from out of province on a variety of issues who are invested in Nova Scotia, who come in to weigh in on important pieces of legislation.

I say that we open that up. I say that we open the door for as many people as possible. I say the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development reaches out to our schools and solicits feedback from our schools. I say the Minister of Advanced Education reaches out to our universities and our community colleges and is very intentional about soliciting feedback from people who are completely invested in a future for themselves.

I had a conversation with somebody over the last week. We chatted about children and having children. It's pretty scary to think about having children these days. It's pretty scary to think about having children on any day, fair enough, but on the subject of climate change, what is the world that we're bringing children into? It's a scary place on the best of days and we know because of our access to information just how scary it is. Weather is

becoming more and more extreme. We got a little taste of that a couple of weekends ago - Hurricane Fiona. It turned this province upside down and there are many people who are still reeling from that experience.

Over the course of that weekend, I had friends of mine from Louisiana call me, checking in - how are you guys doing up there? How are you all doing up there? He said it was only a tropical storm because they get pounded with this type of weather. They are without power for weeks on end, which in some places in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada that was a reality. But you look all over the world and you see these significant weather events that transpire, and you wonder how you can make things better so that the next generation has something to come into.

We've taken some demonstrable steps over the last little while and beyond, I'm sure. The member for Kings West referenced the Coastal Protection Act as part of the different options that we have to combine with pieces of legislation, like the one that we have before us today around carbon pricing, but by his own remarks says that Nova Scotia has a record for success, and I think we all agree on that.

Part of my dilemma here is that if we can all agree that Nova Scotia and successive governments have had a demonstrable record of success on the environment file, then why not simply just pick up something that was working well, by the government member's own admission, and keep running with it? If not - what is it, a few years out? - if not to pick a fight with the national government that wears a different stripe on its shoulder.

The other thing that came up tonight that bears repeating and is something that - again, you end up in situations where you just pick up on stuff that really makes you think. Honestly, this conversation is one of them. We had a program that considered carbon pricing for - I believe the number was nearly 80 per cent of emitters throughout the province. That's a pretty considerable majority of people.

What the Nova Scotia Government today has proposed aims to deal with half of that, from a percentage perspective - 40 per cent targeted simply at the large emitters and neglects a whole other majority of people who are willing to chip in as long as it's reasonable, and as long as those dollars are accounted for, as long as there is a meaningful use of those dollars. We successfully landed that plane.

We were able to establish this cap and trade program through hard work and negotiation with our federal counterparts, whom we didn't agree with initially, and we were clear about that. That was a party that was the same stripe as us. We disagreed with them. We were public about that. The difference in this situation is that we came up with a solution that worked for Nova Scotians that was fair. It met the target of creating a price on carbon, but it also protected the average Nova Scotian and enhanced the lives of Nova Scotians who needed our help the most.

[11:00 p.m.]

With that, Mx. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on the motion for second reading of Bill No. 208. (Interruptions)

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

BEN JESSOME: Thank you. I'll repeat my motion. I move the adjournment of debate on the motion for second reading of Bill No. 208.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for a recorded vote.

We will ring the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: There's a tradition in this House that it's the minister who gets to close debate on a bill, which we all agree is a very significant bill.

THE SPEAKER: Because it's a motion to adjourn and not close debate, other members can make that motion too.

We'll proceed with ringing the bells until the Whips are satisfied.

[11:04 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

[11:59 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. We have reached the hour of adjournment.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at noon.

[The House rose at 11:59 p.m.]