



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2022

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

12:00 Noon

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, I want to let the members know that tomorrow, prior to the daily routine, I'll be ruling on the two points of privilege that were put forward at a previous session of the Legislature. That ruling will be tomorrow morning.

I also want to make a ruling on a point of order from the Official Opposition House Leader yesterday.

SPEAKER'S RULING

(Point of order by the Official Opposition House Leader [Hansard p. 3629, October 19, 2022])

Not a point of order

Yesterday, the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order, alleging that the Premier communicated with the Clerk over whether a certain part of the debate was out of order. The member stated his concern with ensuring the independence of the Clerks be maintained.

All members of the House are welcome to communicate with the Clerks for the purpose of receiving advice, including whether something constitutes a potential point of order. Accordingly, the point of order is not sustained.

However, I do wish to draw the attention to the House that many members - both government and Opposition - frequently offer procedural unsolicited advice to the Clerks during Question Period when those members do not agree with the ruling of the Speaker or seek to have the Speaker make a ruling. This practice should be discontinued. The Clerks are not a conduit for appeals of Speaker's rulings and non-rulings. The Clerks may advise, but the Speaker and deputy speakers rule.

If a member believes a rule has been breached, the proper course of action is to do what the Official Opposition House Leader did - wait until after Question Period ends and then raise a point of order for the Speaker to rule on.

With that, the results of another ruling will come forward. I'll ask the deputy speaker to come forward and make that ruling.

[12:03 p.m. Deputy Speaker Angela Simmonds assumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Yesterday, the member for Halifax Atlantic rose on a point of order, alleging that the member for Glace Bay-Dominion made an unparliamentary remark off the record while the member for Halifax Atlantic had the floor.

I did not hear the remark myself and during a review of the raw audio recordings of proceedings, an alleged remark could not be made out. Accordingly, there is insufficient evidence to sustain the point of order.

I will now ask the Speaker to resume the Chair.

[12:04 p.m. Speaker Keith Bain resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Deputy Speaker asked the member for Halifax Atlantic to table documents from comments he had been making. I wonder if you could confirm if those documents have been tabled.

THE SPEAKER: At this point I can't confirm, but I will certainly find out and make the members aware.

With that out of the way, we'll get into the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition, the operative clause of which is, “We, the undersigned, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to require the installation of air conditioning in every nursing home and long-term care facility in the province.”

The petition has 103 signatures, and I have signed it also.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 196 - Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act (amended).

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

Bill No. 200 - Nova Scotia Museum Act (amended).

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

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

Bill No. 206 - Underground Hydrocarbons Storage Act (amended).

Bill No. 207 - Electricity Act (amended).

and the committee recommends these bills to the favourable consideration of the House, each without amendment.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that these bills be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Community Services, I am pleased to table the annual report for 2022.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in consideration of a member statement to come, I would like to table a document from CBC St. John's on October 5th entitled "NL government writing cheques of up to \$500 for cost-of-living relief."

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, in consideration of a member statement I'll be giving today, I am tabling a document from the Living Wages Nova Scotia 2022 Report from CCPA Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, before my notice of motion, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

THE PREMIER: Thank you. Mr. Speaker. In the gallery today, we have several guests joining us from the Strongest Families Institute. I would ask that they please rise as I introduce them so that they may receive the warm welcome of this House.

First, we have Dr. Patricia Pottie, CEO and President; Mark Long, Director of Software Engineering; Theresa Cunningham, Vice President of Strategy and Engagement; Darcy Comeau, Vice President of Finance; Michael Hughes, Director of Information Technology; Anne Marie Shannon, Director of Communications and Fundraising; and Brianna Pottie, Senior Manager and Project Lead. I'll ask them to receive the warm welcome of the House. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: We certainly welcome all visitors to the Legislature and we hope you enjoy your stay.

The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, just for the benefit of the House, this is a team that all Nova Scotians should be proud of. This is a team that makes it their mission to provide timely access to mental health care.

In fact, it is that mission that led the Strongest Families Institute to develop an online app that allows their clients to access personalized mental health programs from anywhere at any time. This is an app that has earned them the Council of the Federation Award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care.

Again, I just want all members to recognize the important work that this team is doing.

RESOLUTION NO. 407

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

Whereas in February of this year Canada's Premiers established the Council of the Federation Award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care in recognition of the challenges that continue to impact people across the country and to highlight the innovative work that individuals and organizations are doing to promote individual wellness; and

Whereas here in this province, exceptional work is being spearheaded by countless individuals and communities to improve mental health and substance use supports - work that is positively impacting the lives of many Nova Scotians; and

Whereas the Strongest Families Institute of Lower Sackville is among this group and was recently selected as a recipient of this award for their work on an online application that allows people to download personalized educational mental health programming, ensuring access even when working offline or where internet coverage may not be available;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing the innovative contribution that the Strongest Families Institute has made to the delivery of mental health and addictions care here in this province and, indeed, in Canada.

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. (Standing Ovation.)

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 408

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

Whereas it is important that Nova Scotians make the crucial decision to protect themselves and the most vulnerable people in our province from influenza and COVID-19; and

Whereas Nova Scotians can get free influenza and COVID-19 vaccines across the province; and

Whereas Nova Scotians should choose to get their influenza and COVID-19 vaccines from their pharmacist, pharmacy technician, family doctor, nurse practitioner, or family practice nurse;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in receiving their annual influenza and their COVID-19 vaccines.

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.

The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

[12:15 p.m.]

RESOLUTION NO. 409

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

Whereas this week is Small Business Week 2022 and serves as an opportunity to recognize and honour small business owners and the significant contributions they make to our province; and

Whereas small businesses bring growth and innovation to the economy, employ our friends and families, and build our communities; and

Whereas time and time again small businesses have demonstrated their resilience, their dedication, and their generosity to the customers and communities they serve;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize Small Business Week, and whenever and however we can, let us all show our appreciation for small businesses by buying local, eating local, and supporting local.

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. 217 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, The Residential Tenancies Act, Respecting Administration and Enforcement. (Braedon Clark)

Bill No. 218 - Entitled an Act to Ensure Climate Resiliency in Health Care. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 219 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Gaming Control Act. (Hon. Allan MacMaster)

Bill No. 220 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 203 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Homes for Special Care Act, Respecting Comfort in Long-term Care.
(Gary Burrill)

Bill No. 221 - Entitled an Act Respecting a Youth Housing Strategy.
(Braedon Clark)

Bill No. 222 - Entitled an Act Respecting Housing Supply and Services.
(Hon. John Lohr)

Bill No. 223 - Entitled an Act to Dissolve the Municipal Finance Corporation.
(Hon. John Lohr)

Bill No. 224 - Entitled an Act Respecting Perennia Food and Agriculture Corporation. (Hon. Greg Morrow)

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for member for Queens.

QUEENS CO. GROUND S & R: 40TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: On September 17, I was honoured to speak at an event celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Queens County Ground Search and Rescue and its Ladies Auxiliary.

This is such an impressive milestone for this organization: forty years of tireless and selfless volunteer service to communities, courageously responding to a broad spectrum of emergencies and situations. Members have recruited, maintained, trained, and equipped members, educated youth, supported community events and programs, and fundraised to sustain this essential, life-saving organization.

Please join me in congratulating past and current members on this accomplishment, and in thanking them for going above and beyond in their service to all of us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

BYRNE, HEATHER: ALICE HOUSE LEADERSHIP - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize Heather Byrne, who served as the executive director of Alice House for the last eight years. Alice House gives women and

their children a way out of abusive relationships by providing safe housing, counselling, and support services.

Heather's list of achievements is lengthy, from strengthening the finances of the organization to creating and implementing a strategic plan, to leading the team through an organizational transformation in response to a global pandemic. Under Heather's leadership, Alice House managed not only to continue their essential work, but to improve it. I will miss her leadership in the community but look forward to seeing where she will take her talents next.

Please join me in congratulating Heather Byrne on the last eight wonderful years with Alice House and wishing her well in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

DEMINGS, MAIRI: SINGING ACCOMPLISHMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I rise today to acknowledge the accomplishments of Mairi Demings.

Mairi is a mezzo-soprano, hailing from Springhill in Cumberland South. Mairi holds a Bachelor of Music from Acadia University and a Master of Music from the University of Western Ontario. Mairi is an accomplished performer who has had solos in many shows, including Slow Rise Music, Fair Use, Acadia Performing Arts Series Tom Regan Memorial Concert, Shattering the Silence new music festivals, and Parrsboro's Classic by the Bay.

Mairi has also participated in performances including Summer Opera Lyric Theatre, Halifax Summer Opera Festival, Against the Grain Theatre, and so many more. Her upcoming engagements include singing the role of Juno in Toronto Operetta Theatre's production of *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Good Mess Opera Theatre.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Mairi Demings on her outstanding accomplishments and wishing her the best of luck in the future.

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

COCOLUZZI, CHRIS: PERF. ARTS. CONTRIBS. - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: Today I stand to recognize a Cole Harbour resident, high school teacher, playwright, and director, Chris Coculuzzi. He is a member of the Playwrights Guild of Canada and a member of the Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre, and I thoroughly enjoyed the Canadian premiere of his new play called *The Murder of*

Mary Lane at the Halifax Fringe Festival and performed at Neptune Theatre's Scotiabank Stage.

The play was written and directed by Chris himself. It's based on a murder case that took place in 1899 in Brandon, Manitoba. His play blends historical accounts and texts with speculative fiction, exploring themes that still resonate today. Another of Chris's plays, called *Quiet Courage*, about the Halifax explosion, was performed in Toronto for the 100th anniversary.

I ask that the House of Assembly join me in thanking Chris Coculuzzi for his ongoing contributions to the performing arts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

COST OF LIVING PAYMENTS: NEED - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: An important development in the economy of our region took place on the 5th of October with the announcement by the government of Newfoundland and Labrador of a one-time payment of \$500 to adult residents of that province with incomes under \$100,000 in an effort to mitigate the impact of the soaring cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, 392,000 of Newfoundland and Labrador's 525,000 residents will receive a \$500 cheque. Payments are anticipated by the province's Minister of Finance to be in people's hands by Christmas. Premier Andrew Furey said of the payments, "The cost of living is a current and real emergency for many people in our province. ... This is our effort to help right now, when people need it the most."

With this announcement, Newfoundland and Labrador joins Quebec, which has just announced a second payment of \$600 in addition to the earlier \$500, and Prince Edward Island, which announced an inflation-countering payment of \$150 in July. The government of Nova Scotia continues to oppose such a payment for the people of this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

HINES, LISA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Lisa Hines. In March 2018, she filled in for her late father David Coombes as General Manager of the Hants County Exhibition Park, home to North America's oldest agricultural fair. This year the Hants County Ex celebrated its 257th year, and Lisa was right on the front lines as the coordinator.

Lisa spent many years as an active director for the Windsor Agricultural Society, which is not surprising, as she was born into a family that put a strong emphasis on the

educational values that agricultural exhibitions can provide to children. The Hants County Exhibition is really a family tradition for her. Her history and beliefs all played a part in her being instrumental in the development of Future Farmers Friday, which started in 2017, where school-aged children get to learn about agriculture first-hand.

As if Lisa has not done enough, she also holds a Bachelor of Design in Communication, owns and operates Little Horse Communications, and is a very busy “Nanny Goat” to her two handsome grandsons.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree Lisa needs a huge round of applause for what she has already accomplished, what she is currently working on, and for what she will do in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

EUSTAQUIO-DOMONDON, ELIZABETH: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, in honour of Women’s History Month, I rise to recognize Elizabeth Eustaquio-Domondon for her community contributions.

Elizabeth is a former Philippine Consul General for Nova Scotia. She now spends her days as a bridging coordinator for Immigrant Services of Nova Scotia. Elizabeth is a strong advocate for Asian voices and a leader in the Filipino community. Elizabeth and I have worked on many immigrant issues and events. I’m so proud to have her as a constituent of Clayton Park West. We are undoubtedly a better constituency with citizens like Elizabeth.

I would ask that the House join me in recognizing Elizabeth for her extensive service to our community. Thank you, Elizabeth.

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

N.S. LABOUR STANDARDS: IMPROVEMENT NEEDED - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to say everyone deserves a decent job, quality time with their friends and family, and leisure time. In Nova Scotia, Mr. Speaker, the work-life-balance is weighted in favour of work and has been demonstrated by our weak labour standards.

Nova Scotia has the longest regular work week in the country. Overtime is only paid after 48 hours of work. Nova Scotia has the least generous benefits for sick leave, and it also has the lowest number of statutory holidays, minimal or even non-existent provisions for other leaves, and barriers to unionization. Minimum standards are inadequate, with 54 per cent of Nova Scotia workers having no access to paid sick leave.

According to the CCPA, in Nova Scotia we are treating workers like cogs in a machine. This approach to work is unsustainable and partially to blame for our labour shortage. It is time to modernize our labour standards.

[12:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

VELDHOVEN, GERALD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to remember Gerard Veldhoven of Amherst. He passed away on August 21st of this year. He held a special place in the community of Amherst, of northern Nova Scotia, and really was world-renowned for his work advocating for the 2SLGBTQ community.

He was a teacher at the Interprovincial School for the Deaf in Amherst. As well, he owned and operated Carvel Upholstery & Draperies with his late husband Norman. He is best known for his unwavering commitment for equality for the 2SLGBTQ community. He and Norman were the first same-sex couple to be legally married in Nova Scotia, on October 16, 2004.

Throughout his life he continued to fight for equal rights. As he said in his own obituary: "Others who also faced challenges in society due to persecution." Family and friends miss him and his impact on his community deeply.

Today please join me in remembering Gerard Veldhoven.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MACFARLANE, R./LIENGME, J.: DEATHS OF - TRIBUTE

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the lives and contributions of Rachel MacFarlane and Justin Liengme. Both were members of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society who recently passed away. At the time of her passing, Rachel was Chair of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society. She was a dedicated and passionate advocate who believed that providing affordable housing improved the quality of life for our community members. Rachel provided wisdom and leadership to all those who were fortunate to know her.

Justin was a volunteer director with the society. He worked tirelessly to see the Appleseed Court housing development come to life and cared deeply for those who called it home. He was a kind and generous person and gave freely of his time and expertise wherever he could.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in sending sincere condolences to Rachel and Justin's families, their friends and all those whose lives they touched.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

HOLY FAMILY PARISH MBRS.: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

FRED TILLEY: Today I rise to recognize another group within my constituency who stepped up to help others during Hurricane Fiona. The members of Holy Family Parish and the KOC, led by Norma Blinkhorn, really stepped up to help their community - over a week of delivering meals, over a week of making treat bags for children, school lunches, all kinds of wonderful things that they did for our community.

I would like to thank Norma and her team. Also the homemakers who delivered meals to seniors in need, led by Alicia Buffett. I'd also like to thank Rita DiPersio and Lana Verschuren from MNP, who helped myself and my constituency assistant fill out disaster forms in the parish hall, which really helped to lighten our load.

Thank you so much to the folks at Holy Family Parish for all the hard work and dedication they have in our community.

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

VELDHOVEN, GERARD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the life and accomplishments of Gerard Veldhoven. Gerard passed away this past August and left behind an incredible legacy. For many years he spearheaded initiatives across Pictou and Cumberland Counties to better the lives of queer Nova Scotians. The rainbow flags raised in many Nova Scotian towns are thanks to his efforts.

Gerard and his husband Norman Carter were the first male same-sex couple to get married in Nova Scotia. Their 2004 Amherst wedding was celebrated by media, neighbours and others across the province. In 2020 he released his autobiography, *A Passion for Equality: My Personal Journey*. A brave trailblazer, his advocacy continued throughout his entire life.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my fellow members to join me in celebrating Gerard Veldhoven's life and all the contributions he made for and to our province's 2SLGBTQ+ community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

NSCC STAFF: HURRICANE SUPP. - RECOG.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the staff of the Nova Scotia Community College in Cape Breton, who prepared over 2,000 meals following Hurricane Fiona. The staff, who were also without power themselves, volunteered their time to prepare meals for emergency first responders following Hurricane Fiona. The staff knew they wanted to do something to help, following the devastation in Cape Breton caused by one of the worst storms we've seen in its history.

I would like to take this time today, Mr. Speaker, to praise the NSCC staff and their heartfelt contribution to the community during a very difficult time in Cape Breton. It was very well received and I certainly appreciate it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

MAISON MEUSE & FILS: NEW WINES LAUNCHED - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the Province of Nova Scotia, which is becoming well known for its wine, has recently added one more winery, the Maison Meuse & Fils.

The winery's partners, Marcelle and Alec LeBlanc and Daniel Surette, first broached the subject of starting a winery when the Leblanc's bought a property in Comeauville in 2014. The Leblancs would bring their business experience and commitment to learning viticulture while Daniel would bring his winemaking skills.

Some years later, the winery launched its first new wines from its vineyard grapes: the Acadie Blanc in 2020, and the Rosé in 2021.

As the three focus on the future expansion of their winery, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Maison Meuse & Fils on their successful launch of their first two wines and wish them well in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MANELAND HAIR: SERV. TO NON-BINARY PEOPLE - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, in this Small Business Week, I rise to recognize a small business owner and hair stylist from Dartmouth North who centres non-binary Haligonians in their practice - Steph McNair of Maneland Hair.

Salons and barbershops can be very gendered spaces which can exclude folks who don't fit into the gender binary. Creating a space where folks didn't have to navigate

cisgender and heteronormative beauty standards just to get a haircut or colour was part of the reason that Steph got into hair work in the first place.

Steph, a master stylist, opened Maneland Hair: Non-Binary Beauty in 2019 in one of the colourful houses on Vintage Row on Queen Street in downtown Halifax. It was just months before the COVID-19 pandemic closures in the Spring of 2020. Steph and Maneland have made it through the pandemic thus far due to the support of the 2SLGBTQ+IA community, who are at the heart of Maneland.

I ask the House to join me in thanking Steph for creating a space where everyone can feel safe to be and celebrate who they truly are.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

CROCKER, LISA: AMAZING RACE CAN. PARTIC. - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Lisa Crocker of Lower Sackville.

Lisa Crocker, the restaurant manager of Subway in Lower Sackville, was featured on an episode of *The Amazing Race Canada* which aired on July 12, 2022. Lisa entered a contest through Subway to appear as a guest on *The Amazing Race Canada*. She was selected out of hundreds of entrants from all across Canada.

Lisa's task was to provide the *Amazing Race* team members with their next clue, once they successfully completed their prior challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Lisa Crocker on a job well done, and for making her community proud during her appearance on *The Amazing Race Canada*.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

SMITH, DEREK ALLAN: SPORTS WALL OF FAME IND. - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, last month the Middleton Sports Heritage Wall of Fame held the 23rd annual induction ceremony. One of these very deserving inductees was Derek Allan Smith, a Middleton native.

In high school, Derek won medals in shotput and discus at the provincial level and earned a 10th place finish in discus at the national competition. He was ranked No. 1 in the country in the Highland Games Junior Division in 2016, 2018, and 2019. In 2017, he was the Maritime Junior Highland Games Champion, and placed third at the Junior Canadian Championships.

In power lifting, Derek was the Nova Scotia and Eastern Canadian Powerlift Champion in 2017, and in 2018 he became the Canadian and World Champion. In 2018, Derek walked onto the StFX football team and played until 2020 without prior football experience. In his daily life, Derek is a highly skilled nurse working at the Valley Regional Hospital.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Derek on being inducted into the Middleton Sports Heritage Wall of Fame, on his extraordinary athletic career, and for his critical role as a nurse in the Annapolis Valley.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

DOWNTOWN DART. BUS. COMM.: BUILDING COM. - THANKS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Small Business Week to recognize the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission.

Led by Executive Director Tim Rissesco and an amazing board of directors, the commission has been championing small business interests for many years. In addition to supporting local businesses with funding, advocacy, and capacity-building, the team has brought iconic street art, beautification, festivals, and food crawls to downtown Dartmouth.

In the last 10 years, the downtown core has seen a massive expansion of shops, eateries, and experiences for all ages to enjoy. The Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission is as committed to building community as it is to building commerce and has helped put Dartmouth on the map. Please join me in thanking them for all of their hard work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

E. HANTS SWIM TEAM: PROV. MEDAL WINS - CONGRATS.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: The East Hants Stingrays swim team had the opportunity this Summer to have their team compete together for the first time since 2019.

With the team consisting of mostly new members, as well as being in a new aquatic centre, they went on to provincials on August 21st hoping for the best. During provincials, the Stingrays' 15-person team was able to bring home 12 medals: three gold, four silver, and five bronze. The swimmers also earned highest points in multiple age groups in the small team awards, as well as the overall small team award.

I'd like to congratulate the East Hants Stingrays for a great season. I'd also like to thank all the volunteers who helped make this season such a success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

SUNFLOWER HOUSING PROJECT: COMPLETION - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I want to highlight an incredible housing project in Timberlea-Prospect. The Sunflower in the Lakeside community has recently opened its doors, a 25-unit project. I want to first thank the federal government for investing in the Rapid Housing Initiative. It's a great program to invest in housing in communities, and highlight the work of Adsum House, led by Sheri Lecker. She oversees this project for women, children, and gender-diverse people to live in this 25-unit development for \$300 a month. It's a net-zero project.

I want to highlight Passive House. There is a local person and constituent, Natalie Leonard, who runs Passive House in Hubley. She was involved to ensure this project was a sustainable one; and DORA Construction, led by Donald MacDonald, for their corporate culture to build something unique like this.

I want to commend all those involved for building this project. I want to encourage the provincial government and the federal government to work together to build more of these across the province.

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

SOUTH BAR VOL. FIRE DEPT.: 40TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to congratulate the South Bar Volunteer Fire Department on the department's 40th anniversary.

On September 18, I had the privilege of attending the fire department's open house to celebrate with the members. It was an extremely well-attended event with food, treats, music by Rob Murphy, and a special guest, Sparky the Fire Dog. Sparky delighted the children in attendance, mine included. Rory and Isla love Sparky and they love their honorary fire chief hats. Rory will not take hers off.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating and thanking the South Bar Fire Department on their 40th year of community service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

NSP LINE WORKERS: POWER RESTORATION - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to thank the line workers from Nova Scotia Power, all of the women and men who helped remove trees, and others from

outside of the province who worked tirelessly to have my constituents' power restored after Hurricane Fiona.

I met with many of these workers in the field during the storm's aftermath and recognize the very important job that was on their shoulders. The damage they faced was extreme. It truly takes dedicated workers like them to work through those kinds of obstacles and keep going every day, morning, noon, and night for weeks.

My constituents and I are very grateful for those workers and their service to our area as they work to restore power. Today, please join me in thanking the line workers of Nova Scotia Power and all those who helped restore power to my constituents in Cumberland North.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

JEFFERY, JAMES: CANADA GAMES PERF. - CONGRATS.

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my congratulations to James Jeffery of North River. In August, James traveled to the 2022 Canada Games in Niagara to compete in the triple jump.

James has already had several major accomplishments, including placing first in high jump at the 2022 Canadian Indoor Track and Field Championships and second place in long jump at the provincial championships.

James Jeffery represented Colchester North admirably at the Canada Games, and we are very proud of his achievements.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

OXYGEN YOGA AND FITNESS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. TONY INCE: As we continue Small Business Week, I would like to talk about a place in Cole Harbour that is special to me personally.

I was not doing well mentally and looking for something to help me physically when I walked into Oxygen Yoga and Fitness in Cole Harbour. The instructors there are incredible and so caring. I have found that not only have I improved my physical well-being but my mental health as well.

The classes there are great for helping to unwind and strengthen the mind and body, and I look forward to my time in the studio. I always leave energized and refreshed. There are many locally owned yoga studios around the city, and I would encourage all community

members to give one a try in their neighbourhood. If you are near Oxygen Yoga and Fitness, tell them Tony sent you.

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

PURPLE THURSDAY: INTIM. PARTNER VIOL. AWAR. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, today is Purple Thursday. Purple Thursday was created as a campaign of the Canadian Royal Purple Society to raise awareness of the intersection of intimate partner violence and traumatic brain injury.

Intimate partner violence includes many different types of violence, abuse, and intimidation. Ninety per cent of the physical violence includes actions that could lead to traumatic brain injuries.

Brain Injury Nova Scotia is co-sponsoring the recognition of this day in Nova Scotia this year. Brain Injury Nova Scotia works all year to support the over 70,000 Nova Scotians living with traumatic brain injuries, and their families.

I ask all members to join me in recommitting to ending intimate partner violence and thanking Brain Injury Nova Scotia for their work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM: CAN. GAMES MEDAL - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Nova Scotia's women's soccer team on their bronze medal at the 2022 Canada Summer Games.

I am proud to share that four Fall River players - Ellie Lancaster, Emma Crowe, Sierra Gallant, and Mya Archibald - helped in bringing this medal home to Nova Scotia. It's worthy of noting that Mya Archibald is currently representing Canada at the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in India.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating and recognizing the hard work of these amazing local women who have not only made the residents of Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank proud, but all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

C.B. ISLAND HOUSING AUTH.: HURR. SUPP. - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, during Hurricane Fiona, a number of government departments stepped up to ensure that we try to recover during and after the event.

One of the departments I do want to recognize locally on the ground are the staff of the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority. Throughout the pandemic, they were there to support a lot of the families who live in many of the housing neighbourhoods that we have in the CBRM. They went above and beyond to make sure that everybody was fed. They made sure they did whatever they could to put the lights on, and make sure food was made available through various not-for-profit organizations. Staff even went around to help deliver the food and help fill out the forms.

I do want to recognize all the staff from the Cape Breton Island Housing Authority. I saw them first-hand going around to see all the residents in the greater Sydney area, and I really appreciate the support they provided to families.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HUM, SABRINA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an amazing community member, Sabrina Hum.

Being a long-time resident of the North End, Sabrina can always be found helping out others. Whether it is her friends, seniors, or community members, Sabrina is always helpful and genuine with her intentions to help or do for others. She organizes events in her community for the kids and families. She makes sure to have an Easter egg hunt, Summer events, Halloween treat giveaways, movie nights, and many more things - especially fun things for the kids in her community. She is always ready to help and have fun, and cook as well.

I'm pleased today to rise and appreciate the hard work and energy spent by this beautiful person, Sabrina. I would like the House of Assembly help me in this acknowledgment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

COOK, VICTORIA: MULGRAVE TOWN COUNCIL REP. - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Victoria Cook from Mulgrave. Victoria is a Grade 8 student and is the Youth Representative on the Mulgrave Town Council.

Her first term has been a successful one. She brought forward a request for rainbow crosswalks in Mulgrave. She brought this idea to the table after speaking with youth and other community members who felt that the LGBTQ+ community needed to be acknowledged in their area.

With council's full approval, Victoria took charge of the project and was able to be a part of the process to see it through. Community volunteers, adults, and youth alike were able to assist in the painting of the first rainbow crosswalk on August 19th. The next one will be painted further down the road after paving work is completed this Fall.

I want to congratulate Victoria Cook on her interest in representing youth in her community and for putting herself forward for this role on Mulgrave Town Council.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

BROPHY, MARC: VOL. OF YR. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize Marc Brophy, who has been named the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth's Volunteer of the Year for the 2022 Nova Scotia Provincial Volunteer Awards. Marc volunteers as the junior director at the Yarmouth Curling Club and was a big help with the construction of the recently installed and highly anticipated Yarmouth Splash Park.

Marc is also a huge advocate of clean communities. He works tirelessly at organizing community cleanups, helping remove over 25,000 pounds of trash from our community's shores and ditches during the most recent Earth Day Weekend cleanup initiative. He is also instrumental in many cleanups of our beautiful Port Maitland Beach.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Marc Brophy on receiving this prestigious award and thanking him for his tireless dedication to the health and well-being of our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ARTICLE ON "THE AVENUE": DART. COM. HISTORY PRES. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: The Avenue is an historic African Nova Scotian community located in what is now Crichton Park, originally settled in the 1800s. Recently, the Halifax Public Libraries published an article by Kate Foster, entitled "*Where I Belong*": *Tracing the History of Dartmouth's 'The Avenue,'* which featured Crichton Park resident and Avenue descendant Carolyn Fowler.

The Avenue was a tight knit community built on fellowship, faith, laughter, and music. However, the over 100 residents were subjected to systemic and environmental

racism, and most were displaced by development. As Carolyn says in the article, we weren't meant to survive.

Many built good lives for themselves, learned trades, worked, built property. They paved the way through their perseverance.

The article joins Adrienne Lucas's 1998 thesis, *Survival of an African Nova Scotia Community: Up the Avenue Revisited*, honouring this important part of Dartmouth North.

I ask the House to join me in thanking Carolyn, Adrienne, and Kate for their efforts in bringing The Avenue's history to the fore.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

GUILD HALL SUMMER SERIES CMTE.: FREE EVENTS - THANKS

NOLAN YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Guild Hall Summer Arts Series Committee for their commitment to providing free musical concerts every Thursday throughout the Summer. Every Thursday evening, the community and visitors are treated to a free outdoor musical concert featuring wonderful local musicians at the Guild Hall. Each year the committee invites musicians to express their interests in participating. The response has been overwhelming, creating a challenge to choose from so much talent.

I respectfully ask that all members of this House join me in thanking the Guild Hall Summer Arts Series Committee for providing this free event for all to enjoy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

RED CHILLIES FLAVOURS OF INDIA: BUS. SUCCESS - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this being Small Business Week, I would like to give a shoutout to one of our Indian restaurants in Bedford, Red Chillies Flavours of India. I just heard a cheer from the back row. I think one of my colleagues may eat there a bit.

The restaurant opened to rave reviews back in 2019, and then in 2020, they decided to open an ethnic grocery right next door. Then COVID-19 came, so that was delayed for a bit, but their resolve and their resilience is underlined by what they did next. The four owners actually didn't take salaries for a great deal of that time. Arun Johny and his partners have pivoted to offer special menus for Indian holidays like Diwali or Onam.

I would just point out that the feast of Onam features 26 dishes. I can tell you that the lineups in the parking lot are huge. Everybody in our community enjoys their food and I would encourage members to check it out.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SHORT-TERM RENTALS: IMPACT ON HOUSING - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, on October 5, 2022, there was a chart released called “Homes Lost to Short-term Rentals in Nova Scotia Municipalities.” This chart compared the number of short-term rentals, which are registered with the government and the active short-term rentals on the market as of October 5th.

The key takeaway of this chart is the number of entire homes where there is no primary resident. These are record numbers - over 3,700 province-wide, and in the HRM over 1,600 homes that could have been purposed for long-term use, if regulations had been brought in.

The other sad fact is that almost 2,300 of these in Nova Scotia are two to five-plus bedrooms, including about 900 in the HRM. I would encourage all members of this House to take a look at this information as the housing crisis is getting worse.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

E. PASS.-COW BAY SUMMER CARNIVAL CMTE.: EVENT ORG. - THANKS

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Eastern Passage Cow Bay Summer Carnival committee for their unwavering dedication to our community. This year marks the first in-person event since the pandemic.

The 2022 carnival schedule ran from Sunday, July 31st to Sunday, August 7th, a week filled with numerous community events. The fun included sand sculptures, free breakfast, a car show, bingo, fireworks, and a seniors’ tea that I was happy to co-host, just to name a few of the organized events.

Without community involvement and volunteers, this much-loved event would not be possible. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Eastern Passage-Cow Bay Summer Carnival committee members for their ongoing efforts and amazing community spirit.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HEALTH CARE CRISIS: NEED FOR ACTION - RECOG.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to recognize and bring awareness to a health care experience my dear friend Mark and his family struggled through. Mark called me in a panic as his son was going through both a physical and a mental health crisis. We spent days talking and texting to try to find help for his son. Mark's son was struggling and was in desperate need, and yet could not find the appropriate health care here in Nova Scotia.

These stories are all too common, and more and more Nova Scotians are going without. Mark's son is now, luckily, receiving help, but in Quebec. If not for Mark's refusal to give up, who knows what would happen? Love you, Mark.

Health care is not political - it is life or death - and we need to stop treating it that way and stop pointing fingers and work together.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

DIGBY CO. EXHIB.: RETURN IN AUG. - CONGRATS.

HON. JILL BALSER: Today I rise to congratulate the Digby County Exhibition on their return this past Summer. The Digby County Exhibition was held from August 24th to 27th. After two years of cancelled exhibitions, they came back stronger than ever with the help of volunteers, community members, and participants.

The exhibition has been operating since the late 1800s. It has been a place for community members in Digby County to gather and celebrate agriculture through various activities including ox pulls, horse pulls, 4-H Day, various exhibits by the public and 4-H clubs, eight horse shows, and much, much more.

Mr. Speaker, please let us recognize the Bear River Agricultural Society and the Digby County Exhibition Society for all of their incredible work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

HAMILTON-REID, BERNADETTE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Bernadette Hamilton-Reid, who is not only a small business owner but a community connector and communicator. She is a respected community leader, advocate, and ally. She leads by example and does not miss a community event. She's consistent support in all sectors of community engagement, entrepreneurship, business, economics, politics, education, arts, and culture. She is passionate about helping Black entrepreneurs and works tirelessly to create and find opportunities.

Sankofa Afrikan Gifts brings Africa to the world by showcasing outstanding products that depict the rich and vibrant culture of people of African ancestry. Her business proudly carries jewellery, prints, artworks, and books, and I'm all too happy to congratulate her on this enormous amount of work that she does.

Additionally, she somehow finds time for being a loving mother, devoted wife, sister, and grandmother, and for her own personal development. I want to ask the House to acknowledge her great work and recognize Bernadette Hamilton-Reid.

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

VOLUNS.: MILLBROOK POWWOW - THANKS

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important cultural tradition in my constituency, the Millbrook Powwow.

August 13 and 14, 2022, Millbrook hosted their 22nd Annual Powwow. The Millbrook Powwow had been on hiatus for three long years due to the pandemic and its restrictions. This year our community was grateful to have this powerful tradition back in full force.

Over 50 craft and food vendors were available over the two days of captivating drum and dance competitions, which featured many gifted performers of traditional Indigenous song and dance.

The Millbrook Powwow is an important opportunity for the entire community to experience and celebrate the rich heritage of First Nations culture. Thank you to all of the hard-working volunteers who make this event possible.

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

FAIRVIEW CLAYTON PK. FARMERS MKT.: 2ND SEASON SUCCESS - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I want to extend congratulations to the Fairview Clayton Park Farmers Market on a successful second season. This small but mighty market has a great selection of local crafters, producers, bakers, artists, and community groups.

When you shop the indoor-outdoor market, you are greeted with the musical stylings of the resident musicians, Jeff and Gary, who always kept the shoppers entertained. This small business could not have been so successful without the support of our local arena, Centennial Arena, and all the staff who helped out each week.

[1:00 p.m.]

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM. - QEII PROJ.: ON TIME & ON BUDGET - COMMIT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, renewing our province's health care infrastructure is pivotal to delivering Nova Scotians with top-quality modern care. It's also critical to dealing with the capacity issues that we're experiencing in our province when it comes to our health care system. It is actually crucial to recruiting and retaining doctors and other medical professionals to work in our facilities.

The previous government obviously prioritized this with generational projects and we are seeing the results of those projects now. Shovels are in the ground at the health care redevelopment in Cape Breton, which is going to expand cancer and critical care there, among other things. Shovels are in the ground at the outpatient facility in Bayers Lake, which is going to expand primary care. The project is on time and on budget in both cases.

However, with the QEII redevelopment project, we do not know whether that project's going to be on time or on budget. Could we please ask the Premier for a commitment today that that project, the QEII redevelopment, will be on time and on budget?

THE PREMIER: Obviously, investments in health care infrastructure are something that the prior government took seriously, for sure. We do as well. We know that investments in infrastructure are required, for sure.

There are a number of projects that we're continuing on. There are some that we've added to, and some that are still in the active procurement process. The particular project that the member asked about is still in the active procurement process, so we'll let that process continue on but we will, as a government, continue the investments in health care infrastructure because that's what Nova Scotians have asked us to do.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The QEII redevelopment project is absolutely critical to acute care services; it impacts acute care services and ambulatory services across the province. We know that it's also going to be critical to expand and modernize our cancer care options, as well as hospice care, among other things. It's also linked to long-term care wait times with the in-patient capacity of that hospital. However, it looks like this project

is going to be severely delayed because this government delayed approval by close to a year.

Could the Premier explain to the House why that delay in approval occurred and what the government is ready to do to get that project back on time and back on budget?

THE PREMIER: I completely disagree with the member's characterization. There are lots of moving parts on these files. The member would know, as a former Minister of Health and Wellness, in the five months in the portfolio he talked about he did very little. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, our minister in five months accomplished incredible amounts of initiatives to improve health care.

To the extent that we inherited a lot of stuff, some of which had been sitting on the side of the former minister's desk, we're dealing with it, Mr. Speaker. We are systematically and methodically working through it because we know that Nova Scotians have given us a mandate to fix health care and that is exactly what we will do. (Applause)

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier oftentimes confuses me as the current Minister of Health and Wellness and I think he confuses himself as the current Leader of the Official Opposition.

I do think when you look at this Premier, who promised to fix health care, promised solutions - that was the only major promise that was made - I do think that Nova Scotians deserve a little bit more than blame and excuses in this Chamber when it comes to the work on health care.

On this file we do know that the project which was already prepared for approval was delayed. We don't know why it was delayed. We don't know who reviewed that project. We do know that the scope of the project didn't change within its final approval and that delay period impacted the inflationary pressures on that project and the timeline and the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Could the Premier please tell us why that project was delayed before approval?

THE PREMIER: I disagree with the member's framing of the question, 100 per cent. I completely disagree with it. As a matter of fact, we have been a government of action. (Applause)

We have to be a government of action because there was a long period of inaction, Mr. Speaker, so we are acting. We are understanding the complexities of the issues and we are coming up with solutions. We are moving forward.

I will assure the member that investments in health care infrastructure are a priority. I will assure the member that we feel the urgency for a number of infrastructure projects -

more beds, more operating rooms, more long-term care beds. I don't have to remind Nova Scotians what happened in all of those areas over the past eight years. We have a lot of work to do and we are busy doing it. There is no question.

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

PREM. - HEALTH CARE: INACCESSIBLE - EXPLAIN

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd like to share a few stories with the Premier of people attempting to access health care in this province.

A Dartmouth resident shared with us recently: I've had a number of medical issues over the last year. My old walk-in clinic has closed, and the only other ones near me have very limited hours and book fully up early in the day. To get prescriptions or refill them, I've had to use getmaple.ca and pay out of pocket. Each prescription I need must be done in a separate paid appointment.

What would the Premier say to this person who has to pay a private company each time they need to refill a prescription?

THE PREMIER: The stories of access to care are certainly the stories that move me to get up every day and keep moving forward. We know there's a lot of work to do in making sure that Nova Scotians can access care.

I want to remind the member that we have Virtual Care NS. It's provided by the Province. We have walk-in clinics. We have a lot of various - I would encourage the members here to help get that message out. If that message is not out to Nova Scotians, that's something we can do together. We can get together and get behind Nova Scotians and let them know the avenues that are there. We need more avenues, for sure we do, and we are committed to opening up more avenues. We are focused on access to care.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: These are stories of constituents whom we've already told about Virtual Care NS, whom we've told about walk-in clinics, and who cannot access care in that way.

I'd like to share another message from Cyr Mishkin in Dartmouth, who contacted us to say: We've been waiting for a family doctor for almost two years. We had one for a month, and then she moved out of the province. With a two-year-old, our only option has been walk-in clinics and three- to four-hour waits. This is nuts. This is not the Canada I want to bring my daughter up in. We are becoming like the States, and that is tragic.

How long will Cyr and their family have to wait before they get a family doctor?

THE PREMIER: This is an issue, of course, we talk about a lot in this Chamber, and the recruitment efforts, the retention efforts. We recruited 162 doctors this year. That's a record number of doctors. We've offered jobs to all the nursing students, added nursing seats. We will continue to make sure that we add to and support those health care professionals we have in this province. They work incredibly hard and provide an incredible level of care to Nova Scotians.

There is a lot of work to do. There is no question about that. We're committed to doing it for Cyr and for every single Nova Scotian.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Accessing health care isn't the only thing people are having to pay for. Betty Josey is a resident of Eastern Passage who's trying to stay as healthy as possible and to keep those around her safe. She is 76. She says: I've never had the high-dose flu shot but thought it would be prudent this year to get one, so I did, at a cost to me of \$99.43. As you know, seniors are only covered for this if they live in a facility. I guess the rest of us don't count. We are still vulnerable, and many of us visit friends in these places.

When she emailed her government MLA to ask whether the Province would chip in to cover the cost of the high-dose flu vaccine, she received no assistance or adequate response. What is the Premier's response to Betty and others in her position who are asking government to cover the cost of the high-dose flu vaccine here as they do in almost every other province?

THE PREMIER: I want to assure the member and all Nova Scotians that the regular dose is effective. There's a use for the high dose for sure. In this province, that is available in certain settings, but we'll continue to look at ways that that can or should be expanded. We're constantly reviewing the medications, the care that's provided to Nova Scotians. We'll continue to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

SNSIS: QEII PROJ. REVIEW - PROVIDE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier is quick to lay generic blame on everybody else but his government when it comes to the state of health care. What he fails to recognize are the stats around health care, which are obviously getting worse.

The Need a Family Practice Registry going up by 45,000 people in a year. We never saw that kind of increase. COVID-19 deaths exponentially growing in our province. Emergency rooms being closed down more. Access to primary care and other critical care services being harder and harder to get under his watch.

We see this blame happening again on the QEII project. We know for a fact that this project was delayed. Cabinet did not provide the approval when it had the chance to, and in the ensuing year . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Can the Premier please tell us why that project was delayed and provide the review that was done to the House?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: What I would say is that when we formed our majority government, we did the responsible thing. This is the biggest and most complex infrastructure in Canada, if not North America. We took the time to do the responsible thing to understand the complexities of the project. As the Premier has indicated, and I will repeat, we are in an open procurement. There's a process to follow. It's the same process as the Bayers Lake COC went through.

I want to reassure the member that we're going to maintain the integrity of this procurement, Mr. Speaker.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We certainly would like to know the nature of that review because the scope of the project didn't change. Obviously, we know how complex that project was. It took years to develop. This government delayed it for approximately a year, and we don't even know why. Nothing changed in the scope of the project except the cost and the timeline.

This is going to impact health care delivery from one end of the province to the other because the capacity of our facilities to take in ambulances, emergency care, cancer care impacts every single part of the system from one end of the province to the other.

This government can't even be transparent and tell us why that project was delayed or provide a review to this Chamber. Will the Premier please do that today?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I have to question why the former Minister of Health and Wellness didn't approve it the last day he was in Cabinet.

The Halifax Infirmity project is only one piece of the QEII redevelopment project. There are so many other good projects, and renovations are ongoing throughout the HRM. The renovations to the third and fifth floors of the HI opened up a hybrid OR, the first in Atlantic Canada. Bayers Lake is progressing very well, as I noted yesterday. Renovations at Dartmouth General, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have a lot more to say.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

SNSIS: QEII REDEVELOPMENT COST - UPDATE

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that long list of Liberal accomplishments.

At the Public Accounts Committee earlier this month, we were told that over \$50 million had been spent on the QEII project on consultant contracts alone, and I'll table that. That is a lot of taxpayer dollars to spend on consultants.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier update us on how much this government has spent on this project to date?

COLTON LEBLANC: As the preamble from the former Minister of Health and Wellness said, it was a project that they started years ago, so I would say that the vast majority of the \$50 million-plus was spent under their tenure in government.

Mr. Speaker, again, the QEII - so we have the breakdown. The HI expansion project is one element of the QEII redevelopment. Then there's Cape Breton. I hear great things from the member for Cape Breton East and Glace Bay-Dominion on the progress that's being made there. Steel is going up, dust is in the air. Very happy to hear that our government - our government - announced the cardiac catheterization centre that's going to improve health care for Nova Scotians as well.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, what we call that is word salad. Listen, they know how much is spent. They won't say it. The people of Nova Scotia deserve to know because it is their money. Yet the minister sits there and refuses to answer the questions - just like they did in the Public Accounts Committee, just like the Premier continues to do.

Any review of the biggest health care infrastructure project east of Quebec deserves, quite frankly, a little bit of transparency. We're going to ask a lot of questions about this project. So far, we've got nothing but vague statements from this government. The people of this province deserve answers.

Will the minister responsible for the QEII redevelopment project commit to tabling the precise results of the scope review that the government undertook and the funding they have spent to date?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I guess we're in for another long 35 minutes because we remain in an open procurement. That's not going to change, that's the fact of the matter.

Regardless of what the members opposite want to say, we are following the same process that their government followed regarding the Bayers Lake project - the same

integrity of the transparency of this project. There is integrity to maintain, there's confidentiality to maintain and, as minister, I respect that process.

[1:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

SNSIS - QEII REDEVELOPMENT PAUSE - CLARIFY

HON. KELLY REGAN: Earlier this month, when speaking about the QEII project, the Premier's handpicked Health Authority CEO said, "I don't think that anything was put on pause other than to make sure that the government fully understood the nature of the project . . ." I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, this is a direct contradiction of the minister's own statement on this project to the media that, in fact, a scope review was conducted.

My question to the minister responsible for the QEII project: Who is actually correct on this, the minister or the CEO of the Authority?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, we are in an open procurement. I respect the process that the former government went through with the Bayers Lake project. I take that process seriously. I want to maintain the integrity of that process, respecting the confidentiality.

We want to be good partners, and I'm not willing to jeopardize being a good partner. At the end of the day this government will continue to move forward in the best interests of Nova Scotians and I hope . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services has the floor.

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, if the former government were on this side, I hope they would be saying the same thing, that they would be moving forward with the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart.

KELLY REGAN: So I'll just take from that non-answer that the minister doesn't want to say who is actually right.

Mr. Speaker, when the first action a government takes on a project is to stop it for a review, people get worried. This government has made a lot of promises and, in particular, on health care. Nova Scotians need to have confidence that this project is going to be completed. Nova Scotian health care professionals and patients alike deserve to know

exactly when we can expect to have a new Halifax Infirmary constructed, operational and seeing patients.

If the Premier would like to answer the question, we'd love to have him stand up instead of just giving instructions to his minister.

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the difference between the former government, under Premier McNeil, and our government is that our Premier respects his Cabinet and lets his ministers answer questions.

What Nova Scotians want is confidence in action on health care, something that has been neglected for eight years. We talked about it during a year's shutdown under that previous government. We talked about it at the Health Committee - that they shut down during the pandemic. That's why we're delivering on health care, we're delivering on CCA increases - paying for CCAs to go to school and much more.

Nova Scotians want to be confident that they're going to get beds and surgery on time, when they need it, and that's what we're committed to do.

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

OAMH: PUBLIC BILLING CODES - UPDATE

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health. In the last election this government promised universal mental health care to all Nova Scotians by providing public billing codes to mental health care providers.

The most recent budget ran incredibly short of this promise and many Nova Scotians are still unable to get the mental health care they need. Wait times for non-urgent mental health care for much of the Central Zone have nearly doubled since this government was elected. Someone in Halifax may have to wait up to 146 days for non-urgent care, despite the Nova Scotia Health Authority's own target of 28 days. Mr. Speaker, this is a painful and devastating wait of half a year.

The minister committed to conducting a study into the adoption of universal mental health codes. My question to the minister is: Can the minister table the findings of the study?

HON. BRIAN COMER: I thank the member for the question. Significant work is under way to continue to implement universal addictions and mental health care. We had one of the great groups here in the gallery this morning, the Strongest Families Institute which actually works with non-urgent wait times for youth in the province and I think does a fantastic job.

We also launched the first provincial peer support line last week, which is the first of its kind in this province. We remain committed to this - I certainly do. We will have more to say on this in the future, for sure.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, certainly the government has taken some steps to get people help, but I am asking specifically about the promise to provide public billing codes. The minister has been saying again and again since the election that news is coming, information is coming, but we need to see what is actually happening.

While people wait for access to consistent mental health care, will the minister commit to a timeline for his promise of mental health billing codes?

BRIAN COMER: I think we've been very clear as the minister and as a government that access to mental health care is a right, not a privilege, and we continue to look at it that way. I think in the Central Zone specifically, you can look at the recovery support centres, the acute mental health day hospital. They're some great initiatives that have been stood up, the first of their kind in the province. We'll continue to work on these initiatives.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

SNSIS: QEII REDEVELOPMENT SCOPE - CLARIFY

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: When this government paused this project to review the scope, surely one of the considerations would have been the number of critical care beds. The current scope of the project includes 33 intensive care unit beds and 15 intermediate care beds, as well as 626 in-patient beds. What advice did this government receive from clinical health professionals during the scope review regarding the number of beds?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I want to take the opportunity to thank the folks at Nova Scotia Lands, Department of Public Works, Nova Scotia Health Authority, and the Department of Health and Wellness. This is truly a team effort. We're speaking about the most complex, the biggest infrastructure project not only in our province, but in Canada - perhaps even in North America.

At the end of the day, I'm not in a position to jeopardize or put on the line the integrity of an open procurement, and that's where we are. We're going to move forward with the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The cancer care centre at the QEII is meant to be the biggest cancer care centre in Atlantic Canadian history. We all know someone who has been affected by cancer. Cancer care needs to be a priority.

This new cancer centre was designed to accommodate 15,000 new visits per day and 260 cancer treatments per day with some of the most advanced radiation machines in the country.

Can the minister responsible confirm for us in this House today that this will be the appropriate capacity and that it will be ready to treat cancer patients who so desperately need this state-of-the-art facility?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure the member opposite that we have been working very closely with Cancer Care Nova Scotia on a number of initiatives to do just that, making sure that we're delivering cutting-edge cancer care in this province. I want to give you some examples.

CAR T-cell therapy is now available in our province for the first time. To the member opposite's point, we announced Ethos, which is a 3-D imaging machine, and top-of-the-line radiology. We've been also working, of course, in Cape Breton and looking at ways which we can deliver. We're very involved with Cancer Care Nova Scotia. We'll continue to look at innovative programs to ensure cancer care is top of mind for our government and the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DHW: QEII PROJECT CLINICAL TEAM - UPDATE

BRAEDON CLARK: When the previous government identified the need for the QEII project, it was crucial that both medical and infrastructure professionals were on the same page from start to finish. On the clinical side, we need our medical professionals to have confidence that when this facility is built, we'll have all the tools they need to deliver services to Nova Scotians who need care.

When is the last time the minister responsible for the QEII project met with the clinical team for the project?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: In the spirit of the team that we talked about that is supporting, I want to ensure the members opposite we're really in touch with clinical folks across the province. I want to give you an example of that.

Again, back to Cape Breton, where we've introduced the cardiac catheterization lab, which is an amazing project - the amazing part about that is not only is it going to support care in Cape Breton, but it's also going to alleviate bottlenecks in Halifax, where we can actually support people across the province who need specialty care. That's one example of how we continue to work with clinicians.

We are also looking at the OR services at Glace Bay Hospital. We work with clinicians and anaesthetists there so that we can look at what is the best way to deliver services in CBRM as an example. Clinicians are very much a part of this ongoing process.

BRAEDON CLARK: The infrastructure side of this project is also critical. As we know, this is a P3 procurement, which means there's a great deal of expertise that's required to make sure that we get the best contract for Nova Scotians.

Earlier this year, and as recently as this morning, this government made, and continues to make, significant changes in Crown corporations. This includes dissolving Nova Scotia Lands, the corporation where this subject matter expertise lies in government.

I'd like to ask the minister: Will the new entity, Build Nova Scotia, be involved in the QEII redevelopment? If so, what expertise does the CEO in that organization have with P3 procurement processes?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to speaking to the bill later on. There's no change in the process that has been unfolding for this open procurement. The staff at Nova Scotia Lands will now be part of Build Nova Scotia.

We continue to work very hard with our partners across health. Again, we will move forward in the best interests of Nova Scotians when we talk about the most complex and the biggest infrastructure project in our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

SNSIS: QEII REDEV. WRKG. GRP. MTG. - ATTEND

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, the previous government recognized that constant communication and collaboration was important, on top of all that goes on with this - as the minister has said - the most complex project that we have in recent history.

The QEII redevelopment had a deputy minister and CEO working group that met at least once or twice per month, and multiple Cabinet ministers and the Premier were kept regularly briefed. We know that this Premier fired a lot of health care professionals when he took office, but we need to know that proper project management continues.

Can the minister responsible for the project tell us when the last time was that this QEII working group, deputy ministers and CEO, met and when did the minister last attend this meeting?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of the team that we are - at least on this side of the House - there are frequent conversations with colleagues on a number of different files, including this project here. There are ongoing conversations with

the Minister of Health and Wellness, who within her purview, has conversations in her team.

There is a lot of collaboration on the important work of moving forward the health care infrastructure projects in our province to support patients and staff. That's something we're committed to do.

IAIN RANKIN: With respect, a project of this magnitude needs more than ad hoc, ongoing conversations. We need structure behind this project management.

Mr. Speaker, we are hearing from health care professionals who are growing seriously concerned about the future of this project. Can the minister responsible for the redevelopment tell us when the last time was that a broad stakeholder meeting was held for the purpose of communicating project developments to Nova Scotia's hard-working health care professionals?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'd like to thank the member for the question. Certainly, we are out in the communities and in the hospitals on a regular basis talking to health care workers. Again, we talk to clinicians about what it is that they require in order to do their jobs well. We invest in the infrastructure wherever possible in order to see that happen.

Again, we go back to things like ethos - working with those clinicians so that we understand how they are involved in research and where they need the equipment in order to advance cutting-edge therapy for Nova Scotians, and we'll continue to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: NEED A FAM. PRAC. REG. FEES - EXPLAIN

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Earlier this week in an exchange about the ballooning numbers of people on the Need a Family Practice Registry, the Premier said that being on the list does not mean you don't have access to care. But this is not entirely true. As my colleague has already outlined, more and more people are logging into the virtual care platform in the morning to see that they can't get in unless a pay a fee.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier think it is okay that Nova Scotians are being forced to pay fees for their health care because they can't get appointments at walk-ins or on the public virtual care platform?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. Of course, we want to make sure that virtual care is there and it's

free to people because we want them to have access, especially as they are waiting for a primary care team in order to look after them.

[1:30 p.m.]

We are constantly looking at onboarding and expanding clinicians, not only physicians but also nurse practitioners, who can work in Virtual Care NS. We are also looking at recruitment and retention. We spoke a little bit about it yesterday. It's really an important part. I had a meeting today about how we can streamline bringing health care professionals into this province and use them to the highest ability of their scope.

There's a lot of work to do. We continue to look at options. I can guarantee that this conversation will be ongoing as we continue to improve health care.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians need primary care. We all know that. As many as one in four don't have access to a regular health care provider.

Stephen from Mill Village contacted us to say, "Because I did not get a timely doctor's appointment and emergency was filled beyond the brim, I spent \$75 on a prescription from Maple Medical in Ontario. Had I been unable to do that, I would have ended up with bronchial pneumonia."

Will the Premier tell Stephen how long he will have to wait for in-person primary care?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Our emergency services are always available to people if they have any difficulty breathing or anything like that. People should always present to the emergency room or call 911 if they have any sort of emergency treatment. When people access virtual care, providers actually do an assessment over the phone and will refer people to primary care clinics throughout the province if they feel that an in-patient appointment is necessary.

We know that there are gaps and that there are long wait-lists, but we continue to recruit and build teams around our primary care providers to ensure that people not only get a physician and a nurse practitioner, but also the care of the team. Dalhousie Family Medicine is a prime example of how we've expanded that and will continue to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

SNSIS: QEII REDEV. PROJ. - UPDATES

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians deserve to know what is going on. This is the largest project in the history of this province, and it appears that this

government wants to hide behind procurement of one element of this project and not give information to the public.

The previous government regularly published updates on the project and kept the public informed of the project's scope and timelines via government website. Hundreds of planning documents, including the entire redevelopment master plan, are available with what used to be regularly occurring updates about the project's progress. This website has not been updated once since this government has taken office. Does the minister think that Nova Scotians deserve updates on the largest health care project in a generation?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: The member for Kings South may be in a position and he might be willing to jeopardize the integrity of an open procurement. I'm not. I'm not there. I want to reassure all Nova Scotians that there is a process to follow. I'll remind the members opposite that it's the exact same process that the Bayers Lake COC went through, following the best practices that have been engaged with other partners and experts from across the country.

Speaking of up-to-date and wanting to know what's what, I'll table for the House a website that is regularly updated. It's the Action for Health website, Mr. Speaker.

KEITH IRVING: It doesn't seem like we're going to get much information. Let's see what information we do have. We do have their budget - not what's happened in the last eight years. Their budget said that they were going to spend \$465 million on health care redevelopment. If you look at the fiscal update that we know now in September, they are now underspent by \$130 million. Clearly, the project is off-track and it's behind schedule. The further it goes behind schedule, the more it costs, the more the interest costs are.

Will the minister responsible for this project provide the public with a breakdown of what specific work is going to be completed of this \$465 million budgeted?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, if I did my math quickly during the preamble there, there's five months left in the fiscal year, so we have time to spend that money.

We're moving forward with our infrastructure projects. The Minister of Public Works announced earlier this week a critical investment to the IWK. The Minister of Health and Wellness was in Cape Breton a couple of weeks ago to announce a cardiac catheterization centre, something I'm very proud of. It'll have tremendous impact right across the province, and decrease the burden on EHS. Health care infrastructure is important to this government, and any decision that we make is going to be with the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

SNSIS: QEII REDEV. PROJ. COSTS - EXPLAIN

BRAEDON CLARK: Yesterday in Question Period, we got a chance to see this government's obsession with secrecy, and that sad and sorry tour is continuing today. In 2021, as construction costs began to rise, this government was faced with a very unique opportunity regarding the QEII project. In a time of labour shortages and cost uncertainty, two project bidders offered to combine their construction and planning capacities and submit a joint bid to ensure project timelines would happen. The government rejected that bid.

The Premier's logic at the time was that he wanted to have a competitive process, and we are now one week away from one bidder putting forward a bid - so that's kind of weird. There was no guarantee from the remaining company at the time that they would be able to submit a compliant bid. I'd like to ask the minister: Who in government made the decision to reject this bid and why?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: This massive and very complex project is not immune to the market conditions. As the member noted, labour challenges, inflation, supply chain issues, commodity price increases. I'm sure eventually there's going to be an impact by the Liberal carbon tax that they support.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day. We are in an open procurement, and we will, again - I'll repeat for the benefit of the House - move forward with the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart.

BRAEDON CLARK: As the minister knows well, the deadline for the debate here is a week away, so we've got seven more days left to hide behind the procurement excuse and then we'll have to see when the information comes out in a week. I'm looking forward to that.

To date, this government has refused to answer any questions regarding the budgeted cost of this project. We're not asking about procurement process or actual costs. What we want to know is what Nova Scotia taxpayers can expect the bill for this project to be. What we've heard through the media - and we'd love to hear some corroboration from the government - is upwards of \$3 billion.

We know that health care infrastructure is critically important to Nova Scotians, but I would like to ask the minister responsible: How much is this project going to cost us? Does he expect us to believe he doesn't know?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat my answer from yesterday and one that I provided to the media before. The previous \$2 billion figure that was tossed around a couple of years ago is not accurate anymore.

The reality is that we were very fortunate to have an interested proponent, PCL. They're crunching their numbers. They're working on their submission. Once that is scheduled to be submitted and received by the department, the department will analyze it and review it.

Again, for the benefit of the House, we will be moving forward with the best interests of Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW: HEALTH CARE PROFS. - COMMUNICATE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, the ICU department and the emergency room department at the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre continue to experience a severe shortage of nurses. Last week when I brought these concerns to this House and talked about the unsafe working conditions, the minister unfortunately called me irresponsible.

When our doctors and nurses back home saw that, they were very discouraged because they want a better culture. They want to feel and know that they can talk to this government and share the concerns, the facts are that they are working in unsafe conditions. This is a fact.

Will the minister commit to looking at how many incident reports are being submitted by nurses and table that report here in the House, of conditions and how many incident reports are being reported by nurses?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We are in touch on a regular basis with the leadership of Nova Scotia Health Authority and we know that there are some staffing shortages. We're working very hard around recruitment and retention in that area.

We're working with people who are on the ground. We're working with the VP of medicine and the VP of operations to better understand how to support the staff in that area. We continue to do that. We will continue to recruit. We will continue to listen to the staff about how best we can support them in their work environment.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, one of the doctors felt comfortable reaching out to me and asked for help. The nurses are too scared to. That's the culture.

The doctor asked me to request a meeting. I requested a meeting with the Northern Zone as well as the department officials Tuesday of last week. No one responded to my request, and no one contacted the doctor. He's an ICU cardiologist and no one has responded to him.

Also, there is a tour around the province. Cumberland Regional is one of nine regional hospitals, yet they're not coming to hear the concerns of our people, despite our emergency room being closed and the shortage of nursing staff.

Will the minister commit to including Cumberland Regional and Amherst on her tour for listening to the health care professionals?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We are currently on a tour around the province, and this is a partial tour. We started it last night. Of course, I was here with all of you. We do have the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the deputy minister touring the province, and whenever I am able, I will join them.

We have made arrangements and have indicated to Nova Scotia Health that we would like to choose a date in order to go up and speak to the folks at the regional.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH: SHORT-TERM RENTALS IMPACT - ADDRESS

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We continue to hear concerns from Nova Scotians about the impact of short-term rentals on the housing crisis. We were encouraged to see the amendments made by this government in the Spring to create a registry of short-term rentals. However, it's concerning that these changes have not yet been proclaimed.

Mr. Speaker, when will the minister address the short-term rental issue head-on?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Certainly, this is an important question in terms of the member's question about the Tourism Accommodation Registration Act. It's my understanding that the regulations will be ready to be proclaimed within a month. They have been worked on since last Spring, and they continue to be worked on. They're very close to being ready.

SUZY HANSEN: Thank you for that answer, minister - I appreciate that. While we wait and wait, things are worsening. I know you know this and as well everyone else here in this House does. One community organization estimates that more than 3,700 standalone homes have been converted into short-term rentals throughout the province, and the number of active short-term rentals in Halifax alone has increased by nearly 1,000 since earlier this year.

These numbers continue to rise while we wait for government action. I'm glad to hear that the minister has said that within a month I will hear, and I will follow up on that when the time does come.

JOHN LOHR: Yes, we continue to be very aware of this issue and watch very closely.

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

SNSIS: QEII PROJECT ACTION PLAN - DISCUSS

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government cancel or delay major infrastructure projects before. The Halifax art gallery project was supposed to break ground this year but was delayed indefinitely due to soaring inflation and ballooning project costs, and I'll table that. This government has cancelled bridge and road projects across the province due to high costs, and I'll table that.

The public is concerned the QEII project could be next. We already know from hearing that this project could be billions over budget, and you have five months to budget, I realize, but what is the action plan on this complex but critical project? The old infirmary, the building is sick. It has been sick for decades. I have heard from many patients who have been there. Some even said they go in sick, and they come out sicker. The staff is great, but the building is critical.

What is the action plan to replace it?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: If it was sick for decades, I'm not sure why it wasn't a priority in 2013 when they formed government. I recognize that moving our health care infrastructure projects is critical to supporting and improving our health care system, Mr. Speaker, but I also recognize that there are other actions that are important, like expanding virtual care.

I want to correct the record from yesterday: We were not on the record bashing virtual care. In fact, the Premier, at our AGM in 2019, was the first out of the gate to talk favourably of virtual care.

LORELEI NICOLL: In the world I live in, Mr. Speaker, action plans happen in the current state. Right now, critical means now. This government's inability to appropriately manage this file - one of the two groups pre-qualified to bid on the Halifax Infirmary redevelopment project was pulled out in June, and I'll table that. EllisDon Infrastructure Healthcare provided notice that they intended to withdraw from the tender process, leaving just Plenary PCL Health as the sole bidder, which will undoubtedly drive up the cost of the project.

My question is for the minister responsible for the QEII redevelopment project: What reasons did EllisDon Infrastructure provide for withdrawing from the tender process?

[1:45 p.m.]

COLTON LEBLANC: As I said, this project and many other projects in our province are not immune to the reality of the market conditions today: the increase in inflation, the commodity price increase, the labour shortage.

Again, I want to take the opportunity to thank PCL for their interest in this project. EllisDon and many other companies in our province make business decisions every day. Right at this time, we're very fortunate to have PCL interested in this project. Again, we're in open procurement, and we're going to maintain that integrity.

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

SNSIS - QEII PROJECT: SOLE BIDDER - EXPLAIN

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, this is genuinely upsetting. This is the biggest health care infrastructure project in this province's history, and the cornerstone of our health care redevelopment is at risk because this government is dragging their heels.

The minister likes to talk about the open and fair procurement, but the reality is, as my colleague pointed out, there's only one bidder left. That doesn't leave many options. You either accept the bid that could be billions over budget due to the lack of a competitive process, or abandon the project altogether.

My question for the minister responsible for the QEII development project is: How could this government leave Nova Scotians in such a no-win situation?

COLTON LEBLANC: You want to know what the cornerstone of our health care system is right now? It's that crumbling brick, an important brick to maintain that structure of our health care system that the former government failed to fix. I think it's shameful that we're where we're at right now with our health care system, but guess what? We're in very competent hands. I am very proud to work alongside a dedicated Cabinet.

I don't think that our province has been in such capable and knowledgeable and informed hands, at the hands of three ministers for health.

PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, all the accolades aside, we know that a competitive tender process is crucial for driving down prices and giving Nova Scotia taxpayers the most cost-effective and responsible deal possible. But since this government has fumbled the ball on this critical health care issue, Nova Scotians are either going to have to massively overpay for the project or not get it done at all.

Following the withdrawal of the second bidder, a government spokesperson said the Province would continue with the tender process for the project and that the bid from Plenary PCL Health would not automatically be approved. I'll table that.

My question is for the minister responsible for the QEII redevelopment project: Under what circumstances would this government reject the sole bid?

COLTON LEBLANC: We're nearing the end of Question Period, and my answer - I guess it's not Answer Period, but this is my answer - is that we remain to be in an open procurement for the largest and most complex - not only health care infrastructure project, but the infrastructure project in our province's history. I am in no way willing to jeopardize the integrity of an open procurement that respects confidentiality and upholds integrity to a process. I hope that the members opposite will support that integrity in the procurement process.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

SNSIS - QEII PROJECT: HEALTH CARE RECRUITMENT - RECOG.

FRED TILLEY: The province is facing multiple unprecedented crises in health care. Almost 120,000 people are without a family doctor, emergency rooms are overwhelmed, surgery wait times are longer than they have ever been. We know that recruitment and retention of health care professionals is crucial to addressing these issues, but nobody is moving to Nova Scotia so they can practise in a crumbling VG building.

My question is for the minister responsible for the QEII redevelopment project: What conversations have been had with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment to discuss the importance of this project in our health care recruitment initiatives?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: There's been a lot of engagement around how we market the wonderful things that are happening in this province and the already cutting-edge work that's happening. When we think about Dr. Mike Dunbar, who's done one of the first robotic hip surgeries in the country, when we look at Ethos, when we look at CAR T-cell therapy, we look at having a brand new cardiac catheterization lab in Cape Breton, all of these things attract new health care professionals, not only specialty physicians, but also nurses. It energizes the workforce.

FRED TILLEY: Considering the importance of health care infrastructure to the recruitment and retention of health care professionals, can this government commit now that no health care infrastructure project will be cancelled during their term?

COLTON LEBLANC: As a former health care worker, I'm very happy that we have a government that listens to health care workers.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 208.

Bill No. 208 - Environment Act (amended)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville with 29 minutes remaining.

HON. BEN JESSOME: Twenty-nine miles, 55 smiles. Here we go.

I appreciate the opportunity to get back into this conversation here today. Last night was a first crack, I guess, at having this conversation around what will be one of the most important pieces of legislation that we as a Legislature adopt or not, certainly in this Session. As I started to say last night, the youth of our province have truly inspired us all to take a good, hard look at the legacy that we want to leave as legislators, in particular as it relates to the environment. There's so much access to information, we have so many bright people, so many bright young people that have taken a lot of time, invested a lot of their passion and energy and education around understanding the impacts that carbon has on our environment here in Nova Scotia and beyond.

People come to Nova Scotia to experience a coastal climate. We have to do a lot to ensure that our coastal climate is protected. Part of that is beefing up our protections around things like the Coastal Protection Act, and, certainly, this piece of legislation - this bill is no exception. My honourable colleague, the member for Timberlea-Prospect, made a point to bring us up to speed on a number of realities associated with this particular circumstance last night, that I think - given that we've seen daylight today, it begs repeating some of these things.

Five years ago, the rules and requirements were established by the federal government. We had choices if we were willing to put in the work. We had choices to deal with a requirement around carbon pricing, but it was a tax - a carbon tax, however you

want to term that. You want to call it a levy? Similar, same thing. We create a hybrid model or establish a cap and trade system if that was a suitable choice for your province.

That's what we as a government under a former minister who sits in the House today, as well as a former Minister Margaret Miller who decided that no, it wasn't acceptable to take the first recommendation from the federal government. She stepped up, he stepped up, and despite some of the initial inclinations that came out in the form of staff recommendations, we as an entity - we as a government, took it upon ourselves to go a different path, one that would ensure that we made good on that commitment, which I believe all Nova Scotians and all Canadians should and can acknowledge as important to fight climate change, to fight the devastation that is continuing to happen around the world because of inclement weather. Significant weather events continue to happen.

We took it upon ourselves to come up with a structure that would in fact spread the load out and oblige Nova Scotians regardless of the size of the entity, regardless of the size of the household, and came up with a system. The cap and trade system did have a marginal cost for the average Nova Scotian.

But under this plan, the one that's being discussed today and last night and hopefully for days to come, the cost is going to be much more significant. We have acknowledged that it could be as much as 10 times the amount that was established under the former government's cap and trade program. That, quite frankly, is very concerning. It surprises me that when you hear that type of increase that's possibly on the table if this bill is to move forward. You hear that type of an increase - and we're already looking at gas prices that are just out of reach for so many people and even for families that are in fairly sound financial shape - the types of increases that we have seen over the last several weeks and months are ones that create challenges for even sound financial households to take on.

Now the Progressive Conservative government is seemingly okay with adding more to the expense lines in household budgets, which is, to me, unacceptable, particularly coming from a government that continually says they're looking out for Nova Scotians, continually says the best interests are at the heart of all of their decision-making, and a government that continues to say words matter. How is it that, practically, the government can make a collective decision to put this foot forward under a circumstance whereby we're going to see as much as 10 times the cost on Nova Scotians?

Part of that cap and trade system, as we have touched on, and as we continue to discuss in this light and in other conversations around affordability - because make no mistake, the cost of living is having a huge impact on Nova Scotians' ability to do what they need to do: buy drugs, pay rent, get into their first home, put groceries in their fridge. The cost of living is having an impact on households across this province regardless of financial standing. Part of this cap and trade program that we still haven't defeated in this House - the government still has not demonstrated that it was dysfunctional enough to do away with it. We have seen progress and we have heard government members allude to the

fruits of the labour, the fruits from the programs that have been established through the Green Fund, which was a complementary element to the cap and trade program.

[2:00 p.m.]

We've had the privilege of working with Nova Scotians individually and in different organizations that were able to come up with localized solutions for tackling the fight against climate change. We were able to redirect the proceeds, revenues from that Green Fund and have a significant impact on Nova Scotians. More specifically, Madam Speaker, to the Nova Scotians who need it the most.

Our most vulnerable people in the province were able to tap into assistive programs that were a direct consequence of the levy established on carbon. It goes back to the thought process around, if indeed the Progressive Conservative government is truly and narrowly focused on what is best for Nova Scotians, then it just doesn't come together in that you would dismiss an effective financial resource that was having a direct impact on the pocketbooks of our most vulnerable people in the province. I can't figure that out.

As I touched on a moment ago, and I do genuinely encourage the minister, if there are reasonable and certain complications with the former program, I anticipate we will have an opportunity to hear from him through the Chair. I would encourage - as I stated last night - as many members get on their feet and talk about the consequences on their specific districts around removing the capacity of the Green Fund.

We did hear from the member for Kings West last night and I do appreciate his comments through the Chair. He has always, at least from this side of the room, approached his job with sincerity. That means a lot. I appreciate his words and his consideration for his constituents.

He listed off a number of different initiatives in his district, some of which were a result of the Green Fund. If that's one member and there are 55 throughout our House, my understanding and the reasonable expectation would be that there are many stories like that throughout our province, that each member of this House could speak to.

At some point beyond the passage of this bill, when the Green Fund has been dissolved and is unavailable to create programs such as the ones that we've started to discuss - we will all, but more narrowly focused - the government members will have to account for why a program that they've proclaimed is functioning well and doing good things, why they decided to wipe that away.

Additionally, they'll have to come up with resources in some other fashion to fill that gap because, make no mistake, climate change is coming. It's already happening; it's here. Nova Scotians, like many throughout the world, are tuned in and driven to fight this fight, and it is up to governments of all stripes to support them, to create the conditions that

enable our best and brightest, our most driven - many of whom are young people - and equip them with the financial resources to take on this challenge which some might say is the greatest challenge of our lifetime.

We met the requirements, as a previous government, around the cap and trade system. We've had more than a year under a new administration knowing that there was a timeline around the duration of the cap and trade program, and we heard little to nothing other than the acknowledgement that this was going to expire. We heard little to nothing around what next steps would look like. We heard little to nothing consequential from the government, one that has indicated that there is a passion for climate change, and I know we all acknowledge that it's a thing, finally. We heard nothing consequential about what next steps would look like, and we wonder why that is.

You rack your brain about something that is as public as climate change, as publicly supported as climate change. I mean, we all - many of us, anyhow - were a part of the walk for climate change that took place a couple of years back. There were, for lack of a specific number, tens of thousands of people - genuinely thousands and thousands of people - who came out to show their support for that. It begs the question why we haven't seen a more transparent opportunity from this government around their obligations around carbon pricing until the eleventh hour, where one can only surmise that from the delays, from the lack of transparency, one can only surmise that there was something other than practicality on the minds of the government - something political, which is a shame.

We know, as I opened by saying today, we know that the parameters were set by the provincial government. We had the rules laid out and we had choices to make, and we worked hard to make those choices. Other jurisdictions had choices to make. Some agreed with the lead-off suggestion around a carbon tax, some disagreed completely. Some disagreed to the extent that they fought it at the Supreme Court.

It's frustrating to know that other jurisdictions have taken this to the top court in our nation and unsuccessfully tested it in court, so they couldn't do it. They couldn't do what the government here in Nova Scotia is proposing today because it is, indeed, a half measure. They have effectively created a tax, as required, on carbon. What they haven't done is look at how monies will be reinvested through that obligation into green development. We haven't seen that. All they've said is - and they used the word Liberal, continually, which again reemphasizes the thinking around why would we be in these circumstances if not for the sake of politics?

They continue to point a finger at the national government and the Prime Minister, continue to use words like "Liberal government," attempting to create a straight line that will somehow lead, somehow divert the problem or the consequence of negative political perception, to the national government.

Make no mistake, there is a direct line to be drawn, in terms of negative political pressure, for a government, but that will come directly back to the provincial government because they haven't acted, frankly, in the best interests of Nova Scotians, as they continue to suggest that they do.

There will be a time where all the smoke will dissipate from the rooms, the facts will come out in the media, and hopefully from government. If it doesn't, we as an Opposition party, the Official Opposition, and I'm sure our friends from the New Democratic Party, will have no problems speaking about those facts, so as to make all Nova Scotians aware of where the responsibility around this pending fiasco should rest, and that is squarely on the Progressive Conservative government of Nova Scotia.

In closing, as I said last night, I sincerely hope we do get some enthusiasm around this conversation from the extended Legislature, the extended group of members that we have in the Legislature, not just one government member, not just two government members. It's important that we all participate in the conversation.

As I said through the Chair to the minister, I am looking forward to hearing his remarks down the road. We have some political banter that continues to happen, but beyond that, this is a truly important conversation that I think we can all gain a lot from. I expect to gain a lot from perspectives such as the one of the member for Timberlea-Prospect and the now Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

I do hope that as we progress through his legislative process that Law Amendments is deployed to maximize the capacity of this work, to maximize the efficacy of this legislation, so that we can collect as much perspective as it takes to come up with the best product we can possibly come up with. I know that when we step away from the blue, and the red, and the orange, and the green, and whatever your stripe is, I know that as human beings we're all concerned about the legacy that we're going to leave the next generation.

As I said, this particular work is multi-generational. This is historic, and I do appreciate the level of pressure that the minister and the government are probably under. I experienced it from a bench way on the other side of the room, way at the back. It was heavy and it should be heavy.

People throughout the province do expect us to accept that weight, to shoulder it, to learn as much as we can, to engage experts, to come forward with alternatives - not just one solution, but alternatives - to be debated and not decided upon through extending hours in the Legislature to ram a bill like this through.

I'm still unclear about why we have extended the hours if for what? I should say that climate change is an urgent scenario. There's no question around that. We need to act quickly, but if something as significant as an extra tax on vulnerable people, average people, on wealthy people, we need to be measured in the way that we accept that

responsibility around coming to what a Nova Scotia version of a solution to carbon pricing looks like.

[2:15 p.m.]

I will finally add that, as I've said a couple of times, and I do acknowledge that this is not my expertise, but one of the coolest things about being a member is the people that you meet. People have encouraged me to pay attention to this file. I have approached this conversation as humbly as I can. I do look forward to the rebuttals that will come from the minister and from perhaps other government members as we work together - we give each other a little bit of a hard time once in a while, but work together to come up with a solution that is right for Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the Environment Act.

I was going to hold my comments until after Law Amendments Committee, but given the great debate that we're hearing, I thought I would add my comments on behalf of the people I represent for Cumberland North. I am proud of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for tabling his bill. I'm sure he's listening very intently to all of the feedback from all of the MLAs here in this Chamber.

I will just add my comments from the people of Cumberland North, who often add a unique view based on our geographic location, positioned so close to New Brunswick and P.E.I. When I look at this bill and I look at the whole picture of what's happening with changes in climate and looking at the rising cost of fuel and looking at the changes that we know we need to make as a society, both here in Nova Scotia and around the world, I do believe that this is a unique opportunity for the government to work collaboratively - not just within this House but within the Atlantic Canadian region, specifically even our Maritime Provinces.

There are many topics that we could all benefit from through collaborating with our other Maritime Provinces, but I do believe that for this one in particular, we could reap enormous benefits if we were unified with New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and all had the same approach to looking at keeping our costs down.

I can say unequivocally that for the people I represent, their main message to me and to the minister responsible would be that they cannot afford to pay any more in taxes. Unequivocally they say to me: Do not do anything that will increase taxes. I think I can confidently say that our neighbours in New Brunswick and P.E.I. would also share that approach.

I have mentioned in this Chamber here before, and I'll mention it again today, that we can take a lot of lessons from Premier Dennis King in Prince Edward Island and his approach. He is a very naturally collaborative leader. I didn't just hear this from him or watching myself, I heard it from some of the Opposition MLAs in Prince Edward Island when I've been at meetings. There've been a couple of Green Party MLAs who've shared with me how collaborative the Premier of Prince Edward Island is, and he does this even though he holds a majority government.

Premier King actually shares legislation, before it's tabled in the House, with the Opposition parties, asking them for feedback and asking them for their party's input. I couldn't help but think about that last night when I was listening to the member for Timberlea-Prospect. I was thinking of the value, the knowledge that the member for Timberlea-Prospect has and how much richer our legislation here in this Chamber could be if we were able to collaborate more effectively and make sure that the knowledge of someone in this Chamber with his expertise is taken into consideration.

I remember in previous years in Opposition with those who are now in government, we talked about how much better we could govern the Province of Nova Scotia if we had more all-party committees and we had more collaboration, because there are great ideas and there's a lot of knowledge within all 55 MLAs right here within the Chamber.

I'd love to see - I think this is a unique opportunity for maybe an all-party committee to make sure that we are taking the wisdom, the bits of knowledge, from all the members who have that as their area of expertise. I'll say that my area is health care and business, not the environment. But I can still speak on behalf of the people I represent, and I also can recognize the knowledge and expertise that others in this Chamber have that is so obvious. So collaboration, both within this House and also as a Maritime region, I do see the benefits.

I really saw this a few months ago - several months ago, actually, when the price of fuel really rose. I had a lot of constituents contacting me saying we have to do something about the price of fuel, this is ridiculous - from truck drivers to regular people trying to buy groceries.

When the price of fuel goes up, it simply affects everything, right? It affects everything. Those who are trucking, they transport goods for everything - food, clothing. Everything that we buy retail is affected by the price of transportation and the price of transportation is directly impacted by the price of fuel.

I did send a letter to the Premier at that time requesting that the Premier consider lowering the tax on gasoline. My legislative assistant at that time helped me do some research. We looked at the actual federal legislation that prevents the provincial governments from removing or changing HST on the price of gasoline. So we knew that that wasn't an option. That is where the government actually benefits from the higher price

of fuel: They get more HST on that. Again, due to the federal laws, provincial governments can't change that.

What I love to do is to try to educate my constituents wherever possible. I did a video with a flip chart, showing people where the price of gas comes from - how it is created through the NSUARB based on the commodity price of fuel, and all the taxes that are involved in the price of fuel.

It was very clear. In New Brunswick, their carbon tax that is added on to the price of gasoline was 8 cents a litre, but here in Nova Scotia, we only had 1 cent a litre. That was a time when I was like, thank goodness we're here in Nova Scotia. I know in New Brunswick as the commodity prices of gasoline went up, the price of oil went up, they had an even more difficult time with their price of gasoline.

Again, right there I thought, it's too bad New Brunswick doesn't have the same cap and trade system as us where there was only 1 cent of carbon tax added to the price of gasoline. So again, just reiterating a Maritime approach, I think all of us would benefit - and I see that very directly living in a border community.

Again, the price of fuel - my main message to the minister today would be that we have to find a way, whatever steps are taken. We have to ensure that the taxation stays as low as possible because people simply cannot afford to pay more.

In Cumberland North, in the area that I represent, there is a lot of fishing. Fishers need fuel. They need diesel and gasoline to go out to sea to do their fishing.

Forestry - they need gas and fuel to remove the wood and truck it to wherever they're taking their lumber. Farming - they use fuel every day with their tractors and with other equipment.

Manufacturing is very big. We have a large industrial park in Amherst. We export a lot of goods. Again, the price of fuel matters. I emphasize to the minister that we have to keep our prices and our taxation down as low as possible.

We have talked a lot about affordability here in this Legislature - the increasing cost of living due to inflation. The economic experts are saying that we're poised potentially for moving towards a recession. We have to do everything we can to keep the cost of living as low as possible for the people of this province, including those I represent.

It's going to be a challenge. The pressures on the minister, the pressures on us here and around the world are to move away from fossil fuels and change the way that we produce electricity. How do we do this? I don't envy the minister. It's not an easy job. How do we move this?

We expect companies like Nova Scotia Power and Emera to change the way they're producing electricity. That's going to cost a lot of money. That's just a fact. Being a former business owner, if you're looking at changing your capital cost of infrastructure and the cost that it's going to take to change from coal burning to other forms of creating energy, there are going to be large capital costs to that. There's no doubt that there are a lot of challenges to those who are responsible for moving away and the changes that are in the Environment Act. It's a challenge to keep those costs down. I do recognize that challenge.

I do think there are a lot of very smart people who have very innovative ways of looking at keeping those costs down. I know in our area, a lot of our large industries are looking at ways of creating their own energy, creating their own electricity. Sometimes it's because they're frustrated with the lack of reliabilities, sometimes with Nova Scotia Power due to power outages, planned or unplanned.

I know one of our large users of energy is the Pugwash salt mine. In order for them to have a lower electricity rate and cost, they are sometimes called up and told they have to shut down. Because of the demand on the system province-wide, in order for them to receive that lower electricity rate, they have to shut down if they're asked to. There are times that big companies like the Pugwash salt mine have to shut down, and they have a loss of productivity - the employees are sent home.

It's important to look at all factors when we're making decisions. It's not good for our area when workers are laid off or sent home because the company is told to shut down in order to have the lowest power rates that they can have in order to be profitable. We all know businesses, companies have to be profitable. If they're not profitable, they go out of business and employees lose their jobs. Profitability is important.

I want to go back to my comments about some large businesses looking at ways of creating their own energy and electricity. In Cumberland County in general, we have a unique situation right now where we have a lot of energy being wasted. Since Northern Pulp shut down, we have a lot of pulpwood that's just being left in the forest. It's being left there because there's no market to take the pulpwood - to pay enough to even remove it from the woods. There are a lot of issues around that. I won't go into all those today, but there is an opportunity if we created a plant to use that pulpwood to create energy, because right now it's being wasted.

Those who are environmental experts have told me that when pulpwood or any type of vegetation is left to decompose, it actually emits three times the amount of methane than otherwise it would. This pulpwood that's being left on the ground, not just in Cumberland County but across the entire province, is actually creating more carbon. It's worse for the environment. There are opportunities before us to use resources that we have right now at our fingertips to create energy that is otherwise being wasted.

Another one that may not be popular to talk about is plastic. Right now - the fact is a lot of Nova Scotians don't know this - our plastic is being buried. People - and my husband's one of them, he's the one who takes care of the garbage, and everything. He's a little OCD sometimes, but everything is perfectly organized - the plastics, the papers, the garbage, and the compost. Everything goes out to the curb so neatly and beautifully, and it's picked up and taken away, and then it's buried. There is an opportunity there. Other countries in Europe - a lot of them will use not only plastics but use garbage to create energy.

There are opportunities and innovative technologies right before us to use resources that right now are being wasted, that are rotting and/or being buried. Personally, I find it very offensive to think about all the plastics that are being buried in the ground. It just doesn't sit well with me. It seems very wrong. I think we absolutely need to find a solution to change that practice right now. It's happening not just here in Nova Scotia. I know it's been happening ever since China stopped taking the exports. It's happening all around.

One other comment that I want to make with regard to the Environment Act is about the Chignecto Isthmus. I have spoken with the minister about this privately. It's an incredibly important topic to the people of Amherst. It's an incredibly important topic to the people of Cumberland. It is an incredibly important topic to everyone in Nova Scotia, in the Maritime region, and across Canada, and the Eastern Seaboard of the United States.

The fact is that the Chignecto Isthmus is part of the Atlantic Gateway. The documents that I read say it carries \$35 billion worth of goods a year across it. A lot of those goods are coming into the Port of Halifax and into the Halifax Stanfield International Airport, and then being transported out through New Brunswick and into Ontario, or down through Maine and the Eastern Seaboard.

It also brings a lot of goods into Nova Scotia. The Minister of Agriculture knows that we import a significant amount of our food. If the Chignecto Isthmus was flooded and we became an island, or even if we don't become an island but that infrastructure - the CN Rail and the Trans Canada Highway - was broken, our food import supply chain would be severely damaged.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of improving that dike structure. The studies have been done. We know it needs to be done. The federal government made a commitment that they are willing to pay 50 per cent of the cost to improve that dike system. I implore the government to work on that immediately.

During this last storm, Hurricane Fiona, there were a lot of people in the town of Amherst worried that their homes were going to be flooded and destroyed, and that we were going to lose that infrastructure link. It's a real fear, I'm telling you. It's a real fear for the people I represent.

Our municipal government - the Mayor of Amherst, Dr. Kogon and the six town councillors - has spoken about this. They most recently hosted a public meeting. They had a former Member of Parliament, Bill Casey, speak at that because he spoke in Parliament about the Chignecto Isthmus and the importance of that critical infrastructure. I implore the government to make it a priority. It is not just a priority for the people I represent but all Nova Scotians, the Maritimes, and all of Canada.

I recently spoke with Dominic LeBlanc. He is a very popular MP in our neighbouring area in New Brunswick. Again, he said that he was doing everything he can. The federal government has made their commitment. I hope that we're going to see a financial commitment in the Spring budget to ensure that the Chignecto Isthmus is repaired - not in 10 years - but the work should be starting now. The work should have started before now.

It absolutely should be on the mind of our Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I do want to share a quote. I was really happy to see the minister's op-ed in the *Chronicle Herald* last Saturday. I do have the document, so I can table it, but the minister stated, "We know that some Nova Scotians may be concerned with how the Act may affect their plans or property values. However, recognizing the risks posed by sea-level rise and erosion now will help ensure coastal landowners avoid even greater financial losses and possible threats to public safety in the future."

The op-ed ends by saying, "The climate crisis demands urgent attention from all of us. The biggest uncertainty isn't how our climate will change, but what we do about it. The future is ours to shape." I echo those words. I thank you, minister, for drawing attention to that.

I do believe that the most vulnerable area of our province is the Chignecto Isthmus. The CN line that comes in is on top of the dike. That is the most vulnerable area. We have pictures, just in the last decade, where the water is literally to the top of that dike. The Saxby Gale, of course, was the famous storm years ago. We know there will be another Saxby Gale and it just takes the right storm, with the right full moon and we would be in big trouble.

If we take lessons learned from other areas in the country, if we think back to the storms in B.C. and the infrastructure, what happened there with their roads, with their rail. Last Spring when I talked about the Chignecto Isthmus, the importance, the Canadian National Railway Company contacted me and they said, thank you for talking about this.

This is a huge priority for CN Rail. I really hope they are at the table now. They weren't at the table in the Spring, and they've asked to be at the table, to be part of these discussions with our provincial government and with our federal government as well.

I do thank the minister, the MLA for Dartmouth East for tabling these amendments to the Environment Act. These are very important issues. The results of this Act will trickle down and affect every Nova Scotian, including the people I represent.

Again, my main comment I will make is that we have to do everything we can to keep the costs and the taxation as low as possible because Nova Scotians can simply not afford higher taxation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I just want to take a few moments to talk about this very important bill and right up there with housing and health care, climate change and the impact of climate change is right up there with them.

I think what confuses me about this bill is that negotiations are ongoing with the federal government. It looks like they've decided to no longer negotiate with the feds. This looks to me like a government that has put forward a plan that is not fully complete, knowing that it's going to be denied, because they know they are going to get the carbon tax because they didn't do their homework. They didn't do the work necessary.

We hear it over and over from members across. Today we heard it several times from the member who is in charge of the QEII redevelopment, who kept saying the Liberal carbon tax, the Liberal carbon tax. Anytime you start to hear something from this government, when they repeat the same thing over and over, you know that something bad is coming.

What is happening here is they know full well that this plan does not meet the standards. They know that this plan does not have the details necessary. They have been told that several times by the federal government - they have given this province more breaks than anyone else.

Yet the end goal here is not to come up with the best possible plan for climate change, it's to point the finger at the federal government because they know that whatever they come up with is going to increase the price of fuel.

They don't want to wear that, they don't want to take responsibility for this program, even though it is their responsibility to do this and to come up with something. All of the other provinces did. In fact, we had a fantastic cap and trade system. They could have just built on that.

We know they haven't spent an entire year on this. We know that they kept releasing plans, and it was made public, it was like when you were reading the statements from the federal government and the federal minister you could almost see them banging their heads against the wall, saying like just give us something that's workable. Stop.

[2:45 p.m.]

Just over the last session or two we've heard the tone of the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Premier and the Finance and Treasury Board Minister and the minister - I apologize, the minister in charge of the QEII redevelopment (Interruption) Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services, the Minister of Health and Wellness, and a few others start to pivot to this same talking point: Liberal carbon tax, Liberal 10 cent carbon tax. It's because they haven't done a sufficient enough job - how I feel, and I think a lot of Nova Scotians feel, is that they would rather the price go up 10 or 15 cents a litre and blame it on the federal government than have a plan where it only goes up a few cents and people look at them because of it. They want nothing to do with this.

If you want to talk about the Premier's thoughts on climate change, he once called climate change and the program a "Trudeau vanity project," and I will table that. In fact, I will read it to you: "a Justin Trudeau vanity project" - when we sat in this House and discussed the cap and trade system and climate change, that was said. The members who were there that day who are sitting across here clapped and laughed and agreed. I want to read what was said, and then I'll table it.

This is from the Premier when he was in opposition: "Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this year, gas prices were around 96 cents in Halifax. As of this morning, the same price is about \$1.22 - that's about a third higher in three months. Many Nova Scotians might not know that since January 1st there have been some extra taxes for the carbon-pricing scheme in this province on every single litre of gasoline."

The Opposition Leader of the day, the current Premier, was extremely upset that the cost of a litre of gas was \$1.22, yet nothing is said now about the cost of gas. In fact, when we introduced legislation to reduce some of the taxes to help Nova Scotians with the cost of gas, they didn't even look at it. But \$1.22 was too much.

I'll continue on. The Premier at the time, Stephen McNeil, said, "Mr. Speaker, as the honourable member would know, the price has gone from 15.5 cents to 16.5 cents motor fuel tax on a litre of gas." So 1 cent a litre is what it went up.

I underline this little piece because some of the stuff we have been saying back and forth in Question Period and how difficult it has been to get answers from the government on anything - but especially around health care and the QEII redevelopment. All these projects, they're saying, it's going up because of inflation, climate change, labour shortages - all these things are causing the price to go up. But they refuse to say anything - I just want to - during this debate, or this Question Period, I want to give you another quote from the then-Opposition Leader who is now the Premier.

“If the Premier” - who at the time was Stephen McNeil - “is so proud of his carbon tax plan, why is he hiding the amount that he's intending to collect - why can't he put it on display . . . ?”

We have an Opposition Leader at the time who's asking for transparency on money collected and money spent but doesn't do that in government. We have a Premier at the time who's complaining about a 1 cent tax increase that took that department and the former ministers years and thousands and thousands and thousands of hours to create. We know that this has not been a high priority, because if it were a high priority, the government would have listened to the umpteen warnings and the direction, and the help, the hand-holding, they received from the federal government. No other province got as many kicks at the can.

Every time we turned on the media, we looked at the media, instead of working together it was our Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Premier being confrontational with the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Prime Minister. It was setting up the long game. That's what it was. That's what this government's really good at: setting up the long game, blaming others, pointing fingers. If any Nova Scotians don't believe me, watch Question Period.

That's what happened. The second I read that article, I said to a friend of mine: They're going to blame the feds. They're going to go after the feds. They're not going to do a thing. That was almost a year ago I said that. They're going to sit on their behind, not do a thing. They're going to bring in half-washed and half-complete - 20 per cent done - reports. Not meeting the criteria, the very specific criteria, because they want to blame the feds because they can't stomach being responsible for putting in any type of increase.

Somebody sat there - probably not with the minister, let's be honest - but from the ivory tower in the sky and said, the best idea here is to blame the feds. We'll put something out there that puts the feds in a difficult situation. The old Pierre Poilievre trick. We've seen that over and over with the - when he - as an MP and now Opposition Leader, we saw that during the convoy and things like that. We're continuing to see that as a leader. I mention him on purpose because there are some quotes, I want to say, that pertain to your federal leader.

I'm not Nostradamus. I can't predict the future, but I predicted the future on this one. I predicted the future on this one, and I told so many people. In fact, I think I wrote it down somewhere with the date on that, and if I get that, if I can find that at home, I am going to table it for this Legislature.

The day that I heard those - I knew that they were going to blame the feds. Just like they're doing with health care - we're not getting enough money; just like they're doing with housing - we're not getting enough resources; just like they're doing with climate

change - we're not getting enough support. I don't know how many times they have to have their hands held.

To compare, they are going to do the same thing with the QEII redevelopment. They're going to be quiet, not really say any numbers, not say anything, and then we all know where it's going. We know the delay, the cost. We know this is all leading to one thing. Then they're going to open the envelope one day and the price is going to be five, six, seven times larger and they're going to go, those darn Liberals, look what they did.

That's what they're going to do instead of taking on the issues head-first and doing what's best for Nova Scotians - not what's best for your party.

I was struck by the member from Cumberland North when she said her - what? Whatever, when you first get elected. The letter you get from the Premier (Interruption) - mandate letter. Took me a while there. Brain's not working. That her mandate letter from that party when she got elected wasn't to serve the people of Nova Scotia, it wasn't to spend dollars wisely, it wasn't to be there first and foremost for everyone. Do you know what it was? To get re-elected.

You know what will help them get re-elected? Pushing the blame on the federal government, the big bad federal government. That's what will help, right? It wasn't our fault.

This plan is short on details but it's large on frustration and it's going to be punitive because we have a government that simply did not try.

I don't blame the minister. I'm not trying to be personal with the minister, trust me. As I said, we saw this coming. It was in the media, it was in the papers, it was on the news where the feds were saying - I mean, I don't know how you could come to an agreement when you are coming to the table as confrontational, and that's what it was. It was confrontational. It wasn't about, like, let's work together and do something.

I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, they probably think that because we were a Liberal provincial government and we had a federal Liberal government, it was easier for us to come up with a cap and trade system, right? But I have to break it to all of you - Stephen McNeil and Justin Trudeau couldn't be any more different if they tried. Yet his government was able to work with the federal government and come up with a solution.

It wasn't easy, it was hard work. I'm sure there was lots of back and forth arguments, and finger-pointing behind the scenes. I'm sure there was confrontation behind the scenes, but the first thing this government did was take that disagreement, the confrontation, from behind the scenes where you are supposed to negotiate, to the public, to the paper, to the media, so that it kneecapped negotiations. You are going into negotiations saying, we're not going to listen to them, we're going to do our own thing

because we did our own thing before. But it wasn't our own thing before. It was intense negotiations. It was smart, intelligent people sitting around the table putting egos aside and doing something.

I'm not going to pretend to know all the details, but I think the Minister of Environment and Climate Change might have been put in a place where he first takes it on and probably the first thing they said - he can clear it up - I'm sure the first thing they said to the minister when he walked into his office is, you need a new cap and trade system, we've got to look at carbon reduction. I think it was expiring shortly after they got into office.

I just wonder how we got to this point and how we got to the point of, I feel like, putting politics before people. I listened carefully, I reviewed, I went back and saw what the feds were saying. It was olive branch after olive branch after olive branch. Yes, it may have been a difficult situation, but it was chance after chance, and here we are.

Sometimes you have to make difficult decisions, especially when it comes to the environment. I look at Northern Pulp, for example, and decades and decades of that going unattended to. It wasn't an easy decision. I may be mistaken but I'm pretty sure the government of the day did reach out to some of the MLAs from that area to speak to them, to get their input on it, but it wasn't an easy decision.

I just can't believe that almost a year ago I wrote down that this was going to be the result, and sure enough, it was.

To continue on with that debate, I want to finish it off with some good words from the former Premier:

“Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question. As we would know, across the country, carbon taxes are going into many provinces, including some of the sister provinces in Atlantic Canada. We're very fortunate here in Nova Scotia to be able to do our own cap-and-trade system. The honourable member referred to the increase in motor fuel tax - he would also know that money does not go into general revenue, it goes into the Green Fund that will be made available for initiatives to continue to help Nova Scotians' businesses to continue to reduce their carbon footprint. All of that money will go back into making sure that we continue to 'green' the economy of Nova Scotia.”

Where did that money go? It went to home heating programs. It went to reducing the cost of solar panels to make sure that everyday Nova Scotians could afford it. It went to retrofitting homes. It went to so many projects that a lot of Nova Scotians could not afford before that Green Fund. It was a partnership - when you look at the solar, it was a

partnership with the feds also. If you want to figure out how successful that is, just take a drive around. I think it was the Minister of Environment when we introduced the changes to save the solar industry (Interruption) Sorry, the Minister of Natural Resources. They realize how important that is. We realize how important it is to get off of carbon.

I want to know specifically with the program: Does that go into general revenue, or does it go into a fund that will be used for Nova Scotians? Not for the large corporations, not for pet projects, and paving and fields and different things in Progressive Conservative ridings. We heard earlier today about different projects - was it today or yesterday? - health care projects in particular, and every one that was rattled off was in a PC-held riding.

We need to make sure that that funding is given equitably across the province, that it goes to the people who need it the most. When energy costs go up, when the cost of everyday living goes up because of climate change - I heard one of the ministers across the other day say, and it stuck in my head, I understand how difficult it is when the cost of electricity goes up. I'm thinking in my head, you make \$150,000 a year, you probably don't understand it like most other Nova Scotians - \$140,000.

That money, I think, has to be specifically for those who need it the most. When the costs go up, when people are impacted by climate change, it's not you and I who are going to suffer the most. It's the people who are still making \$15 an hour (Interruption) Excuse me? It's the people who are making barely enough to get by. It's the people on income assistance. It's the people on CPP. It's those individuals who are impacted the most. I remember when we started talking about the cost of gas, all that is related to climate change and access to carbon, and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said, well, people are just going to drive less. They're just going to drive less, was his response.

I thought, what province does he live in? Do you think people in rural Nova Scotia are going to drive less? Do you think people - maybe in urban cores, but even then, there hasn't been a heavy investment in active transportation by this government. That was the response, that they'll drive less. It's the same kind of response they made when we talked about a \$15 minimum wage: If they don't like it, they can get a better job. They can make more money.

It feels like it's everyone else's fault but their own. You are elected leaders. You were put here in a very privileged position as a majority government and given the opportunity to steer this province in a better direction, and part of that is dealing with climate change. But it's also about cost of living, inflation. We came up with a good balance.

Again, I don't think that this was a serious issue because of all the public fighting between the levels of government. I've read it - I've said it before, I've read it over and over and over. It was publicly never the federal government that started the fight. It was

always comments by either the Premier or the Department of Environment and Climate Change that would start these arguments, start these fights.

How are we supposed to get a deal that's best for Nova Scotians if we can't get past the partisan party stuff? If we can't get past saying that the most important thing we can do - here's your mandate letter - the most important thing you can do isn't to serve the people of Nova Scotia. The most important thing you can do is get re-elected.

Most of us will have our judgment day someday, and we'll get thrown out by the people who voted us in. I hope that if that day comes, we're all able to hold our chin up high - that we did enough work for climate change, that we did enough work for our children, because climate change isn't just about us. Climate change is about generations to come.

The fact is if you look globally, some of the world's biggest polluters, countries and companies, are transitioning. The biggest investments made by some of the largest companies in the world right now are around green and carbon-neutral technology. China is moving to a greener economy. They're investing billions of dollars. Saudi Arabia just announced a legacy fund with billions and billions of dollars to green and create green technology.

We're fighting with our federal partners, and we have federal leaders - the federal Conservative leader, to this day, who still denies climate change. I haven't heard a single person on that side of the aisle say anything about it. I know that I'm a Liberal - kind of left of centre, somewhere around there - and if I heard someone within the provincial or federal party deny climate change, I'd be furious. I would denounce them publicly.

You know, during his leadership campaign, Pierre Poilievre did not once mention climate change. He did not once mention climate change, Mr. Speaker. In fact, when asked by the media to talk about it, he called the media all a bunch of Liberal shills. I wonder if that's leaking down because we know that the current Premier once called it a vanity project, a Justin Trudeau vanity project. I'm going to table that right here. I prepared for that.

We have to be able to trust that the decisions being made out of the Department of Environment and Climate Change and by One Government Place are ones that are best for Nova Scotians, and not just for big businesses and big polluters but also listens to the people. Mr. Speaker, there have been decisions that worry me.

I know that Otter Lake compost sorter, for example, is a big thing for several members on this side of the House, who fought for years, and the people in that community fought for years to get that sorter on line. The member for Timberlea-Prospect put his own reputation on the line in government to fight for that. I'm sure he received a little bit of backlash, especially politically, but it didn't stop him.

Individuals like Scott Guthrie, who has spent a lifetime fighting for this, only to have it taken out from under him, and the community to have it taken out from under them with no consultation. I shouldn't say that - there was consultation. That's why we listened. Then we don't listen, and it's removed. If you're not a government for the people, then what are you a government for? The people in that community were very specific. They said no, and the previous governments listened.

One of the first acts by the Department of Environment and Climate Change was to reverse the decision. You know what, though? It's going to save the company \$2 million a year. It's going to save a multi-billion-dollar company a couple million bucks.

I want to talk about the feelings when something like this happens. I'm going to read quotes: "Some in the community worry that allowing any amount of compost into the landfill would attract rats and birds, along with methane emissions . . ."

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, just a point of order. I'm not sure where talking about methane, talking about anything has to do with this bill. I would appreciate it if you could direct the member to get back on topic, please.

THE SPEAKER: I honestly think that the discussion is on the environment in general, and I consider it not a point of order.

The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

BRIAN WONG: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. This has to do with amendments and stuff, not dealing with the environment as a whole. This is a very specific bill on which the member opposite is talking about anything in general that has to do or not has to do with the environment.

THE SPEAKER: To the honourable member, I did make my ruling, and in consultation with the Clerk as well. He is talking about climate change in his remarks and the bill is related to climate change.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, as per last night when there are interruptions like this, the deputy speaker gave me my time back, so I'm asking for two minutes and ten seconds. I'm asking for that back on the clock, please. I'm dead serious.

THE SPEAKER: No. You have an hour to speak, just keep going. The episode last night was during Late Debate, I believe. You have an hour to speak, and I'll ask that you continue to do so.

[3:15 p.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank you for that fair ruling. I just want to say to the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank, if he doesn't think that methane gas impacts the environment as far as climate change, my son is nine years old, and I can bring you in his books from school where it clearly states that. It's very important that we know what's causing this, and methane is being produced at that landfill.

It was a decision that was made by the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and it goes to the credibility around this bill. We are told to trust them, that they're going to do the right thing when it comes to the environment, when we know their track record so far has not been good. That's what scares a lot of people.

When I talked about when people are climate-betrayed, there are real feelings around that. I want to read from this and then I'll table it. Again, some in the community worry about rats, birds and methane. What I would say to everyone on that side of the aisle is that if you woke up tomorrow morning and there were rats, birds and the smell of methane in your community, by your house, you would be furious. If you knew that the Liberal government of the day did that to you, you would be absolutely furious, especially after you've put something in place to prevent it. It's not just about the global environment, it's also about individual environments - the air you breathe, the water you drink.

We had a similar issue in Harrietsfield. It took 30 years of an environmental disaster in that community that was caused by private industry - and was one of the main reasons I ran. Again, to go to trust, I sat here and was ridiculed and mocked by the government leader of the day. He stood up at one point and made - and we'll table that when I find it - an offhand remark about the community of Harrietsfield, knowing it was going to get under my skin. But it didn't get under my skin. Do you know why? It just made me work harder. I was going to prove to those people that we would fix that issue after 30 years of neglect. Now we're creating those kinds of things in people's backyards again.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect as quoted in the paper: All three parties for nine years have said they would never, ever remove this sorting line to ensure that we have removal of the hazardous materials and organics. But now they're looking at reneging on the commitment that they made. For nine years they were about protecting that environment. Then they get in power and there goes the agreement . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: That's out of order and that's what you were going to table as well.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I've got another copy.

THE SPEAKER: I'd like for you to apologize to the House for having done that.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry for ripping the paper, I apologize. But that's how people in that community felt.

This goes back to a trust thing: We don't have details; we don't know where the money is going. Instead of coming up with a concrete, detailed plan that will protect our children, our wildlife, our farms, and our fish, we're told that it's their fault, it's the feds' fault. We're told, trust us here with this plan. When we ask for details, we don't know, and they are still negotiating. They are still supposed to be negotiating.

I'll give you an example that everyone can understand: Sidney Crosby's contract runs out. The Pittsburgh Steelers come to him and say, we're going to renegotiate a contract. They negotiate for two weeks and then Sidney Crosby walks out and goes, I got \$40 million a year . . . (Interruption)

Sorry, what did I say?

AN HON. MEMBER: Steelers.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Oh, the Pittsburgh Steelers. I'm football-brained. It's the NFL season. What I'm saying . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, on another point of order, where he is talking about sports. We're really talking about cap and trade. I haven't heard anything that has put me on track of what this bill is all about.

I appreciate your ruling earlier, Mr. Speaker, but I'm not quite sure where the member opposite is going with this. I know he is not on track with the bill that is on the floor.

THE SPEAKER: I will make a ruling on that because I was just about to make one. I'm going to ask that the member stick to the topic at hand and not about a hockey player playing football.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Listen, I appreciate the honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank getting up. This is the most he has spoken in a year, so the people he represents should be proud. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask that the member apologize to the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank for those remarks.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I apologize. I also apologize to Sidney Crosby. Mr. Speaker, I apologize for the comments I made toward the member.

What I was trying to get at is that this government currently is negotiating a contract with the federal government. I was trying to break it down and say that it's like an individual who plays - that you are in the middle of a contract negotiation, and you walk out without a deal and say that this is the contract. It's insane.

How can you leave the table and say that we have a contract? Listen, if this is the way that government is going to do business, I encourage the NSGEU and the rest of the unions to do the same thing: Walk out in mid-negotiations and say here is the contract. Look at what we just signed. That's what is happening here.

I joke, but the truth is that climate change is extremely important. It's impacting everything we do in life. It impacts the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink. We have communities in this province that do not have fresh drinking water.

We have an immense amount of old gold mines in this province that are not being dealt with. In fact, they're not only not being dealt with - talk about going after the environment, Mr. Speaker, and I'll table this document, that's why I'm lifting it up, so you know I have it - they're opening up more, after the recommendation from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change's own internal scientists told them not to do it. It's quoted here, and I will get to the quote in this article. Fisheries and Oceans Canada told them no. His own scientists told him not to do it because of the impact on the wetlands. And they moved ahead with it.

How can we trust a one-sided agreement? I would like to see this government table a schedule of when they met with the feds, why they took such an open and aggressive approach and public approach. I can tell you why they did. Because once again - I will say it - it wasn't about environment. It's about public relations and partisan politics. If you really cared about the environment, if you really wanted to do something for generations, you would work with your partners. You would work with the municipalities. You would work with the federal government. You would work with industry. You wouldn't just unilaterally say, this is what we're doing, take it or leave it. That seems to be the approach to a lot of things . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm just going to remind the member that I don't think the member knows for a fact whether or not any discussions took place with the different levels of government. It's an assumption at this point, and I ask that you move on.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What I will say about that, Mr. Speaker, is that there are articles in the paper, and the minister himself has referenced negotiations with the federal government and the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who was here just recently to negotiate with the provincial minister. It's public knowledge. I'm not making this up. It is public knowledge. Part of that public knowledge was that they were told and the options they kept putting forward were being rejected because they didn't meet the criteria. That's all public knowledge. That's all in the media. Both the Minister of Environment and Climate Change provincially and Minister of Environment and Climate Change federally said that. I just wanted to clarify that with you.

We had protesters outside the other day around the environment, around protecting wetlands and around protecting very important parts of this province. I wonder if the minister went out and spoke with them because I know that when in Opposition I saw those members out there all the time. Those things shouldn't change when you get in government. If anything, they should become more frequent when you're in government. You should be out there talking to them. You should be out talking to the environmentalists about climate change. We know that young people are leading this revolution when it comes to climate change and our environment. Cap and trade is extremely important to them. Climate change is extremely important to them. Did any of those members march with those tens of thousands of - did they listen?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the member to go back to the discussion on the amendment to the bill.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What groups did the minister talk to? What youth groups, what Indigenous groups, when it came to the cap and trade system and what system we were going to put in in Nova Scotia? It's important to talk to your stakeholders.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

HON. BRIAN WONG: On a point of order, you directed the member to get back on point, the member continued on with the exact same narrative. If I may, Mr. Speaker, Rule 24(2): Irrelevance or repetition in debate. The Speaker or the Chair, after having called the attention of the House or of the committee to the conduct of a member who persists in irrelevance or repetition of his arguments in debate, may direct him to discontinue his speech.

THE SPEAKER: I will ask the member to continue with his speech with 11:51 left.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

[3:30 p.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So when it comes to the environment, and when it comes to a cap and trade system and a carbon tax, which are potentially going to be in effect for years and decades, my question before I was interrupted was: Did you speak to the stakeholders?

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to once again say, you refer either to the minister or ask the question through me.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, did the minister speak to stakeholders? Could the minister table a list of stakeholders that they met with, including those tens of thousands of youth who took to the street, including Indigenous elders who have been protectors of our land since the beginning of time, to academics, to fisher men and women, to farmers, to everyday Nova Scotians?

It's important that they know and have input and that this not just be a he-said-she-said, finger-pointing thing, because there are a lot of things you can do that with, I'm sure, but this really matters. This is the future of our province, the future of our planet, and the future for our children. We're seeing increasingly worse storms because of climate change. We just went through one. Eroding sea walls. We're seeing our farmers have to change because of lack of rain. All of this stuff (Interruption) Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The member for Halifax Atlantic has the floor.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: To the fishermen out there who have to brave the sea. We're talking about things that I know about. I continue to get comments from the other side. Just let me finish. Give me the respect I give you.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm asking the member to please finish.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll repeat that. The fishermen and -women whom I speak to who are friends of mine or family members, whom I live beside, who have told me that the storms are getting worse and more frequent, that where they used to catch halibut and haddock and lobster is changing now because the water is getting warmer. We're seeing more and more sharks enter the Atlantic Ocean, and there's a great website you can go to, to see that. But it's changing.

When we politicize it and we don't put forward a plan that's right, then you're no better than the climate deniers. Putting a band-aid on a gunshot wound is not going to do anything. You need surgery. We need real action.

I've heard individuals describe this as trying to be punitive to Nova Scotians. There's a way to do this. We saw that. We saw it. We saw a system that worked, and that money went back to Nova Scotians. You know what they did with the money? They bought solar panels and heat pumps, and they took care and helped lower their own energy costs, and that spurred the economy, but it also helped lower the individual impacts.

It reminds me of when I was younger. You'd go to McDonald's, and you'd get a styrofoam cup. We don't do that anymore. They had pizza, too - I wasn't a big fan - and you didn't recycle. Do you remember that? Does everyone remember that? You just took a bag - dumped it all in, you threw it to the curb, who knows where it went. Then we started to recycle, then we started getting rid of some of these materials and stopped using them every day, and it had a big impact. It changed our behaviours. We adjusted. We're human beings, we're smart. People can make comments back there.

We're smart, we adjust, but when we politicize and scare people, when we point fingers and we confuse the conversation, it makes it more difficult when we say climate change - that we go out on our own and we refuse to negotiate - I wouldn't say refuse to negotiate. If we refuse to fully negotiate, we refuse to come together. There's a government that prides themselves on being solutionists. Still waiting for a solution on something, and there's not a better place to start having a solution than climate change and a carbon tax versus cap and trade. We had a cap and trade system. It worked; it was 1 cent. It helped deter and it helped change people's behaviours, especially large polluters, and we went from a very complex, well-thought-out book to a flyer.

Maybe I'm wrong. I know the minister will get up on his feet, and I would actually like to step aside with the minister and have a conversation, and if I'm incorrect, I've done it before and I'll do it again, I'll go on the record. You show me where I'm wrong, you show me where I can take that document, and give it to my children, and be proud and say: Look what we did in government. By government, I mean all of us.

Will it hold up to the test of time? Will you look back five to 10 years from now and say this was the right plan, this was the plan? Will it get its desired results? What are the desired results of this plan?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Just another point of order. The member opposite is talking about "the" document, tabling "the" document. Is the honourable member referring to the piece of legislation that we're talking about, the bill that was presented by the honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change?

THE SPEAKER: Actually, the bill that's before us right now is the amendments to the Environment Act, and, again, I'm going to ask the member to bring it back to discussion on the amendments of the Environment Act.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The document I'm actually talking about is the bill, the Act with the amendment. When we look back for clarification, the amendments you're making to the Environment Act - I know that, Mr. Speaker, some people try to throw me off, but, hey, like Bert Kreischer would say, I am the machine, so I'll keep going.

We have the Environment Act and we have an amendment. When we look back five to 10 years from now on the amended document, will you be proud of it? Will it have the desired effect? Will we have to go back and scrap it and actually create something? Will our children be proud of it? Or was this just a way to stick it to the feds? Was it a way to say it's Trudeau's fault, and as I tabled the document earlier, that it's a Trudeau vanity project? I tabled that document earlier - those were the words of the Premier, who at the time was in Opposition.

Will you be proud of this document, this amended document that's short on details on the most important issue facing us in our lifetime? It impacts our fisheries, the food we eat, and our transportation. It impacts everything, the climate does. If people don't believe that, Mr. Speaker, they should read a book, because when kids in elementary school know that and we've got leaders of this province and the country denying it, what does that say about our leaders?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill No. 208. I would like to start on a positive note, I guess, and say that I believe the Minister of Environment and Climate Change personally is very sincere in his commitment to the environment. I have no doubt of that. I actually believe that 100 per cent, and I'm sure that the folks in his department feel the same way. I don't want to leave any confusion on that point.

But I do want to speak to some shortfalls in this bill, and really, the biggest issue that has bothered me about this in the past year or so, since we've all been elected, is the way that it has been unnecessarily politicized and made silly. I'll touch on all of those things.

I do want to start by referring to - over the last few months, I had the chance to read a wonderful book called *The Prize*, by Daniel Yergin. It's actually about the history of oil, which I know sounds thrilling, but it really was quite interesting in the sense that - and this is relevant. I can sense, perhaps, some skepticism from the other side. This is relevant to the bill here in the sense that from the time the first oil well was drilled in western Pennsylvania, I think in 1858, up until today, oil as a commodity, oil as a resource, has

fundamentally changed and transformed society, the economy of the world, and the politics of the world. Wars have been fought over the commodity.

[3:45 p.m.]

I think where we are today in 2022 is similar to where we would have been in the early 20th century when it came to oil. I think we are on the cusp of a massive societal transformation when it comes to the sources of energy and how we use them. I know that means that the choices we make on the environment and its protection in this province are critical. It can be easy sometimes to assume that because we are a small province of a little over a million people, there's not much we can do, but I do believe there is an example we can set to the rest of the country and the rest of the world as well about where we want to go on climate over the next few years.

I don't need to remind everyone here in the House of how profound this issue is and the impacts it has. There are many recent examples globally, and much closer to home as well, that make that point. In Pakistan, the monsoon floods this year have left tens of millions of people homeless - over 30 million people. Recently in Florida, Hurricane Ian completely devastated many communities in Florida. Then, of course, here in Nova Scotia over the past few weeks Hurricane Fiona devastated our province and continues to have impacts today.

I believe this number is accurate, from a news story I was reading recently: Insured - and this is just insured - damages relative to Hurricane Fiona in Nova Scotia are sitting at \$660 million. That does not include, as I mentioned, losses that are uninsured. I think it's reasonable to assume that the total losses attributable in this province to Hurricane Fiona could easily be in the range of \$1 billion, which is just about 10 per cent of our provincial budget. If we think about the impact of storms in that way, it is massive. All those issues speak to the critical nature of getting this done and getting it done right.

I think, as I said at the beginning, the point that has bothered me the most about all this talk about carbon tax and cap and trade and all these issues over the last 14 months is the politics of it and, kind of, the bad performance art that we've seen here from the government, to be honest on it - motions being introduced, resolutions being introduced.

I think it was in the Summer sitting, I'm not sure, when the government introduced a resolution on the carbon tax. In fact, our caucus voted with the government on that resolution, and then there was a press release that went out from the PC caucus saying the opposite, which was not the case. That's the kind of silliness that is irrelevant, really, and it doesn't do anybody any good. I think it's all part of a calculated strategy to say, well, the federal Liberals are carbon tax folks, so the provincial Liberals are on the same boat.

It doesn't matter how we voted, it doesn't matter what we say, it doesn't matter what we do, that is the political narrative. We want to spin and we want to tell people over

the next two to three years, prior to our next election. It's not something to be proud of, it's not something that we should be engaging in, but there you go. Politics works that way sometimes, unfortunately. (Interruption) Things get manufactured, well said - not news stories, though.

The other piece of this that is interesting is the idea that somehow there was any question about where we were going to end up on this issue. We didn't have to peer into a crystal ball and try to figure it out. It has been very clear. The federal government has been very clear for years on this issue. Every other province in Canada that has attempted to hold out on this issue of carbon pricing, whatever form it may take, has lost. Some have lost in court, the highest court in the country. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled conclusively on this matter that the federal government has the right to impose carbon pricing systems on provinces, so Alberta has lost on that score. Saskatchewan. Manitoba was dragged kicking and screaming into a carbon pricing system as well, at the eleventh hour.

For this government to pretend that there was any other outcome is laughable, to be honest, and that's the way it has been for 14 months. It makes it even more disappointing, I would say, that things were left to the last minute. We had requests for extensions, I believe, to deadlines that had been in place for months and months to submit a legitimate carbon plan to the federal government. That doesn't speak very well to this government's commitment to the issue, when they're looking for eleventh-hour extensions for something that they knew about the moment they were elected last August 17th.

Now I wouldn't suggest that I am an expert on climate policy necessarily. I think it's very interesting, but I know we have many members in this House who can speak to it more eloquently. None more so than the member for Timberlea-Prospect, who did so last night to great effect, I think. (Applause)

I have his remarks here in front of me and went through them while previous members were speaking just because I think it's a great road map for all of us to consult on this issue in terms of where we've been, where we are now, and where we will go in the next few years, and, more importantly, where we should go in the next few years.

I have just a few quotes here from the member for Timberlea-Prospect that I highlighted that I thought were interesting, and I will table this document once I get through them all:

“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.”

Again, I think we have a trend here, unfortunately, at times with this government where they treat voters, they treat the media, they treat the public as though they don't know what's going on. As if they wake up and just accept the world that the government tells them as though they don't have independent thought of their own.

It's our job in Opposition to check that and to call that out when we see fit. Unfortunately, we're seeing fit to do that far more often than I would like, but I think what the member said last night and what I'm reiterating today is very true.

There was a pretty obvious track record and pretty obvious set of precedents in terms of where this issue has gone in this country and where it will, without doubt, go in this province as well. That's the first point.

The second point from the member last night, and I quote, "This bill is a step backwards." I think that's an important and very simple way to say it from someone who has been the Premier, has been the minister of the environment, knows this issue, I think better than anybody in this House.

"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" - so a little bit of a worst of both worlds - "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 very year..."

There is a strong thread of politics that has played through this issue from Day 1 with this government. I think that's really unfortunate because I think there should be a tremendous amount of agreement in this House on this issue in particular, on climate change, because as we all know, this is not an issue that discriminates on region, on anything at all. No matter where you live in the world on planet Earth, you are affected by the climate. No matter where you live in Nova Scotia, whether you live in Cape Breton, northern Nova Scotia, the Eastern Shore, Halifax, the Valley, Pictou, anywhere in between, you are affected by the changing climate.

I wish that in this House we would park the politics a bit more on this issue and deal with the principle on the policy a bit more. We will see if we're lucky enough to do that, although I have my doubts.

Something that's really important in this bill and where we were with what was a very effective, almost unique cap and trade system here in Nova Scotia which did its job

preventing significant increases on the price of gas, the price of home heating. I think it's a program that was a tremendous program and did its part in both protecting the environment and protecting consumers. Along with that cap and trade system came a very important element, being the Green Fund. The member for Timberlea-Prospect last night laid out some of the programs that were initiated as a result of funds through the Green Fund. I wanted to mention those again because I think they are really important.

"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;" Very important. "Affordable Multi-Family Housing Programs, which provide incentives of energy efficiency upgrades in affordable housing projects": Again, that's a climate initiative and an affordability initiative. We all know that when you upgrade your home with a heat pump or any kind of solar panel, with any kind of system, you are not only helping the environment, you are helping your pocketbook as well.

Also, "the Small Business and Non-Profit Energy Solutions Program, which offers incentives for energy efficiency upgrades in small businesses and non-profits." Again, helping out some drivers of our economy, incentivising businesses to take action on climate. Businesses, as they should, will make decisions based on the bottom line, so any time government can intervene, step forward and incentivise positive behaviours through the business and non-profit community, that is really important.

Back to the member's comments, "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's a fantastic concept, Mr. Speaker. I think we all know that - whether you are out knocking on doors, whether you have young kids of your own, if you have nieces or nephews or even grandkids - people who are under the age of 25, let's say, are incredibly passionate on the issue of climate change.

It is actually a very interesting phenomenon that I've noticed myself. I'm 34 and I think that even people five to six years younger than me have a totally different appreciation for the issue of climate than I did. I think that whatever happened in that period of time - that five- to six-year window - everybody who was born after that point who might be 28 years old and younger, this is the signal issue for so many of them.

I think to have a program like the Clean Leadership Summer Internship Program that really lets young people work on projects - get their hands dirty, for lack of a better phrase - and see how climate projects can really make a difference, and to have the Green Fund fund those projects, is something I don't think we can afford to lose.

I understand, in looking through the bill, there is a fund outlined in the bill. I'm sure the minister, when he gets a chance to speak to this, will lay out how that fund might work, what kind of projects might be eligible. I do want to hear that, because I think the programs

that I just laid out that were funded through the Green Fund are really essential. I hope that programs like that will proceed under this new system.

Again, last night from the member for Timberlea-Prospect: “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.”

As we know, that tends to be in our province - lower-income people. Globally, the people who are most going to be most impacted by climate change over the next number of years will be people who tend to be lower-income and who have less ability to move, perhaps, less ability to deal with the impacts. I think that’s incredibly important. As the member said, “This is where targeted funding should be going when you’re raising revenues from polluters on fossil fuels.”

Another really important point that the member made last night: “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.”

This is a really important point. A system - whether it’s a carbon tax, or cap and trade, or whether it’s some kind of output-based pricing scheme - whatever system you have is only as good as whom it covers. If we’re dealing with a system that in this case is only dealing with emitters who - I think it’s 50,000 tonnes per year, I believe. I could be wrong on that, but I’m pretty sure that’s what it is. That represents a substantial portion - 40 per cent - of the emitting sources in the province, but certainly not even the majority.

I think an open question on this bill, on this system going forward, will be, what about the other 60 per cent? What about the other 60 per cent of emitting sources in this province? How are we going to be dealing with them, accounting for what is the majority of emissions in this province? If we’re only going to deal with 40 per cent, we are leaving a lot on the table, unfortunately.

Last night the member also touched on an issue that I brought up here in the last few minutes around what the experience of other provinces has been. This is something that I know anytime there’s a piece of legislation that comes forward in this House, one of the things that all governments, all departments, do - something that’s on all the documents that end up going to Cabinet - is a jurisdictional scan. We want to know what has happened in other provinces and territories across the country - basic stuff. We know what has happened in other provinces and territories across the country on the issue of carbon pricing, as the member said last night.

[4:00 p.m.]

“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.”

Again, that is where it can be frustrating on this issue, to deal with the politics of it when we won’t just call a spade a spade and be honest with ourselves, with the Opposition, and with the people of Nova Scotia, most of all in terms of what’s going to be happening over the next several months and years on this issue.

The member for Timberlea-Prospect made this point again last night when he said, “What they’re doing is actually saying, bring the carbon levy in. We’re just going to call it the Liberal carbon tax.” Stamp the Liberal logo on there and all will be well, I guess. “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.” There’s a lot of gold in here, trust me. Everybody should be reading this.

I’ll say that again because I think it’s really important: “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 ...” - this is like a story I read to my kids - “... 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 funny, actually, to say “made in Nova Scotia.” The one thing over the past several years that was, in fact, made in Nova Scotia, designed in Nova Scotia, effective in Nova Scotia, was the cap and trade system that worked for several years. When we talk about a made-in-Nova Scotia solution for climate, that’s the gold standard. That’s where we have been over the past several years. That’s the system that has worked so well that it has been almost unnoticed, I think, by Nova Scotians.

It’s funny: If you’re a sports person, there’s a saying that the best referee is one whom you don’t notice, who’s just out there, does their job, and carries on. That’s analogous here. The best carbon-pricing system, perhaps, is the one that consumers don’t notice because it’s doing its job. It’s adding one cent per litre at the pump. It’s adding a nominal increase to your cost of home heating every couple of months from Nova Scotia Power.

What it’s doing quietly behind the scenes is raising funds through the Green Fund, through options and credits, and actually delivering millions and millions of dollars to support programs and incentives that I mentioned earlier - to install solar panels on people’s

homes, to give young Nova Scotians the ability to get their feet in the door on the climate issue, and really have some practical experience that they can use - funding that can be used for something that is actually noticeable for folks. That's rebates - rebates on electric vehicles, rebates on e-bikes.

Just about a month ago I was at a street party in my constituency and a guy zoomed on by on his e-scooter, I guess it would have been. We had a chat and he talked about the rebate and how great it was. As the member for Timberlea-Prospect said last night when that was introduced - he mentioned the member for Kings South, who was the Minister of Environment at that time - that proposal for rebates was mocked by members of the Opposition who are now in government. In fact, that was an outstanding idea - an outstanding concept. That is how we should be doing carbon pricing.

As the member said last night, every reputable economist in the world who has studied this issue - people who are far smarter in economics than me and most of us - has said that the best way to incentivize behaviour is through pricing systems. For example, the rebates that I was just mentioning. I think that was another wonderful initiative that came from the cap and trade system, which was a really unique and interesting system that is in place in Quebec and is in place in California, which for a long time has been a continental and world leader on the issue of climate change. I think that's good company that we were keeping on that particular system.

A couple of other comments that I wanted to make here from the member for Timberlea-Prospect from last night - I want to make sure I don't miss any, because there was a lot of wonderful commentary here. Here at the end of his remarks, the member made a couple of points that I think are really worthwhile, because this issue does not exist in isolation.

We know that there is a lot happening on energy right now when it comes to Nova Scotia Power. We know there's a lot going on with the Atlantic Loop, for example, which we all want to see happen, which would, of course, substantially increase the amount of renewable energy that our province would be taking advantage of. Offshore wind - we've heard several ministers over the past few weeks talk about the potential for offshore wind, for green hydrogen. Those are all really interesting, novel energy sources and means of economic growth and climate action that I think we want to move on.

The last points that the member made that I wanted to highlight - he said, "You can say what you want about it not being a battle and not being partisan, but I can guarantee you that none of them" - meaning the members of the government - "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."

What a great line there. I actually wrote that. It's the smallness of politics. It's true. This is the biggest, most significant issue of our time, and it will continue to be for years

to come until we truly, as a province, as a country, and as a global community, get our hands wrapped around it. To take an issue like that and to make it small and petty and vindictive, I think, in some ways, is unfortunate. I think the member said that very well last night.

In closing, I know there are many other members who want to get a chance to speak to this bill, so I don't want to leave them behind, but this was what the member for Timberlea-Prospect, again former Minister of Environment, former Premier of Nova Scotia, who knows this issue better than all of us, summed things up last night at the end of his comments, and I think it was wonderful. He said:

“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.”

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RONNIE LEBLANC: It wasn't my intention to get up, and I'll be the first to say that I'm not an expert on the subject matter. I've been sitting here most of the day yesterday and today listening to the debate, and I'd like to start by saying that I do have a lot of respect for the minister. I know he does care deeply about the environment.

I feel I have to stand up and get on the record. I've listened to my colleague from Timberlea-Prospect, and the question for me, really, I'm asking myself: Is this the best deal for Nova Scotians and is this as good as it can get? I really feel I have a lot of respect for the knowledge the member for Timberlea-Prospect brings to this floor, and I've been re-reading his speech from last night.

On a number of occasions, he does reference that he feels that there's more opportunity to negotiate and try to get a better deal. I can read one section here. He says:

“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.”

The reason I decided to stand up is I think if it was the perfect deal, they’d argue that it is the perfect deal, but the last few weeks we’ve been hearing the words “Liberal carbon tax.” The member for Bedford South did mention a couple of times the press release going out after a vote saying that the Liberals refused to oppose a carbon tax and stand up for Nova Scotians, which I can say that’s not my position.

The reason also I want to get up and say a few words is most of my life I’ve been a lobster fisherman; that’s where my heart lies. This carbon tax has a great effect on the lobster industry. Last year the price of fuel was high, but the price of lobster was at record highs. This year it won’t be the case. Fuel increases the cost of bait, and it increases the cost of transporting lobster. The way it’s going, it’s a slow move toward labelling the carbon tax as the Liberal carbon tax - similar to in the States with Obamacare, when they decided they were against that, so they were going to continuously refer to that as Obamacare. I feel I need to stand up because this Winter when I’m on the wharf with fishermen, I want to make sure they understand that it is not a Liberal carbon tax, or a carbon tax brought in by the Opposition members on this side of the Legislature.

My feeling is, from listening to the debate, there’s more work needs to be done. That’s where my concerns lie. Let’s make sure this is the absolute best deal, but if it is, then the government should stand up and defend it, sit on their laurels and say, we did everything we could and this is the best deal for Nova Scotians, but I don’t want to leave this sitting and go back to my constituency, and have to defend to my fellow fishermen and my colleagues that I was in this Chamber not fighting for them. Absolutely, that is my priority.

Every time I hear “the Liberal carbon tax” - and we heard it in Question Period today - to me, it’s a clear indication that they’re trying to put the blame on this side of the floor. We’ve even heard the Premier say that the Opposition should help them negotiate for a better deal. I mean, we are in the Opposition, we’re not in the position of governing. That role falls to the government. I just want to make it clear that this carbon tax is not brought on by the Liberals sitting on this side of the Chamber, and there’s no way that I’m going to sit in my seat and accept that as a defence for what’s coming down the pike.

As a lobster fisherman, cost of fuel does make a huge difference on that industry. A lot of my friends and colleagues have borrowed a lot of money to buy lobster boats, and they’ve dedicated their lives to that, and they’re raising their families. If there’s a better deal to be had, then it should go back, or this bill should be looked at, I don’t know.

I can see what’s happening. Every day we’re going to start hearing a little bit more, and if you repeat something enough, eventually people start taking it for fact. For me, I

asked the government to really look at themselves, and if this is the route they're taking, it's not a courageous one, to be honest.

We all come here to defend our constituents, to work for them, to try to make their lives better in one way or another. From the debate I'm hearing here, this is not going to do it. If the government honestly was fighting to say this is actually the best deal, then maybe I could sit here and say, okay, I believe them, but it's the words "Liberal carbon tax," those words. And it seems to be more and more - I think the Premier read a motion yesterday or the day before, and in that motion, he did reference the Liberal carbon tax.

I think there's an effort here to paint that on this party, and I think somebody mentioned it earlier - the federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals are not the same party. I'm the first one to say that. We have different values and different principles. We have some of the same values, but this party, as a caucus, we look at what's best for our residents and what's best for our community, and that's where we try to make our decisions.

It's very difficult for me to sit here every time I hear that. Again I'll say, the Liberal carbon tax. That's not a defence of the bill, that's trying to blame another party on something that they could do a better job in negotiating. We know that eventually with time, if this is repeated every day, people will understand that this - they'll go to the wharf, and it will just be. They won't even think what it means, similar to Obamacare, although Obamacare, now it's just a matter of fact. That's the name. That's what it is.

If the government is proud of this legislation, then they should stand up, defend it - all of it, not just parts of it. That's why when I listened to the member for Timberlea-Prospect say - again, I'm not an expert, but I do respect his opinion - he said that they negotiated one part of the deal, but they didn't really look at the other, and the cap and trade actually did that work. Cap and trade was so good that when you mentioned cap and trade, nobody knew what you were talking about. If you go to the wharf or wherever, it's not an issue because, like the member for Bedford South mentioned, it was doing its job.

The carbon tax, the way it is portrayed, is going to become very politicized, like it is in other provinces. I feel it's extremely unfair to the members on this side of the Chamber who are here to try to defend their constituents.

For me, being a lobster fisherman who has fished for 31 years, there is no way I'm going to accept that I was part of the reason that carbon tax came in. I felt that I had to stand up and get on the record. So when this Winter and next Winter and the Winter after that or in a few years if I go back lobster fishing, that I have something to show that I actually stood up for the fishermen of this province.

I don't have too much more to say (Interruption) En Français. No.

I think the point I want to make is that it's important for the people of Nova Scotia to recognize that this carbon tax is not a Nova Scotia Liberal carbon tax. We are here to debate this bill. If that's the best deal, so be it. Honestly, if they can convince me of that, this is a bill that we can be proud of, but every day they seem to be insinuating that whatever is going to happen in the future, it's the Liberals that have brought that in. And it's not.

With those few words, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: I just want to remind both the member for Clare and the member for Bedford South that there were quotes made from last night's speech from the member for Timberlea-Prospect. I'm going to ask that you table those.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic on an introduction.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I would like to welcome to Province House Mason Lamb. Mason is a videogame YouTube golfer and a basketball player extraordinaire. We have no doubt some day he'll be famous for one, if not all, of those things. He is a proud resident of Kidston Estates in Spryfield. I'm glad to see you here, bud. I hope you have a good time.

THE SPEAKER: You're very welcome to Province House, and don't pay attention to everything that these people say. (Laughter)

The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: It's a pleasure to stand and make a few comments on Bill No. 208. I must say my colleague for Clare spoke with such genuineness about this issue. I think that is important for us to note and think about as we go through the political theatre of this and the concerns that have been expressed about the politicization of this issue.

This is a really important issue, and the work of the minister and his department is extremely important. We need to support his work, and we need to ensure that the work that the minister and his government are doing is vigorous and rigorous with respect to this issue.

I want to begin by talking a little bit about how important action and a concerted effort is on this work of climate change and how we deal with carbon pricing. My interest in this issue started 30 years ago in the Arctic as we began to see the changes that we were seeing in climate in the year-to-year weather that we were experiencing in the early 90s, long before it was in the consciousness of Nova Scotians and other southern Canadians.

I was out in January when it should have been -30, -40, with rain. I was seeing wildlife that should not have been there in mid-January. During the course of my 20 years in the Arctic, I saw our dog team season, which we used to start on Remembrance Day

crossing the frozen Sylvia Grinnell River, and we would dog team to Canada Day on the ice on Frobisher Bay. When I left 20 years later, that ice was not safe to cross that river until the first week of December, and the ice was breaking up in June. We virtually lost six weeks of Winter in 20 years.

That was the canary in the coal mine. I was involved with municipal politicians, attempting to try to get federal and provincial governments to take climate change seriously and to start action. Unfortunately, governments across the world did not take action when we could have had the biggest impact with the least amount of cost to our taxpayers.

We've woken up in the south, obviously, and there is consensus that we need action and we're going to have to invest and pay for the work in climate change reduction. There is no greater example of why we need those investments and why we need to put a price on carbon than what we just experienced with Fiona. The government is spending millions trying to respond to that one storm, and we could have another one next year and the year after. We will.

We need our Department of Environment and Climate Change to act quickly, to be well-funded from the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, and we need thought and hard work with respect to carbon pricing. I have been concerned over the last 15 months on what from my perspective has been a slowing down of action on climate change. We know the minister has reiterated several times, 81 per cent of Nova Scotians want action. They don't want plans.

The other thing I wanted to share with my colleagues here is an extremely good book by Seth Klein called *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency*. It talks about how we as governments need to take on the challenge of climate change like we are on a war footing from World War II, and talks about - and I didn't know much about this - the Dollar-a-Year Man, who in essence volunteered for \$1 a year to tackle the war, to take on the war and the incredible mobilization by Canadians. The numbers are staggering. Obviously I need to learn more about World War II and the efforts. The output of war planes and tanks and military equipment was unbelievable. The premise of this book is that we need to take that kind of action as if we were on a war footing.

What is concerning me is we seem to be slowing down things in Nova Scotia. I know that when I left the department this work was well under way and it was time for a decision on the three options that were before us that have been outlined by my colleague, in terms of how were we going to put a price on carbon in this province.

It is staggering to me that we are now 15 months into the new government and now are just bringing forward a piece of legislation that I would submit is actually premature because the work hasn't been completed.

[4:30 p.m.]

The minister has had notes prepared for him for the Spring sitting last March in which he was to tell this House that carbon pricing decisions would be in the Spring. So the minister's staff were ready to have this decision in the Spring. The minister was prepared to tell this House and commit that this was ready in the Spring and here we are, in October. It's that kind of time frame that is concerning when we have urgent work to do.

These are complex pieces of work and they involve partnerships and they involve relationships between governments to come to solutions that are going to work for Nova Scotians.

I am extremely concerned and maybe I will talk about this a bit later, about the politicization of this work. Nova Scotians want actions, they don't want two parties, whatever colours they are, to be bickering and blaming. One of the biggest challenges to climate change, one of the biggest threats to climate change is the four-year electoral cycle. Maybe we just saw an example of that - lots of work going on under our then-Premier from Timberlea-Prospect, the department was operating at full steam and then the new government comes in and 15 months have been lost.

During Estimates, I inquired about the work of the department. I was concerned that the business plan that was presented to this House had only two items that they were going to complete in the year - that was the climate change plan and a risk assessment. It didn't even talk about a carbon pricing plan being completed.

There was a funding cut to the department and the climate change plan - and perhaps that has been held up because of the foot-dragging on this piece of legislation - was to be completed months ago. In fact, the consultation ended, I believe it was July of 2021 - 15 months ago. That staff at the Department of Environment and Climate Change, particularly the Climate Change Department, are committed to this work and they aren't foot-draggers. They're very knowledgeable and they're working extremely hard, and I can only assume that they have been frustrated that this work has dragged on, and here we are without a signed deal on a carbon plan.

I know the minister is proud of the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act - I got the words mixed up, there must be an acronym that we can use at some point here. The challenge is there's good goals there. In fact, the goal that is touted all the time about the 53 per cent greenhouse gas reductions as being the best in Canada was not the work of the current government, but the work of the past government, and the leadership of our former premier from Timberlea-Prospect.

When we got the update on the progress being made on the goals in that Act, and I have it here somewhere - I'm not sure that I can find a number. So the goals in the Act of a reduction to 53 per cent, well, where is there a number saying we've made progress?

Where were numbers in the progress that we made in the previous year toward those goals? There were no numbers in that report - virtually none, anyway.

Whether it is local food consumption, or the one that really is particularly outrageous is this government's commitment to 20 per cent land protection. Under the leadership of the previous Premier, and during my period as Environment Minister, we protected 61 pieces of land at the Cabinet table. A government that is saying that they can protect 6 per cent of the province in eight years. In their first 15 months, they have protected one piece of land, 285 hectares, I believe. There does not seem to be the rigour, the intensity, the urgency, not by the department or even the minister, I would suggest, but the government supporting that minister and his department to take urgent action.

When we talk about this issue and needing all hands on deck, I can think of no better idea than the minister sitting down with weekly meetings with the member from Timberlea-Prospect to gain the incredible knowledge. That member in this House, as has been stated, knows this file better than any member of this House, and probably better than many, many people in the department.

If we're committed to working together collaboratively and not just playing politics - and I think that's the most disappointing thing that has happened over the last few days with respect to this, that an existential threat, an issue that needs all hands on deck, people working together - we need to find solutions on how we're best going to price carbon for our citizens, that ease the pain for our lobster fishermen, but do the work of changing our behaviours and find ways that we can decrease our carbon footprint, and decrease the costs for Nova Scotians. We need to be working together.

I do want to highlight and be very clear - as another member of this House, as was stated by the member for Timberlea-Prospect - that this bill does two things. It cancels the cap and trade program, which worked effectively for Nova Scotians for the last - what was it, four years? Maybe it's a five-year agreement coming to a close. And it makes the choice - the government has made the choice - to use the hybrid model. Performance standards and carbon pricing.

They have chosen a price on carbon, a consumer price on carbon. They know that that comes with the other. It's the hybrid model.

Sometimes our Premier tries to be so transparent. He is transparent in his manipulation of facts. On the same day that this bill was introduced, to put a resolution on the table about a Liberal carbon tax - which my colleague from Clare has spoken about - is pretty transparent. The Premier is not confident that he has made the right decision, and he wants to blame someone else.

The Premier and this government have made the decision for performance standards and a carbon tax. The decision they made was that they decided they would not

take the revenue in and use that to give to Nova Scotians. They made the decision to have the federal government apply that tax and use the benefits of that revenue. It is the revenue from the carbon tax that is going to help to ease the pain for the lobster fishermen and other Nova Scotians. Again, let's be clear. This was a decision of this government, a decision to take the hybrid model. They have said we'll do performance standards, and we'll do a carbon tax. They have said no to cap and trade.

[4:45 p.m.]

The previous government negotiated hard with the federal Liberals to get that carbon tax - to recognize the work that we had done on reducing greenhouse gases. It was a tough negotiation. What I think we have seen here is a government that didn't do the tough negotiations. They spent 15 months - and on deadline day they handed in their homework, and they failed. The federal government said no, this doesn't work. I can't believe that for 15 months they've been talking to the federal government, and they didn't know that what they were going to submit was going to be rejected? They had to have known it.

Now, instead of - as my colleague for Clare said - proudly saying, we've struck the best deal we can, let's go ahead and address climate change, there's a very clear, calculated move to politicize this and make it about two different parties. I don't think that that finger-pointing means a hill of beans to those 10,000 young people who marched the streets of Halifax pre-pandemic.

The average Nova Scotian trying to make ends meet is not watching Leg TV. They don't particularly care. In fact, they get completely disengaged from partisan finger-pointing. I think we need to do better. We need to do the hard work. We need to operate in good faith with our federal partners. We have to be grown up about this and make the tough decisions instead of pointing across the aisle and saying, it's the Liberal Opposition members that brought on the carbon tax.

The minister is quoted as saying he is confident that this would be accepted by the federal government. I was surprised by that, given what I understand of the issues, so I texted an MP. Yes, but he doesn't have the approval to the extent - this was referring to the Premier - in which the Minister of Environment and Climate Change framed it. That's a sign that our federal partners are not as confident as the minister that this will be accepted.

The other staggering thing about the politics - and it goes to this propensity of very loose numbers being thrown around by this government, such as the 20 per cent land protection. That one just blew me away. We worked for 13 years to get from 13 to 14 per cent, spending \$1 million or \$2 million each year to buy some land, and this government has committed to buying eight Kejic Parks by 2030? Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, could you find \$1 billion in your budget, sir, to meet that . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Please direct your comments and questions through me.

The honourable member for Kings South.

KEITH IRVING: We need to ask the Minister of Finance if he can find \$1 billion to meet that climate plan, that Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act target. These things are in legislation. Those numbers should have rigor behind them, and the reporting should have rigor behind them or else we are in a political fog, talking about very important issues that Nova Scotians care about and want to see progress on.

When the Premier puts on the floor of the House a resolution that their plan submitted to the federal government is going to cut greenhouse gases by 17 per cent, where the federal plan is at 2 per cent, I just don't buy it. I just don't buy how this government feels they can put a carbon price through performance standards on two companies and are going to do better by 8.5 times than what the federal plan is. How can anyone be taken seriously by throwing around numbers like that on the floor of this House and want to debate them? We need to see the evidence behind that because if it is thrown around like land protection, we are living in a never-never land.

Nova Scotians want a government that is competently, seriously, rigorously attacking the challenges that Nova Scotians are dealing with, including climate change. We can't - and I am repeating myself a little bit - sit on our hands for 15 months and then say, blame it on them.

Right now, we have no agreement with the federal government. This piece of legislation is dependent upon having that agreement. This legislation will not do anything without that agreement. The federal minister said that we might have something in a few weeks, in terms of a response from the federal government.

This idea, this 17 per cent approach should have been on the federal government's desk six months ago. Now we are here in this House looking at a piece of legislation that doesn't have any basis in fact. How do we, as members in this Legislature, know that we should be passing this bill?

More work is needed. Hard work is needed by the minister and his staff to work with the federal department of Environment and Climate Change Canada. That work must take place before we consider this bill.

I move that the motion for second reading be amended by striking out everything after "that" and substituting "the bill not now be read a second time but three months hence."

THE SPEAKER: Order. We have a hoist motion on the floor.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I want to rise in support of the motion from my colleague, the former Minister of Environment and Climate Change - the first Minister of Environment and Climate Change in our province - for the reason that he gave. This government had 15 months to bring forward legislation to further negotiate, to see how we could potentially continue to protect the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians, and the request is to ensure that they have more time.

They're doing this in the reverse order than we did it in after signing on to the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, which I tabled last night. After there was a deal made - approved, that Nova Scotia could have a made-in-Nova Scotia cap and trade system. The next session, Fall 2017, a cap and trade bill was brought forward to the House, which that party voted against. If we hadn't passed that bill, Nova Scotians would have had higher costs at the fuel and higher power bills. We would still have higher gas prices than New Brunswick, and now it's the reverse. I verified that with my colleague for Cumberland North.

They need to go back to negotiate before they put the risks on all Nova Scotians - small businesses, low-income Nova Scotians who are struggling to pay their home heating costs and record inflation. They're bringing a bill forward that puts the risks of the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians there.

I started last night with my comments around the Pan-Canadian Framework and how it's important to work together to come to a deal that's in the public interest of Nova Scotia, our regional interests. I want to table a document that speaks to the international co-operation, because this is a global threat and Nova Scotia and Canada need to do their part to combat climate change.

After we brought in cap and trade, attended COP meetings, we signed on to a regional co-operation on carbon pricing in the Americas, the western hemisphere, Mx. Speaker. "Government leaders of Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, the Governors of California and Washington, and the Premiers of Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Quebec launched the Carbon Pricing in the Americas co-operative framework." I'm going to table that so members can see why it's important and what's in the agreement.

A big part of it is ensuring that there is a credible system in all of these places, that they all follow the same measurement, recording, and verification of all the data, especially with cap and trade. That's why in Nova Scotia we signed on to the Western Climate Initiative, another agreement that transcends our national border, to ensure that our system has credibility. I wanted to reference that just to preclude any more criticism on the other side of the House of our cap and trade system that we have, which is internationally known.

[5:00 p.m.]

I wonder, with the deletion of this cap and trade program, if they've already started talks with the Western Climate Initiative that Nova Scotia no longer wants to sit on that board with Quebec and B.C. and California - and now Washington has joined. There are quotes in here that are all quite good from various heads of state, presidents of places. I'm quoted in it after I signed the agreement.

I said, "Nova Scotia has worked hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We can be proud of what we have accomplished, and through our new cap and trade program, we will keep contributing to the global effort on climate change. We are happy to be working with other countries, states, and provinces to reduce greenhouse gas emissions" - working together.

This bill does the opposite. This bill wants a fight with Ottawa and someone to blame for what's inevitably going to happen at the pump to consumers.

A Premier of Quebec, who was also part of the Western Climate Initiative - and they continue to have cap and trade in Quebec - said in Quebec that they chose a carbon market because it is the most flexible and efficient economic tool to guide businesses in the energy transition and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors. Today, Quebec, California, and Ontario - Ontario has since removed themselves from this system after a Progressive Conservative government won - together make up the second biggest carbon market in the world.

Our market has inspired many others and is a carbon pricing tool shared with a growing number of partners in the four corners of the globe. In joining this declaration, Quebec adds to the many actions, partnerships and alliances that have been created to support the introduction of a price on carbon in the world's economies and, in particular, to promote carbon markets.

It's actually a system that uses the free markets to find the lowest-cost reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. I'll table that document for the benefit of the House. There are lots more quotes that speak to the value in working together, the value in ensuring that there are partnerships, and a realization that this is everyone's problem - all levels of government need to work together.

That's why it's important, specific to the motion, to give back, to find out how we can continue on with cap and trade or something similar that does continue to protect the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians, that continues to raise the kind of revenue so that we can support those who are impacted the most by the cost - low-income families. That's why the Green Fund was in place. We disbursed half of the funds targeted exactly at those programs - home heating programs, efficiency programs, something that Nova Scotia is

known for as being a leader in our country. It's an effective way to spend funds to create good jobs, to lower emissions, and to lower power bills.

We're losing our capacity to be able to do that, by the government's own admission, by their estimate of how much revenue will be coming in under these output-based performance standards. That revenue doesn't come close to what we were getting off the auctions – some \$30 million to \$40 million per auction. Fuel suppliers basically had to pay by going through the auction. That's in fact how our system was approved and deemed credible.

Cap and trade has had issues over time in big markets, the European Union and in the United States, and there's learning from all that - not to flood the market with too many in allowances and to ensure that there are fair auctions.

It's a system that worked for Nova Scotia. It's the only system, when I was in that department, that considered the work that Nova Scotians had done, that considered our regional disadvantages because of our fossil fuel percentage in our energy grid. The cap was set higher in Nova Scotia, meaning that the carbon price was lower. This bill, if it were to pass, throws away all that leverage. We have the lowest carbon price in Canada. If this bill passes and the carbon levy comes in, we will have the same carbon price as all the other provinces. That's not fair because we already have carbon pricing in our electricity regulations. (Applause)

Do you really think that Nova Scotians want the provincial government to fight Ottawa with the result that they pay more at the gas pump and for their home heating if they're on oil or propane or natural gas? Or do you think that the average Nova Scotian would like to see the system that we have right now continue?

Again, the agreement was signed. We know what the carbon price is. It was \$10 and it escalated up to \$50 a tonne. This was not a program that was set to expire. This was a program to start a carbon pricing system that we could negotiate once that time period elapsed.

The carbon price doesn't go to \$170 a tonne at the end of that time frame, no matter what the government would have you believe - skeptics on cap and trade, that everything's going to fall apart. The carbon price goes up by \$15 a tonne. Instead of an incremental increase at the pump by half-a-cent or maybe 2 cents, this government is prepared to sit by and be complicit in seeing the largest increase in carbon pricing in the country in Nova Scotia.

I know that the minister hasn't had an opportunity to speak since he opened debate, in fairness. We'd like to learn what kind of conversations that he had. Or was it all out of the Premier's Office? Was there a discussion with Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador to look at a regional approach? I think the

member for Cumberland North mentioned the importance of co-operation in this matter. Were there discussions with Ontario, Quebec, and other provinces that had experience with cap and trade?

Somehow the Eastern Seaboard of the United States are able to co-operate with the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. States like Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont - all of those states somehow are able to trade in an open market.

I don't think anyone could say that the United States is a less polarized political environment. Surely four provinces our size can find ways to work together to minimize the cost to the consumers. Surely they can go to the federal government as we did and explain the business case. Explain that we can't find hydro at the price that they can.

That's the importance of the motion and what I want the government to consider. What's the harm? Unless you're so confident that there is no carbon levy, which I'd be very surprised at. If there is another agreement that now supersedes the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, table it. Let's see where you're allowed to have half a hybrid, which wasn't okay before with other provinces. Other provinces had performance standards. Alberta had them and then the carbon levy was put on top of that to be eligible for the federal plan.

On this side of the House, it's not about arguing for a specific system. It's about doing what's right for Nova Scotians. That's what they expect of us. Let's do what's right for the environment, how we can join the fight in climate change and continue to be leaders, and how we do that in the most cost-effective way with a Nova Scotia approach and regional approach.

This government is bringing a bill forward that does the opposite. By their own admission as my colleague said. They have a motion before the House that blasts the federal government and encourages members opposite to join the fight.

They're fighting a losing battle that has been determined in the Courts, in the Supreme Court of Canada. That bill doesn't stand up. Of course, I brought forward cap and trade, it's a system that I think worked, has worked in other provinces.

You can't say that the revenue didn't come in, you can't say that we weren't able to provide incentives for electric vehicles. One of the first jurisdictions to look at used electric vehicles, so we could have more access for different income levels in Nova Scotia, and e-bikes, so popular that you couldn't get an e-bike after a while, so many people were ordering them, so the government ought to look at extending these programs.

I don't know where the revenue is going to come from, and maybe the minister can talk about that, with no more auctions. I suppose they can continue with some of that with

the next auction in December. I think that by allowing that auction to go forward and continuing with the program concurrently, they are admitting that the program works - cap and trade won't end, no, we're going to continue to use it, but it's a stopgap, it's not a good system. It's not even into trading, no one is trading.

What matters is that we're protecting Nova Scotians while making strides forward with the fight on climate. There are places in Canada that are envious of the system that we have. Some people call it unfair. There's an opinion piece, actually, that talks about it's unfair that Quebec has a lower carbon price. Again, that's because they are in a cap and trade system that finds the lowest costs in the trading market.

In this article it says - this is a 2022 article - in May of this year the cost on the market was 30.85 USD so it actually ends up being 39.49 CAD per tonne. There are people envious of that, but is it the fault of the federal government or is it the fault of Conservative premiers who refuse to do the work?

Carbon pricing has been one of the most politically charged topics that I've ever seen, and it is holding back progress. These agreements and working together is how we confront this existential threat.

There are jurisdictions in North America that still don't have carbon pricing, despite the efforts of President Obama. I heard his name, and it actually reminded me when my colleague mentioned Obamacare. President Obama tried to pass cap and trade so that the United States would have a full market of cap and trade working. Could you imagine how much further ahead we'd be if the biggest economy in the world had that trading system in place, if Canada could be part of that, how much lower the cost would be for consumers and how much more climate action could be taken? There's so much value in working together.

There will be criticism and was criticism when we passed our bill for cap and trade, particularly some on the environment side said we weren't going far enough, that we were giving out too many allowances, which is part of every cap and trade system there is, to protect industry, energy-intensive trade exposed companies like Lafarge, which is part of the bill. And that, quite frankly, is just to avoid carbon leakage. They could leave our jurisdiction and go somewhere else and pollute somewhere else, so there's justification.

We had people saying we weren't going far enough, and the other way around, that there shouldn't be any carbon price at all. I think it is established now that the cost of inaction on climate change is much higher than the cost of action.

All we were saying was that Nova Scotia has already contributed so much, and the reliance on fossil fuels here in our province, that that just be considered where we set the cap. That wouldn't be possible with a carbon tax or carbon levy. It's explicit. It's clear. The merits behind it work better in other jurisdictions, but in Nova Scotia, we were able to

combine our implicit carbon pricing in our electricity regulations with our cap and trade system so that we had more coverage, so that it wasn't just the 40 per cent of the electricity of the grid. We have total emissions being covered. Upwards of 90 per cent of emissions are now covered.

[5:15 p.m.]

This bill goes backwards, back to 40 per cent, where it's Nova Scotia Power and Lafarge being the only coverage. The federal government is not going to agree to something that goes backwards. Prove me wrong. Support the motion. Go back to work. Then come back to the House.

It's de facto endorsement of the carbon levy, performance standards. There's a lot more work to do, and I would encourage the government to get back to the negotiating table and find a true made-in-Nova-Scotia approach that is as good if not better than the one the Liberal government negotiated.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm going to rise and say a few words to this hoist motion, and I'm going to speak a few words in support of the motion.

We're often compared to school children in this Chamber, and tonight I spoke to my kids, and the first question I asked them after school was, did you do your homework? They said yes. I don't believe them, but what can I do? Here I am. This is the same question we need to ask about this bill: Did the government do its homework?

I think that when we saw this bill, the first response was, is that it? As I think has been pointed out, we were given some really clear options from the federal government. These aren't options like, "do you feel like?" or "gee, it would be awesome if." It was, you are required to price carbon, here are the options of how you can do that.

I feel like that logic is a little bit lost on the government right now, in particular the Premier. The Premier has now spent days somehow, mystifyingly, blaming the Opposition for the fact that he hasn't done his homework. That is probably, the dog ate my homework. There are lots of great examples of people doing that in other ways. I think it's really clear here and I think it's really important, because it's just spin and it's disingenuous.

I think it's important that we are really clear about what's happening here. We were given a task as a province. The minister and the Premier were given a task, which was to figure out a way to price carbon according to the federal benchmarks. First the government said, we're not going to do that. What happens if someone says, here's your homework and you say, I'm not going to do that? They say, okay, you still have to turn in your homework. Then they said, come on everybody, stand with us, we don't want to do our homework.

That didn't work. The next tactic was, we're going to do a tiny part of our homework. Is that enough?

The answer clearly is no, because this isn't a request, it's a requirement. Quite to the contrary of what the government has been asserting, this bill ushers in a federal carbon tax. That is the function. If this is the only bill that we are going to see that contemplates carbon pricing, then the impact of this bill, in addition to pricing pollution from Lafarge and Nova Scotia Power - which is a good thing. We don't argue that that's not a good thing, that's important. But in addition to that, what this bill does is it ensures that a federal carbon tax will be imposed upon the Province of Nova Scotia.

Quite to the contrary of the assertions that this is somehow a nefarious plot of the Opposition, whom I remind you are sitting in a Chamber with a majority government who make all the decisions and have made it pretty clear through the way they run this Chamber that they're not that interested in what any of us have to say about anything.

What this government is doing is inviting the federal government to implement a carbon tax. I think that that point is really clear. That is why I am standing in support of the hoist motion. What this does is it says, finish your homework. It's a finish your homework motion. Please take this back. Go back to the table with the federal government and have the conversation that needs to be had. Figure out a made-in-Nova Scotia solution that retains the Green Fund, that protects consumers but that most of all protects our environment.

Mx. Speaker, I think it's really important that although we have the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, we don't have a climate plan. We have a history of opposition, in fact, to what I think are some of the progressive climate legislation that has moved through this House.

Basically, the made-in-Nova Scotia plan, that wasn't a plan that didn't price carbon - it said, take us at our word. That's not how it works. What we're saying is do your homework and show it to us. I think that's the same thing that the federal government is saying.

For those reasons, I support the hoist motion. I think it makes sense to send it back. I know that there are lots of brilliant people in the Department of Environment and Climate Change who can help us to finish the work that we have been asked to do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I appreciate the opportunity to get up in support of the hoist motion to send this back and take a look at, as some of my other colleagues said, getting the work done, doing it the right way, governing instead of politics.

Again, this is no reflection of the minister - I said this last night too. I believe that he and his staff are doing the very best that they can to come forward with a new deal. But I think that ultimately it's being driven, and the decisions are being driven from the Premier's Office.

I look back at the very first thing, and it has been mentioned here before, that we came in here with a government notice of motion, and I believe the Premier's Office was praying that we weren't going to support it, that that was their opportunity to get out there 10 seconds later with a press release, with the brand, saying, we're the best, and the Opposition is not. I'm not sure if the brand was on it this time or not, but we voted for it. Even when we voted for it, they put it out, hoping that we wouldn't see the press release, knowing full well that of course we were going to support it because we negotiated the initial deal. We never supported it in the first place.

Again, I think that's ultimately not only the challenge for that minister, who honestly, I never anticipated that he would become the minister of that department. I thought he would end up becoming the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. He has always been forthright with his information, whether he was a minister or in Opposition. Again, I think it's a challenge for him because I think he has to battle the political side of the Premier's Office, which we have seen decision after decision after decision, they want the fight. They have been looking for this fight. It's the "look at us, we're defending everybody" mentality, but that only goes so far. Everybody, regardless of who has served on the government side, does what they can to support Nova Scotians.

You also have to do the work. You also have to govern, and you also have to make decisions. In this case, as my colleague said, it's always hard to speak after him, especially on this stuff stuff. We've worked on multiple files together, but as I said last night, I don't think there's a person in the province of Nova Scotia who has the knowledge and the history - especially when it comes to major government decisions and negotiations in this House - as the member for Timberlea-Prospect does. This has been a passion of his. The environment is a passion of his, and it shows every time he speaks.

I talked a bit about my own experience last night as the Minister of Energy and Mines. I talked a lot about the programs that we put in place. This is why I go to the hoist motion, why I support the delay. For me, I'm looking at the incentives and the programs and the organizations that have been funded over the years, asking myself, where is that money going to come from when the Green Fund is no longer there?

I have two documents I want to table. The first one is from our time in government, and that was February 24, 2021, and I'll read some of this:

"As part of its commitment to the environment and fighting climate change, the Government of Nova Scotia is investing \$19 million in rebates to support low-income families in making their homes

more comfortable and energy-efficient and help Nova Scotians buy clean, reliable electric vehicles.

It will also move toward a new renewable energy standard, with 80 per cent of Nova Scotia's energy coming from renewable sources by 2030.

'Bold action on climate change is a priority. We know it's possible to have a cleaner economy that creates jobs, supports a healthy environment and benefits all Nova Scotians.' said Premier Iain Rankin. 'Electric vehicles, more comfortable homes, healthier communities and careers in renewable energy and efficiency will help our province and the planet.'

To emphasize the importance of addressing climate change, government has renamed the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Climate change will be a priority in every Minister's mandate."

And here's the big part:

"Half of the \$19 million - \$9.5 million - which will come from the Green Fund, is to go into the HomeWarming and the Affordable Multi-Family Housing energy efficiency programs. This will help 1,200 more low-income Nova Scotians make their homes more comfortable and protect their family budgets."

Again, this is my concern and why I feel that the government needs to go back and do this. This is important. This is significant money that the government's going to have to find with the elimination of that fund.

"The other half will be invested" - it says, half of the Green Fund "will be spent to support those most in need.

"The other half will be invested in a rebate program for new and used electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids and e-bikes. Rebates will be \$3,000 per new vehicle and \$2,000 for used vehicles, with \$500 for e-bikes. This will be in addition to the \$5,000 federal rebate available for new electric vehicles."

This was the program, actually, that the Premier started strategically talking about, saying this stuff wasn't important at the time for Nova Scotians. This was being targeted in areas, different areas, during the campaign.

“The Department of Energy and Mines will release the new Renewable Electricity Standard next month. Work will begin immediately to ensure new wind power is made available at the lowest possible cost to ratepayers.

Nova Scotia will join the federal government in buying energy from new local renewable sources through the Green Choice program. By 2025, all electricity for provincial government offices will be from renewable energy projects. This will reduce the province’s greenhouse gas emissions and create new jobs, without impacting Nova Scotians’ electricity bills.”

I say that again. I said this last night. Through all the hard negotiation of cap and trade, behind the scenes - we had our public debates, but ultimately, we all came to an agreement and we started building these strong programs in conjunction with the federal government through our Department of Environment and Climate Change, through Energy and Mines, and through the federal departments.

Again, I talked about that last night. I said I think the relationship is going to get very strained. I’m seeing it now. I’m hearing it myself. The relationship between the provincial and federal governments is going to get very difficult very quickly. We debated passionately the issues around carbon tax. We had our debates, but we came to an agreement. We never went looking for a fight. This government’s going looking for a fight. It doesn’t end well.

[5:30 p.m.]

As I said last night, Nova Scotians ultimately pay the price for that. I use that as one example of what happens and where the government is going to have to find the money that came out of the Green Fund.

I have another one but this one is from this current government, which I’ll also table. I’ll table this one first.

This is from January 17, 2022, Province Invests in Climate Adaptation Projects in Communities. “The Province is investing \$37.3 million from the Green Fund . . .” The government needs to find \$37.3 million just in this alone, and I’ll read it.

“The Province is investing \$37.3 million from the Green Fund in projects that support the goals of the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This includes \$15 million over three years for the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, which will support communities to adapt the impacts of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A request for proposals to develop and administer the fund was issued today January 17.”

Where is that \$15 million coming from? Under this new plan they have to find that money. Nobody knows - we don't know for sure where that money is coming from. We had a Green Fund, we had a budget, we knew what we could do, and we allocated the funds to these projects that are important.

“Climate change impacts every Nova Scotian in every community across this province.” That's from the minister so it's a good quote.

Other projects include \$8 million for the SolarHomes Incentive program. Where's that \$8 million coming from? They tout the program. I give the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables credit. He is working with the industry. I talked about the industry last night, the importance of it, how it skyrocketed from 2017 to 2020 to the best in the country. I think I got the number almost right. Approximately 13 to 70 companies got into solar installation. Awesome, fantastic, amazing.

The minister got it and I'll give him credit for it because that program really kick-started a new industry in Nova Scotia. Homeowners took it on like wildfire. It was great. We need to support initiatives like that.

It will adjust and adapt as it goes, as the minister knows. Demand and trying to find that balance is important, but \$8 million - this was this year - for the SolarHomes Incentive program for single-family homes to install solar systems.

Here's another big one: “\$8 million to extend for one year the Home Energy Assessment program, which provides low-cost subsidized energy assessments for people using oil heating, in incentives of up to \$5,000 to energy efficiency retrofits.”

That is huge for families all over the province. A solar program doesn't touch everybody, programs like that do. It allows you to help transition away from traditional heating sources. It allows you to apply for retrofits to your home.

Under this plan, if this goes through, you are talking about an additional 10 cents on oil to heat your home. So these programs - here's another \$8 million you have to find to help even combat that additional cost that's going to come to families if the government's plan goes through.

Another one: “\$3.3 million over three years to support the implementation of climate change initiatives by the Department of Environment and Climate Change.” Again,

very important. We want to do whatever we can as a province and as a government. I'm sure that this current government does, as we did. They want to use that money, \$3.3 million, to help communities implement a lot of the things that are necessary probably for the electrification of their fleets, probably solar in their public buildings - help that transition away from coal and traditional sources to heat these bigger projects. They have to find that money - \$3.3 million.

Another huge one - \$2 million for affordable housing retrofits to upgrade one- and two-unit housing units in Cape Breton. The Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing is also involved with this, contributing \$2 million for a total of \$4 million.

Again, this is only one piece of it. This is the announcement that they made. In our time in the Department of Energy, working with the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing - kudos to the staff in both departments, I had the honour of being in both of them - we retrofitted over 11,000 units in conjunction with a strong relationship with the federal government. Retrofitting that much infrastructure to help people cut down on their power bills, their heating bills, and feel more comfortable in their homes. Again, another \$2 million that they're going to have to find.

This is actually really fitting to say, considering what we've all gone through and the challenges that communities are still going through post Fiona - \$1 million in flood line mapping to provide communities with coastal and inland flood plain maps that incorporate climate change.

Again, another significant investment from the Green Fund. We've seen it in Cape Breton, Mx. Chair. The flood in 2016. We had an event in between. They called 2016 a 1-in-a-150-year flood. I don't know, but it's not 150 years between 2016 and 2022.

We've had a number of flood events in multiple areas of the province, Cape Breton particularly - Sydney and up north, as well. The Speaker himself would know that there have been a lot of washouts and a lot of coastal erosion. This is what the Green Fund was intended to do, because these resources are hard to come by.

These are significant numbers for the government. They have to come up with this. All of these programs were funded through the Green Fund, and they need to find that money. I'll table this as well, Mx. Chair. I just want to go through it very quickly - a quote here from the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities:

“Flood line mapping is imperative to the planning that is needed to build environmentally resilient communities. Pairing green technology and efficiency solutions with affordable housing is the bold action needed to ensure we provide safe and climate-friendly housing that is future minded. Providing a forum for residents and organizations to develop and implement innovative green solutions allows for community-led

solutions that will make significant impacts in all corners of the province.”

That quote comes from Amanda MacDougall, who is the Mayor of CBRM but also the president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Again, just to sum up this press release from this government in January: They used over \$37 million from a fund that is not going to exist as a result of their inaction and their waiting until the last minute. I feel like I defend him a lot. I’ve got a lot of time for the minister, but I think most of the ministers are battling this political game that is constantly wanting to be played.

They had over a year to have these conversations. Like I said, you get into situations in politics and in government, but you need to govern. You need to negotiate. They knew this was coming and now this is only one example. I gave another one.

I’ll table this as well. This was actually one of the more fun things I did. We drove an electric car around the province because we wanted to promote electric vehicles. It wasn’t a big investment, but it was an investment in a community organization that wanted to partner with government. Whether it’s about coastal protection or promotion.

Next Ride - people will be familiar with Next Ride here. They drive around with the electric car. We drove an electric car from Halifax to Sydney. We did it on \$13, I think. It was really interesting but the reason why I say that is because, again, these programs are all in jeopardy now. They’re going to have to do some major reworking with their budgets to come up with \$50 million to cover a lot of these programs. I just gave one example of \$37.3 million of the program fund isn’t going to exist.

Money doesn’t grow on trees. They’re going to have to find it somewhere, because if they don’t, a lot of these programs will suffer. A lot of the initiatives that we put in place help low-income Nova Scotians stay in their homes, get that heat pump, or draft-proof their home. All of the programs that we expanded, whether you were heated by electricity or anything else, that was the whole goal. Everybody needed to be part of the conversation, and we needed the money to be able to do it. We understood at the time that the federal government was going to impose a tax on carbon, but we did the work. We went out and we talked, negotiated. The federal government came back and signed on to a deal that reflected Nova Scotia’s long-standing work, transcending governments.

Then we built this incredible relationship. They were calling, we were calling. I made reference to them last night. I’ve made some of the references now - solar program, 11,500 public housing units, 2,400 Mi’kmaw homes, 13 communities across Nova Scotia, incentives for electric cars, incentives for e-bikes, educational programming, whether it was through ACAP in Cape Breton or a multitude of the organizations that are across Nova Scotia into our schools. Community solar projects, talked about last night.

Hants West - forgot them. I forgot last night. He talked about Berwick last night, Berwick and Antigonish, the solar projects. Sorry, Kings West. I thought I got it. I was showing off there. All of these things. This has been building so positively. I think what the current government did with this \$37.3 million is fantastic. It's exactly what we need to be doing. Like I said, it flows beyond one political party. We all care. The technology and everything is getting to such that we've been able over the years to support families making those steps, whether it was a family in their own home, working with municipalities on areas - actually Antigonish and Berwick solar projects - giving people the ability to drive around in an electric car and get a feel for it and learn about the incentives that we put in place.

It was about, as well, going into our schools and talking to our students and looking at building programs early on in the P-12 system so we could expose students not only to programming around the environment, but also to what opportunities may be there for them. I think that's really the next big step in the climate change discussion for our P-12 system, is exposing students to new trades and opportunities, to get into the field.

As I say all of this, that money is going to be gone, to do all of those projects. We don't know, and nobody has indicated to us where that's going to come from, and that's heartbreaking, because I just know how hard staff has worked on this over the years to build these programs. I know how strong the relationship has been with our federal counterparts to look at new initiatives and ways that we can promote wind, promote solar, promote efficiency. As I said, the prices for wind and the prices for solar and such have dropped so significantly because of technology and demand that it's becoming a viable option for families all over the province.

My fear is that budgets are such - we go into a recession, people are calling for one, the experts are calling for one. I hope it doesn't happen, nobody wants that, but what happens is budgets start to shrink. This fund was put in place, and it wasn't driven by, oh we have to find this amount of money out of a government department to fix this. We had this base on which we negotiated in cap and trade. We had this money. This was the money that was being generated through a strong negotiation and a deal that put this money in place but also kept the cost to consumers at approximately 1 cent on diesel, on propane, on gas.

In this plan, approximately 10 cents a litre is going on gas and propane and furnace oil. As others have said tonight, it's almost like they want it to happen. We want the fight. We're going to fight this out. Everybody's going to think that we're defending them. Well, they're not going to think that when they go to the gas pump or they go buy bread, or they try to do really anything at this point.

That's really what I'm scratching my head at. You can call it a Liberal carbon tax all you want, but people are catching on to this. People aren't going to care whether you call it a Liberal carbon tax or not when their gas is up 10 cents a litre. They're not going to

care. Liberal - whatever. Their gas is going up 10 cents a litre, so everything else is going up in price. I have heard this messaging and it's all scripted. Everybody is scripted.

[5:45 p.m.]

Back to the hoist, because I know I'm getting off topic, and I got that look from you before, Mx. Speaker. I'm going to bring it back. This is why we should delay. I'm giving the example of the Green Fund - significant. Low-income Nova Scotians use it. It's important. We're keeping people in their homes.

I said this last night. A lot of these initiatives actually on average probably save Nova Scotians \$900 a year on their power bills. That was the other thing too. Not only did we keep power rates stable - I was there for three years in negotiations with Nova Scotia Power. We kept them stable and low. We did. You can smile all you want. We negotiated hard with Nova Scotia Power and kept it under 1.8 per cent three years in a row when I was minister.

We also did that and built all of these programs at the same time. We kept rates low, and we built all of these programs at the same time, which the department is still building upon, which is great. That's not any kind of shot at the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. He gets it totally. So does the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. We set the conditions for it. One of those conditions, a big condition, was cap and trade.

Think - kept power rates low, built all of these programs, used the Green Fund, strong relationship with the federal government, 2,400 Mi'kmaw homes, 11,500 public housing units, a solar program that was the best in the country, e-bike incentives, electric vehicle incentives, incentive for public electrification of fleets, chargers all over Nova Scotia, 13 solar installation companies to 70. I can go on for three years because that's what we did. My point is that we did all of this. We negotiated cap and trade and kept power rates low.

Fast forward to now, and all of it is in jeopardy. It all is. They need to find tens and tens and tens of millions of dollars to cover that Green Fund. If they don't, these programs are going to suffer. Government deals a lot with a lot of very important issues, whether it's health care and education. The environment is starting to take stage. It should have long ago. It kind of did as we progressed - as I said, technologies and initiatives and priorities change, partnerships change, money changes. A lot of things happened to get us to this point. Again, the government is making some of the same moves we made, and they're expanding on some stuff, which is great.

The sad reality is when you need to start looking at cutting things, which very well could happen if you can't replace that money and we move into a recessionary environment - the challenge for me and the scary part for me becomes a lot of these programs go away

- these are the ones they look at first. These are the ones, the retrofits in homes, programs around installation of heat pumps, I'm afraid these are the ones that are at the desk saying you know what, we can't do that this year. Then they get lost.

We're talking a lot about the environment and why we should delay this thing - this is economic, too. If you don't figure out that Green Fund - I'll table the document - but over \$80 million went into that Green Fund. That's 70 companies that employ people because of that incentive.

It's the environment, this is the focus of the bill and I get that, but my reason for supporting the delay of this is because we have to put an economic lens on this as well. When you put a program in place that retrofits 11,000 public housing units, people are going to work. When you talk about solar farms and massive wind projects, people are going to work.

These are big construction opportunities, because with this field and my experience you have your big projects - your wind, your solar farms, the tidal - the investment in tidal is in tens of millions of dollars and it's great because you have so many companies that are around that are doing that work.

You have to put the economic lens on this as well. This is one of the greatest economic opportunities the province has probably had in a long time. When you go from 13 to 70 companies in a year, because of a program that was initiated because of a fund that existed that the government used itself - the current government - to help fund, this matters.

This is why we shouldn't just jump into this thing because we also know that the federal government may not even approve it. That's what I mean, we are negotiating something backwards.

You are talking about a number of significant programs that help Nova Scotians that all could very well be in jeopardy, based on what happens with the conversations between the province and the federal government.

Why again we should have to support the hoist motion is that we need to really take a look at the fact that this is ultimately about the environment; the environment and the economy go hand in hand as well. We can continue to build on these programs. These are clean energy, clean educational opportunities that we can expose our kids to now, to get them into the field as they go.

We have our traditional industries. I was always a big supporter of moving green technology into our school trade systems, our classes. I think the time has come for that, expose our students.

All of these things matter because this will be one of the biggest economic drivers. If you look at some of the initiatives that the government has put in place or that they are looking at, that we supported as well, everybody has, like the big wind project, like these things matter. All of these retrofits are employing local people in communities all over the province and they are being funded by this fund.

That is what is really concerning for me, I just don't know where they're going to find the money. It's not a few bucks, this is significant cash that they'll have to find within their budgets if they want some of this stuff to continue and, as we know, expand and have the ability to leverage federal dollars as well.

That was the other great part of it, too, we could use the Green Fund, we were leveraging money. We had this different fund that was set because of cap and trade; we didn't have to go into our own budgets to deal with it. We used some government money. We used some Green Fund money. We had that money to leverage. It worked great, and now that could be all gone. That is my concern.

I'm about a half-hour in now, Mx. Speaker. I don't know how much more I've got to say at this point, but I will say this: I support the hoist of this bill. I support that this is being done backwards, and this is too big of a deal to do it this way. The government has no idea whether the federal government supports this or not. They didn't do it in any other province, why are they going to do it here? Why would they say, okay Nova Scotia, we said no to everybody else, but you know what? Thanks for coming in at the eleventh hour, and we're going to support it.

As my colleague for Timberlea-Prospect said, this has been challenged in court more than once, and every time it was the same result. I forget the saying. Anyway, they know the end result, but that's the point. They know the end result. This goes to being political and actually governing. That's where the hard negotiation comes in. That's where this should have been happening over an extended period of time. They had over a year. They didn't do it. They didn't govern. They said, we don't know what we're going to do with this, but we're going to call it a Liberal carbon tax, and we're going to try to blame the Opposition, and then pretend like they're in Opposition and say, you guys are Liberals. It's all your fault.

Actually, we knew it was bad and we negotiated a new deal, one that funded all these programs. One that's putting lots of people to work. One that supports a lot of great education for our youth around climate change and the environment. One that supports the electrification of vehicles and the electrification of fleets, community solar buildings, solar farms, wind projects, retrofits, and the list goes on and on. Like I said, I had the privilege of working in that department with a really spectacular group of individuals who really care and really know what they're talking about.

As I said in my comments last night, their whole foundation was building programs that supported our most vulnerable Nova Scotians, the ones who really needed the help the most, and it really had a great impact on saving them money, and in a lot of cases saving money for families, but also making their homes more comfortable. I don't know where they're going to find the money, I really don't. The thought of going into this knowing that the federal government could say no, they're jeopardizing tens of millions of dollars that they're going to have to find.

With that, Mx. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to get up and say a few words in support of the hoist. Politics are at play. The unfortunate reality is I don't think that for the Premier's Office the 10 cents matter more than the fight. It's true. The 10 cents a litre doesn't matter to that office more than the fight. When every member gets up and speaks and they use that term, Liberal carbon tax, somebody's writing those speeches. Somebody's saying, you make sure, if you say it's sunny outside, make sure you mention Liberal carbon tax. Happy birthday, Liberal carbon tax. Happy holidays, Liberal carbon tax.

You can see it, and it's really unfortunate. I'll stop there. I support the hoist. They definitely need more time to make sure they get this right.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I very much appreciate the comments from this side of the Chamber tonight. We've had some very articulate arguments put forward as to why we are making a stand on this bill and why we have moved a hoist motion tonight.

Essentially, the argument is very simple. This bill will scrap a cap and trade program that's existed in Nova Scotia for years, that was an alternative to a carbon tax, and that generated revenue for the province to redistribute to Nova Scotians. To any Nova Scotians listening at home, this would be the money that funded your efficiency programs - if you put heat pumps in, if you upgraded your windows, if you're in affordable housing, you could bring more efficiency programs into your affordable housing.

This has been a very important tool in Nova Scotia for a couple of reasons, the cap and trade system. One, it has ensured that we could participate in carbon pricing in the country within the federal framework, and two, redistribute money collected from polluters to the public so that they could then invest in initiatives that would actually make their homes more efficient and cheaper to heat and power.

This bill seeks to scrap that cap and trade system that's been in place without, we believe, a viable alternative. What has been proposed in the bill by the government, as the member for Timberlea-Prospect mentioned earlier, has actually been thrown out in courts when other provinces have tried a similar legislation. We have not even had approval yet by the federal government that this is even going to be accepted.

[6:00 p.m.]

The rationale for the hoist is very simple: We pull this bill for three months and before we scrap a cap and trade system that has been very effective at pricing carbon but not punishing the consumers - actually supporting consumers with energy efficiency funding - before we do that, we have to ensure that we actually have a viable alternative that's going to protect the consumer and also do our part to price carbon.

That is the reason for it. You do have to give credit where credit is due with the government. This government is very good at marketing and communications. It is. We see it with their health care plan that certainly is more marketing than substance. We've seen the situation in that sector deteriorate very rapidly over the last year, yet we have government messaging saying that it's actually remarkable what's happening.

We're seeing the same thing happen here. I think what's consistent is when the Premier's back is against the wall on something, that's when we start to see the blame game happen. If any members aren't familiar with the blame game, there is a Berenstain Bears book that was written on this. My mother read it to me when I was a child. I still read it to my children. It's when Brother and Sister Bear blame each other for everything instead of working together.

What has happened here is that, for whatever reason - I know that the government's been very focused on other files, particularly health care - but they got caught with their pants down on this particular issue with the carbon tax. There has been a year that's gone by where no negotiation was happening, and no attempt to expand the cap and trade system. We've heard the Premier talk about the great relationship he has with all the other Atlantic Provinces, and how they're working together on all these important initiatives, but yet no work to try and expand our cap and trade market with other provinces.

Nothing has happened over the last year, so we're now in this position right now where it looks like the carbon tax is potentially inevitable and instead of taking responsibility for that, we have a Premier who is playing the blame game. The same thing that we've seen in health care.

The same thing that we've seen on every single issue, actually, that the Premier has not been executing on his promises with. He says it's not their fault, it's the Opposition's fault. We saw it several times this Summer when we sat in the emergency session. We've seen it here. The Leader of the NDP mentioned it earlier.

Instead of taking responsibility and saying that they want to get back to the table with the federal government, they really want to push, potentially, to keep the cap and trade system going, the government has misrepresented the position of the provincial Liberal Party. That's actually on the record in the House. It also blamed the two Opposition parties, which do not have the votes in this Chamber to accomplish anything without government

support. The Premier decided to blame it on us, who were in that situation, which is absolutely ridiculous.

But it can be a very easy and effective message. It's an easy one for people to understand: the Liberal carbon tax, we don't want it, they didn't help us. That is very easy. It's much harder to say we actually have a viable alternative to the cap and trade system. It's not only done what we need to do to attack climate change through carbon pricing, it has also redistributed funds to people and is making life more affordable for them and helping them live in more efficient homes and use more fuel-efficient vehicles.

I believe it's also a superior program to the carbon tax because of the innovation that is incentivized in the private sector as a result of this. It's a better tool for innovation to green our economy, green our companies, and green our power grid. This government, because their back is against the wall, is willing to scrap that whole system that we've had in place. A lot of people don't know we've had it in place because our government, on the other hand, was strong on policy. We weren't always good at public relations or marketing, but I do think we actually have the opposite situation now where we've got a government that is focused on marketing and public relations but does not bring forward much substance on policy.

Madam Speaker, for those reasons I think a hoist motion is reasonable. We have not even heard yet from the federal government if they are going to accept this deal. Again, we have reason to believe that they are not, because similar legislation has been thrown out by the Supreme Court when other jurisdictions have tried it. Other Conservative governments have tried to do that.

I believe we have had a superior program in place of cap and trade. It has done what we need to do without punishing the consumer. It now looks like the carbon tax is inevitable, because this government refused to defend the system that we had in Nova Scotia, work to expand that system, and is using it to play the blame game instead of finding a solution.

As many members in this Chamber have already mentioned tonight, the stakes are a little too high on this issue, from an environmental perspective obviously, and the impacts that climate change are having on the world and on our communities here in Nova Scotia, but also on the cost factor and the economic factors with Nova Scotians.

We are already dealing with an inflationary crisis, a cost of living crisis, not just in Nova Scotia of course but across the world, and this government's inaction, I believe, is ensuring that more cost pressures are going to be put on the consumers, particularly at the gas pump. This is particularly going to affect rural Nova Scotians. I really think they can blame the Opposition all they want but they really have only themselves to blame on this issue, Madam Speaker..

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I just had a good meal. I had some jambalaya. It was fantastic.

This hoist motion is important. I know that it may seem like an annoyance to some to have to sit here for hours on end and I will remind the members on that side that they did call the hours, not us. So in the spirit of democracy, if you are going to call the hours, I guess we'll have to fill them.

We need to press pause. We've seen the Premier do this on many occasions, where he has put legislation forward or he has put ideas forward and maybe they are a little bit rushed, they didn't have the proper consultation. He admitted here today on the floor that the out-of-province tax was something he didn't agree with, and they put the kibosh on it, which makes me wonder how and why an out-of-province tax for non-Nova Scotians is more important than dealing with climate change and dealing with this bill.

If you can pause the tax on out-of-province residents who own second and third homes to make sure you get it right, I would certainly hope that you do something, that you would do it for something as important as climate change. If you don't, I think it really shows where your priorities lie and your priorities lie with getting the votes but not getting the legislation right.

I support the pause on this bill because I don't think the stakeholders were properly consulted. I don't think the people of Nova Scotia were properly consulted. This is a government that will tell you that they're out talking to everybody, especially when it comes to health care. They're on their third or fourth tour of the province, they said, when it comes to health care, claiming they're the only ones who have ever done that, but I can tell you that every Health Minister I have ever seen in my life has done a tour of Nova Scotia and toured what they're responsible for.

For some reason, they don't want to tour Nova Scotia to talk about climate change and find out what really matters to Nova Scotians. I think it's because what matters to Nova Scotians doesn't matter to them. I think that's the problem. They don't want to hear what Nova Scotians have to say.

I don't think it's the minister in particular. I think the minister works hard. He's very open and transparent. I think he understands the importance of this. Sometimes you get marching orders, and unfortunately, some of us listen and some of us don't.

We will continue to fight climate change, and we will continue to fight to get these bills right because this isn't about an election. It's about doing what's right for Nova Scotians. I will again ask that side of the House, why is it that you quickly react to out-of-province taxes, but climate change, you plug your ears?

It's not going to make - I shouldn't say that. It will make a big difference if you pause it. Because you're literally still in negotiations with the federal government. By not pausing this and refusing to go back to the table, you're making things worse. You're actually making it worse for Nova Scotians.

The spin is there, and the public relations is there and everybody is working their magic to say, "Liberal carbon tax." I'm going to tell you something. This is not a Liberal carbon tax. This is a Progressive Conservative carbon tax, because you refuse to negotiate. It was a Liberal cap and trade system. Get it right. It was a Liberal cap and trade system that had a 1 cent increase. This is now a Progressive Conservative carbon tax. They can spin it all they want and say, it's not us.

But you're governing, you pulled out of negotiations, and you're putting forward legislation that you know will be rejected. You have been told at least a half a dozen times to bring forward a real plan by the federal government. Every other province and territory in this country can do it and has done it. In fact, Nova Scotia did it. We're left alone. What has been the difference? Has the federal government changed? No. The provincial government in Nova Scotia changed, and thus the priorities changed also.

I know this is just nobody's listening and it's falling on deaf ears and nobody wants to hear this right now. That should say something, Madam Speaker, that something as important as climate change is not sinking in, and nobody's paying attention. Nobody wants to hear it. Nobody wants to negotiate. Nobody wants to budge on that side of the House.

It has become political points for them. I want you think about that, Madam Speaker. It has become a political victory and political points. That's how they see climate change now. They don't see it as something they should be continuing to negotiate. Pause this; negotiate.

We have seen a flexible federal government. They were certainly flexible on the cap and trade system. I just saw a photo op the other day with Justin Trudeau and Doug Ford together, complimenting each other. Two years ago, who would have thought that? Yet, our current Premier cannot get along with the Prime Minister, but our current Premier will tell you that he's not a federal Conservative. On climate change, you're certainly looking like it.

Climate change and the environment, I think the reason why they won't pause this and the reason why they're showing little interest in our speeches here tonight or any other night is because they don't think it's a ballot issue. They think it's health care, education, the economy, but not the environment. Maybe they've done their own polling and maybe that's what they've found, but not everything has to be about winning and losing an election. Sometimes it's about winning and losing at life and doing the right thing.

[6:15 p.m.]

I would say that the ones who have not been fully immersed in the whole political realm as politicians right now, they know that the environment is important, and they know that the right thing to do is to pause this. It's tough. They're a brand-new government. They're told don't make a mistake, don't listen to the other side because they're going to try to get you. Keep your head down. Toe the party line and you'll get ahead.

I'll remind them that we know that the average career for an MLA is three and a half to four years. That's what statistics show. When your family and your children and your grandchildren look at you and they say, well, you were in a position to do something about the environment, you were in a position to do something about clean air and water, and they ask what you did, the answer will be little or nothing, unless they pause the bill.

We'll give you full support. Pause the bill, do real stakeholder engagement on something as important as the environment. I should say it louder to make sure that they're listening. Do stakeholder meetings on something as important as the environment. Pause it. Meet with the experts.

Bring back a real plan, one that you've negotiated with the stakeholders, Madam Speaker. One that you've negotiated with your federal and municipal partners. I've certainly talked to all kinds of leaders in the municipality, and they haven't heard a peep from the government on the Environment Act and these amendments. Bring something back and we'll support it unanimously, and that is a bigger win for you than this. Much bigger. It also shows that they care about the things that Nova Scotians are concerned about and that they're not just a one-track-mind government.

Sometimes when I stand up here and I refer to the government, I'll say "the Conservative government of Nova Scotia" and as soon as I say it, you hear, like, crickets at night when you hear the crickets going, you hear in the background, progressive, progressive, progressive. That's what they'll say, we're Progressive Conservative.

Well, this is an opportunity to be progressive. Pause the bill, show that you have a progressive bone in your body and earn the title Progressive Conservative. Unless the progressive in Progressive Conservative means only progressing what we want, only progressing this. If they want to show that they are progressive, pause the bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Just a point of order, for the member opposite to get back on track. He is talking about what Progressive Conservative or Conservative is. That really has nothing to do with what's on the floor right now, so if you could please instruct him to get back on track.

THE SPEAKER: I'll acknowledge that point of order. I would say that the member is talking about the bill in terms of the hoist that is on the floor and I'll just remind the member to stay on point.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Again, I would say I would like this paused so that the members opposite can show that the environment matters to them, and they are progressive in their beliefs. We have seen in the past, when you talk about the environment, individuals who are not progressive tend to ignore it. Individuals who are progressive tend to act and react. The pausing of this bill allows them to do that. Show Nova Scotians what real Progressive Conservatives look like by pausing this bill. If you don't pause this bill, you can't disassociate yourself with the federal Conservatives any more. You are federal Conservatives if you do not pause this bill because Pierre Poilievre . . .

THE SPEAKER: I am going to ask the member to stick to the hoist that's on the floor.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I think what I am trying to do is explain to them why I think it's important for them to pause this bill - some of the statements that this government has made around their beliefs and who they are and who they aren't and who they support and who they don't support. If you want to really show the public that, then you just pause the bill, you consult.

I did table something in my last speech about it was *The Globe and Mail* that said that during the leadership run-up and since then, the Conservative Leader, the federal Leader Pierre Poilievre, did not mention the environment once. When asked by the media why, he called them Liberal skills.

Pause this bill to consult, to speak, to talk or be branded the same. That's what it comes down to.

You are in the middle of negotiations, and I'll say I just try to set an example to this: Imagine you live in Inverness and you want to purchase a home and you're in the middle of purchasing a home and you are going back and forth on the price and in the middle of it you pull out and say, this is the price now. This is the price I'm going to pay and that's it. That's what's happening here. I think you have people in Inverness who negotiate better than that.

I think that people are watching. Companies are watching. Stakeholders are watching. More importantly, the next generation in our children are watching and they actually want you to do something. Tens of thousands of Nova Scotians took to the street

in a climate change protest. They told you what they wanted. They demanded it from their politicians, and yet in the middle of the night, in the late hours, we're going to sneak this through while nobody's watching. A bill on the environment and carbon is being snuck through in the middle of the night while no one in the public is paying attention - and maybe one person on the government side is.

What does that say? If they were proud of this bill, they would be doing in the light of day. Instead, they want to do it at night, refuse to pause, refuse to have input, refuse to listen to the people that they have sworn to represent. I often wonder if this was watched by the majority of Nova Scotians and not the person speaking, but the people who are supposed to be listening, if this was watched, would Nova Scotians pause when they went to vote for those individuals?

I bet you there would be tens of thousands of emails sent to the individuals asking what you are doing. Just listen. These are common-sense arguments on why you need to pause this. They've shown that they can do this, and they've shown that they're willing to do it, to pause bills, to go back and correct the course when they receive pressure.

I think there's a gamble being done here, and the gamble is the majority of Nova Scotians aren't watching, they're not going to be upset. Then the government is going to put out some public relations stuff saying, "we did it" - we see it on Twitter all the time - in nice big blue and signed by the Premier. That's what they're going to do. We saved the environment, and then move on to the next.

When it comes time that they're hit at the pump, they're going to say it wasn't us, it was Justin Trudeau. It wasn't us, it was the federal Liberals. It wasn't us, it was the provincial Liberals - even though we voted against it. It's extremely offensive that those members across the way continue to put that misinformation out there on the floor of the House and outside the House, that we voted for it when we actually voted against it.

That goes to character. That goes to what's most important to the individuals. Is it politics or is it climate? Is it politics or real policy? It's politics. Again, I say, if you want to redeem yourself to Nova Scotians and not run from the issue, pause. We've heard from groups, not partisan groups, not government groups, we've heard from groups that this doesn't work. What's being presented does not work.

We've heard from families who are struggling that they can't afford to pay this. The response isn't to say, we'll pause it, we'll look for a better deal for Nova Scotians, we'll fix it, we'll make it better for you. The response is: We're going to do it, we're going to blame the feds, we're going to hope we get a 10-point bump in the polls and use it as political warfare. Imagine using poverty and climate change, inflation, and the inability of parents to feed their families as a political weapon. That's what's happening here on this floor.

[6:30 p.m.]

Just pause and wait for those people to come into your office and talk about fuel prices and talk about inflation and talk about costs and say, you know what, we're going to do something. Look to see what the ramifications are on real life people, not people making \$150,000 a year, not people who have been in politics for the last 25 years, not people who are independently wealthy and decided to run for politics - real people. But they won't.

They're going to carry on just like they did when we asked them to give people a break at the pump. They said Nova Scotians can shoulder it. (Interruption) Those were the words of the individuals across, Mx. Speaker. They'll drive less is what was said. Just like when we talked about people struggling every day to pay their bills. There was no pause there. They said get a better job, shaming them.

When it comes to climate change, it's the same ordeal . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I am going to remind the member to speak to the pros and cons of hoisting this particular bill.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: It shows the pros and the cons. What it shows actually is it shows where their priorities are. It shows where their priorities are - not Nova Scotians' - their priorities. There's a lot of different expressions that come across when you stand here. Most of it's almost like people think you're a fool for standing up here talking about these issues, as if they're better than you because you're standing up here fighting for what you hear Nova Scotians say to you every single day.

I don't know what it is about this Chamber, Mx. Speaker, that does not allow flexibility, because the way people act in this Chamber and the things they say and do in this Chamber are completely different than the way they present themselves outside, the inflexibility on important issues. If a constituent of one of these individuals, of an MLA in Nova Scotia, approached them about climate change, this is not how they would act. They would sit down, they would talk to them, they would listen to them. They would tell them they're going to do everything they can for them and the future of this province and this planet. And then they come into this Chamber, and it's like things are completely forgotten.

It's almost like these walls give people a sense of invincibility. I wish more Nova Scotians watched their MLAs, because what I say in this Chamber is the exact same things I say outside this Chamber. When I say I want it paused, I'm not just saying it here for political theatre. I'm saying it because I'm a father of three. I'm saying it because I believe that climate change is real. I believe that it has a huge impact and will have even larger impact on our lives. I don't believe the finances of individuals of this province should be

politicized and used as political tools. You can catch me out there, and I say the exact same thing. This isn't about me. I think people start believing the honourable title when they get it. They believe that they're inflexible and that they have to put their party first. Maybe that's what we get when we have a first-past-the-post system. It's time to pause not just this but pause the deep partisanship that these bills cause you, to have the real conversations about climate change, the impact that it's going to have on our children, the impact that we're seeing now.

If you would have said, Mx. Speaker, 10 years ago, that we were going to see the storms that - before Hurricane Juan, so I guess that was probably 15 years ago, maybe? Sorry, I'm not good with timelines. If you would have told us before Hurricane Juan that we were going to see the type of storms we're seeing in Nova Scotia, no one would have believed you. People used to say that Nova Scotia was the safest place weather-wise in the world. No volcanos, no earthquakes, tornados. We'd get a storm here and there, but nothing really big. The thing that we really had to worry about was every once in a while, we'd get a really heavy snowstorm, right? But now we're seeing more, and more, and more - Mx. Speaker, phone.

THE SPEAKER: Order. My understanding is that you're not allowed to be in a conversation on phones in the Chamber. (Interruption) Okay, I apologize.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mx. Chair, totally on me. Sorry. I apologize to the member.

You know, but now we're seeing these storms. We're seeing coastal erosion at a faster pace, and that's the other thing, Mx. Speaker. Why not pause it until the Coastal Erosion Act is done so that we can bring it together, so that they can work off each other? That's the other thing we're waiting for, we're waiting for our Coastal Erosion Act, which is extremely important for Nova Scotia, especially you rural MLAs. Coastal erosion is massive.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Please direct your comments to the members opposite through the Speaker's Chair. Thank you.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mx. Speaker, especially for the rural MLAs, coastal erosion is extremely important. If they don't think that, then I think they need to talk to their constituents. I know that I represent a large portion of a rural area, and it's extremely important for us. We're seeing breakwaters because of climate change not holding up and protecting coves anymore.

When Dorian hit Nova Scotia, it made landfall at Ketch Harbour, Nova Scotia, for those of you who don't know. It actually made landfall in Ketch Harbour, and what did it do? It destroyed the breakwater in Herring Cove. A massive breakwater was destroyed, it was taken off, and these are things that are happening because of climate change. We never saw storms like Dorian. We never saw storms like Ian and Juan, and we need to get this bill right.

As smart and as well-intended as the individuals are over on that side of the House, and we are on this side of the House, there is so much more expertise and knowledge on climate change, carbon tax, carbon capture than in this room, than in the minister's office and department. There are people who have literally spent a lifetime studying this.

We are about to swallow, as Nova Scotians, a massive hit at the pump, and at fuel, not because we have to, it's because they want us to. The government wants us to, to score political points, and I see members laughing about it, but if you believe that not to be true, pause the bill. Pause it. If you do not pause this bill, there is a really good potential that a carbon tax is going to be enforced on Nova Scotians. A Conservative carbon tax will be enforced on Nova Scotians because that's what this is. You have the ability to stop this right here, right now tonight.

Stand up. Mx. Speaker, stand up and tell us why you don't feel it's important to pause this bill. Stand up and tell us why you don't feel it's important to pause this bill and speak to constituents; why it's not important to pause this bill and speak to stakeholders. Heck, why isn't it important to pause this bill and speak to your own children and grandchildren?

Here we are tonight away from our families and the people we love because they decided to call hours until the cows come home. We should not be debating this bill, this amendment, this hoist at 6:41 at night outside of a news cycle - if they believed in this bill.

If you truly believe in this bill, Mx. Speaker, you would pause it and let's have a conversation. You'd call hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday - heck, Monday to Sunday - for the next couple of weeks, and have the debate in prime time. Let's do it.

You know what we should do, Mx. Speaker? Let's pause the debate and let's each and every one of us reach out to our elementary schools and have those children fill the gallery. I'm saying pause it and have the children fill the gallery and see how they feel about climate change, and see how they feel about the future of this planet. Let's see how they feel about responsible governments that listen. Let's pause and do that. It's not going to happen.

I'm befuddled - puzzled on how you can let a win slip through your fingers, Mx. Speaker, for partisan purposes. A win is to pause this bill and to listen and to say that we are a government that takes climate change seriously, and we will continue to negotiate

with our partners. We know they're fair partners because they gave us a cap and trade system that only raised our prices 1 cent a litre. They allowed us to create a Green Fund that helped low-income Nova Scotians afford power. Does that sound like an unfair partner to you?

That's the other thing, they don't mind spending the money. If I said let's pause this bill and you can spend another \$37 million, this bill would be paused forever.

I just think that any reasonable non-political, non-partisan human being on this planet would take the time to pause and listen on a subject so important as climate change. If we were talking about mowing the lawn, I would say let it go through. If we were talking about painting your house, let it go through. If we were talking about a gravel road and you were trying to jam gravel roads down our throat, I would say that this isn't the time or place to fight. Maybe they know what they're talking about. Let it go through. But it's climate change and it impacts everybody.

I have a lot of respect for the minister. I had a lot of respect for him when I was in government. As much as people want to think whatever about me, I think the minister and I have always had a decent relationship. We know a lot of the same people. The people I know who know that minister have a great deal of respect for him, as do I. I know it's difficult. I know it's tough. I have been a minister. I know it's tough when the department is saying things to you, and the experts in the department are telling you things, and you have a government telling you things, and Cabinet confidentiality.

I want to talk about one situation where I paused. I paused something before it got to the floor of the Legislature. I walked into a room as Cabinet Minister. The ED, the deputy, everybody was there. They had this idea they wanted to do. They'd been trying to do it for a while. They gave me the spiel and all that stuff and the information. They said, we have to do it, now's the time. I stopped, I took the information, and I said to them, I need to process this.

I walked out of the room, took a day or two, read the information, came back, and I said, I'm not doing it. I'm not doing it, and here's the reason why. Were they happy with me? Nope. I'm sure there were people in the government at the time who weren't happy with me. A lot of times there were people in our government who weren't happy with me. But so is life. It wasn't easy, but I did it.

It would have been a bill that was so simple, I think from some individuals there would have been some pushback in the Legislature on it. But for me at that time, what it represented and what it was supposed to do wasn't the right thing, and there were better ways to do it. What I said was that we need to talk to the individuals this impacts. We need to talk to the experts, and it can't just be a cone of individuals within the department and within the political, partisan realm.

If the minister truly believes that this is the right thing to do, if he truly believes that fighting with your federal counterparts after they have been extremely co-operative, that not listening to the tens of thousands of people who took to the streets for climate change, that students in the schools and our children and our grandchildren, and the experts - not listening to them - if he truly believes that the information he was given and the direction he was told to go is the right way, well, put your name on it. Stamp it. He was given information - I think the report was just under 6,000 pages - not just on this. I think it was on maybe the gold mine, a 6,000-page report.

Did he read the whole thing? If he did, hallelujah, but I doubt that he read the whole report. I think that's what staff help him with. He has to be able to trust his staff. He has to be able to trust his advisers and the people around him.

Sometimes going against what people are trying to push through doesn't mean that you're not on the same team. It doesn't mean that you don't value their input. It just means that you're the minister, and you think this is not the right way to go, so I'm going to pause it, and I'm going to get more information. I'm going to go into Halifax Citadel-Sable Island and I'm going to talk to those individuals. I'm going to go to Lunenburg and I'm going to go to Truro and Musquodoboit. We'll go across the causeway and talk to some Capers too. We'll go to Cumberland. Nobody forgets about Cumberland. Well, not what we heard in Question Period.

Go to those people, because the impacts of the environment look different depending on where you are. If you are in the urban core or if you represent farmland or you represent a coastal community, the impacts of climate change can look very different. We see that when hurricanes hit. We see that when we have extensive weather conditions.

I often think when we stand up here and we debate and talk, I know there are staff and Pages who are very young - compared to us - watching. I know that the staff and the Pages stay quiet and non-partisan, but I also think, man, what do they think when we're debating climate change and they see one side just totally shut off and the other side begging and pleading? And this is democracy.

I hope that when they pause and think about this bill that they think about those people.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank.

BRIAN WONG: On a point of order, I really did enjoy hearing the stories about the member's time in office for five months as minister of something - I'm not quite sure what that was. But to get back on point to what this whole thing is about, we are really listening to a hoist motion about cap and trade. We're listening to a hoist motion on taxing the big businesses and stuff in Nova Scotia.

I've heard very little in the last 20 minutes that even touched on that, Mx. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I will note your concern. I note the point of order. I do actually think that the member has spoken to the issue of climate change and the importance of that, and perhaps he used his own experience to provide empathy around the call of decision-making in government.

I don't find the point of order, but I will remind the speaker. Thank you.

With your remaining time, let's talk to the pros and cons of the hoist motion.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I have to start back in time here. I'd say that over the last two days they have probably taken 10 or 15 minutes away from me with a 1 per cent success rate.

I am glad that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is allowing me to continue without interruptions. That means a lot to who he is and the character of that individual. When I say that, I hope that as I continue, the minister also listens to the words we're saying and realizes that this isn't going to be about a partisan moment. This isn't about gotcha politics when we ask for the pause.

I'll gladly stand out front with a sign that says this is the best environment minister ever if they pause this bill and they do the proper consultation and they get this bill right. I'll be the first one, Mx. Speaker, to praise the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, to praise this government, and to say that they did things right.

As proof of that - as much as they may not want to believe it - I have posted positive things in the past about this government when they made what I thought was the right decision.

We just need to make sure that this is one of those bills that we get right. Instead of pausing and consulting, and speaking and talking, you spend the first year fighting, finger-pointing, and being in the media - how can we trust that this is the right proposal? I'll tell you how we can. If you have non-partisan groups and all parties agree - and they haven't. If you pause and take the time to consult and work with that group - we heard that a lot. When we were in government, we heard that a lot, especially in the Law Amendments Committee - pause the bill, pause the bill, listen, do all this stuff. It was constant. It was non-stop.

We did it sometimes; sometimes we didn't. That's how government works. But on this piece of legislation, we ask that they pause it. The one piece of legislation they paused

didn't impact Nova Scotians, it impacted non-Nova Scotians who had a second home in Nova Scotia. That's the bill they paused.

I know, Mx. Speaker, that you can't comment on things like this, but if I could read your mind right now, I think - if I could read everybody's minds right now, I wouldn't want to. How's that? Is that better? If I could read the minds of individuals, I'm sure they would all be saying climate change is more important.

You know, there are going to be lots more hours to discuss this bill. I don't want to stand here and talk for hours on end to, Mx. Speaker, one of the nicest people I know, one of the nicest ministers I know, and one of the nicest human beings I know. I don't want to do that. I go back to, I know that when we have conversations over the years, they've been fantastic. I know that individual to be intelligent, to be wise - I'm not just blowing smoke, to be someone who generally cares, and for the most part, I mean, we all get our partisanship, but for the most part hasn't been overly partisan.

I hope that when I say these words for the next 11 minutes and 43 seconds, that it convinces the minister or the powers that be - it might be better if the message were delivered by someone else but me, but so be it - to reflect, to pause, to go back to their constituents.

We don't need to rush this through, right? Let's be honest. This isn't a bill that needs to be rushed through, but it's being rushed through. I was a little surprised when I saw this on the docket. I said, I thought they were still negotiating.

It shows a level of disrespect to your partners that this is the approach you take. The approach starts as microaggression and then it's poking and prodding and then it's flat out calling them out in the media and then it's dropping legislation when the other side is saying, hey, these are going to be difficult negotiations, but we can do this. It's been done before.

I don't know if the former Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change Minister ever took an IQ test, but I bet you they're around the same. Maybe the current one's a lot smarter. I don't know. (Interruptions) Energy, sorry. Energy and Environment. Same thing. The Environment Ministers, we'll say, Mx. Speaker.

I don't think it's because that department and that minister are afraid of hard work. In fact, people I know in the department, and the minister himself, I know they're not afraid of hard work. In fact, they thrive under tough conditions and hard work. That's where they do some of their best work.

So why take the easy route out? Why decide that we're going to put this through and then turn around and blame the federal government to score political points. Why do

that? Why not take the difficult route, take the right route? What do they say? “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” The easy route.

[7:00 p.m.]

Take the difficult route. Negotiate with your partners. You can't always put yourself before the people that you're supposed to represent. You can't always put the party first.

You should never do that, in fact. You weren't elected to represent the Progressive Conservative Party, or in this case the Conservative Party. You were elected to represent the people of Nova Scotia, and the people of Nova Scotia want you to pause this bill. They want you to get this bill right.

Mx. Speaker, I would ask that when it comes to this bill, how about we just pause it for one day? No, give us a week, pause for one week. This bill . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The amendment is to hoist it for three months.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I was trying to give them options.

THE SPEAKER: That would be another amendment - are you proposing another amendment? No, okay.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mx. Speaker, let's pause for three months. But maybe we can give them some leeway if we get the information we need. How about the first day after we pause it, they release all the consultation that was done on this bill, on this amendment? How about they just give us a list of people they spoke to or the list of town hall meetings they had, who they met with, and how many times they met with their federal partners, how many times they met with their municipal partners - the mayors and the wardens - who are just as invested in this as anyone else? That's important information.

It's a common occurrence on this and other things. When we ask for detailed information, there's a reason why we can't have it. This is a government that when in Opposition was so adamant about access to information that they took the previous government to court. Yet in government, they refuse to release information. They refuse to have town hall meetings on climate change. They refuse to have - or if they did, they're not releasing it. Those are things we can get if they pause the bill. We could talk about the Green Fund and all the great stuff that it has done. If you paused the bill and actually showed Nova Scotians how they're going to be able to afford their retrofits, how they're going to be able to afford their solar panels, how they're going to be able to afford energy-

efficient updates that they normally cannot afford that would help the working class and low-income people of this province get by day-to-day.

We know power rates are going up 20 per cent. We know that because there's a fuel adjustment cost coming down the pipeline. They don't talk about that. They're not talking about it. They're saying 1.8 per cent, but we know with the fuel adjustment cost that's coming down the pipeline, and now with the withdrawal from the Maritime Loop, power is going to skyrocket.

So pause and get it right. Get it right. Things have gotten exponentially worse, and this is an opportunity to make sure that Nova Scotians don't suffer, that when, because of the decisions of this government, things continue to skyrocket out of control price-wise there will still be a Green Fund.

Mx. Speaker, power is going up close to 20 per cent over the next couple of years because of the fuel adjustment cost. The Green Fund helped fight that. If people don't see that - I see members laughing - ask the people who got heat pumps and solar panels. Ask the people who got their homes retrofitted and their hot water tanks wrapped at a discounted price. If you think that's funny, you're out of touch.

Mx. Speaker, they're taking that away for political points and to be able to say the big, bad Justin Trudeau. You sure didn't mind taking his COVID money. So pause the bill and listen. You can't have it both ways. You can't say that we're going to ram this through and go against our federal partners, but at the same time say, we'll take that child care money over here. Come on, give it to me, and then turn around and say, oh, climate change, you got it wrong.

If for anything, do it to keep the Green Fund. The solar industry has exploded because of the Green Fund, Mx. Speaker. You are, again, about to decimate that industry. Take a moment. Pause. Talk to the owners of Aztek Solar and ask him how he went from one little truck to 15 trucks because of the Green Fund. He'll tell you that. The moment the Green Fund came in, people could afford retrofits and solar panels.

Gone. It's gone. You all can afford solar panels because you make twice, three, four times more than the average Nova Scotian. Maybe we all should be making \$35,000 for a couple of years, Mx. Speaker, to remember what it feels like. If the pay was that, 90 per cent of the people wouldn't be here.

I pause my thought for a moment, and I go back to the topic at hand. That is, Mx. Speaker, again we ask that this minister, whom I believe has a huge heart, and who is smart and who is listening - there are very few people, when I stand up for an hour, who actually take it all in. But I can tell you, I've got a feeling that the minister takes it in. I really do. I think that individual is one of the few people who actually listens and takes it all in.

He probably goes home and cleans out his ears and stuff when he gets home. Blasts loud music or something to clear his brain, or maybe he does yoga. Mx. Speaker, I just think it's really important. I hope that you take the time to consider all this stuff and listen. We will support you thick and thin if the public does, you keep the Green Fund, and you do this right.

Just stop saying on that side of the aisle that this is a Liberal carbon tax when the Progressive Conservative Government of Nova Scotia is going to impose it by not negotiating. If they decide to not negotiate and they decide not to pause, not negotiate, when you stand up next time, don't call it a Liberal carbon tax because we voted against it, and we negotiated against it and you've failed to.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order.

The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: I hope I have the forgiveness of the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank, I will be off topic for one line. My two little boys are watching right now. They think their dad is famous because he's on Legislative Television. (Standing ovation)

You may not understand what I'm going to say, but it's something that you may understand: Dad, we are watching you. Can you rub your nose so that we know you're watching. (Applause) Thank you, Mx. Speaker.

I'm a man of few words, mostly. A lot of good points have been made by my colleagues, so I won't reiterate too many of them, but I will highlight a few that stood out. I obviously want to be on record for my children. Every once in a while, a member from the other side or our side might mention that their kids are watching or their kids are listening in, and what would they think, it does make me want to stand up even more quickly.

I do want the residents of Annapolis to know, the residents of Nova Scotia to know, that under the previous government, under the leadership of Stephen McNeil, whom I have a lot of respect for, under the leadership of the member for Timberlea-Prospect, many of my colleagues here in the room worked hard to introduce a made-in-Nova Scotia cap and trade system for Nova Scotians. They knew it was the right choice, they knew it was the most affordable choice, they knew it was the best choice.

I want the residents of Nova Scotia to know that it seems like the current government doesn't care if this was the right choice or the most affordable choice or the best choice. I do agree, I do think the minister listens intently, but I do think this government is dead set on introducing their own version of carbon tax.

We do know that the cap and trade system we introduced was not an easy choice. It's a complex system. Many people have mentioned that. It does challenge the government to be creative and bold. As the member for Timberlea-Prospect mentioned, we aren't granted the luxury of other provinces of unlimited hydro in our backyard. We've had a lifetime of dependence on coal and it's going to take some bold action to transition from that. This cap and trade system we introduced allowed for the lowest carbon price - I think in the country - while balancing these challenges that our province faces.

This current legislation was an easier choice. It seemed to be a choice with the least amount of work. It did seem to be a choice that sees Nova Scotians carry a burden and force them to suffocate more on affordability issues. This choice equates to not doing your homework, as the Leader of the NDP has mentioned. It doesn't seem to care about the deadline, and it doesn't seem to care as much about Nova Scotians.

This amendment from the government only works if we have an agreement with the federal government. As of now, we don't have an agreement with the federal government, giving even more reason to hoist or press pause on this bill.

I believe this amendment completely gives away our negotiating position. I believe this amendment not only rids us of all the good work of a past government and government staff, it does rid any chance Nova Scotians get for the best, most affordable deal.

So why hoist this bill? Why ask government to do more homework? I believe it's the right thing to do. I think much more work is needed. I think more negotiation is needed. This government had a year and a half to do the work and I think there's more time to do more work.

This legislation deletes a program that department staff and our government worked hard to put together for Nova Scotians. It was a made-in-Nova Scotia cap and trade system. It seemed to do much more for the environment. It raised a lot more funding for programs. It saved more for Nova Scotians than other programs and it will be removed because I believe this government refuses to give credit to a past government and I believe the Premier is set on making a decision that is a complete 180 from the past government, no matter how reasonable the idea is.

This isn't a new idea, I think all governments are guilty of this. I wish it wasn't the case. I know it sounds naive as a first-time MLA but we all know we have an endless amount of items to discuss and debate, and every once in a while I wish we'd come together and build on what the previous government did and then all Nova Scotians win.

With this bill amendment Nova Scotians will lose. They will lose at the pumps as they pay more, they will lose on heating their homes as they pay more to sit colder, longer. They will pay more because this government chose this.

[7:15 p.m.]

Please pause this bill. Please consider it and thank you for giving me the time to speak on this.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I am happy to stand to speak to the hoist of Bill No. 208, the Environment Act. I really wanted to just put it on the record that I am in support of this hoist motion to ask the government to please hit pause before we lose more.

Our government worked so hard in the last four years to bring this cap and trade program and bring some benefits to my constituents and to your constituents. They have been able to use the money from the trading to implement a beautiful efficiency program that I used so many years ago to change all the windows in my house. I have a house that costs a lot on electric bills; now I'm spending half of that. They put programs for the solar, all these programs that are so important. Now your government is going to have to find money to pay for it, while we had negotiated the money to pay for those programs.

We all knew that the proposed deal that this government has sent to the federal government - they knew that it wasn't going to be accepted, but they still at the last moment sent it just to say that they've done something. They knew it was going to be rejected, and it was, of course, rejected - by many other provinces as well - so it was a very obvious tactic that they played, unfortunately, and we are very scared, actually, for what is going to happen.

Nova Scotia is known to be a leader on the environment. I remember, actually, from 15 years ago when my niece's husband, who had just finished his environmental engineering degree, he and my niece went to England and he was snatched like this because he was working on the green garbage. Nova Scotia was a leader in the green garbage, and we've done so well with that. We've always been leaders, and this bill will set us back instead of moving us forward. I just can't imagine why this government is doing it besides political reasons, just as two kids who are fighting and do not want to help each other. It's unfortunate. Truly, that's how I see it.

I will be there to remind my constituents that when the prices of the pump will rise, that this was the cause of it as well. It is just a very regressive piece of legislation instead of progressive piece of legislation. We have many cars. We all drive many cars, and we know that the carbon tax and the way it was negotiated, it is very beneficial to us. We are, as I said, very progressive and advanced in our environment and protecting land and doing everything else. Why is this government setting us back? I'm totally against this amendment that is coming with this bill, and I am in support of the hoist and delay. Please take it back, please negotiate for the benefit of everyone, especially my constituents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: I stand to support this hoist. I do so after sitting and listening for several hours about this debate. I do so because, like many of my colleagues, I'm a little concerned as well. I'm concerned with the approach.

I have a lot of respect for a lot of people across the floor and especially the Premier, so it really troubles me when we are getting the finger pointed at us. It troubles me because it's not true. The statements that have been made are not true. That troubles me. It's kind of the reason that brought me into this place because I got tired of hearing politicians talk, make promises, pie in the sky. That's what drove me to this place.

I ask respectfully that you at least entertain pause. Work with us. We are willing to work with you. And allow us to do what we should be doing as legislators for all Nova Scotians.

We have an environmental crisis right now going on, all over the place. We need to do whatever we need to do. We need to pull out all the tools in our pockets to ensure that whatever moves we take moving forward, whatever laws or legislation we put forward, that it is in the best interest of all Nova Scotians - not just some, all. I ask again, humbly, please, just take a moment. You may have another agenda, but I'm asking, just take a moment and allow us to try to do better for all Nova Scotians.

I support this hoist. Mx. Speaker, with that, I'm going to take my seat.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Well, it seems like we're all over here pleading for a pause, and once again, in my life experience, I get to speak about protecting the environment. I know when we had Hurricane Juan and all the storms since, they have been getting worse. The most costly one was the most recent one. I have always told residents, when Mother Nature gets mad, she gets really mad.

I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward to have this discussion in the House. But it's not ready to be pushed through this House in a rushed manner.

I recall when I was a mom raising my three children, I decided to join a focus group where I was asked to weigh my kitchen waste because there was an interest in diverting waste at the curb. I did that, and it was quite interesting. I was educated. I was interviewed by CBC. They asked me, this is great what you're doing, composting and diverting from the curb and helping the municipality in their expenses instead of burying everything, like someone said earlier. I was asked by the journalist, well this is great, what you're doing, but do you think your neighbours will ever take up what you're doing? I said, I would only hope so.

Here we are today, decades later, and we're going to be asking my neighbours, your neighbours, all the neighbours across Nova Scotia how we're going to protect the environment, and are they willing to buy into it? I don't know. We don't know what we're asked to buy into.

We heard from the member for Timberlea-Prospect last night saying it's going to be 10 cents a litre more at the pumps, as opposed to 1 cent a litre under the cap and trade. Others have said that power rates are going to go up. We also heard it doesn't meet the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change.

How, as has always been my challenge in my experience, do we engage the public to get that buy-in, to educate them on what they need to do? I have always made the decisions of what's best for the environment. I have always driven a hybrid vehicle. I drive an economical, compact vehicle. Are we going to be telling everybody now to get rid of their big vehicles because carbon pricing is going to be scary?

We have a high rate of skin cancer now. We knew it was coming because the tailpipe of industry from the rest of North America ends right over Nova Scotia. So here we are, trying to address health care.

If no one can be passionate about protecting the environment, we're wasting our time in this room. I have served on many committees, I served on municipal councils, environment and climate change. A Page asked me yesterday, I've just been asking everybody, what brought them to be in this House? I said because I wanted to protect the future for my children and my children's children. As a young person he found that very interesting that that would be my viewpoint on why I want to be in this House.

I've walked and marched along with many youth, fighting for the environment, crying and telling us all that you don't understand what this means, you are killing our world. Then we just kind of - well, we know what's best.

I know we've spent - I can talk to my grandfathers and the people before me and my father on how they thought they were doing the right thing but years later we're spending millions of dollars remediating our soil because they thought burying hydrocarbons was just okay - out of sight, out of mind, that's what everything has always been and how we've always treated the environment.

All I ask in my plea, along with my colleagues here, is pause, give it some thought as to how you are going to get the buy-in, because this will blow up when it gets to the public and it will be too late and each one of us in this room is going to wear it. A hybrid system: Does that mean we all drive hybrid cars? Done. What is it?

[7:30 p.m.]

I can't emphasize enough what is in my heart of hearts right now. I don't want to have to judge the people of Nova Scotia in their decision-making. I want to know that they are doing it for the right reason.

I had a gentleman once call me and he said it's ridiculous what you are asking me to do with my garbage. I'm 75 years old and I'm continuing to put it at the curb because I pay my taxes to do it. Is that the engagement and is that the response you want for the environment? Without engagement that's what you are going to get.

I hope that each and every one of us will march along with our youth when they come with their tears and their pleas, to listen to them. I am here speaking on their behalf.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I've been listening to the debate intently. It really is advantageous to have former environment ministers in your midst because they're intimately familiar with the file. Some of us sat on Treasury Board as well, so the file would have come before us when we were talking about the cap and trade system.

I support this hoist motion because during this debate it has become very clear to me that the government's response to the issue at hand has not been clearly well-thought-out, and I think they need some more time to work through their response. By that response, it seems to me that they're actually trying to avoid dealing with this particular issue - it's a thorny issue, there's no doubt about it - because it's easier to look away and to decide that you're not going to deal with climate change. You're not going to deal with what we need to do, but those of us who have children and who hope to have grandchildren one day, those of us need to think about what kind of a future we're leaving for Nova Scotians here if we don't do something here. I think what bothers me singularly is that the government's response has been completely inadequate to what is expected on a major file.

So we saw, as many of my colleagues have alluded to, a last-minute rush to get a plan in to the federal government which no one expected the federal government to accept, and I'm not sure why the government did, but no one expected the federal government to accept it because it was clearly inadequate and they were told that. Sure enough, the feds said no, so the response is let's blame the feds, and I think that this is - governing is hard, we did it for eight plus years. Governing with principled policy is even harder, and there were lots of times when there were easy solutions to things, but they were the wrong solutions, so we would tough them out.

My Leader spoke earlier today about the fact that someone made the observation that we were all about policy and not enough about PR, and this government's really good at PR, but there has to be good policy behind it and my concern is this is not good policy.

The fact that a government would decide to actually impose by their actions a carbon tax on the citizenry that's already being taxed for that carbon, and do it willingly because they know they can blame it on somebody else, that kind of blows me away that it would even be a consideration in a political calculation. That just boggles my mind.

So now we have what's called a carbon levy that they're proposing which will be the end result of this. It's an admission that we're going to have a tax, and they could have worked through this. They could have just left things alone. They could have left it alone. Nova Scotians are already paying for carbon. That was the case we made ad nauseum to the federal government and they accepted that in the end. It didn't mean they wanted to in the beginning, but they certainly did at the end, and that's how we ended up with cap and trade.

I get it, you know. Maybe part of this is that there are strange terms people are using: carbon tax, cap and trade. It feels like people are walking around changing hats or something. You can see people's eyes glaze over. So it's much easier to just point your fingers at the feds.

If you want any proof that this is a political calculation, look at some of the government's moves around this particular file. On August 2nd, first thing that day, there was a resolution brought forward by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and immediately upon having the resolution voted on in the House, boom, out the door goes a news release from their party saying that the Opposition parties were up to no good and they want a carbon tax. Only, whoops - they didn't watch what was actually happening over here on the other side of the House.

That was the first signal that there were political machinations going on here. It's really important, if you're putting out a news release, to actually have it based in fact, or so I've found.

Then we heard, just this week in the House, the Premier put forward a resolution, Wednesday, October 19th. It refers no less than three times to a Liberal carbon tax. They didn't say a federal carbon tax or a federal Liberal carbon tax. It was a Liberal carbon tax. All that tells you is that they're looking for somebody to blame. They're hoping it gets reflected over here, but they don't really care whether it gets reflected over here or not. It was all about pointing fingers.

It was funny, when I was sitting here earlier this afternoon, I was writing out some notes, and I was thinking, this is like the kid who goes to school and tells the teacher: The dog ate my homework. We're looking for somebody to blame. It was interesting to hear the NDP Leader say the exact same thing. It occurred to both of us. It was pointing fingers. Let's blame somebody else. It's not my fault. I'm going to point over here.

Look, governing is hard. I'd be the first to admit it. Governing is hard. But you can't just keep blaming somebody else, particularly if you haven't done the work and you didn't try. My gosh. We handed to you a cap and trade program that was delivering results to Nova Scotians. My colleague, the former Minister of Energy and Mines, walked us through a whole host of programs that have real and meaningful benefits to Nova Scotians. When people are having their homes upgraded, whether it's solar energy - all kinds of different programs that help them stay in their home, be more comfortable, pay less for energy - that's huge. That has really significant impacts on Nova Scotians.

We have a solar water heater. It's been in our house for 20 years. It was there before we bought it. It makes a difference in our house. We bought splitters. That helps us heat our house. I shudder to think what we could be paying in our house if we didn't have those.

Now, we didn't use government programs for those but lots of people do, and they made a difference. We've heard about the incentives for buying electric cars, electric bikes, and also used electric vehicles, which I thought was a really nice twist on that. Usually it's something new, but I thought it was very thoughtful of the member for Timberlea-Prospect, whose baby this absolutely was, to actually include used vehicles in that.

But we handed you a really good package - sorry. We handed the government a really good package, and they didn't have to mess with it. But they did, and so the result is that now Nova Scotians will pay twice for carbon. We shouldn't have to. We have already been paying for it. That was the whole point.

To be really fair, it was a PC government that really started us on the path down toward a greener future and brought in a lot of these changes and put a price on pollution. I believe it was back in the early 2000s. Nova Scotians have been paying for carbon for many years.

By this government's refusal to actually accept what was there, because I guess it was different or it's not in lockstep with the latest conservative thinking and maybe the idea is you'll elect a federal Conservative government if you force a carbon tax on the citizenry.

The government has to understand it's them that's forcing it on Nova Scotians. They had an alternative. I get it if there was no alternative, but there's an alternative, and they didn't want to go there. Seriously, why would anyone want Nova Scotians to pay twice for carbon? It's bonkers.

We see the government trying to - it's funny because on the one hand, they're trying to blame the federal government hoping a little bit will rub off on us, and on the other hand, they're trying not to call it a tax just in case it - I don't know - rebounds on them. They're calling it a levy, hoping that Nova Scotians won't know what a levy is, or maybe they'll confuse it with the events that we go to on New Year's Day and we have fun.

If you look in the dictionary, what is a levy ? Not a levee but a levy. If we look at the Oxford Languages dictionary, it's a noun. It's an act of levying a tax, a fine, or a fee. If we look at the Cambridge Dictionary, a levy is "an amount of money, such as a tax, that you have to pay to a government or organization."

That's what this is. It's a tax. They don't really want to admit it, but if they're going to admit it, they're going to point their finger at the federal government.

It kind of reminds me, we were talking about children and not doing homework and all of that, and it kind of reminds me of a sulky teenager - I apologize to any sulky teenagers who are in the room or emotionally still teenagers or whatever - who is pointing fingers and does not want to take responsibility for what they're doing. So you're pointing fingers everywhere.

Everyone is going to end up paying more for energy, and they don't have to, Madam Speaker. They don't have to. The government needs to go back. They need to really look at cap and trade for what it was, for the good program it is, it has been, for the results it has delivered to Nova Scotians on a variety of different programs.

Again, as my colleague had enumerated, there were all kinds of excellent programs that were coming out as a result of the Green Fund: \$37.3 million, we heard; \$15 million over three years for the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, which would support communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Really, when you stop and think about it, we have just been through a hurricane, which decimated communities, and these once-in-a-hundred-year storms are now becoming increasingly more common. So of course we want our communities to be able to invest in these because I don't know where the government is going to get the money for these if it's not coming from the Green Fund. But then maybe we'll just lay off some more deputy ministers or something, I don't know.

Eight million dollars for the SolarHomes incentive program for single-family homes to install solar photovoltaic systems. Eight million dollars to extend for a year the Home Energy Assessment program, which provides low-cost, subsidized energy assessments for people using oil heating, incentives of up to \$5,000 to energy-efficient retrofits.

There are so many small things you can do in a house to help increase your energy efficiency and then things start getting more expensive progressively, but it can make a huge difference in your bills, and being able to provide that kind of service to Nova Scotians makes a big difference in their bills - \$3.3 million over three years to support the implementation and climate change initiatives by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Again, climate change is real, it's here, we see the results, I have to say.

We often vacationed on the North Shore for many years, and places where we stayed Summer after Summer are gone, or they are wrecked. Climate change is here and it's real and it's happening now and it's important that we deal with it.

[7:45 p.m.]

Two million dollars for affordable housing retrofits to upgrade one- and two-unit housing units in Cape Breton. The Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing also contributed to that, for a total of \$4 million. There was a lot of housing that needed upgrading in Cape Breton and this is meaningful and, as we all know, housing is at a premium now and upgrading our housing is important.

One million dollars for flood line mapping to provide communities with coastal and inland flood plain maps and incorporate climate change. It is imperative for planning for the future. Communities have to know where they can't build anymore. I live in a community that was once upon a time a vacation spot for Halifax. There are little cottages dotted along the shoreline of Bedford Basin and along the Sackville River, and sometimes the Sackville River floods and there are families that - I actually had a friend who owned one of those cottage units on the Sackville River and they had no electrical below the main floor of the house, nothing in their basement because every 20 or 30 or 40 years that basement would flood.

Then came a period where it began flooding all the time and that's because of climate change. For communities like that, like Bedford, which is on a river that experiences flooding and, let me be clear, a town that once upon a time let people build on flood plains, for those people who own those buildings, that's tragic and it's very difficult for those families.

The reason I support this hoist motion is because I feel it's imperative that the government go back to the drawing board. It's clear that Nova Scotians are going to pay because the government has decided that they want to play games with the federal government. And it's funny, I remember sitting here in the House when the Premier stood up and said we have a great relationship with the federal government, but I think that's because the feds were going to give them some money on child care or something.

You could get whiplash from watching it go back and forth. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the House to pretend they're in the Senate and give some sober second thought. Even though Nova Scotia abolished its Senate which used to sit over in the Red Room about 100 years ago, but I urge them to do that.

And I will say that just this evening we had news about the cancellation of Emera, pulling out of the Atlantic Loop. It's going to be very difficult for this government to meet its energy targets without that. The actions you take in here - the actions the government

takes in here have consequences, and that's why I urge them to give them some sober second thought on why I'll be supporting the hoist motion.

THE SPEAKER: The member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I stand tonight to stand in support of the hoist. I am a big supporter and fan of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I am very concerned, though. I always have to remember when I stand in this House that I stand as the voice of the people of Cumberland North and the voice of the people whom I represent, and unequivocally the message that the people I represent have said to me is you have to ensure that the price of fuel does not increase.

What I'm seeing, Madam Speaker, to the minister, is that we don't yet have a plan with the federal government and that is the reason that I support the hoist. I believe that until we have the federal government aligned with the plan - which I think there's a lot of good in the plan with green technology, and green hydrogen, and clean energy, and updated power grid. There are many good ideas, it's just at this point we don't have the support of the federal Liberal government and they have said, at least from the reports that I have read through the media, that the current federal minister who is responsible for this topic has said that if Nova Scotia changes away from the cap and trade, that Nova Scotians will see an increase in the price of fuel. We can't afford that. Nova Scotians simply cannot afford that.

Cumberland North is the area I represent - it includes a town of about 10,000, and then the rest is rural, very rural. A lot of farming, fishing, and forestry - those are our three main rural areas. That's what our economy is built upon. It is very historical, very cultural in our area, and it's not about to change anytime soon. With those three very rural economies of farming, fishing, and forestry, there is a huge need for fuel. The people I represent simply cannot afford another increase in the price of fuel, and from what I'm reading - I don't have the exact number, but I'm seeing between 8 and 10 cents more a litre. As I mentioned earlier, right now we only pay 1 cent per litre in carbon tax, so to see another increase in that will certainly harm the people I represent.

In forestry, there is a lot of fuel that's used in cutting down the trees, putting them onto the trucks, and then of course the trucks taking the logs to sawmills. The only way of getting that lumber to the sawmills is by trucks - 18-wheelers usually - and it takes a lot of fuel.

If the price of fuel does go up, if this bill does pass, if the hoist is not effective and if this bill passes now and the price of fuel goes up, we are going to see further lack of affordability for the people of Nova Scotia, including the people I represent. It's never a good time for prices to go up, let's face it, but right now, at least in the area that I represent, we're seeing unprecedented people struggling.

Never before in the town of Amherst in the County of Cumberland have we really actually seen homelessness. When I have walked on the streets here in Halifax over the past four or five years, sometimes we'll stop and speak with people who are panhandling. We'll have great conversations. Three times over the last four years, some of the individuals I spoke with who were living in shelters were from Cumberland County.

What people are saying in the area where I live now is, Elizabeth, they're not from Cumberland. I'm saying they actually are. They're people who have come back because there are no shelters in Metro anymore. Madam Speaker, I bring this point up because we are living in unprecedented times. Since the pandemic, there has just been a - we're in times like we have never experienced.

There's a lot of mental health, people just unable to cope, people having real difficulty readjusting back to normal functioning lifestyles. We have seen the highest price of fuel over the last year than we have seen here in Nova Scotia in a long time. It was the number one issue, next to health care, that I was hearing in my constituency office a few months ago.

Going back to why I support this hoist . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm just going to ask that there be a little bit less chatter in the room while the member for Cumberland North is speaking.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: This is a serious topic, and the reason I support the hoist is that we need to make sure that the price of fuel does not go up. It's just that plain and simple. We cannot afford an increase in the price of fuel in rural Nova Scotia. I'm speaking on behalf of the farmers who absolutely need fuel to fuel their equipment and fuel their trucks.

Listening to one of our urban MLAs a few minutes ago talking about hybrid vehicles and moving away from larger vehicles, it's a great concept. The fact is, in rural Nova Scotia, it's just not possible. It's not realistic. With the types of economies and industries that are in rural Nova Scotia, people drive big trucks.

I drive a big truck. I had four businesses, and I was always hauling equipment, materials, retail. There was always something I needed to lug around. I'm not in farming, fishing or forestry, but I was in business. It's not as simple to say to take these measures to lower the use of fuel, especially in these types of industries that we see in rural Nova Scotia.

These industries in rural Nova Scotia are important, and I'll be the first to stand by it. It's part of who I am. It's in my blood. I grew up on a dairy farm - proud of it. We need our farmers. We need to ensure that our farmers are able to earn a living and continue to

produce food for the people in this province. I had to stand up for my fellow farmers. They are doing an incredible job. We do not produce enough food in this province. If anything, we need to be doing even more to be supporting our farmers and to be producing more food.

[8:00 p.m.]

Madam Speaker, if this bill goes through without having an agreement in place with our federal government, then from everything I understand, we are looking at a guaranteed increase in the price of fuel. We need to do everything we can to prevent that.

There are so many things we can say because it's such a very important topic when we're talking about our environment and climate, talking about food, and all the things that are impacted by the price of gas and fuel.

I guess I'm the only one here in this House of 55 MLAs who sits as an Independent where my true, one and only loyalty is to the people who elected me. Because of that, I have such a unique perspective of sitting on this side of the House in Opposition with those who are - or at least the ones who served before - now in government. I have that unique experience. I have the unique experience of seeing the federal Liberals, the federal Conservatives - and honestly becoming good friends with the colleagues on this side of the House in the NDP and the Liberals who have been so kind to me. I just want to say thank you, it has been incredible. It's true.

Everyone, whether federal or provincial, aligned with a party, you want to be true to what your party stands for and what your policies are and what you stand for. I really think this is such an important topic that every Nova Scotian cares about. I mentioned earlier in my comments the idea of collaborating more and the idea of having an all-party committee on this topic because if we sat down and we really talked about - okay, what do we agree on?

THE SPEAKER: I'm just going to ask if the conversations can go outside. It's a distraction when I am up here, for both sides.

I'll ask the honourable member for Cumberland North to continue.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If we looked at the things that unify us instead of looking at what the things are that we don't agree on, I think we would all agree that we care about our Earth. We all care about our Mother Earth. We all care about our children. We all care about our - hopefully soon to be someday, I will be a grandmother - grandchildren. We all care about trying to give them the best future.

The scientists say that we need to reduce our carbon emissions. Then I think it's from there that the strategies differ, that the different organizations and different political views have different ideas of what the best way is to reduce the emissions. Is it with a carrot or is it with a stick? Do we pressure or penalize people if they don't reduce carbon? Or do we provide an incentive to encourage people to reduce their carbon emissions?

Some of us in this Chamber who are parents probably all parent differently, depending on our child. If we want to encourage a certain type of behaviour, do we punish to try to train the child or do we provide incentives as a way to try to encourage behaviour? But it comes down to, as legislators, as government, when we're developing policy, what is the best approach? I think we agree on so many things around this topic, but not everyone agrees with the strategy of how to actually achieve it.

I want to give credit to the minister and to the government. There are a lot of good ideas and a lot of good strategies with this piece of legislation around green technology. We have seen my colleague for Cumberland South, the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, put forth some bills around green energy as well - green hydrogen. It's good.

The challenge that we have right now is that the government does not appear to have the federal government onside. The federal government has been clear that here in Nova Scotia we will see an increase in our price of fuel if we go in the direction that this bill would take us.

Emphatically, I am here to say that the people I represent in Cumberland North cannot afford higher fuel prices. Full stop. I know that.

Politically, it's kind of interesting to look at where we've come from. I don't think the former Premier would mind me sharing this. When I introduced him to my father back in 2017, he shook my father's hand and said, "I'm the most conservative Liberal Premier Nova Scotia's ever had." He did. (Laughter)

The reason I bring this up today is we're looking at the cap and trade, which saw Nova Scotians pay 1 cent per litre on their fuel. I look at that in comparison, my neighbours 10 minutes away in New Brunswick - it's a PC government - and they're paying 8 cents per litre carbon tax on fuel, on top of federal excise tax. Here in Nova Scotia, we pay 10 cents per litre federal excise tax. Here in Nova Scotia, we pay 15.5 cents provincial motor fuel tax per litre.

We pay 1 cent carbon tax. I mean, most taxpayers would say, "Get rid of it all. We don't want to pay any tax," but when you compare 1 cent per litre to 8 cents per litre, I think most Nova Scotians would say they would prefer the 1 cent per litre carbon tax.

Then, of course, we're all paying the HST on top of all of that. Fundamentally, Madam Speaker, and philosophically, I totally disagree with tax on tax. I just think it's wrong. But we need the federal government to change that. We can't change that today.

What we can do is we can hoist this bill. We can go back to the federal government. We can talk with our federal partners. My former colleague here in the House, the MLA for Dartmouth East, and I believe a former teacher, would be an excellent negotiator. I believe he has the skill to work with our federal partners and come up with a plan that would not see an increase in fuel tax here in Nova Scotia. There are a lot of other great negotiators and collaborators in government - some really great, skilled politicians.

The MLA for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River - I don't see if he might have left the Chamber. Sorry, I'm not supposed to say that. He's a former businessman. He would be an excellent person for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to take with him to work with and discuss this with the federal government.

I do have to add one other comment, Madam Speaker, that's related but unrelated. I can't help myself. My former legislative assistant, Kait Saxton - this would make her so proud. There was a bill in the Spring session that we didn't agree with, that I didn't think was best for the people I represented. She wanted me to do a hoist motion so badly. She was so skilled and so smart when it came to the legislative process and dilatory motions. She was so skilled.

When I saw what happening today, I just thought of her. I just wanted to mention her name. She was the most knowledgeable person I've ever met and probably will ever know when it comes to the legislative process and the skill set and knowledge of how this Legislature works and how the process works here in the House of Assembly.

I will end my comments by saying I support this hoist for the main reason that we cannot see an increase in the price of fuel here in the Province of Nova Scotia. The people that I represent, and I believe all Nova Scotians, cannot afford it. If we see an increase in the price of fuel, that will increase the price of absolutely everything else. It will increase the price of food. It will increase the price of lumber that we need to build more homes, and right now is not the right time for that. Right now we are seeing too many people homeless in our province, a situation that, like I said earlier, we've never seen in our area. Never.

There have always been people living unsheltered, absolutely. There are always people maybe couch-surfing or maybe have to spend a few months outside in the Summer, but never have we seen what we're seeing right now. People just simply cannot afford to put a roof over their heads, let alone buy food. This is not a time that we can see an increase in the price of fuel, Madame Speaker.

I can only imagine how challenging it would be to negotiate with the federal minister responsible for this file. I know he's very passionate about the climate, but I do believe that the government has people within their Cabinet who would have the skill set and the ability to create a strategy and a plan that would ensure the price of fuel does not increase for the people of Nova Scotia. For that reason I support this hoist, and thank you for this opportunity to speak.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Thank you to the member for Cumberland North for her comments and the comments of so many other of my colleagues on the Opposition benches here, whom I think are speaking very well to this hoist motion before the House, which I, of course, support as well.

I've only been in the House here as an elected person for a little over a year. I know there are many others in the Chamber who have been here quite a lot longer than me. When I was a staff person with the previous government, I recall a hoist motion at least once perhaps. It is a rare occurrence, there's no doubt about that. It's not an everyday procedure in the House, and it shouldn't be, but I think it is a useful tactic and a useful strategy in certain circumstances. I think this actually - especially given some recent developments that I'm going to touch on as well tonight - is particularly appropriate.

What we're asking for, as was mentioned earlier when this motion was introduced, is a pause on this Bill No. 208, and a pause for a three-month period. I think that kind of pause - as the member for Bedford Basin said, sober second thought - is particularly relevant on an issue like this. Carbon tax, cap and trade, output-based emissions, these are all really complex, very important issues that I think require a significant amount of debate and thought and negotiation, which is a word that we've heard from other members. It's a word that I will be discussing as well.

I think what can happen often and what is happening at the moment with this particular House session is that those on the government side, particularly in a majority situation, which we, of course, find ourselves in at the moment, want to get in and out of here as quickly as possible. That kind of attitude of ramming through every piece of legislation, no matter what it is, as quickly as possible, no matter how long it takes is, as we've said at other occasions, probably undemocratic. But I think it also leads to bad decision-making and bad outcomes, not just for government, not just for the Official Opposition, not just for the Third Party. Most importantly, for Nova Scotians who are the people whom we've all been elected to serve.

When we have a process like this, when we're talking about an issue as momentous as climate change - which as I've said when I previously spoke to this bill, is something that should not be particularly partisan but, unfortunately, has become in this case - I think it is perfectly reasonable to suggest that we take three months to have further consultations

with stakeholders. We could understand, perhaps, a bit better what the federal government's point of view is on this issue, on this bill. We certainly need to know a little bit more in terms of what the provincial government's point of view is on this, and it is a bit confusing to me in terms of where we are, where the two governments are at relative to one another.

[8:15 p.m.]

My colleague from Fairview-Clayton Park was kind enough to pull together some articles for me that I think are relevant. This is from two days ago. Keith Doucette, Canadian Press, October 18th headline: "Nova Scotia to replace federal cap-and-trade system with homegrown emissions-reduction plan." This would have been published the day that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change introduced this bill. There are some really interesting notes in here that I think are relevant to the point that we on the Liberal benches are making here, that there is a need for pause, there is a need for at least a three-month reset on this legislation.

The opening of this article says, "Nova Scotia tabled legislation on Tuesday for an emissions-reduction plan that would replace its cap-and-trade system for large industrial greenhouse gas emitters, but the new bill doesn't lay out how the province will meet its ambitious climate goals."

That is an important point; that's a big question. How are we going to meet the climate change goals that the minister has pointed out - and I think rightly - are ambitious? I might be wrong on this, but I believe 53 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, which if, of course, a great target. Nobody would dispute that, but there's a difference as we all know between targets on paper and actually putting those targets into practice. This bill, as this article notes, does not lay out how, in fact, the Province will meet these ambitious climate goals. That's one issue that I think demands or leads us in the direction of a pause on this bill.

The other point that I mentioned earlier is, what is the exact state between the provincial and the federal government on this issue? I think that has been an open question just about from the beginning. Maybe a couple of months ago I was at an event in my riding at Maskwa Aquatic Club, a beautiful spot on Kearney Lake. The federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister Guilbeault, was there. The provincial Minister of the Department of Environment and Climate Change was there, the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables was there as well.

It was a great chance to see all of the relevant players in the same place at the same time being asked the same questions and giving, I thought, different answers in a lot of ways. You know how these things go. Politicians are diplomatic, certainly, when they're standing next to one another.

But I could see there was some daylight between where the federal minister might have been on the issue of carbon tax and where the Minister of Environment and Climate Change was. I think over the ensuing two to three months, we continued to see that, and I think that is an open question.

From this Keith Doucette article here from two days ago, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said:

“... Environment and Climate Change Canada has given the ‘green light’ to the province's plan to replace the cap-and trade-system, which expires at the end of the year. The new system - which still needs approval from the federal cabinet” - I think that’s an important point - “is scheduled to begin Jan. 1, he said.

The federal department declined to comment on Nova Scotia’s proposed legislative changes when contacted Tuesday.”

Okay, there could be a perfectly legitimate reason for that. I don’t know, but it is interesting, I think, that the federal department, as of two days ago, will not comment when asked about this plan. That’s another question that we don’t have an answer to that lends itself to the idea that we should perhaps do a hoist and hold off on this for a couple of months.

Continuing on this point here:

“Nova Scotia submitted its plan to the federal Environment Department in early September, but the plan did not include a carbon charge” - carbon levy, carbon tax, lots of words, same concept - “which Ottawa can still impose on the province. The federal government has said it will impose a federal carbon charge on provinces that do not submit a carbon-pricing plan it deems acceptable and that adheres to Canada’s greenhouse gas emission targets.”

What’s the long and the short of that here is that we don’t know how the federal government has reacted and might react to this proposed system that the province has put forward.

We know that frankly the province’s track record over the past 14 months on this is not reassuring. As the Leader of the New Democratic Party mentioned, as the member for Bedford Basin said, there is a tendency to scramble, to not do your homework, to wake up the morning of your exam and realize, oh my God, I don’t know any of the answers, can I call in sick to school and do it tomorrow?

That's where we were when this government put forward its slickly packaged made-in-Nova Scotia solution a couple of months ago. The federal government basically said, great, but no, you've known about this deadline for a year. How can you not get your stuff together and get it in on time?

Again, we still don't know, and I'm dying to find out, exactly what the federal government thinks about this issue. That is more evidence to suggest that we need a little bit more time - we're not talking about a year or two years; we're talking three months - early, early in the new year here, to figure out whether or not this system makes sense for the province.

Also, in this article here, we have some commentary from Brenna Walsh, an energy co-ordinator with the Ecology Action Centre, which, of course, is an organization here in the city that has, I think, 50 years - I could be wrong, at least a very long history. Is that right? They have a very long history of comprehensive, detailed, very thorough analysis on issues related to the environment, to wildlife, to protection. I think they're a voice that is worthy to listen to.

Brenna Walsh, as I said, from the Ecology Action Centre, noted, quote: "These emissions from these two large emitters (Nova Scotia Power and the Lafarge cement plant)..." which are really the only two large emitters that this system would apply to because, as I mentioned in my previous remarks, we're looking at a threshold of 50,000 tonnes of emissions per year, which again only applies to only two emitters in the province, which is another issue, for sure, that needs to be considered - what about all of the other emitters in the province that don't meet that 50,000-tonne threshold but still certainly contribute, in fact, the majority of the emissions in our province?

These emissions from Nova Scotia Power, the Lafarge Canada cement plant, really only cover a small piece of the pie in terms of where these reductions need to come from. Again, we have a tremendous goal in mind, and I'll give credit where credit is due. As I said, I think the goals in the Act - 53 per cent below 2005 by 2030 - are great, and as the member for Bedford Basin said earlier, the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia actually does have a record on climate that they should be proud of.

Again, I'm not sure if it was the Hamm or the MacDonald government - my timing is a bit fuzzy on that - but the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act was introduced by a Progressive Conservative government within the last 15 years or so and that was one of the most significant pieces of climate legislation we've had in recent history. I think there is a record there that the Party can be proud of, but I think perhaps they are falling a bit short on meeting that legacy on this particular bill, on this particular issue.

We have these targets, we have this system before us here. This bill doesn't say anything about how we get to those targets. We don't know what the federal government

thinks about all of this specifically. They will not give comment on this as of two days ago. The only thing we have is a comment from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change suggesting that they have the green light. Okay, that sounds good but that's it, that's just two words. I think we need a little bit more than that. So again, more evidence to suggest that we take a pause, take a breath, have a sip of water and think about this bill a bit more.

More evidence in this article, in fact, and I commend the minister for his honesty here. The article follows up here at the end by saying that on Tuesday, two days ago, the Nova Scotia minister - the member for Dartmouth East - hinted that the two sides, meaning the Province and the federal government, have not been seeing eye-to-eye during talks on how the revenue from any carbon system will be spent. Again, I actually commend the minister for being honest about a disagreement here. This is the minister's quote: "Was I surprised at how rigid they" - meaning Ottawa - "were? Probably," the minister said, adding that discussions are ongoing.

Again, we have evidence coming from the minister that there is a disagreement between the Province and the federal government on this issue of how funds raised through this system will be used. As we've heard from basically every member who has stood up and spoken on this issue, dating back to last night, the Green Fund and the proposed successor fund that is laid out in this bill are really important because those funds will raise millions of dollars, presumably, and where that money will go, how that money will be used - will it be returned directly to consumers, as is the case in some provinces?

One of my best friends lives in Calgary and, of course, the government in Alberta fought the carbon tax tooth and nail and lost, as we've heard, and he's certainly no Liberal fan, this friend of mine, but just a few days ago he mentioned to me, okay, I got my quarterly return, cheque, on carbon tax payments.

That's one way to do it. That happens in many provinces, I believe Ontario and some others as well. Funds are returned directly to consumers. Will that happen here in Nova Scotia? Will that money go from the federal government to Nova Scotians? Will it go from the province to Nova Scotians? Will it go from the province to Nova Scotians in the form of, again, energy rebates, efficiency installations, solar panel installations, heat pump installations? These are open questions that, based on the minister's own words in the media a couple of days ago, are still being negotiated between the two levels of government.

That's not necessarily a bad or surprising thing when you're dealing with an issue of this complexity, this importance, and this scale. It is certainly to be expected that there will be disagreements and negotiations between the two levels of government.

What we are suggesting here as the Opposition with this hoist motion is just to say, let's not put the cart too far before the horse on this. If there are negotiations ongoing, if

there are significant, substantive issues at play here between the two parties on what the future of a carbon system in Nova Scotia will look like, then let's just take three months, have some further consultations, have some meetings, allow members of the government, members of the Opposition, members of a third party to speak to this issue and to better understand the relative positions of the two levels of government. It seems simple enough to me.

[8:30 p.m.]

Now, another issue that's really important that we are just learning about almost in real time over the last couple of hours, and I know the member for Halifax Atlantic, the member for Sydney-Membertou, and others have referred to some pretty alarming comments, I would suggest, from Scott Balfour, the CEO of Emera regarding Emera's outlook on investments in the Atlantic Loop.

We know that the Atlantic Loop is absolutely critical for the province to meet its ambitious goals, as we've heard many times. The Atlantic Loop is not just important, it's not just key, it is absolutely essential to meeting those goals. Don't take my word for it. I've heard the Premier say it more than once. I've heard the minister say it, many ministers on the government side, say that more than once.

It's why the Premier of Nova Scotia, the Premier of New Brunswick, and of P.E.I. have all gone to the Prime Minister and others at the federal level and said, will you help us with the \$5 billion price tag for the Atlantic Loop, because we desperately need that clean, renewable energy source from northern Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador - provinces that are tremendously blessed with hydro power, which we unfortunately are not.

We need that power. We need the transmission capacity to take that hydro power from northern Quebec, from Labrador, and transmit it hundreds of kilometres to our provinces. If we don't have that, if we don't have the federal government on side, it won't happen.

We've asked, I believe in the past, what's Plan B if that doesn't happen? There really wasn't much of a Plan B in order to reach 80 per cent renewable electricity generation in about seven years, 2030.

Our assumption had been over the last little while that the sticking point, if there were one, on whether or not Nova Scotia would achieve the Atlantic Loop would be the federal government and whether or not they would invest that money. Okay, we can understand that. But now, what we are seeing is that there is an issue with Emera, with Emera's willingness to invest that kind of capital to get that done. The reason why Emera is saying this is because of the legislation that has been introduced yesterday, I believe it was, by the minister on power rates. Again, I'm not going to dive into the details on power rates because I know that's not what we're necessarily talking about here tonight.

The reason I bring it up is because I think what we have seen with this government, and what I have seen with this government, from the beginning, is a failure of vision, a failure of principle, an idea that you should govern to be popular, you should govern to maximize public relations opportunities.

That's a field that I spent some time in myself professionally, so I actually commend the government a little bit, in some odd way, for being slick PR practitioners. I think that's very important to the Premier and his office, but the downside is that we aren't selling chocolate bars. We're governing. We're legislating. It's a different game. It's not just about public relations.

This government, I think, has failed to negotiate on a couple of fronts, and this is one of them. This government has failed to negotiate well with the federal government on cap and trade, carbon tax, whatever the carbon system will be in Nova Scotia. I think we have proven that. I think we have seen that very clearly over the past 14 months, that there has been an abject failure to negotiate appropriately, and we're still seeing it now. We have a bill before this House and still a great deal of uncertainty about whether or not this system is acceptable to the federal government. If that is the case, I think it's fair to say that there has been a very weak, disorganized . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: It's all good.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. The honourable member for Bedford South has the floor.

BRAEDON CLARK: I needed a breather, so I don't mind.

As I was saying, I do think there is a failure to negotiate, and a desire to be political and think first about what is the public relations value of something before what is the right and appropriate course of action.

As my colleague for Clare was saying earlier this evening, when we hear over and over and over again about a Liberal carbon tax, when we see press releases coming out with blatant misinformation minutes after something happened that the press release says didn't happen, when we see an inability or an unwillingness to address issues head-on for what they are, and instead an eagerness to bury your opponent under repetition and repetition of something that is not the case, that is perhaps effective in a cynical way, but it is not useful. It is not appropriate, and I don't think it's right.

I think where we see that philosophy of this government manifesting itself on this issue is in the idea that it's okay, we'll wait till the last minute to file our plan, and it's not a good plan, and we know what's going to happen. We know because we have seen it in

every other province that has done this. We know that the federal government, if they say our plan is unacceptable, will impose a carbon tax, and we know that's likely.

We waited until the last minute. We didn't negotiate very well and now that we've done that, if the federal government goes ahead and says, sorry, Nova Scotia, you've failed your test on this, your plan is not sufficient and we're going to go ahead and impose a carbon tax in addition to the system you've put forward - as the member for Cumberland North noted, as has been noted all over the place by many members of the government as well - that will lead to increases in costs for consumers and for Nova Scotians. Maybe 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 cents at the pumps.

Again, we're raising the issue of gas prices on the Opposition side. For some time, the government and, I think, the Premier kind of sloughed it off, talked about market conditions and global trends and all these kinds of things, and gave the impression that this would resolve itself. And several months later, gas is \$1.70, still, in Halifax, and in fact has been inching up.

So that hasn't resolved itself, and again, if the calculus on the government's side of the House is to wait until the last minute, submit a plan that you know is going to get rejected, have a carbon tax imposed upon you, and then blame the provincial Liberals for it - okay, I guess that's clever. It's also morally questionable at best. I don't know how else to describe it.

I think that is the trend. That is the playbook that I have seen from my perspective on this side of the House on this particular issue. So that, I think, speaks to either a failure to negotiate, if I'm being generous and kind, which I like to be, or it's an unwillingness to negotiate in order to further their political agenda, if I wanted to be a bit more cynical on the issue. We'll see, I guess, over the next little while what interpretation is correct, but I think if the goal is to be as straightforward, as decent, and honest as we want to be on an issue like this, I think a reasonable step is to push this bill down the line for three months, as we've heard. That would help all of us get more answers as to where we're going.

Now, to my point about a failure to negotiate well, a failure of vision and how that ties into what's happening here on carbon and greenhouse gas emissions and all these other things, we also see the issue with the Nova Scotia Power issue, with the rate increase, as I mentioned a few minutes ago. We are now hearing on the record from the CEO of Emera that they are pretty much, I would say, closing the door on significant investment in the Atlantic Loop.

We knew months and months ago that Nova Scotia Power was looking for a significant rate increase here in Nova Scotia. It's no secret. The UARB is not some mystical Illuminati organization. It's on the internet. You can Google it. We knew they were asking for a significant rate increase. The government knew they were asking for a significant rate increase, and they also would have known, because the Nova Scotia Legislature has an

open website, that other governments have taken legislative steps in the Chamber to limit rate increases.

[8:45 p.m.]

If this government was so concerned about this, they could have introduced amendments several sessions ago - at least two sessions ago, maybe three. I'm not sure about the timing on that. That, perhaps, if they had negotiated that with Nova Scotia Power in a reasonable, open way, perhaps that could have been achieved. Instead, what we saw from this government - which, again, I think loves marketing and loves public relations - take a look, as we did at Budget Estimates, at the Communications Nova Scotia colour palette, which was the Progressive Conservative colour palette down to the little yellow touch there, which was delightful.

If the government wanted to negotiate that with Nova Scotia Power ahead of time, they could have done so, and we could have gotten to a point where perhaps rate increases could have been capped, as they are now. But the significant difference, I think - and the relevancy to what we're talking about here on carbon and on greenhouse gas emissions in particular - is that if this government had negotiated a bit better, if they had been a bit more interested in policy and not politics, and governing effectively rather than winning the news headline, I think it's reasonable to expect that we could have gotten to a point where we could have had a cap on rates. Nova Scotia Power and Emera might still have been willing to invest in the Maritime Loop.

Instead, at the 11th and a half hour - if that's even grammatically correct - this government comes, pats itself on the back, has some slick graphics, some signatures, some little lions' crests, blue and yellow and beautiful, talking about how they're protecting ratepayers, a nice little 30-second video talking about how they're protecting ratepayers at the last minute in the middle of a UARB process.

We heard the Minister of Service Nova Scotia today talk ad nauseum about this government's respect for procurement processes. I guess that doesn't apply to UARB processes even though that's also very important, and what we see here is that when this government intervenes in the middle of something at the 11th hour, rather than being a bit more pragmatic and getting the work done months ahead of time, Nova Scotia Power and Emera respond - not surprisingly - in a very negative way.

The only people who are being hurt by this failure to negotiate from this government are Nova Scotians. That is what's happening here. Nova Scotians are the ones who will be paying the price for the failure of vision, the failure of negotiation that we see over and over and over again from this government. They would be paying more at the pumps, their power bills will be more expensive, they will have less ability to have access to rebates for solar panels, for heat pumps, for e-bikes, for e-scooters. They will see higher power rates; maybe not as high as they would have been, but they will see higher power

rates and, most crucially, it looks like they're going to see higher power rates for longer, they're going to see less investment in clean energy, they're going to see that it's just about impossible for this government to meet the goals of 80 per cent renewable energy by 2030.

You watch: Over the next little while, there will be a shift in tone. There will be a shift in narrative here from the government on the issue of the Maritime Loop, I expect. It will no longer be about the federal government: The blame will shift to Emera, the blame will shift to Nova Scotia Power, it will be everybody's fault but the government that the Maritime Loop isn't happening. It will be everybody's fault but the government that the goal - the critically important goal - of getting to 80 per cent renewables by 2030 is off the table. It will be everybody's fault but the government that we are not going to be getting off coal by 2030. It will be everybody's fault but the government that a carbon tax will be imposed in Nova Scotia, and that can work for a very short period of time, and I think we're already past that point.

We hear from members on the government side every day in Question Period about the last eight years. As I've said before, I get it. I think that's a standard operating procedure, to blame the folks who came before you, but we are more than 25 per cent of the way through this government's mandate. This carbon issue is not a holdover from the previous government. In fact, as every other member who has spoken before me has made the case very well, this government was actually handed a system on a silver platter when it came to carbon. They had a unique, useful system that, as we see here from documents that were released at the time when the cap and trade system was put in place - I don't have the date on this specifically, my apologies - but the program, meaning cap and trade, will add about 1 cent per litre to the price of gas, compared with about 11 cents per litre by 2022, under the federal approach. The program will increase electricity rates by about 1 per cent versus about 8 per cent by 2022 under the federal plan.

Again, I think if the failure to negotiate is not enough - and I think I have made the case pretty well that this government has failed to negotiate on power rates and on carbon systems. I think the failure to have a vision for what the government wants to do on this issue is also telling. I think there's a couple of ways that you can manage yourself in a majority government situation - any government situation, but especially in a majority - where you really can do whatever you want. You can govern to do what you think is right and what you think is best for the province or you can govern to get re-elected.

As we heard from the member for Cumberland North in recent days, when she was talking about the mandate letter she received and her number one goal was to get re-elected, I think we know where the priorities lie. When you approach governing in that way, I think it can lead to poor decisions, poor decision-making and short-sightedness on just about everything, and an issue that would be very unfortunate to be short-sighted on, perhaps the worst you could make a case for, is environment and climate.

I think there's a very strong argument to be made that this government has been short-sighted on climate, has allowed this issue to creep up on them somehow. Again, even though we all knew when the cap and trade system was set to expire, we all knew what was happening in other provinces when it came to carbon pricing. We all know what the federal government's position has been, continues to be, and I imagine will be as long as the Trudeau government is in power, on carbon pricing.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change knew very well what the federal government's position was. He heard it from Minister Guilbeault himself. I was standing there. They were no more than three feet apart at beautiful Maskwa on Kearney Lake. It was clear to me that the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change was signalling very strongly that the federal government would not budge on the issue of carbon pricing, and why would they? It has been a signature issue for that government. It has been a signature issue for Prime Minister Trudeau. He and his government, whether you agree with it or not, have been very clear and very firm on their position that it's your own system that we approve of or a carbon price - you make your choice.

The previous government was able, through negotiation - again there's that critical word - through sustained, rigorous, thoughtful negotiation, to get a cap and trade system in place. The member for Timberlea-Prospect said yesterday that Premier McNeil at the time, in the 2016-2017 range, I think it would have been, it was very clear to him that the carbon tax would not be an option here in Nova Scotia.

Rather than say, oh, jeez, well, they're going to impose it on us, what else can we do, let's start blaming the other guys for what's coming down the road, the member and the Premier and the government said, okay, let's design a system that will work for Nova Scotians. As I said before, this was not a system that was easy to design. It was not a system - I don't believe - that was popular within the Department of Environment and Climate Change. I think there was a lot of support for a carbon tax system at that time, which again is a system that a lot of economists speak favourably of, so that's not surprising that there would be a lot of support for that.

But the leaders of this province at that time, including the member for Timberlea-Prospect, decided that a cap and trade system would work better - and it did, and it still does. It has maybe six weeks left, unfortunately, until we see something new come in. This was a system at the time when it was created that was not common by any means. There's only one other jurisdiction in Canada that had a cap and trade system, and that's the province of Quebec. As I mentioned earlier, Quebec is blessed with some of the greatest hydro power resources of any place on planet Earth, so they are able to manage their clean electricity and clean energy needs much easier than Nova Scotia, and they're able to sell a lot of energy to the northeastern United States, for example.

The only other jurisdiction in North America that actually has implemented a cap and trade system is the great state of California, which, as I said earlier, has long been a

leader on climate. It's interesting if you think about it - California is the biggest state in the U.S., a population of over 40 million. It would be one of the 10 largest economies in the world if it was a country by itself. Just think about that. It's pretty amazing. This is a massive economy; this is a massive population - this is a big, big place.

Then we have Nova Scotia, with 1 million people as compared to 40 million, a fairly small economy by the standards of our country, certainly tiny compared to a state like California, yet cap and trade worked here. Cap and trade worked and continues to work. It is still in place in California. And then we have Quebec, the second-biggest province in Canada, second largest economy - again, unlike Nova Scotia, a major, major clean energy producer at this point through hydro power, and cap and trade has been very successful in the province of Quebec as well.

What happened in Nova Scotia was not some kind of goofy pilot project. It was not some kind of silly system that - oh little Nova Scotia over there is playing around with a cap and trade system, we'll let them do their thing, play in their sandbox for a little while, and then when the time comes they can get serious and get a real system. No, that's not the reality at all. The reality is that cap and trade was in place for several years. It capped prices. It raised hundreds of millions of dollars through the Green Fund for worthwhile projects. It worked, plain and simple. There is no other way to say it other than it worked.

Perhaps the government's position - and again, I'm sure the minister at some point will get a chance to respond to our comments, although he would have a lot of things to respond to, but at some point in time he will get the chance to respond, I'm sure. I would love to hear from him a few things.

First of all, was the continuation of the cap and trade system doomed from the start, or did this government calculate that it might be beneficial, politically, if the system expired and some kind of carbon pricing scheme was instituted, that - as the member for Sydney-Membertou laid out earlier - they could slap Liberal carbon tax on to everything, left, right, and centre, and try to tag the party that in fact kept the carbon tax out of Nova Scotia for several years with it?

Think about how backward that logic is. It's like a pretzel, it's so twisted. You have a party, the Liberal Party, that was in power, that instituted a system that kept a carbon tax out of Nova Scotia for several years. Now you have a Progressive Conservative government in power that is now blaming the Liberal Party for a carbon tax that they have done very little, if not nothing, to prevent the federal government from imposing on Nova Scotia.

Again, it's an abdication of responsibility. It's a stunning lack of vision. It's an inability to have a consistent and clear negotiating position that leads to a positive outcome. It's an end result that is so silly, so ludicrous as to almost defy explanation. Sometimes I think when we are in politics, we get used to the absurdity of situations. We get used to the

absurdity of talking about this at 9:00 p.m. We get used to the absurdity that the only way to respond to a question is to say, well, you did it too, so we can.

[9:00 p.m.]

We get used to the absurdity that sitting from 9:00 a.m. to midnight tomorrow is helpful. We get used to the absurdity that the imposition of a carbon tax 16 months after the Liberal Party left power is the Nova Scotia Liberal Party's fault. We get used to the absurdity that this government had no idea that the federal government would impose a carbon tax at some point despite all evidence to the contrary. We get used to the absurdity that this bill needs to be decided in two days.

We get used to the absurdity that it makes sense that a bill dealing with the most important existential issue of our time should be debated, passed without amendment - of course - and moved on through the process in the dark of night for no reason other than it is politically expedient to do so. The motion to hoist this bill, as the term goes, to park it for three months is not based on vindictiveness, I don't think, or any desire to be punitive. I think what it's based on is a recognition that this issue of climate, this issue of carbon pricing, should remain non-partisan. This issue of carbon pricing deserves deep, meaningful stakeholder engagement.

This issue of carbon pricing demands the attention to detail that this Legislature can exhibit on rare occasions when we are collectively able to put aside our petty and often thin partisan differences and actually try to achieve something that is worthwhile for all Nova Scotians. That is the essence of what this legislative process is designed for. That is the essence of what all 55 of us were elected to do. We were elected to try to make better laws for Nova Scotia.

That is who we are. We are legislators, first and foremost. That's how I feel. Despite all evidence to the contrary at times, that's why I like being in the Legislature, because it is kind of the point of the job. It's kind of the point of the institution. It's kind of the point of this entire process that dates back hundreds of years.

I worry that in this particular instance, where we have a bill on an issue that I think we all actually generally agree on - I would say we are all in the same boat on this - in that climate change is very much real. It is very much a clear and present danger to our province, to our planet, to future generations, and to all people around the world.

No matter where you live, you cannot escape the effects of climate change. Whether you live in China or South Africa or Argentina or Canada or New Zealand. No matter where you live, climate change is affecting you right now today. It's rare to have issues where you have that kind of consensus.

We can have good faith disagreements on how to manage health care. We can have good faith disagreements on how much money to spend on roads versus bike lanes. We can have good faith disagreements on fish farming and ferries. We can have good faith disagreements on economic development, on housing - how much we spend on affordable housing, for example. We can have good faith disagreements on recruitment and retention of physicians or whether or not we want to do a P3 process versus a traditional procurement.

There are limitless things we can have good - and sometimes, I guess, bad - faith, disagreements on. That's fine. That's the nature of things. But climate change, I think, is a unique issue in the sense that we all agree on the baseline issue, which is very rare and should be an opportunity for all of us to come together and say, let's figure out the best system for Nova Scotia - not, let's figure out the best system for our re-election chances, let's figure out the best system to punish the Liberals, let's figure out the best system to call this a Trudeau tax.

Whatever the argument might be, it falls a bit flat and it feels insincere on an issue of this type, where I know that outside of the often artificial nature of this room we would be on the same page on this across all three aisles. That's a shame when we have situations like that, where we allow this Chamber and the atmosphere of this place and the norms of partisan politics to interfere with common sense and decent human-to-human interaction.

We throw common sense out the window. We throw decency out the window. We throw humility out the window in exchange for perceived partisan advantage. And again, it's perceived.

I think, actually, that a lot of these things are meaningless. Nobody knows what's going on and nobody really cares. In fact, a lot of people would be turned off by the idea that one party - all three parties can be guilty of this - is using an issue of this importance and of this significance that we have a basic agreement on, for a perceived - again, a perceived - partisan advantage.

I think we all know this intuitively: We are all connected to people much more than we were through social media. I think you'll notice, because I notice this, when you post things on your social media that are partisan in nature, you actually get less response.

You get much less response than if you post something that is reasonable, that is common sense, that acknowledges, yeah, I agree with 50 per cent of the government's position on this, or, I think this part of it made sense, or I think the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is a good guy who cares about the environment. And then you say, but I think on X, Y, and Z, the government is falling short and here's what I think should be done instead. That to me is an effective and appropriate way to serve your constituents, to serve in Opposition, and to serve in government as well.

In my last three minutes, I'll just say that the ask we have here before the House today is not to scrap this bill. There're a lot of worthwhile elements to this bill. The idea here is not to lambaste the government, the minister, the department for the long hours of effort that they have put in to bring this bill to the floor of the Legislature, because it is a titanic task to do something like that.

The intention of this motion to hoist this bill is so that all three parties and the Independent member have a chance to talk with the government, to engage with the government, to engage with stakeholders, to better understand the position of the federal government on this to the benefit of Nova Scotians.

At the end of the day, if the net result of this whole situation is that we see gas prices go up, we see home heating costs go up, we see an Atlantic Loop project fall apart, we see Nova Scotia in seven years with coal-burning power plants still operating, we see ourselves fall far short of an 80 per cent renewable energy target by 2030, if the end result of this entire process is that that outcome - I don't think the government wins. I don't think the Opposition wins. I don't think anybody wins in that scenario.

I do know that people lose, and the people who will lose in that scenario are the people who are not here right now, who are not watching right now, who are probably getting ready for bed. The people who elected us to this Chamber, who have put their faith and trust in us to make good, reasonable decisions so that we can take care of them; protect their interests; and protect our planet for this generation and for generations to come.

With those few comments, perhaps, I will take my seat.

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mx. Speaker, excuse me. That's a good start.

I appreciate the opportunity to try to untwist my tongue and recommence with some time on this very important debate, and a new element of the debate that perhaps we've only seen a couple of times in this House, at least during my time here, a hoist where the Opposition can try to delay things a little bit.

When I joined in 2013, I didn't know what side of the House I'd end up on and I didn't know what my experience would be like in the Chamber. The same thing occurred in 2017, and then again last year in the election. When you get involved, particularly as a young person just wet around the ears trying to - was that parliamentary? That's fine, isn't it? I thought about that after the fact. Sorry, folks. Just getting involved. In this scenario, this is my first job after university, one that I have appreciated the opportunity to have these different experiences in.

[9:15 p.m.]

I think that over the years I have tried to learn from other members in the House. I had the privilege to sit on the government bench. I had the opportunity to hold the position of the government Whip. When you're involved with the House and the Legislature and you hold positions like that, it sometimes forces you to get used to, a little more quickly, what sort of elements of the debate are in the realm of the possible.

When on the government side we were debating things like environment, or I think we had a couple of essential services bills that were of consequence and did take quite some time and the undivided attention of all members of the House. And I am grateful to see all the members in the House paying very close attention and really buckling down to understand the different perspectives that we all have throughout the House.

I know that deep down - I know that there will be a part of this debate where members of the government stand up and get involved vocally in this debate, as the member for Kings West did. We appreciate that. It lets us know on the Opposition side that the government is at least to some degree paying attention to the debate that's taking place.

It lets Nova Scotians know that aside from a minister, in this case the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, subject to Bill No. 208 before us now - it lets Nova Scotians know that there are more people on the government bench who support the legislation that's being debated. It gives some degree of confidence, whether they agree with what's taking place or not, that the members of the government are active and invested in what's taking place in the House.

Now we have before us with Bill No. 208, this opportunity to have a discussion on carbon pricing. We have introduced this hoist motion because seemingly there is no other course for us to take at this juncture. We have all members invested in debating this as long as we possibly can. We as members of the Opposition look forward to every other day that we can continue this discussion.

This hoist motion is one of the ways that we can do our part to ensure that more focus, more Nova Scotians, more attention, more consideration, more action is taken to spread the word about what's taking place in the House after 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 20, 2022. That's two days before my birthday and at this rate it kind of looks like we'll be here until 12:01 on Friday night and we can all sing Happy Birthday and Kumbaya on Friday night. How do we think about that, folks, through the Chair?

Yes, we have the opportunity, as Opposition members, to suggest through this hoist motion that an additional three months - not one, not two, not four, not five - the government seems fond of that number five - we're here to suggest three months. We would appreciate a great deal of consideration from the government to pick up what we're putting

down, three months in the grand scheme of things when the carbon price has been five years or more in the making.

I know there were discussions at the national level preceding that milestone five years ago. Certainly there have been philosophical debates and scientific debates that have taken place preceding that five-year marker that happened historically and ended up leaving us as a nation, as individuals, as communities, and as governments of all stripes and all shapes and sizes, to have this dialogue around carbon pricing.

Five years ago today - maybe not today, I'm sorry - approximately five years ago, when this situation that we find ourselves in, a situation that we are obligated, as a government, to adhere to, we had some options put forward that we were required to look at and to accept. We have to make a choice, we have to debate and do our homework, do our research, connect with as many people in our communities that we represent, step outside our communities because that's an important element to this, too.

I've had the good fortune and I know that many members on all sides of the House have participated in by-elections around the province. I think functionally that it's important to do stuff like that when it comes to debating bills in the House and hoist motions, such as the one we have in front of us today. I think that commitment you make to travel to other parts of the province and participate in a by-election and knock on the doors of other communities, it's important and it helps us all understand more completely what are the needs and the wants and the perspectives of Nova Scotians.

There are plenty of ways we can reach out to Nova Scotians beyond the walls of our districts because oftentimes when you are knocking on doors in your own riding, conversations like this come about, important conversations on the environment. It is important, even as a representative for one particular community, that you are able to, at least to some degree, bring more voices into the conversation.

Sometimes it's very helpful back home, being able to speak to the perspectives of people from around the province. We all have the opportunity, and in this case, we could have, as 55 members spread out respectively across the province, in communities that we all represent. We could have an extra three months here because of this particular hoist motion if, through the Speaker, the government is willing to oblige.

I know that we've all participated in out-of-town caucus opportunities, and that's another example of a part of the job that we have in here, something that we're capable of doing that we all take part in, to a certain extent. My last out-of-town caucus, we had the opportunity to meet with an organization in Mahone Bay that is rebuilding the natural coastal infrastructure initiative that is being looked to from different parts of the world, to be honest. They've had to rebuild part of this waterfront, and I know we're all familiar with the waterfront down there in Mahone Bay, a little further down the road from Saltbox,

between a few of the churches, a couple of little shops right down there. I know that many of the members would be familiar with the waterfront that I'm talking about.

That waterfront, and that initiative by the team in Mahone Bay, is an example of why debates on the environment and climate change, carbon pricing, and how we take up action against anyone who would seek to further add to the damage that we've globally caused already. It's important that we bring this motion to table. We've got an opportunity to conduct three additional months of research and engagement.

I know that to date, the minister has spent many hours and engaged with many people, many Nova Scotians. You don't get re-elected unless you go out there and you have those conversations and make a point to try to hear from people. One of the questions that we continue to ask throughout these last couple days is for some further depth on those meetings, on those engagements that the minister has been involved with. We need to know, because we all come from different parts of the province, we represent different parties and we come from different backgrounds personally and professionally. We all know different people.

As a collective, if we have that information about the list of stakeholders, whether it's 10, 20, 30, 100, five stakeholders, then we need to know that information so that we can reference it and say, you know what, I don't believe that the minister has had a conversation with this person who has a long history in a profession that is very related to - whether it's the environment, the economy, social assistance. We can identify people. We can work as a team and work to identify a more complete list of stakeholders so that when that list finally is shared, it is a more complete list that will produce a more complete, thorough, strong, thoughtful piece of legislation, one that Nova Scotians can be proud of.

We have heard that terminology around Nova Scotia solutions. How appropriate would it be for us as a Legislature to take a step back and say, wow, we can make this better? We have the opportunity to do just that. The Opposition has humbly placed this hoist motion to accept another three months as part of the process and go forward to Nova Scotians and come up with a Nova Scotia solution that has the hands, the minds, the perspectives, the impressions, the footprints of people from Yarmouth to Sydney to the Cumberland shore to Guysborough.

How wonderful would that be, to all walk away from this debate with a package for Nova Scotians that truly screamed this is a Nova Scotia solution, made in Nova Scotia by Nova Scotians? That would be lovely. I would appreciate that.

However, we do find ourselves in a situation here whereby our honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change has presented a bill because in fact he and the government are obliged to do something. We know that the duration of the cap and trade program has come to a close. We submit on the Opposition side that the government had a

ton of time to get their ducks in a row. We knew, again, five years ago, that we had options that we had to pick from.

[9:30 p.m.]

We as the government of the day went toe to toe with our national partners and said that we don't accept the first choice. We would like to come up with a solution for Nova Scotians that not only meets the requirements around carbon pricing, adding a levy or a fee or a tax, an instalment - we met that obligation. But we went a step further, Mx. Speaker.

We went to the cap and trade system, whereby we were able to establish a fund that, I would say, most members have seen the revenues from touch parts of their ridings, and if not, in ridings with close proximity. We did hear the honourable member for Kings West speak to some of those initiatives in his district yesterday, and he was truly proud of those.

I know that all members, no matter what side of the House you stand on, and I know community members and individuals throughout our province, are proud of what we've been able to accomplish as a result of the Green Fund.

If I can, because you never know who's watching and you don't want people to miss anything, I'd like to talk a little bit more about the cap and trade program. I'm happy to table these documents for public consumption and the benefit of the House and certainly anybody who's watching from home, you can pick these up on the World Wide Web.

This is a news release here about the cap and trade, a news release titled "Cap-and-Trade to Cost Nova Scotians Less than Federal Approach." It goes on to say,

"Nova Scotia's climate change plan will protect the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians and preserve the environment for future generations.

The federal government announced in 2016 that all provinces and territories must put a price on carbon pollution and gave them three choices: a carbon tax, a cap-and-trade program or a blend of the two . . .

Today, Oct. 23, the federal government accepted Nova Scotia's cap-and-trade program, which will cost far less than the federal approach to carbon pricing."

That was a win for Nova Scotians. We as a government fought hard for this scenario that we're discussing here.

There's a quote from the Premier of the day, Stephen McNeil: "Thanks to the hard work of Nova Scotians, our province is already a national leader in the fight against climate change. Through this program, we will reduce emissions with very minimal cost . . ."

That's a big piece to this as well. We are matter-of-factly talking about a cost that Nova Scotians will have to shoulder. We all know that Nova Scotians from all across our province - people come from different backgrounds and people have different capacity to pay their bills.

We chose to stand up for them and establish a program that would indeed be more affordable than the one proposed by the feds, one that protected Nova Scotians of all parts, of walks of life, especially those who need us to stand up them, who can't stand up for themselves or who are too scared at times to stand up for themselves.

"Independent consultant Navius Research Inc. estimated cost increases for Nova Scotians over the first four years of carbon pricing. For example, the cap and trade program will add about one cent per litre to the price of gas, as opposed to about 11 cents per litre by 2022 under the federal approach."

I think that's important to take a second to reflect on. If we were here today and we had not had the ambition and the persistence and the consideration to say no to that initial proposal from the feds, we'd be in a situation where Nova Scotians are spending an additional 11 cents per litre versus that one cent that is on our bills today.

We know that gas prices today are some of the highest that I know I have personally seen in my life. That's not as long as some folks from around the province. They are some of the most significant gas prices I've seen today. To think that if we hadn't former minister Margaret Miller and the member for Timberlea-Prospect - if they hadn't had the wherewithal and the courage to stand up for Nova Scotians at that time that in addition to the \$1.70 a litre, something like that, we'd be at \$1.80, maybe even getting closer to \$2. That has a big impact, and it disproportionately affects a lot of people in this province.

I want to make sure I read through this because it is important. "Government also announced today that Nova Scotia is setting one of Canada's most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2030." I say again: most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2030. That's coming up pretty soon, folks. That's eight years out.

Building on our success today - because it's important to acknowledge the past success that Nova Scotians have had. Nova Scotians from all parts of the province who have been represented by political stripes of all different sorts, we've had successive governments of different stripes, so it is important to acknowledge that, as this article clearly does, it talks about the success that we have achieved as a province, to date:

“Building on our success to date, we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45 to 50 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030,” said Environment Minister Margaret Miller. “This is a very important step we are taking to ensure a bright, sustainable and prosperous future for Nova Scotia.”

The target is for all greenhouse gas emissions in the province . . .”

That’s important to touch on, too, because now we have a submission in the form of Bill No. 208 that presents a scenario whereby we are not maximizing our coverage of pricing carbon emissions throughout the province.

We’ve learned - at least I’ve learned - over the last couple of days that there’s a gap here in this new proposal from the government today that does incorporate the emissions of some of our larger producers, the larger public utilities, and big polluters. It does target them, which we would agree with. We do believe that to be reasonable, but it doesn’t go far enough.

If I had a nickel for every time I heard an Opposition member say that - I can’t believe I just said it out loud - it doesn’t go far enough, we might be able to help balance this out with those nickels.

"Cap-and-trade is one of the steps the province is taking to meet that target. It will begin Jan. 1." - that means 2019. This article, again, titled “Cap-and-Trade to Cost Nova Scotians Less than Federal Approach” was dated almost - well, this was the day after my birthday in 2018. We’re talking about the January 1st start date that is referenced in said article. It’s talking about the year 2019. I’ll table that.

As we get into in that article, we had this cap and trade program that - and I started getting into it a little bit, alluding to recognizing, acknowledging, confirming the fact that the government’s submission through Bill No. 208 is not as complete coverage as what we Nova Scotians have grown accustomed to and what we should be able to expect from programs such as this. The rate that we’re seeing it reduced by, the rate that we’re looking at now is only for 40 per cent of emissions. That’s a little bit concerning because when we have a scenario that further maximizes our ability to utilize more income streams, we bring in more finances, we bring in more revenue, we have a greater capacity to spend those dollars, which Nova Scotians have entrusted us to do.

Some of us are brand new to the Legislature. Some of us have been here for a little while. Some of us have been here for quite some time. Nova Scotians expect us - if we are taking in their tax dollars and if there are fees associated with some of the programs that we produce as a provincial government - they do expect us to treat them, treat their money that they’ve entrusted us with, with respect and consideration, and to do meaningful things with it.

[9:45 p.m.]

Part of those meaningful things that we were able to do - some of those meaningful things that we were able to do as a province, because of the cap and trade program, the cap and trade program which, in fact, enabled what we've come to know as the Green Fund. This is one of the cool things about this, and nobody likes to have to pay more for anything, regardless of how much it is. Let's be frank about that. That is probably a fair assessment of that scenario.

Nova Scotians are already asked for a lot financially, the highest taxes in the nation. When you ask them for more, it's certainly concerning. It doesn't matter what part of the nation you're from. It's a little bit of a tough pill. But perhaps if that amount is marginal enough - which in the cap and trade program established under the previous government we were able to achieve - we're talking about 1 cent on a litre of fuel.

That 1 cent, in a way, is kind of like the input of everybody. In a way, that's demonstrating that you're willing to commit to a cause, the cause being the fight against climate change by paying this additional marginal fee, tax, however you want to frame it. We want to be a part of the solution. Our expectations are that our government will accept those funds and do something constructive with them, something constructive that will have a lasting impact. Something that will - if it's a good thing - be continued by future generations, future governments.

I know that the minister will get on his feet to wrap up debate here at some point in time, and I know he has been listening intently. I know he has been listening intently to the various elements of the debate over the last several hours and a couple of evenings and afternoon - we had a little bit of morning. Yes, we were in the morning. We'll be in the morning tomorrow. He'll be able to present some of the information that I know we're all just licking our chops to hear about. I'm looking forward to that.

To this point in time, we have done our part to present as many of the facts as we can about the last several years under the cap and trade program and the fruits from that labour and the work that has been able to be accomplished, the investments that have been distributed throughout Nova Scotia via the Green Fund. I'll table this document as well. Certainly, I know that we have heard this a couple of times in the House this evening, but in case anybody new has tuned in, I want to make sure that they get this information as well.

Green Fund investments will include \$5.5 million - I'll count that again, \$5.5 million - over two years for the SolarHomes Program, which offers rebates to homeowners for installing solar panels. We know that there has been a tremendous amount of uptake in the solar industry. I believe the number that I heard referenced is we went from 13 to 70 companies in a single year. There's a company that's made its home in Hammonds Plains-Lucasville and they're flat-out. They are flat-out because of the capacity that this funding,

and funding like this, has enabled. Because people have an appetite to install those solar panels on their houses, because they want to continue to participate in the fight against climate change. They want to find ways that they can reduce their power bills over time.

Additionally, Mx. Speaker, \$6.7 million over three years for - wait for it - the Affordable Multifamily Housing Program, which provides incentives for energy efficiency upgrades in affordable housing projects. We all know how deep in a hole that we are around housing and the needs of housing, and in particular, affordable housing and quality affordable housing.

This is an example of a program that will help not only the infrastructure of those affordable spaces, but they'll also help the people who are living in those spaces by adding efficiencies that will help them keep the heat in in the Winter and keep the heat out when it gets hot in the Summer.

We also have been fortunate to achieve an investment of \$3.5 million over three years - wait, I just did that one. No, it's not. Sorry, let me get back here; \$3.5 million (Interruption) carry the one. We could carry it if we continued the program. We could carry it, but alas, we're working on that.

So \$3.5 million over three years for the Small Business Energy Solutions program and non-profit energy program, which offer incentives for energy efficiency upgrades for small businesses and for not-for-profits. We've all met with small business owners throughout our districts and throughout the province.

Again, we've taken it upon ourselves to do those out-of-town caucuses and to go to by-elections and see what's going on in other parts of the province. We've met those small business owners from all across the province. We've met with those not-for-profit agencies from across the province, and in both scenarios, whether they're doing very well or whether they're not doing so hot, they're trying to find every penny that they can scrape together. I know that there are no pennies anymore, but that saying should still ring true.

When programs like this come up because of the Green Fund and because of the cap and trade program, this creates a funding stream for these folks and these organizations to tap into so that these are not expenses that they have to take on as organizations.

In fact, investments and programs like this, as they do for individuals in affordable units like I just referenced, create an opportunity for these businesses and these not-for-profits to upgrade their facilities and upgrade their operations so that the energy they expend is more controlled. They end up being able to make better use, more efficient use, of their operations in such a way that on top of receiving funding to do these types of upgrades, they actually save a few bucks, which for a lot of businesses and a lot of not-for-profits - I know in particular the not-for-profits, our community centres, our church halls, places like this - these are the types of programs that matter. They truly help in a meaningful

way. The frustrating thing is that we're discussing a scenario where they won't be able to tap into these types of programs.

[10:00 p.m.]

Finally, there is another example here from this Green Fund that many members would be able to reference and be proud of some of the offshoots from these investments. Two million dollars over five years for the Clean Leadership Summer Internship program to allow youth interns to work on climate change projects across the province. That's a pretty amazing thing too, because not only do we acknowledge young people as a group who continue to surprise us every day by just how engaged and confident and researched and ambitious and forthright and demanding they are, they demand that we have a sharp focus on the issue facing us, the greatest issue perhaps of our lifetime.

They demand that we make important strides towards fighting climate change. What more sustainable way to ensure that this mentality continues, that this focus continues, this capability that we have to fight climate change, than to look to our next generation and deploy investments like this in such a way that directly ties into further educating and further training and giving more real-life experience to the next generation, so that they're able to carry on with this battle after we're no longer in this Legislature, after we're no longer around, period.

I think that's probably one of my favourite investments that we've gotten to talk about and acknowledge that is a direct result of the Green Fund, because it has an impact on the future generations that are being trained, and they will have the knowledge and the expertise to pass on to their children in the next generation.

Before I table this, I should include the last piece here: "The investments in energy efficiency will save Nova Scotians . . ." I talked about that as I descended through the list of these investments and I talked about the small businesses and the savings that they get and the not-for-profits and the savings that they are able to achieve through these types of programs, the savings that low-income families are able to realize because of these programs - "The investments in energy efficiency will save Nova Scotians approximately \$1.8 million a year on their energy bills. Clean Foundation will be able to create an additional 175 youth internships." That's pretty incredible. I'll table that.

To personalize some of those internships, some of those internships came in the form of individuals who supported the Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes because we all know that the environment is important and legislation like this is important to all Nova Scotians. In this scenario the Green Fund was able to contribute to internships and there was a group of three interns who worked with that organization this year to provide them with a significant amount of data. We were just myself, the member for Bedford South, and the member for Clayton Park West. We had the opportunity to attend that with a former colleague, Diana Whalen, who is involved with that organization,

helping them. Go figure, it helps to have a former Minister of Finance and Treasury Board as the treasurer on your board. It doesn't hurt.

They were able to deploy these young professionals, these young students, into that community asset and get much-needed data that they otherwise wouldn't have as they moved forward with their very admirable mandate to make that Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes park a national urban park. We're looking forward to the opportunity to see that realized. It is programs like this that we see increased capacity to tackle, to eat the many small bites of the elephant that we need to take before we can have any sort of satisfaction that we are meaningfully addressing climate change.

Blue Mountain-Birch Coves Lakes is only one example. It's close to home. It borders my district with a couple of the colleagues whom I mentioned, but that's just one example that certainly hits home.

As I begin to wrap up here tonight, I'm having a great deal of gratitude for the opportunity to weigh in here on this hoist motion. It is a pretty simple ask that I know is possible, that if there is a will from our colleagues from the Progressive Conservative caucus, from the Premier, to take a step back and say let's use these three months, heck we can even defeat this particular motion and the government could bring it back as a motion of their own, make it their own because sometimes it is something that helps get things across the line in this House, an Opposition Party, an Opposition member presents something that is a good idea and the government picks it up and runs with it. We would be willing to see that happen too.

The point is that's so we can go into our communities, and we can go into different parts of the province and have these conversations and look Nova Scotians in the eye and ask them, Mx. Speaker, if this is acceptable.

Regardless of what the scenario is, we have the Law Amendments Committee that's coming up. At some point in time through any bill process, we have the Law Amendments Committee. We're fortunate to have the Law Amendments Committee as part of the approval process in our Nova Scotia Legislature. We're privileged to have that element to our process. Even if this particular motion is not accepted at this particular time, then just maybe, there's an opportunity to pick up on the spirit of this motion through the Law Amendments Committee process and extend that to allow for people from anywhere to weigh in on this important conversation in a more thorough way, now that we have had a chance to look at the bill that's before us.

That's one of the things that I was always kind of grateful for - the opportunity to look at things - and I still am - more in depth and ask those questions, to try to understand a little bit more before pressing go. Ultimately, these are things that we all have to accept can have a meaningful, concrete, at times detrimental, at times positive impact on the lives of Nova Scotians.

We're saying that it makes sense when you're looking at a bill that moves from, by all accounts, a successful program that funds important initiatives that protect the pocketbooks of vulnerable Nova Scotians and protects our environment. We don't want to see this moved away from so easily without a truly meaningful engagement to take place. Sometimes that doesn't happen, depending on how closely people pay attention to what's going on in here on a regular basis. People come to me a couple of years down the road and ask, when did you guys do that? When did that happen? I say, that happened two years ago.

We have an opportunity with this particular motion to proclaim this a little more thoroughly throughout the province. We know that the Progressive Conservative Government has an inclination for public relations, a profession that I do believe in and appreciate. Why don't we deploy those many resources, those minds that are so actively at work to spread the word about a very important environmental bill?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALIDUALE: It's 10:14 p.m., Thursday night. I'm standing here to use my privilege as a member of this House that I'm entitled to almost an hour; I'm missing 33 seconds. I'm going to use my privilege because this is the beauty of democracy. This is the entitlement of democracy.

I give a thought to myself: Can I speak one hour, and what can I say for one hour? The simple things that come to my mind - I did ask the staff of the caucus to bring me the binder of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. It's right here, in my hand. I made the decision to read this page by page, because I am entitled to speak for one hour. I realize I did raise the file, and I'm taking it back.

But also, I was wise enough to say not to do that, and to speak my heart, without notes, because I believe in what I'm doing.

First of all, I'm going to take this opportunity to thank and to acknowledge the respect and the honour that I as an individual have for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He's a very quiet leader and a good listener.

If I'd been given a chance to give an award in this House - members of this House who are 55 people - especially the respect and attention they give every single individual in this House who stands to speak, there are only two people who come to my mind. Oftentimes I struggle with my personal bias: Which one should I give that award? Those two individuals are the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and my colleague, the member for Clare. Most of the time, he doesn't even move his seat.

But tonight, because of the subject matter we're talking about, I'm going to give that award to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I thank you for respecting

your colleagues and your willingness to listen, and I am very hopeful that with what's happening here tonight, you will respond because I have that faith in you.

[10:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. Could I ask that you speak to the member through me?

The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: I'm here tonight to speak to Bill No. 208, the Environment Act. This Act - many members of this House have spoken clearly to the point. The Leader of the NDP and the way she has described this issue was very, very elegant and very understood. The conclusion was, we need to do our homework and we need to take our time. We need to listen to each other.

I get why we are here these late hours. It's something that affects all of us. It's something that we all believe in. Sometimes people ask me, "You know you've become a politician? How can I have all these beliefs?" We all like each other and we will hug, and we will say Kumbaya. I actually believe that.

I actually believe that we can hold each other's hand and say Kumbaya and work together as a team. I'm going to hold that hope and faith in each other. After being here a very short time, I've learned - especially from those who have been here long enough - what happens here in this House. If you're sitting on the other side and you've ever felt that you were not being respected, you are not better because you are doing exactly what happened to those who have been here in the past eight years.

I'll urge you to be better and to do better. We can do that. I'm standing here to speak to this bill for the sake of Nova Scotians. I'm standing here to speak to this bill for the sake of my constituents. I'm standing here to speak to this bill to give a chance for this sitting government.

This is my third sitting in this House. One of the things I'm still struggling with is the idea of blame. If you were in Opposition for eight years and you've been blaming, and then you get elected as a government, you were not elected to blame. You were elected to lead. I don't see, during the last three sessions that I have been here, a leadership. That's what I'm hoping for from the sitting government. That's what I'm hoping for from the decisions that Nova Scotians have made - to have a leadership that can lead a better future.

This bill will not offer Nova Scotia any solutions. We can blame the federal government as much as we wish. The federal government - it doesn't matter what party they belong to, they have obligations in the eyes of the international community to speak on behalf of Canadians. Whatever decisions they make, they make on behalf of the Canadian people.

Because of that reason, we as a province have an obligation to fulfill that international agreement. I will say that we as a province have an obligation to protect the interests of Nova Scotians. I was actually confused because I'm not sure if it was within the last month or so, I saw a truck that had "Nova Scotia Loyal" written on it. What's happening here? Are these kinds of ideas and these kinds of decisions the way we are loyal to Nova Scotians?

Is that how we treat Nova Scotians? This is how we are willing to build Nova Scotia? In my view, I think we can do better than this.

We have a province that has many educational institutions. We have so many organizations and community-led environmental issues. We need to go back; we need to consult people. We need to reach out to those who are experts, who have the knowledge, and to come up with a better solution that's good for Nova Scotians.

It has been repeated here. This will not be good for the pump, it will not be good for small businesses, it will not be good for rural communities. Who are we working for? Who are we making decisions for? If all these groups and individuals, the decisions that we're making here will have an affect on their lives, then why are we here at this hour? I'm optimistic. I think we can do better than this. What we are asking for is to listen to one another. What we're asking for is to take more time to think about this and consult each other and to come up with a better solution. I still believe that it's doable.

As I said, I do trust the minister will listen, as well as the Premier. Within this file, one of the first pages that I read was the minister's mandate signed by the Premier. I'm going to quote from it, and after I quote it, I will be willing to table it. We have committed to listen to and respect all Nova Scotians. We have also committed to lead a government which represents all Nova Scotians and is a reflection of the modern social makeup of Nova Scotia, inclusive and respectful of all demographic, cultures, and ethnic diversity to advance our collective growth and prosperity.

This bill does not show prosperity for Nova Scotians. This bill does not show listening to one another as Nova Scotians. I'll urge the Premier, this paper has your signature. Nova Scotia expected you to lead. Nova Scotia expected from you prosperity. Nova Scotia expected from you growth. I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I stand in my place in support of the hoist motion. Like I said previously, I'm not an expert on the subject matter, but I've had a lot of opportunity to listen to my colleagues and it seems pretty clear that the choices here are to support the bill, with a high probability that a carbon tax will be imposed by the government, or to try to send the bill back for further deliberation and give an opportunity for the

government to negotiate a better deal that would save 10 cents, 11 cents on a litre of gas, to try to negotiate a cap and trade, like the previous Liberal government.

[10:30 p.m.]

In my mind, from what we've been hearing in the last few weeks, and I did mention this previously, the branding of the carbon tax as a Liberal carbon tax - and we've heard the Premier and we've heard others clearly use that language to try to brand that and blame the Opposition for whatever comes into the future, rather than take more time and try to negotiate a deal.

One thing we did hear, as well, is the Liberal Party should stand up and fight for Nova Scotians, to work with our federal counterparts and try to stop a 10 cent or 11 cent increase on a litre of fuel, and I would say that this is why we are here tonight.

We've heard the Premier and we've heard the government. We've been asked many times to stand up for Nova Scotians against this increase in the cost of living, the increase in the cost of fuel, which will increase the cost of everything, essentially.

We've heard the Premier and this is what we've decided to do - fight for Nova Scotians, fight for a better deal and make sure that people in Nova Scotia don't see a massive increase when it comes to all kinds of costs.

Clearly, and I'll say it multiple times, I'm not an expert but one thing I do understand is that my constituents can't afford to pay more. As MLAs, we see seniors come into our offices struggling to pay for heat, struggling to pay for their medications, struggling to put fuel in their cars if they have one or can afford the insurance, so 10 cents, 11 cents does make a huge difference.

When you come from rural Nova Scotia, where public transit isn't always an option, seniors have to drive large distances to get their medication, to just go to the store to get some food, I feel that what we are doing here tonight is fighting for Nova Scotians, fighting against that 10 cents, 11 cents increase in fuel prices.

Rural Nova Scotia, as well, depends on resources, it's a resource sector economy. It's forestry, it's fisheries. We live far from the centre, which includes a lot of transportation costs, so when you talk about carbon pricing and the option that is presented to us here in this Chamber will not help ordinary Nova Scotians but it will, in fact, hurt ordinary Nova Scotians while at the same time, from what I'm hearing from my colleagues, will not really improve the environment.

Mx. Speaker, to be honest, it's painful to be here at 10:34 p.m. on a Thursday night - fighting for something we've been accused of trying to bring in ourselves - because of a lack of action on this file, but it's the prior Liberal government that brought in cap and

trade. It's the prior Liberal government that instead of seeing massive increases in fuel rates saw an increase of 1 cent, on average, per litre and now the cap and trade is coming to an end, or has to be renegotiated and now the government is saying that they're not ready to renegotiate, but at the same time, they're saying that the Liberal carbon tax will be coming in, and it's our fault because we're not ready to fight for it.

I can assure you, from what I see from my caucus colleagues, that we are prepared to fight for it. Because I think it's the right thing to do, honestly.

I don't say that disrespectfully to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I have a great deal of respect for the minister. But the reality is our job is to make sure that the people of Nova Scotia have the best deal that they can get. Right now, I don't see from my colleagues - the member for Timberlea-Prospect, whom I feel is an expert in the field - I feel that from what I have heard from him, it would make a lot of sense to engage Nova Scotians and take three months to look at this bill. It would give ample opportunity to try to renegotiate or negotiate with the federal government. I have full confidence that it can be done. I honestly think that this government can do it if they choose to.

Coming from a municipal background, I realize it's not the same, but we send multiple - it's not bills, but multiple motions that pass council that went to a planning advisory committee, and when we see that there is a better way. There is a better option. There's a better way to negotiate. We have backed off, looked at our constituents, looked at how it affects the residents of our community at that time, had a second sober look, and came back with something usually much better because the public had an opportunity to engage, and we had time to look at what was presented and where we could improve it.

Sometimes we look at things in terms of winning and losing, or positions of strength and weakness. There are times you just have to look at it for what's the best for Nova Scotians. In this case, I think this hoist motion is actually the right thing to do. I have no issue standing here today and supporting this motion and asking the government to take it back.

At the end of the day, they can call it a Liberal carbon tax, but for seniors, and for single mothers, and for people struggling to make ends meet, for them it's just an increase in the cost of living. Again, coming from a rural community, where a lot of people are in the forestry sector - take the lobster fishery, for example. Every time the cost of fuel goes up, the cost of bait goes up. Then for the buyers, the cost of transportation goes up. It affects the price of lobster in a negative way, and then it increases costs for lobster fishermen.

I feel on multiple levels the responsibility to stand here and say that I support this motion, not to try to prove the government didn't try their best or couldn't do it. It's their opportunity to take a second look at it and to try to figure out how we can come up with a price on carbon essentially that won't have the same impact on regular Nova Scotians whom I see in my office every day, like I assume most of you see as well.

The forestry sector is, I would say struggling as well. The price of wood is not as high, wood chips have a hard time finding a market. The cost of transporting the wood, cutting the wood - they have to drive farther to deliver their product. Again, a carbon tax of 10 cents or 11 cents on a litre of fuel will have a devastating impact on that industry.

Before we just all take for granted that this legislation will pass and people will pay more, have to try to figure out how to make ends meet, especially in certain industries, I think we all have a responsibility to look at ourselves and say, did we do absolutely everything we could to come up with a solution that could help regular Nova Scotians.

Honestly, there has been a lot of great debate here since yesterday and a lot of people with a lot of knowledge on the file who think there's a better way to negotiate a better deal. I think that deal is a cap and trade program from everything I've seen.

Again, I really hope people consider this motion seriously. It's easy to dismiss it as a stall tactic but I'll say it again: We've been challenged to fight for Nova Scotians, and I say we stood up and we're fighting for Nova Scotians.

At the end of the day, it is about regular Nova Scotians. It's about industry. A price of 10 to 11 cents, and eventually higher, will have detrimental impacts on our communities and our economy and our businesses.

You can see it as a stall tactic, but we've heard the Premier ask the Liberal Party on this side to stand up for Nova Scotians. I've listened to him, and I've heard him and that's what I plan to do. With that, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: I am also happy to stand here in support of this hoist motion to give this government some time to rework the deal.

I am sure everybody loves cake, right? I love cake, we all love cake. Have you ever gone into a location, seen this beautiful cake and it is like screaming at you "eat me" and you look at that cake and you say, I'm buying that cake. So I buy that cake and I get home and I'm all excited and I cut into that cake and it's not cooked in the centre. You know what, it just needed a little more time, kind of like this bill, it's half-baked.

Madam Speaker, the purpose of this hoist motion is to allow the minister to spend a little more time with the cake in the oven. Three months is not a long period of time. We'll probably still be in the House so they can work on it in off-hours, but three months to work with their federal partners to negotiate a real deal for Nova Scotians and of course that deal would be a cap and trade deal.

[10:45 p.m.]

Madam Speaker, the area that I come from in Cape Breton, Northside-Westmount, from Alder Point, Little Pond, Florence, Sydney Mines, North Sydney, Keltic Drive, Point Edward, Westmount, parts of Coxheath, people are struggling. If we were to look at the economic situation in some of those communities, it would really break your heart. People cannot afford furnace oil, they can't afford food. They are looking at their prescriptions and they are looking at their oil - do they want to stay warm or alive? That's a difficult decision.

Now, add 10 cents or more on top of gas, furnace oil, probably even more than that on groceries when you add all of those things in together. What we're doing to Nova Scotians is, we're sinking them. They're not able to afford the necessities of life. For what reason? For what reason would we do that to Nova Scotians?

We heard the Leader of the NDP talk today about homework and dogs eating it, losing it, and not handing it in. What I would suggest, Madam Speaker, is that we already did the government's homework for them. What better deal can you get than that? There's a system in place where they can take that and build upon it.

They can build upon it. We gave them some homework in the last session. I actually introduced a bill to reduce the motor fuel tax by 50 per cent. That would have cut 7.5 cents a litre off for all Nova Scotians. But no, that couldn't get passed.

What do we do? We don't help Nova Scotians. What we do is we just sit on our hands for a year - 14 months - and just hope that somebody does the work for us. And then, I'll say that someone said 11.5 hours, but I'll say at the 12th hour - goodness, we realize that we've got to get this homework in to the federal government.

We send them, at the 12th hour, a half-baked plan. Of course, they're not going to approve that plan. It doesn't meet the requirements. So, what's going to happen - it's a half a hybrid, a half a plan, whatever it might be - is that Nova Scotians are going to get saddled with 10 cents per litre. The government will tell you that that's a Liberal tax. I think I've heard, that's a Liberal tax, that's a federal government tax, and I think one member from Kings West, if I'm correct, even said it's an Ottawa tax because he didn't want to use the word "Liberal."

Well, Mx. Speaker, it's clearly a PC tax. It's a PC tax. And the reason it's a PC tax is because they didn't do the work . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I am going to ask the member to speak to the hoist motion.

FRED TILLEY: That is why we have to hoist the motion. It's because they need, clearly, more time to avoid additional tax on Nova Scotians. We don't want it to be a PC

tax. That's why we're hoisting. If we are able to work with the folks on the other side to actually do the right thing, take those months, engage Nova Scotians, and engage some experts.

I'm sure that the member for Timberlea-Prospect would be happy to give some advice and guidance on how to actually negotiate a cap and trade deal. He was very successful in doing that as Minister of Environment and Climate Change. We have a great Minister of Environment and Climate Change and I also have a lot of respect for the minister, but I just think that in this particular case, maybe the message from on high was, no minister, don't do that negotiation that should be done because we want to have a scrap. Where I come from, it's not a fight, it's a scrap. So, we want to have a scrap with the federal government so that we can blame this all on a Liberal tax. But no, it's not. It needs to be rethought. It needs to be reworked.

Honestly, I do know, that a negotiation of that type is not easy. It's tough to negotiate because in every negotiation, you may win some, you may lose a little, but in the end you will come out with a compromise, which will be a good deal. What's important is that it's a good deal for Nova Scotians. It's not that it's a good deal for political points. It's not that it's a good deal for extra revenue. It's that it's a good deal for struggling residents of Northside-Westmount. It's a good deal for struggling residents of the other 54 constituencies within Nova Scotia.

At the end of the day, it's about the people of our province. It's about keeping them whole. It's about allowing them to survive in their communities where they live and what they need to do to heat their homes. A deal needs to be done quickly to work with the feds. Three months is not a long period of time. We're not voting down the motion. We're simply asking it to be reworked. Go back into the Chamber and do the hard work that's required to make this happen. Some of the things, when we look at this tax that's going to be added, this 10 cents, it's going to bring us backward. It's not going to bring us forward. It's going to eliminate some very important programs that we had listed here.

What's it going to do? The SolarHomes program. We're not going to be able to - look, you know what? There are multiple companies in Cape Breton, but one that I've been talking to recently said to me, we could green your whole community with the way that these rebates and plans are structured. You think about that community rink that is run by a volunteer board, is struggling to keep the lights on - \$10,000, \$12,000, \$14,000 a month just for power. It's so hard for these organizations.

Imagine if they're not able to tap into these amazing rebates and programs that were made possible because of the Green Fund that came from the cap and trade program. Millions of dollars. On my own street in Northside-Westmount, in Sydney Mines, there are a couple of homes that have installed solar panels on their entire roof. Not only are they helping the environment, but they're helping their pocketbooks. They're saving money, helping the environment, and because of the Green Fund, they were able to get rebates,

low-interest financing, and other programs to help with the installation costs. We understand there's a capital cost up front, and that's what the Green Fund is for.

Affordable, multi-family housing programs. Energy rebates for those projects. Small business and non-profit energy programs all could be gone. What about the Clean Leadership Summer Internship program? What an amazing program, where we can create future leaders for our environment from across this province, who would be able to then spread that news to their communities.

Can you imagine? A young person comes home from an energy Summer camp all excited, they come home and they talk to their parents: "Mum and Dad, did you know that we can access these funds through this amazing Liberal program that was put in place a couple of years ago but is now in jeopardy because of the PC tax?" Can you imagine that conversation around the dinner table when they talk about the programs available, solar panels, to green their homes?

The short-sighted piece to all of this is that . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. There's quite a bit of chatter in this Chamber. I would invite folks to take conversations outside.

The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: I lost my train of thought for a second here. I was in around with young people.

The Summer Internship Program where these young people become future environment leaders, and they're able to spread that word and grow the environmental movement in Nova Scotia.

Last night, Mx. Speaker, the member for Timberlea-Prospect did an amazing analysis and an amazing speech on this bill. I would just like to quote one part of his speech, which I will table. The member for Timberlea-Prospect, who in my opinion and I know in the opinion of many others on this side of the aisle feel is an expert in this industry, has a ton of knowledge, experience, and respect from the environmental community. He said last night - and this really stuck with me; I even highlighted it:

"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."

That alone, should be enough for us to say, absolutely, we need to take a pause on this bill. We need to rethink this. Imagine, 1 cent per litre of carbon tax, let's call it, versus 10 cents per litre. On top of that, it's better for the environment by double of what the program that is being proposed by the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia.

Like my honourable colleague for Clare said, we have been challenged multiple times: You're not doing enough, you are not helping us, you're not helping us fight the federal government, you're not helping us help Nova Scotians. Mx. Speaker, that is a crock.

[11:00 p.m.]

The cap and trade program is the way to help Nova Scotians. The blueprint was available. All the other side had to do was take that blueprint, expand on it, then do the work, and submit that program. Cap and trade is one of the three options available in this carbon program. They absolutely should have done that.

It just frustrates me because when I think about the potential for this program, and I think about all of the seniors, and I think about all of the youth, and I think about all of the struggling families in our communities who are going to struggle even worse. We talked about gas earlier - I think it's \$1.80 or something now, or \$1.70-something? It's going to go over two bucks if this keeps up, and this is only going to exacerbate that.

Mx. Speaker, with that, I move to adjourn debate this evening on this hoist motion.

THE SPEAKER: There is a motion to adjourn debate.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

The bells will ring until the Whips are satisfied.

[11:01 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, Friday, October 21st at 9:00 a.m.

[The House rose at 11:59 p.m.]