



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2022

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

12:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

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

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

LISA LACHANCE: I would like to table an article published on July 27, 2021 that I will make reference to during a member's statement, entitled "Veronica Merryfield: I am transgender, I am intersex, I am me."

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier

KENDRA COOMBES: I'd like to table two documents to which I made reference in my member's statement yesterday. The first one is from the Cape Breton Post posted on October 20, 2022, called "Cape Breton companies remove tree from the roof of a New Waterford woman's home." The other one is from CTV News, "'My heart is ready to explode': Cape Breton community rallies to help senior without power." That date, Mr. Speaker, was October 21, 2022.

THE SPEAKER: The documents are tabled.

With the unanimous consent of the House, we'll revert back to Presenting and Reading Petitions.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

[PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, before I present this petition, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KEITH IRVING: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the attention of the House to the West Gallery, where we're joined today by four folks from the Annapolis Valley who have taken their time to come and observe me presenting the petition here today. They have been taking up a cause in their neighbourhood that's dear to their heart and important for their neighbourhood.

I'll like to introduce Ross MacPherson, Lorraine MacPherson, Harold MacPhee, and Judi MacPhee, if they could rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: I'd like to welcome everyone who's a guest of the Legislature today. We hope you enjoy the proceedings.

The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition. The operative clause reads as follows:

“WHEREAS the Department of Environment and Climate Change regulates the Industrial Approvals for Asphalt Plants in the Province of Nova Scotia; and

WHEREAS the residents and landowners of Greenwich and New Minas feel their quality of life and air quality are being compromised by the co-existence of the Dexter asphalt facility located at 17 Standards Paving Road, Kings County;

WHEREAS concerned residents have been voicing their concerns for many years with no action by local or provincial officials.

We the undersigned urge the Department of Environment and Climate Change to consult with local residents and landowners to gain social licence before extending any further Industrial Approvals to Dexter Construction for the operation located at 17 Standard Paving Road.”

This petition has 115 signatures, and I have affixed my signature to the petition.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 418

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

Whereas the Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce presented the 2022 Excellence in Business Awards on October 21st to celebrate local businesses for their leadership and outstanding achievements; and

Whereas the Membertou Development Corporation was recognized as Business of the Year and the Eskasoni Corporate Division was honoured with the Economic Development Leadership Award; and

Whereas both of these Mi'kmaw communities are playing an important and increasing role in the socio-economic development of their own communities and of Cape Breton as a whole;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join me in congratulating the Membertou Development Corporation and the Eskasoni Corporate

Division on their awards and thank them for their contributions to building a stronger, more equitable Nova Scotia.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 419

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's seafood industry is the province's largest exporter and Canada's top seafood exporter; and

Whereas the success of this industry is achievable only through the hard work and dedication of exceptional individuals and organizations in Nova Scotia's seafood, sport fishing, and aquaculture industries; and

Whereas as part of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister's Conference 2022, I was honoured to recognize Mike Feltmate, Sali Cunningham, and Mary Atkinson, Ocean Pride Fisheries Ltd, Noël Després, Corey Mood, First Fisherman Seafoods, Osborne Burke, Tommy Symes, Sammy Symes, Adam Sams, and Dylan Gordon for their contributions;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House extend their congratulations to the recipients of the 2022 Fisheries and Aquaculture Minister's Awards of Excellence.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

SWINIMER, WAYNE: 58 YRS. WITH FIRE SERV. - RECOG.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of a remarkable man: my father-in-law, Wayne Swinimer of Windsor Forks.

Wayne has devoted an impressive 58 years and counting to the fire service. Joining the department in 1964 for the City of Dartmouth, where he progressed to the rank of Captain, a title he held until his retirement in 1996. Wayne had such a passion for the fire service that he joined the Windsor Fire Department as a volunteer in 1988 where he held the ranks of driver, lieutenant, captain, fire inspector, Deputy Chief, and serving on the executive and many committees throughout this time.

As if he wasn't busy enough, he and his loving wife Deborah ran D&W Swinimer's, a thriving convenience store, laundromat, and take-out for over 13 years - a business still thriving today under new ownership. Wayne is also a man of many talents; I don't think there is anything he hasn't done. He's a golfer, farmer, gardener, mechanic, carpenter, chef, entrepreneur, and loves to tinker in his garage.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all the members join me in giving appreciation to this incredible man who is a friend to many, a loving husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather, and thank him for all he has given to his community over the years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DOBBS, JENNIE: DRINK SPRIZZI LAUNCH - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to send a shout-out to Jennie Dobbs, who is the owner of Morris East Restaurants.

Earlier this year, Jennie launched Drink Sprizzi. In case you're wondering what they are, they're actually super-refreshing cider, wine, and vodka spritzer sippers that showcase real Nova Scotia fruit flavours with a little sparkle. Drink Sprizzi has been a passion project for Jennie over the last few years.

If you're wondering where you can order them, you can get them through www.drinksprizzi.com, at Bishop's Cellar, on the menu at CHKN CHOP or at a Morris East near you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLUB 24: ADD. DISORDERS HELP - THANKS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Club 24 in Downtown Dartmouth.

Club 24 is a home away from home for many seeking support for addictions and substance use disorders. The club is volunteer-run and is truly an organization by the community, for the community. AA, NA, and many more meetings are held in their building every day, evening, and weekend.

When COVID-19 arrived in Nova Scotia, they pivoted to online meetings. When it became clear that this wasn't working for their clients - many of whom were desperate for in-person support - Club 24 fiercely advocated for, and won, the title of essential service provider and were able to safely return to in-person meetings.

I've spoken with clients and I know how important Club 24 is to the recovery community. I ask all members of this House to join me in thanking Club 24 for its tireless work in supporting recovery in Dartmouth.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

GIFFIN, WAYNE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember the life of Goldboro resident Wayne Giffin.

Wayne started working with his family's funeral business, Giffin's Funeral and Ambulance Service, in Country Harbour in 1975. In later years he changed the name to G.W. Giffin Funeral Home Ltd. and also opened a funeral home in Sherbrooke.

When ambulance service went provincial, Wayne was instrumental in creating that EHS Model. Wayne's extensive experience in the funeral business made him a valuable

manager of the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Plan and, in particular, in the aftermath of the Swiss Air Disaster in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, the committees and boards Wayne served on and volunteered his time with over the years were many: Funeral Service Association of Nova Scotia, Funeral Service Association of Canada, Guysborough County District School Board, Sherbrooke Village Restoration Commission, Redhead Project, and Isaac's Harbour Medical Center. He was also a proud member of Liscomb Legion Branch 86 and of his local political organization, for which we are so very thankful.

Wayne and wife Vivian loved to travel and enjoyed their Winters in Florida. Returning to Goldboro in the Spring, they were always happy to reunite with family and friends and enjoy more walks with his beloved fur friend, Reba. I ask that the house join me in recognizing the life of Wayne Giffin for his contributions to his community and beyond.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

MITCHELL, DR. LANCE: RWANDA PROJ. - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Dr. Lance Mitchell and the Canadian Rwanda Open-heart Project.

In May of this year, Dr. Lance Mitchell and volunteer doctors, nurses, and allied medical staff from Dalhousie University's Department of Surgery, the QEII Health Sciences Centre, and the IWK Health Centre travelled to Rwanda to perform lifesaving cardiac surgeries. Working with the Rwandan medical partners, one team will perform adult cardiac surgeries - almost exclusively valve replacements - requiring heart-lung bypass.

I'd like to honour Dr. Lance Mitchell and the rest of his colleagues for doing this great work and for focusing on raising awareness and raising funds to be able to travel yearly to perform these surgeries to make sure that there's lasting impact on all Rwandans.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Dr. Lance Mitchell and his colleagues for this important work and long-lasting impact.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DIWALI: HINDU FESTIVAL - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights, joy, prosperity, and happiness. Celebrated this week, it is a five-day-long celebration, celebrated by millions of Indians in and around the world.

[12:15 p.m.]

The festival of Diwali is celebrated on the darkest night of the year, and people celebrate this festival with great grandeur: music, arts, crafts, and especially food. They enjoy it all with their families, their friends, and relatives.

It is considered as a new year for the Hindu religion, and I would like all members to join me in celebrating Diwali and recognizing that the model of Diwali is the winning of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

ORGANIZERS: MAXWELL GOLF TOURN. - THANKS

NOLAN YOUNG: I rise today to acknowledge and thank the organizers of the Matthew Maxwell Memorial Golf Tournament. The memorial golf tournament this Summer, held in memory of well-known talented young athlete Matt Maxwell, who sadly passed away in 2018, raised over \$30,000.

Thanks to this successful tournament, sizeable donations were made to community groups, including the Clark's Harbour Elementary School breakfast program, Clark's Harbour and Area Minor Baseball Association, and Crosbie House in New Minas.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask that all member of this House join me in thanking the organizers, volunteers, and participants of this event for their commitment to their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

THE BINNACLE: MARINE SUPPLIES - RECOG.

ALI DUALE: Today I would like to recognize the unique but essential service of Purcells Cove Road's The Binnacle. The Binnacle is Canada's premier supplier for marine sailboat accessories and equipment for people from Canada and the United States.

As many sailors can tell you, The Binnacle and its staff can often come in in a pinch and help solve grievous fail issues.

I wish to recognize the service and celebrate The Binnacle's continued service.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DAL CUPE STRIKE: LOW WAGES - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: I am a former part-time faculty member at Dalhousie University. A majority of our NDP caucus, as a matter of fact, have been part-time teachers and teaching assistants at Dal, so it's not an abstraction to us, but something very acute and personal that CUPE Local 3912 is today on Day 8 in their strike for wage fairness for the 1,500 teaching assistants, markers, demonstrators, and contract teachers at Dalhousie.

Consider that if you teach on a single-course contract at UNB, you're paid \$6,400 for that course. If you teach on a single-course contract at McMaster, you're paid \$7,500. If you teach on a single-course contract at Queen's, it's \$8,000 for that contract.

By comparison with the \$6,000, \$7,000, and \$8,000-something per course standards, single-course sessional teachers at Dal today are paid \$5,232. Local 3912's strike slogan is Living Wages for Living Here. Sounds fair, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

FIRE STN. 16: HOSTING FUN DAY - THANKS

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to thank all the volunteer firefighters at Fire Station 16 in Eastern Passage for their continued support of our community.

On Saturday, October 15th, the firefighters hosted a fabulous community fun day and barbecue for local families to come and enjoy. Some of the fun at the station included meeting the firefighters, fire truck demonstrations, games, giveaways, balloon animals, and even a vintage 1960s fire truck. I am happy to have had the opportunity to attend and to support our firefighters.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking the volunteer firefighters of Fire Station 16 in Eastern Passage for their hard work and dedication in giving back to our wonderful community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MCCONNELL-GORDON, ASHLEY: EMPLOYER AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: The Minister's Awards of Excellence in Agriculture are presented annually to individuals, nominated by their peers in the agriculture sector, who have demonstrated resilience, leadership, and innovation.

Ashley McConnell-Gordon of Benjamin Bridge winery in Gaspereau was awarded the Minister's Award of Excellence in Agriculture in the outstanding employer category in

May 2022. Ashley, along with her twin sister Devon, now leads a small family-like team at Benjamin Bridge winery, which was started in 1999 by their parents, Gerry McConnell and Dara Gordon.

Benjamin Bridge has distinguished itself as Canada's premier sparkling wine house, and its popular signature wine Nova 7 can be found across Canada.

I ask all members of the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to join me in congratulating Ashley McConnell-Gordon on receiving the Minister's Award of Excellence in Agriculture as an outstanding employer of 2022 and wish her and the remarkable team at Benjamin Bridge continued success as a premier winery in Canada.

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

INTERSEX AWAR. DAY: HUMAN RTS. DEFENCE - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw my fellow members' attention to today being international Intersex Awareness Day.

Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a range of bodily variations and sex characteristics. Intersex people are born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions for male or female bodies, including sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns, or chromosomal patterns. These traits may be evident prenatally or at birth or they may emerge at puberty or become apparent later in life. Many intersex people undergo medical treatment as children, unbeknownst to them, to attempt to confirm them as male or female. In recent years, awareness of intersex people and recognition of the specific human rights abuses they face has grown, thanks to the brave work of intersex human rights defenders.

I was honoured to raise the intersex flag at the House earlier this morning. I encourage all members to take a photo and share the marking of this day with their constituents as one thing we can all do recognize Intersex Awareness Day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

MARINER CRUISES: WHALE WATCHING TOURS - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge an important and popular tourist attraction in Westport, Nova Scotia: Mariner Cruises Whale and Seabird Tours. Mariner Cruises is located on Brier Island and offers some of the best whale watching in Atlantic Canada. It's truly extraordinary.

Mariner Cruises is owned and operated by Penny Graham, a lifelong resident of Westport. The family-run business has been operating since 1994. Every year, from July

to mid-October, they offer a unique and fascinating experience on the shores of the Bay of Fundy. People from all over the world make their trip down to the islands to observe the dozens of marine animals that live on our shores.

Thank you to the captain and crew members, who devote their time teaching people about the importance of the wildlife species in the beautiful Bay of Fundy.

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

DART. KIWANIS CLUB: TREE PLANTING PROJ. - THANKS

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, the Kiwanis Club of Dartmouth has begun a climate change project under Chair Gerry Lethbridge.

Kiwanis is known for helping youth with scholarships and fixing up parks. This was the first time any Kiwanis Club internationally has become involved with climate change. Last weekend, he was joined by Crispin Wood, the superintendent of urban forestry, and a group of air cadets and their friends to plant more than 1,100 saplings by the new Viscount Run Park in Hammonds Plains. The purpose of the planting is to help mitigate damage from climate change.

Both Lethbridge and Wood say that it is important to get the community involved, especially our youth, with projects dedicated to climate change. The cadets said that this was, in fact, their first time digging and planting, but they were happy to be involved in the project.

The tree planting project is one of many Lethbridge hopes will mitigate climate change, and they're already planning an eelgrass initiative with Dalhousie.

I would ask all members of the House to join me in thanking the Kiwanis Club of Dartmouth and chair for the climate change projects and for their help with the fight against climate change, and for choosing Hammonds Plains.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make a reintroduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

KENDRA COOMBES: I just want to draw everyone's attention to the Gallery opposite, where my daughter Rory is here with my partner watching the proceedings.

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

POL. EDUC.: IMPORTANCE FOR CHILDREN - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Rory has been learning quite a lot about politics. She asks me every day if she can go to the Legislature, and she's now using words like "recorded vote," (Laughter) as well as "Order, order," and also "ring the bells". She's liking that one; she finds that one fun.

Mr. Speaker, political education is very important for children. We must start them early so they can learn our democratic processes as well as have a full understanding and respect for democracy and, as well, the importance of voting and the understanding of what their elected officials do at all different levels of government.

I am proud that we are starting our daughters very early. I hope they become responsible citizens of the world who will vote and who will participate in the democratic process.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

WILLIAMS, STEVEN: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

TOM TAGGART: In the wake of Hurricane Fiona, Camp Evangeline's director, Steven Williams, opened up the camp to house members of our military. The camp, which had been readied for Winter shutdown, was transformed back into a usable facility, thanks to Steven.

While the troops were staying at Camp Evangeline, Steven noticed the rations they were eating. While they provided nourishment, they were not necessarily the best-tasting. Steven and friends decided to treat their 100 guests with a special meal. They fired up the indoor grills and provided the troops with fries, hamburgers, hot dogs, and his famous poutine. The dinner was topped off with chocolate chip cookies provided by high school students.

Mr. Speaker, before I go on, I should note that I just spent time in the Public Accounts Committee, where we talked about nutritional foods. I'm not sure if that fits right in here or not, but anyway.

Steven exemplifies the Nova Scotia way of helping others and making the best out of tough situations. Please join me in thanking Steven for all he does for our community.

THE SPEAKER: We're really taking advantage today of exceeding the time limit on our members' statements so we'll try to bring it back in line again.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

INFLATION: NEED FOR SUPPORT - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'll be careful. Today I rise to bring awareness to the ever-increasing inflation costs to the constituents of Cumberland North, as well as all Nova Scotians. In fact, just today the Bank of Canada reported that inflation remains elevated at 6.9 per cent, with no signs of easing.

With increased prices for gas, power, and particularly groceries, many of my constituents are dealing with great anxiety about how they will continue to meet their most basic needs. Those on fixed incomes, like our seniors, are finding it difficult, especially if they also have expensive medications to pay for. This will undoubtedly mean making some potentially life-threatening decisions: whether to buy food or medications or turn up the thermostat.

There seems to be little sign of relief on the horizon and stress is growing, particularly as Winter is drawing near. There needs to be more means of support for those in need, especially during these extremely turbulent times when prices seem to be increasing daily.

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

GRAHAM, SAMANTHA: COVID-19 EFFORTS - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank and acknowledge all the great work of Samantha Graham. Samantha supported her community as a St. John Ambulance medical first responder and immediately volunteered for the community Emergency Response Unit as the pandemic began. As Saint Mary's University's Student Association VP External, she worked with Dr. Robert Strang to plan a communications strategy aimed at students on vaccination and COVID-19 safety. She regularly volunteered with Dr. Lisa Barrett to perform COVID-19 testing throughout the HRM.

Samantha spent her entire holiday break from studying for her Master's in Public Health managing the COVID-19 test packaging sites. As chair of Students Nova Scotia, she successfully advocated for the COVID-19 grant for Nova Scotia student assistance recipients and international student accommodations.

She now works with Doctors Nova Scotia as a policy officer to support her community through improved health care. Thank you, Samantha, for your efforts in providing excellence in public health care to all Nova Scotians and Canadians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

[12:30 p.m.]

LEBLANC, C./CHAPMAN, D.: *MI'KMAW MOONS* LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Acadia First Nation member Cathy LeBlanc and Crichton Park resident David Chapman on the release of their new book *Mi'kmaw Moons: The Seasons in Mi'kma'ki*, which is illustrated by Loretta Gould.

Over the span of 10 years, Cathy and David have studied and educated others on the meaning of the names of the Mi'kmaw moons and their connection to the ecological and celestial cycles. Cathy's knowledge of Mi'kmaw culture and seasonal traditions, and David's knowledge of astronomy merged to really embody the concept of two-eyed seeing. For example, this month's moon was the animal fattening moon or the Wikewiku's moon.

The pair launched the book this week to packed crowds on the South Shore and in Kjiptuk, and I personally cannot wait to get my hands on a copy. I ask the House to join me in thanking Cathy, David, and Loretta for their beautiful work and congratulating them on the launch of this book.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

KERR, BRENT: BETTER TOGETHER - THANKS

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my good friend Brent Kerr. Brent is one of the three founding members of Better Together, a group that is dedicated to working with members in the community to make a positive difference.

Prior to COVID-19, Brent was famously known as the "Muffin Man" for his countless hours of baking for Margaret's House, for various food banks, senior residences, and many others. Brent and the other members of Better Together will stop into my constituency office with flowers and treats for my staff - makes me realize that I need to up my game.

In 2018, Brent brought 150 muffins for all the volunteers at the McNabs Island Earth Day Cleanup. Brent is an exceptional and amazing person. I'd like to thank Brent for his sense of community and his sharing of his love of baking to the residents in my community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

KANTH, FARHANA: PAWN WISE CHESS FESTIVAL - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Farhana Kanth for her spirit of volunteerism.

Farhana devotes much of her time in serving as vice-president of the Nova Scotia Chess Association. She has worked tirelessly to recruit volunteers to spread the love of chess. The Pawn Wise Chess Festival was Halifax's first international chess event with over 100 participants. It was an honour for me to attend and present the awards to the winners.

This event was made a success thanks to the labour of love by Farhana and many other volunteers like her who have a vision to make Halifax a chess destination. I would ask that the House join me in recognizing Farhana for her hard work and dedication in spreading the game of chess across Nova Scotia. Thank you, Farhana.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EDUC. SUPP. WORKERS: NEED FOR LIVING WAGE - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about our educational assistants and our support workers - at St. Joseph's-Alexander MacKay School in particular.

You are not just an EPA or a support person, you are one of the many adults who love our children so much that you do just about anything to help them. When our kids need a hug, you are there. When they need someone to listen, you lend them your ear. When our children have had enough and need a break, you are the ones who sit, walk, lay, kneel, or whatever it takes to be with them. You make sure that their time at school is an amazing one.

I would like all members of this House to join me in thanking these EPAs and school support persons within our system, recognizing them for their hard work, and acknowledging the fact that they deserve to be paid a living wage.

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

JAY'S DRIVE-IN: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to recognize Jay's Drive-In. This family-run business has been providing the Town of Glace Bay with an amazing menu since 1966. Even though it's changed hands a few times, they are certainly best known for their deep-fried chicken, which can cause quite the lineup at times.

During the power outage that resulted from Hurricane Fiona, Jay's Drive-In held a free food giveaway for a day-long event. All day long they had a lineup outside the restaurant. The restaurant had no power, so staff were operating with flashlights only. Even though these were challenging conditions that they were in, it never deterred them at all. They continued cooking all day long and late into the evening. In the end, hundreds of thankful people were fed.

For many people, Hurricane Fiona was the biggest weather-related challenge of their lifetime, and it left us feeling vulnerable. Knowing that our community is supported by such compassionate and amazing businesses as Jay's Drive-In is indeed a comforting thought.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FAMILY MILESTONES: CELEB. - RECOG.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, October is a month filled with milestones for my family.

My parents Robert and Donna celebrated their 57th anniversary. My wife and I celebrated our 29th anniversary on the same day as my parents. My daughter turned 27 this month and she and her fiancé Liam celebrated their engagement photos and they'll be getting married in October 2023. I just wanted to wish all of my family a happy anniversary/birthday and I love you all.

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

MERRYFIELD, VERONICA: INTERSEX ADVOCACY - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues in the House join me in recognizing Veronica Merryfield for her years of work in building a more inclusive Nova Scotia for the intersex and trans communities.

As co-founder of the Cape Breton Trans Network, Veronica has spent over 20 years advocating for the equitable treatment of intersex and trans people in Nova Scotia, and devotes hours to a long list of boards and committees to make these communities safer and better. She also provides the one-on-one support that people need and can't access anywhere else.

I will end with Veronica's words from a 2021 news article that I tabled earlier:

“. . . we grow up enduring debilitating gender dysphoria, trying to maintain expectations based on the trap of a physical body that is completely at odds with who we know we are . . . I look forward to

a day when we no longer have to talk about the need for acceptance as it becomes the norm and uncomment-worthy. I hold hope that this will happen in my lifetime.”

I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in recognizing Veronica for her years of work in building a more inclusive Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Pictou Centre.

CONST. ASSTS.: HELP FOR CITIZENS - CONGRATS.

HON. PAT DUNN: I rise in my place today to say a thank you to all the constituency assistants in every office in this province. We can all agree that the messaging is clear in that if you have any questions or need any assistance when it comes to Hurricane Fiona relief benefits, go to your local MLA office. We know that it is the CAs who are dealing with each of these situations.

I can certainly attest to the fact that we have had actual lineups outside our door over the past few weeks, with an average of 50-plus calls each day during this particular time. On a regular day, our CAs deal with a multitude of issues. Our office has been busier than ever before, but we are pleased to see those who are coming for assistance and direction pleased with the efforts being made to bring relief, and doing so efficiently.

I ask for the members of this House to join me in congratulating all our constituency staff. They are keeping our offices welcoming to our communities across our beautiful province of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

DESPRÉS, NOËL: MIN. AWD. RECIP. - RECOG.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Every year, as part of the Minister's Awards of Excellence in Seafood, Sportfish and Aquaculture Industries, individuals with long and outstanding service to the fishing industry are honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

On October 13, 2022, this award was presented to Comeau Sea Foods Limited president Noël Després. Noël Després heads one of our leading fish and seafood companies - a company he joined in 1978 to work alongside the company's founders, Bernadin Comeau and his son Marcel Comeau.

Mr. Després has played an instrumental role in Comeau Sea Foods' diversification plans, and since being named president in 2014 has guided the company to new markets, as well as modernizing its facilities.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating Noël Després, the recipient of the Minister's Awards of Excellence Lifetime Achievement Award - a well-deserved honour.

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

MORRISON, JANET LYNN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Janet Lynn Morrison. On October 24th, Janet, the daughter of Ray and Anita Morrison, gained her wings, with her loving family and friends by her side, at 45 years old.

Janet had a lifelong affliction of Prader-Willi Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that results in a number of physical, mental, and behavioral problems that include being constantly hungry, underproduction of growth hormones, delayed motor development, and sleep disorders.

Janet may have had limitations, but her determination, her grace, her love, her humour, and her joy were infectious, and her love for animals was well-known. I will always think of Janet at the Coal Bowl on the bleachers, the number one cheerleader for the BEC Bears. She was awarded the gold star for being the community's number one fan. I see her collecting those school pins and her handmade signs.

My love and heart go to the family.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

WALTON, DORIS: AFTER THE SCHOOL BELL PGM. - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Doris Walton from After the School Bell program. Doris is a senior and she is the founder of this program, which provides food security on weekends to children in need so that they do not go hungry.

A backpack goes home with the children from school each Friday, full of food that ensures they will have enough food to eat over the weekend. This is all done on a volunteer basis, and Doris works hard to ensure that children do not go hungry. This is very important work. No child should have to worry about where their food is coming from. I am very thankful for the work that Doris Walton and her team of volunteers do for children in the After the School Bell Food Program.

Mr. Speaker, we must do more so that families can feed their own children. Until the government can create that, we thank people like Doris Walton who step up to the plate and help people in need.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

SUTHERLAND, LEAH: RIDE FOR A CURE ORG. - THANKS

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a dynamic Pictou West constituent, Leah Sutherland of Scotsburn.

Leah is one of the main organizers of the Ride for a Cure, a fundraiser for juvenile diabetes. The event is an opportunity for bikers to join together for a group ride for a good cause. This year's ride was a huge success with more than 80 motorcycles and 90 riders, and over \$13,000 raised.

Leah has a personal stake in finding a cure, as both of her children were diagnosed with juvenile diabetes at the ages of 10 and 8. Despite her children now being young adults, Leah continues with her fundraising efforts.

I want to extend my gratitude and admiration to Leah for her kindness, her dedication, and her hard work in making the Ride for a Cure such an overwhelming success in Pictou West.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

SPURRELL, JAMES: SPORTS WALL OF FAME IND. - CONGRATS.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, last month the Middleton Sports Heritage Wall of Fame held their 23rd annual induction ceremony. One of these very deserving inductees was James Wallace Spurrell. Jim began volunteering with the Special Olympics in 2001, and he is still very active in the program. Initially he was involved with the bowling team and a number of bowlers earned medals at provincial competitions. Later, he moved on to have great success as their soccer team coach.

Jim also worked with cross-country skiing athletes, several of whom won medals at provincial and national competitions. He twice coached the Nova Scotia Special Olympics Cross-Country Ski Team at nationals.

Jim initiated a weekly physically active lifestyle program at the Middleton Regional High School. He offered folks the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities, including basketball, badminton, volleyball, and washer toss.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Jim on being inducted into the Middleton Sports Heritage Wall of Fame.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

GORDON, SHIANNE: SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS SUPP. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, Dartmouth North resident Shianne Gordon started going to the Dartmouth North Boys and Girls Club at six years old. Later, Shianne became a junior leader and then a staff member at the club. Shianne has referred to the Dartmouth North club as home.

Shianne's current work is to prevent sexual violence and to serve survivors. Shianne, who identifies as two-spirit, played a role in creating the provincial government's Supporting Survivors of Sexual Violence virtual course, is the community navigator for Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, and facilitates workshops on how to work with youth who have been sexually exploited.

At Avalon, Shianne has helped the centre create more pathways in the community for survivors to access support and services. They believe that everyone has the right to heal, not just survive.

I ask the House to join me in recognizing this shining star from Dartmouth North and thank Shianne for all the work that they have done for youth and survivors in helping them to survive, heal, and most importantly, thrive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HEBBVILLE GIRLS SOCCER TEAM: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Hebbville Academy girls soccer team, who won the 2022-23 Western Region Junior High/Middle School Tier 1 Soccer Championship after victories against Kings-Edgehill and Barrington Municipal High School yesterday.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating soccer players Allie Dow, Annabelle Amos, Addalay Veinotte, Kylie Joudrey, Asia Corkum, Jane Van Kessel, Nadia MacPhee, Lily Craig, Eva MacEllion, Payton Wentzel, Alana Boudreau, Maria Bryson, Gabby Druhan, Rebecca McDow, Caitlin McDow, and Aliyah Demone, and the coaches, Kate Smith and Steve Johnston.

I couldn't be there in person but was cheering them on from here in the House in spirit. Way to make us proud, girls.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

[12:45 p.m.]

DUGAS, CLARA: 2022 PRIX GRAND-PRÉ - CONGRATS.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Monsieur le président, Arts Nova Scotia et le Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council ont récemment discerné à Clara Dugas le Prix Grand-Pré 2022.

Clara est une conteuse bien connue qui a grandi à Clare en écoutant les histoires de sa mère pour le bon vieux temps. Non seulement elle a écouté les histoires mais elle est devenue une conteuse, une compétence qu'elle a utilisé pour motiver ses élèves au cours de ses 35 années d'enseignement dans mon circonscription, où j'ai eu l'occasion d'être une élève moi-même.

Depuis sa retraite, Clara s'est reconcentrée sur la narration d'histoires et le divertissement des gens. Elle a également produit une guide pour la narration des classes du Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. Elle a été choisie comme conteuse pour la tournée de la Semaine canadienne des livres pour enfants TD en 2014.

Je demande à tous les membres de se joindre à moi pour féliciter cette conteuse souvent humoristique et toujours authentique et la remercier d'inspirer des générations de gens pour ses histoires et son enseignement.

Mr. Speaker, the Art Nova Scotia and Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council recently awarded Clara Dugas 2022 Prix Grand-Pré.

Clara is a well-known storyteller who grew up in Clare listening to her mother's stories about the good old times. Not only was she listening to the stories, but she became a storyteller, a skill she used to engage her students over her 35 years in teaching in my constituency at Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Elementary School, where I had the opportunity to be a student as well.

Since retiring, Clara has concentrated on her storytelling and entertaining people. She also produced a guide for storytelling in CSAP classes and was chosen to be a storyteller for the TD Canadian Children's Book Week tour in 2014.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating this often humorous and always authentic storyteller and thank her for inspiring generations of youth through her stories and her teaching.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

LISA LACHANCE: It's my great pleasure today to introduce my team, who is here visiting.

I'll start with Marius van Leeuwan, who is my constituency assistant - Marius, maybe you can give a little wave - greatly feared by many around the city trying to get answers for our constituents.

I would also like to introduce Jennifer Schwartz, who is here as well. Jennifer has joined the team on outreach and communications. As well, I would like to welcome for this week only Felix Couture, who is coming from the Université de Montréal and completing an internship - and also happens to be my cousin.

I would like to welcome them all to the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Kings West.

DOLSEN, ERLE: 100TH BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, On Sunday, October 9, 2022 I had the pleasure of joining a local constituent, Mr. Erle Dolsen, at his 100th birthday celebration, along with many of his family and friends. I was honoured to present Mr. Dolsen with a certificate congratulating him on reaching this amazing milestone.

Mr. Dolsen was the bandmaster at CFB Greenwood for 10 years and played an integral role in the early years of the base's Lake Pleasant Campground. He served for 32 years, retiring in 1975, and continues to be known as the musician playing "The Last Post" at hundreds of schools, community events and memorials around Remembrance Day every year since 1962.

Mr. Dolsen has been a dedicated member of the Royal Canadian Legion Ortona 69 Branch in Berwick, having held every executive position at the branch. He has been an exemplary role model, not only as a veteran but also for his work within our communities.

As his MLA and Chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I ask all members to please join me in congratulating Mr. Dolsen on his 100th birthday milestone and wish him all the best in the years ahead.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

CAPE BRETON CHORDSMEN : COMPETITION WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my place to congratulate the Cape Breton Chordsmen, who celebrated their 50th anniversary by winning first place in the Sunrise Division of the Barbershop Harmony Competition in Saint John, New Brunswick.

This is a group that is, as I said, celebrating their 50th year. They're a staple in our community. They have their celebration coming up in November to mark their 50th anniversary.

I rise in my place to recognize their success in their competition in New Brunswick but also for 50 years in harmony in the CBRM and larger community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

AALBERS, MARC: VOL. RCMP PIPES & DRUMS BAND - THANKS

KENT SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Marc Aalbers of Ostrea Lake. March has been a volunteer for the RCMP Pipes and Drums Band of Nova Scotia for many years. He is a retired Canadian Forces member and has volunteered thousands of hours with the RCMP band.

Marc began as a piper, but due to health considerations a few years ago he had to retire from playing an instrument. Since then, he has acted in a volunteer role as business manager and recently moved to the position of quartermaster.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in thanking Marc for his tremendous time commitment to volunteering for the RCMP Pipes and Drums Band, as well as the Royal Canadian Legion and veterans' groups he frequents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

FEVENS, SANDY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to honour the life of Sandy Fevens of Yarmouth. Sandy recently passed away at the age of 75. Her passing is a great loss to our community, leaving an especially deep void in our theatre community.

For over 20 years, Sandy was the Executive Director of Th'YARC Playhouse and Arts Centre, where her talent and passion for the theatre was both contagious and inspiring. She was loved and respected by all in the theatre community and beyond. Th'YARC will truly not be the same without her, nor will Yarmouth.

I ask this House to join me in sending condolences to the family and friends of Sandy Fevens and recognizing the great contributions she made to arts and entertainment in Yarmouth.

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

EATON, ALEXANDRYA: ARTIST OF YR. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, Queensland is the proud home of the Hooked Rug Museum of North America. Each year, this non-profit selects an Artist of the Year. For 2022, the recipients are Alexandrya Eaton of Sackville, New Brunswick, who won Contemporary Artist of the Year; and Mary Hays of the United States, who was named International Artist of the Year.

Ms. Eaton's work was on display at the museum this Summer in Hubbards, and I was able to admire it during the Sail Away Art Show, which coincided with the start of the World Sailing Championships in August. I want to congratulate Ms. Eaton and Ms. Hays, and the Hooked Rug Museum of North America, for the contributions to this cherished art form.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

PORT MEDWAY FIRE DEPT.: 60TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, on September 18th I had the pleasure of attending an event celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Port Medway Volunteer Fire Department and the 50th anniversary of its Ladies' Auxiliary.

In rural Nova Scotia we know too well the vital roles these volunteer organizations play in our communities. These men and women recruit, train, educate, fundraise, and often put their lives in harm's way in order to serve and protect their neighbours. They selflessly go above and beyond.

I was honoured to speak at this event and especially pleased to acknowledge Maurice and Mary Whynot, founding members of the department and auxiliary.

Please join me in congratulating past and present members on their impressive milestones and in thanking them for their service to the constituents of Queens.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

KING, NOLAN: BENCHED BY NOLAN - RECOG.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to 14-year-old Kentville resident Nolan King. Nolan is a Grade 10 student and entrepreneur with his own woodworking businesses, Benched by Nolan. Nolan uses hemlock from a local mill to build benches, picnic tables, raised flower beds, garbage boxes and custom orders for outdoor furniture.

Nolan operates Benched by Nolan from April to September and has acquired many life skills while managing his business, such as how to advertise, money management, and how to provide customer service.

Please join me today to recognize and congratulate Nolan King as a young entrepreneur in our community of Kentville.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

LOUISBOURG RESIDENTS: HURR. SUPP. - RECOG.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the Town of Louisbourg, which is one of the areas hit hardest by Hurricane Fiona. I specifically want to thank all the members of the community for stepping up in this time of need.

The people of this town were out in full force following the storm, helping neighbours who literally lost everything, including their homes. The generosity was overwhelming, from setting up a comfort centre at the fire hall to bringing in food and supplies to assist with emergency repairs to homes, gassing up generators for those in need.

I'd like to take this opportunity to applaud the community members and volunteers from the fire hall for coming together to help those when they needed them the most.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

BUTLER, ASHLEY: VOL. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Ashley Butler of Lower Sackville. Ashley, owner of the Ultimate Party & Rental Store, has been providing a one-stop shop for all party supplies and wedding rentals to customers of Lower Sackville, as well as across the Atlantic Provinces, since 2013.

Every year during National Volunteer Week, Halifax Regional Municipality acknowledges and honours the contributions of volunteers in their communities. This year, Ashley was chosen as the recipient of the 2022 Volunteer Award for her contributions to our community.

I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ashley Butler on being selected for this award and thank her for the contributions she continues to generously provide to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

SHUB. FIRE DEPT.: 60TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Last month the Shubenacadie Fire Department held a dinner celebrating their 60th anniversary of serving our community. I would like to extend my greatest appreciation to all the volunteers for making this department such an integral part of the community.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the Shubenacadie Fire for 60 years and offer them all the best in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

VOLUNS.: CLUBHOUSE PLAYGROUND REOPENING - CONGRATS.

NOLAN YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize volunteer efforts led by Lou Brannen, president of the Clubhouse Playground Association, and her team of volunteers on the grand reopening of the Clubhouse Playground in Wood's Harbour.

Initially opening in 1993, the playground that has served three generations now and has all new play apparatus and play surface that support inclusion. This project came to fruition as a result fundraising, provincial and municipal grants, as well as funding from the Live Well Challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask all members to join me in thanking the volunteers and congratulating the community on their newly modernized playground.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

ANTIG. RESIDENTS: HURR. SUPP. - RECOG.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I rise today to recognize and thank so many members of my community. Hurricane Fiona had a devastating impact on Antigonish. People had extensive damages to their homes, those in the agriculture sector were gravely impacted, and most residents were without power for many days.

During these difficult times, the Antigonish community members stepped up. Comfort centres were quickly opened across the county where residents were able to charge

devices, grab something to eat, fill water containers, and visit with neighbours. Many of these centres hosted suppers so that people would have a hot meal.

We also saw businesses that were running on generators, open so people could buy gas for generators, purchase supplies they needed to make repairs, and for household needs. Many of these people are also dealing with a lack of power in their homes and damage to their property. I would also like to acknowledge health care workers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of these people who stepped up during a difficult time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

FUNDY ERRATICS: 10TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring recognition to the Fundy Erratics.

The Fundy Erratics are a local hiking group full of passionate hikers who come together to share their love for the great outdoors in Digby County. They recently celebrated their 10th anniversary. They celebrated by hiking to the SS Princess Louise monument at the Point Prim Lighthouse in Digby.

Their hikes vary in levels of difficulty, allowing people of all ages and skill to join in on the fun. I had the pleasure of hiking with this fabulous group on the Acacia Valley Trail last Winter. It's a great way to connect with others while appreciating nature that surrounds us.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that we all share a round of applause for the Fundy Erratics to congratulate them on their 10 years of success, and I personally look forward to joining them on future adventures very soon.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

STEWART, BILL: NEIGHBOURS SPEAK UP - RECOG.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to recognize and thank Bill Stewart for his community leadership. After his quaint neighbourhood in the Hydrostone became overrun with noise and disruption from Airbnb guests, Bill Stewart founded Neighbours Speak Up as a concerned citizen and a neighbour.

Neighbours Speak Up aims to bring attention to the impact of short-term rentals on neighbourhood sustainability and the housing crisis. Bill has campaigned to spread awareness on his issue and equips residents with the resources they need to take action.

I recently met with Bill and other members of the Neighbours Speak Up at my monthly coffee and conversation. They highlighted more reasons, numbers, and issues of short-term rentals in Nova Scotia.

I would ask that the House join me in recognizing Bill Stewart for his leadership and service to his community.

[1:00 p.m.]

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

Before we go into Oral Questions Put By Members to Ministers, I neglected to announce the late debate topic for this evening. It's submitted by the honourable member for Dartmouth North:

Whereas the federal government's carbon reduction requirements compelled the Nova Scotia government to put together a plan that would both protect Nova Scotians from high costs and also tackle climate change; and

Whereas the provincial government has had ample time but failed to submit a comprehensive plan to do this;

Therefore be it resolved the people of Nova Scotia are facing the real possibility of high costs and a changing climate as a result of this government's inaction.

Again, that's the topic for late debate at the moment of interruption.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: CARBON LEVY PLAN - SOLUTION

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Premier and the government are more interested in playing the blame game when it comes to the impending carbon levy than actually finding a solution. The Premier has gone as far as to say that the provincial Liberals are supporting a carbon tax.

However, the Premier knows that it was actually this provincial party that negotiated an alternative that was accepted by Ottawa, something that the current government has failed to do.

My question to the Premier is: Is this government more interested in playing the blame game or actually finding a solution to this big issue that's going to affect the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't call us "solutionists" for no reason. We're interested in finding a solution. The reality is that we don't want a carbon tax. We're not interested in a carbon tax. A carbon tax is not necessary in this province. If there is a carbon tax, it is only because the Liberals insisted that there be one, not because we want one.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard too many people lately actually calling the government "solutionists" other than the Premier himself.

The Premier states that it's because of the Liberals that this is going to happen, but we contend that it's because this government did fail to negotiate. The Premier has said that the Liberals themselves have not engaged in meaningful conversation about this and the Opposition.

However, Mr. Speaker, I'll table 120 pages of meaningful conversation this week that members of this caucus have had regarding this carbon levy. I think Nova Scotians need better than the blame game from this Premier. Nova Scotians need an actual alternative plan to the carbon levy that's going to come in or all Nova Scotians are going to pay over 14 cents a litre more at the gas pumps when we're already dealing with a cost of living crisis.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to have discussions internally and stuff, but really what Nova Scotians need right now is their elected representatives to get on the same page and tell Ottawa together that we don't need a carbon tax in this province.

I would encourage and welcome the opportunity to go hand in hand with the Leader of the Liberal Party and the Leader of the NDP to go to Ottawa and say that Nova Scotia does not need a carbon tax. We have something better. If they can get together with us, I would love to do that.

ZACH CHURCHILL: However, there does need to be a viable alternative that is going to price carbon to protect our environment, our climate, and also to protect consumers at the pump.

Mr. Speaker, we've had that program in place for years now in Nova Scotia. That program was not defended, protected, or negotiated by the current government. The plan that they have in place now is similar to other Conservative plans that have been thrown out in the courts. It's actually going to cost Nova Scotians more and do less for the environment.

To the “solutionists” opposite, how is that an acceptable outcome?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the discussion and I certainly wish that the federal government would have a meaningful discussion on this very same issue.

The reality is that the path Nova Scotia is on, which in many parts was set by the former government, will reduce greenhouse gases by 17 per cent. A carbon tax will only reduce it by 2 per cent. We have something better in this province than a carbon tax. The member opposite, I believe, should know that the cap and trade program that was negotiated is not an option. It can't be extended. There is no way to extend that program.

Instead, we need everybody in this Chamber to get behind Nova Scotians. Put the politics aside. Get behind Nova Scotians and tell the federal government that Nova Scotia does not need a carbon tax. We are doing something better.

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

PREM.: DAYCARE CLOSURES - ADDRESS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, this government promised to open an additional 1,500 daycare spots by this December, and 9,500 more by 2026 - but Nova Scotian families can't find a spot right now. It seems that every week we hear news of another centre closing, and those in the sector are warning us that this trend will continue. One daycare operator told us, I think we will see more and more private centres close in the next couple of months. I'll table that.

As we are one month out from the government's deadline of over 1,000 new spots, can the Premier assure families that this promise will not be broken?

THE PREMIER: What I would assure families is that we are absolutely committed to affordable child care in this province. It's absolutely critical. We know with the cost of living rises, the pressure is on families. We know that affordable child care is something that we need for every family for so many reasons. That's where our focus is.

There is no denying that the implementation of the Canada-wide agreement is not without its difficulties, that is for sure. It is not without its stress for many of those private operators. We understand that, but our focus remains on getting through that transition, making sure that Nova Scotian families have access to affordable daycare and child care. That is where our focus will always remain.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: It sounds like Nova Scotian families won't have access to those spots that were promised.

This week it was reported that military families here in Halifax won't, either. The Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre in Windsor Park - the only extended hours option for military families on this side of the harbour - will be closing due to a chronic shortage of staff. This reflects a widespread problem, as centres have reported their challenges in recruiting and retaining early childhood educators. I've reported that directly to the department.

One long-time ECE said earlier this year: For me to have to work from 8:00 in the morning until 9:30 at night just to make ends meet is very difficult. I could go to, let's say, Costco, and make more money per hour and only have to work one job.

I'll table that. The new wage framework does not address this issue. The Province cannot afford to lose any more ECEs if it's to meet its goal of 9,500 new spots by 2026. How does the Premier plan to recruit and retain all these workers without paying a living wage?

THE PREMIER: We're deeply concerned about this, for sure. We want to make sure families have access to their child care. It's absolutely critical. We want to make sure that those providing the child care are being paid a fair and proper wage. That's obviously been a focus of our government. We know, the track record is there on doing what we can to provide that. We'll continue to do that.

We're concerned, and we're working with a number of the operators, for sure. Certainly, the military families are one, absolutely. I know they had some options for the families there. Maybe some of those options don't work for some of the families, but we'll do what we can to continue to work with the providers and make sure we put the families first.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I think one possible option for families in Windsor Park was to drive to Shearwater, which doesn't seem like a real option to me.

As a result of the most recent daycare closures, families are having to look further away from their homes and workplaces to find new spots, sometimes with no luck. After the closure of a Fall River daycare, one mother remarked: I'm on so many wait-lists right now I can't even remember how many. I'll table that.

Daycare closures pose a real challenge to families, and affected families face potential job losses. As the executive director of a Dartmouth centre said: You may not have a child in daycare, but it will impact your ability to hire people and your ability to obtain services from other industries, because people can't work if they don't have child care.

My question to the Premier is: Why is he allowing this critical sector to flounder and leaving families behind?

THE PREMIER: What I do know is that those providing child care care deeply about the families they're working with. In terms of that specific example, the different options that the people providing the care offer to their families, I certainly wouldn't belittle those and weigh in on those without all of the facts. It's a shame to see that happen.

We know that people put families first. People want to put the child care they're providing first. We'll work with the operators across this province. We'll work within the framework that has been agreed with the federal government. We want to make sure that families have access to affordable child care. That's our only focus. That's where we'll remain.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

NRR: ATLANTIC LOOP - SAVE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, after over a year of pressure from the Opposition on power rates and after the government said they are going to wait for the NSUARB hearing to take place, the government did bend to that pressure and table legislation to curb the rate hike.

However, there's another big hit to household bills coming. We all know that the price of gas and fuel and home heating oil is set for very large increases, and potentially not just for the short term.

Nova Scotia Power has also said they are halting investment in the Atlantic Loop project. I will table that. This means that not only will we not meet our 2030 emissions targets, it means that we are not able to transition off increasingly expensive fossil fuels. Power bills in Nova Scotia under this government are going to go up and up.

My question to the Premier is: What is he going to do to ensure that we save the Atlantic Loop project to keep prices on our power bills lower and lower?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I thank the member for this important question. The Atlantic Loop is a very important key component to us getting off coal-fired power generation. The fact of the matter is that we are still at the table with the Atlantic Loop with the federal government. This is a project that will not move forward without the partnership of the federal government.

We were still at that table this week. I believe Nova Scotia Power was still at that table having those conversations. We stood up for ratepayers. As I've said in the last couple of weeks in the media, the government will still be at that table. I sure hope that Nova Scotia Power will be at the table.

As the member opposite indicated, the pressure from Opposition - I can take that as an expectation that they are going to support that important bill.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the federal government has been very open about their thoughts on the Atlantic Loop and that they want Nova Scotia Power to remain at the table. However, the Atlantic Loop wasn't just nice to have, it is necessary.

Nova Scotia Power has listed 27 possible outcome scenarios for emissions in our province in 2030. Without the Atlantic Loop, we do not meet any of these targets. I'll table that.

It's imperative that we transition to both keep power rates affordable and to protect our environment and our climate. We will need more than just the plans that have been put in place by this government - we need that Atlantic Loop.

Can the government please tell us what the concrete plans are to make sure we do not lose this incredibly important renewable energy project that is not only going to help us protect our environment and climate, but also help us keep power rates lower?

TORY RUSHTON: The Atlantic Loop is part of the piece of the puzzle. Once the five projects that the independent procurement manager just announced are successful, that's another big crunch into the renewable aspect. Once we can get Muskrat Falls on full and have that committed power come from Newfoundland - we're already at that 70 per cent renewables target. That's well before the 2030 deadline that this government stuck with.

Mr. Speaker, there are other alternatives. We've talked many months, many weeks, about green hydrogen. Is that a key to the thing? I think so. We're open-minded. There are many things at the table and a lot of other investors and companies that want to have these conversations, and we'll commit to that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

NRR: TRANSITION OFF COAL - PROGRESS

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The Atlantic Loop - or at least upgrading the interties to New Brunswick - is a key part of the strategy to transition away from coal and keep power rates stable into the future. Respectfully, hydrogen is not going to do it.

Nova Scotia has the ambitious goal to get off coal by 2030, and this is not easy. This is why all parties in the past supported equivalency agreements with the federal government, but it is achievable. That's why our last Throne Speech in the former government laid out the plan to get off coal by 2030.

Considering the Atlantic Loop, which is what the Premier put all his chips on, is now in jeopardy, will this government admit that there has been no discernible progress and that Nova Scotia will continue to burn coal past 2030?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no, I don't agree with that context.

We are still at the table. By all indications that I've had this week, Nova Scotia Power is still in those conversations. I respect the fact that they have concerns about their ability moving forward, but we're all still at the table. We haven't written off the Atlantic Loop. Maybe the Opposition has.

IAIN RANKIN: We did a lot of work to try to find ways to get more low- or no-emission baseload into this province, and we have just eight years left to decommission eight coal plants. We know that our previous timelines have already been missed for retiring the oldest plants. Trenton Plant 5 was extended by a year and Lingan Unit 2 by eight months.

It doesn't matter how many targets this government repeats in legislation that were actually established before them. There is no plan to get off coal. Worse, there's no public just transition plan for our workers in these industries. A plan to follow through on these targets needs to avoid throwing hard-working Nova Scotians under the bus if the government actually wants to put words into action. The future of our entire energy transition is stalled, and workers have no idea what's going on.

When will the government take it seriously and explain to the public exactly what the plan is?

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, the Atlantic Loop is a component. It's a piece of the puzzle. Is it the only piece of the puzzle? No. We're going to be staying committed on this side of the House as government for renewable energy - renewable energy that's built right here in Nova Scotia. We're committed to having the green energy aspect here. Let's bring our young people home to work in a green economy right here in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect on a new question.

ECC: CARBON REBATE AMOUNT - INFORM

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Wind and solar are not going to do it. We need baseload power coming into this province. I would like for the government to start increasing their investments and try to get funding from the federal government from multiple programs that are already available, Mr. Speaker.

[1:15 p.m.]

The federal government's carbon pricing has been law since the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change was signed half a decade ago. But it's not until this government took office that Nova Scotia has now been faced with the prospect of a carbon tax coming in. This government had three options when it came to carbon pricing - let's be clear: keep cap and trade, a carbon tax, or a hybrid system. This was clear. The government chose to submit a last-minute, faulty, half-a-plan to the federal government. Now Nova Scotians will have a carbon tax on gas, diesel, propane, and natural gas - making everything cost more.

My question for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is: Will the minister tell Nova Scotians if they figured out how much of a rebate they will get under this choice of a rebate system, and will it be more or less than in other provinces?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the premise of that question. Over the past year, we have done a lot of ongoing analysis in terms of what the best approach would be. We have landed on a very, very simple response: No carbon tax at the pumps here in Nova Scotia.

IAIN RANKIN: The federal government's carbon pricing has been in effect for years, and a made-in-Nova Scotia cap and trade system has saved people from having to pay more at the pumps and for their home heating. This Premier and minister had lots of opportunities to stop a carbon tax from coming to Nova Scotia, and at every opportunity they failed. They had a whole year to come up with a carbon pricing plan that would shield Nova Scotians from the carbon tax, but instead they sat on their hands and put forward this faulty plan.

Will he admit that because of this lack of planning, Nova Scotians will have a carbon tax, like everyone else is saying - academics, the media, and both Opposition parties?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, this government will never stop defending Nova Scotia. That's what this is about. We want to ensure the protection of our environment. We want to ensure the reduction of greenhouse gases. We also want to ensure affordability. We also want to ensure that power rates are manageable. Make no mistake, the bill that's before this Legislature to bring in performance standards will protect ratepayers and protect the environment. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Environment and Climate Change has the floor.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have been clear with the federal government - crystal clear - that a consumer carbon tax is not necessary. We don't need it to reduce greenhouse gases. What we need is for Ottawa to work with us to develop green hydrogen, solar, to develop offshore wind, and to develop the power and opportunities in the Bay of Fundy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

SNSIS: ELIG. LIMIT FOR SRS. AID - RECONSIDER

GARY BURRILL: My question is for the Premier, Mr. Speaker. A senior writes us:

“We are both seniors living on a pension. By the time we pay for power, water, groceries, gas, car payment, et cetera, money is getting slimmer, and I haven't mentioned the unbelievable amount we're going to pay for oil to heat our home. This is really starting to give us anxiety of how we're going to make it, and we have not felt like this since my husband retired. We're always just above the income for any kind of help for seniors.”

If a couple makes more than \$44,000, they're not eligible for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, and if they make more than \$37,500, the Seniors Care Grant won't help them.

Will the Premier acknowledge that the income cut-offs for these programs are just too low for them to be really effective?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: These are certainly questions that are very important, top of mind for our government. That's why some of the programs that the member opposite spoke about - the Seniors Care Grant. This is a new program that our government announced. We've responded to some calls to action that we've heard from our constituents in discussion with caucus. We've added a \$250 top-up for the heat, we've added a \$250 top-up for Hurricane Fiona. That's an investment of \$29 million. We'll continue to do what we can.

GARY BURRILL: Another senior writes this:

“We are on a small pension myself and my wife . . . One of our sons is a single parent and because he often has not the money to . . . get oil we have to help him . . . He has no oil at this time and winter is approaching and with oil three times as expensive as it was last year the oil rebate they give to low income familys will only give enough oil to last 2 weeks.”

The Premier and the minister both know no oil company in Nova Scotia is going to deliver to your home for less than \$300 of an order of oil, and that means that the whole Heating Assistance Rebate Program does not even get the oil truck to pull up in front of your house.

Will the Premier acknowledge that in the present situation, these problems are not adequate to what is needed?

COLTON LEBLANC: Earlier this year, we did announce another \$150 top-up to the HARP program. That's recognizing that there were additional challenges and pressures for Nova Scotians. We are continuously looking at ways to improve the programs that we deliver to Nova Scotians, and we'll continue to do that.

In addition to the HARP program, there's also another program administered through the Salvation Army, the HEAT Fund, and that's one that we continuously support and appreciate the members' support in sharing that information with their constituents.

THE SPEAKER: Since the member was quoting from letters that were sent to him, I'd ask that he table both those letters for the House.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

ECC: CONTINUE GREEN FUND PROJECTS - COMMIT

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: With the elimination of the carbon tax, we aren't only left to pay higher taxes, we also lose the Green Fund that was brought in by the cap and trade program.

The Green Fund funded programs like the SolarHomes Program, which offers rebates to homeowners installing solar panels; the Affordable Multifamily Housing Program, which provides incentives for energy efficiency upgrades in affordable housing projects; and the Small Business and Not-For-Profit Energy Solutions Program, which offers incentives for energy-efficiency upgrades in small businesses and non-profits.

Why has this government chosen to eliminate the Green Fund and place these programs at risk?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Quite frankly, that question is full of FUD - Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt. Let me clarify that FUD question with some facts, Mr. Speaker.

This government has invested \$100 million in climate change initiatives through the Green Fund. That is why with the bill before this House, the Green Fund will become the Nova Scotia Climate Change Fund, and we'll continue to make those investments because it's right for Nova Scotia. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: I started looking through the unparliamentary language when that word came out but couldn't find it. (Laughter)

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Well, hey, you learn a new word sometimes, Mr. Speaker.

Really, there's no other options. In the Green Fund alone, I can provide a number of examples, but this government's spent close to \$40 million alone in that fund and they don't know where the money's going to come from.

What this government has done by getting rid of the cap and trade system is remove a program that did more for the environment and raised revenue for green funding through GHG actions that this government will not be able to raise. Their prospective new climate fund does not have any guaranteed funding whatsoever. It's entirely at the discretion of the Premier how it gets funded.

To the minister, will the government commit to continuing to fund these Green Fund projects that are doing so much good for this province?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Yes. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DED: INFLATION INACTION - IMPACT

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the damaging result of this government's lack of action on economic recovery and cost of living play out in rural Nova Scotia.

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council's September Economic Update for Atlantic Canada says that jobs in Nova Scotia's primary industries have dropped nearly 20 per cent over the last few months as businesses continue to fend off pressure from record-high inflation without any support from the government. I'll table that document.

My question is to the Minister of Economic Development: Is she aware that this government's inaction on the cost of living crisis is causing rural industry and business to fall further and further behind?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: We have spent the last year speaking with business people across this province. We know that there are many pressures.

We know that there are the pressures to simply survive the COVID-19 pandemic and now there are fears of a recession. We know that there is an extremely tight labour market. We continue to work side by side and to speak robustly and frankly with the

business community. What I would add is that our business community remains very optimistic.

CARMAN KERR: Our rural economy is struggling and falling further behind. They have disproportionately shouldered the impact of the cost of living crisis with no support from this government. A new tax sure isn't going to help rural industry recover.

Mr. Speaker, is this government's plan for economic development in rural Nova Scotia to introduce a new tax?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: The easy answer is no.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

ECC: FUEL TAX INCREASE - INFORM

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia has the second-highest percentage of homes heated by oil in the country. There are 52 per cent of Nova Scotians who use oil to heat their homes. Home heating costs are already through the roof this year due to soaring inflation.

Nova Scotians are paying over 50 per cent more for oil this Winter than they were last Winter. People are already worried sick about heating their homes this Winter. Now they are going to have to face an additional carbon tax because this government failed to do the rigorous negotiations with the federal government.

To the Minister of Environment and Climate Change: Will the minister let people know how much extra they will be paying to heat their homes due to this government's inaction?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: I think the honourable member indicated quite well how challenging and how troubling a federal carbon tax is for residents of Nova Scotia. That is why we have been clear for months that a carbon tax on consumers is not necessary - it's not necessary in a time of historic inflation that we haven't seen since the early 1980s.

I encourage my honourable members across the aisle here to join us in opposing the federal carbon tax on consumers. (Applause)

KEITH IRVING: The minister knows full well, if he has been at the table for the last year with the federal government, that the plan that they have put forward de facto introduces that carbon tax. So he's fully aware.

I can tell the minister that a new report by Larry Hughes of Dalhousie University shows that a home that uses oil this season will have an additional \$317 of carbon tax. That's just in new taxes, Mr. Speaker, and I'll table that report.

This isn't a game of political football with the federal government. Real people are going to be hurting because this government did not act and negotiate a deal to avoid the carbon tax.

Does this minister believe that Nova Scotians can afford another \$300 in taxes on their heating bills?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: De facto? Okay, let's talk a little de jure; let's talk a little legal. The legal requirements that the federal government has on pricing carbon are extremely strict. We've been clear that it's unnecessary. Work with provinces - provinces like Nova Scotia - to achieve their greenhouse gas targets by working on renewable energy.

We've been at the table; we've discussed with Ottawa. The Premier has been crystal clear with Ottawa; I have been crystal clear with Ottawa: A federal carbon tax is not necessary for us to reach our targets. All it will be is punitive on Nova Scotians, and we'll always stand up for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DCS: HFX. HOMELESSNESS SOLUTION - UPDATE

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Community Services. The Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia says that the Halifax homeless population has doubled in the past year. I'll table that.

Yesterday the minister said that her government just needs a bit more time to deal with the homelessness crisis in this province, but we don't have a bit more time. This government has already had over a year. Nighttime temperatures are dropping and service providers can't give out enough tents. The fact is there are not enough beds for the number of people sleeping rough right now.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the minister said that her government will find an interim solution. When will they find a permanent one?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I thank the member for this important question. We realize that there's a lot of work to do. We have made substantial and significant investments. Just in this past budget, we added another \$17 million to address this.

[1:30 p.m.]

We know that this issue didn't grow overnight. This issue has been growing for a long time. It was COVID-19 that absolutely brought it out but it has been insulated away from us.

On that note, I will say that the Executive Director, Jim Graham, also said in that article - and I'll table it - "I think the Department of Community Services with its mandate around permanent supported housing - that's a huge help. It's not something you can do immediately but a commitment to having that kind of housing support attached to housing is really important."

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful that the minister is tabling that article, because there are still people sleeping on the street.

Eric Jonsson is a street navigator working with people experiencing homelessness in Halifax. Earlier this week he said, "Pre-pandemic, I would buy two to three tents a month and that would last me. Today I had a conversation with a colleague about bulk-buying a pallet of 100 tents, and I don't think that will last the winter. And that's the state of housing this year." I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware that people become homeless for many different reasons. Many of those reasons are the direct responsibility of this government. Why are we leaving people out in the cold?

KARLA MACFARLANE: The same report says that we have inherited this issue but we're the first government that has actually addressed it. Mr. Speaker, that is obvious and proven with the financial investments that we have been making. We are the first government to show a dedicated commitment to working extremely hard, making financial investments and making sure that there are temporary shelters so that we can find permanent housing for these individuals. We won't stop until we get it right.

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

ECC - CARBON PLAN: ELECTRICITY COST - CLARIFY

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, over one in five Nova Scotian households heat their homes through electricity. How much will the failing plan for a carbon price cost Nova Scotians who heat their homes with electricity?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Look, we want to protect Nova Scotians, we want to protect the environment. We want to ensure we continue our leadership in greenhouse gas reduction. We're doing this to protect ratepayers. That's why the bill that is before this House is so critical, because it will protect ratepayers by 8 per cent.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I thought I would stop with my first question, but I will answer the question myself because I knew I wouldn't get an answer across the way. According to Dr. Larry Hughes, it will be \$823. What would the minister like to say to Nova Scotians who will see that \$800 increase to heat their homes this Winter, among all the other inflationary pressures they will face?

We see the carbon tax price on Nova Scotians drastically reduced on heat pumps. The carbon tax for home heating for someone with the heat pump is low, is less, is \$87. That's upwards of \$700 in savings. That \$700 is also a better way for the environment.

My question to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is: Will he drastically expand existing heat pump programs so Nova Scotians can heat their homes this Winter?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, through Efficiency Nova Scotia, through various other government programs, we're working with Nova Scotians to quickly move to help Nova Scotians put these things in their homes. We certainly are sensitive to those struggles and that's why we've been saying clearly that a consumer carbon tax at the federal level is simply unacceptable. It's simply not necessary, and I encourage members across the aisle to stop defending the federal government and join us in defending Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

ECC: OIL HEATING ASSISTANCE - UPDATE

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Atlantic provinces have a unique circumstance when discussing fuel prices. Over half the people in our province use oil to heat their homes. I can table that. We were pleased to see an announcement coming from the Premier and the federal government that would help address home heating oil affordability. However, while other provinces like Newfoundland have been communicating what their programs are going to do, Nova Scotians are still in the dark.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change update the House on how they are distributing the money, and timelines? When do we expect to hear?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: One of the first things, on being appointed to this position, that I brought to the federal government, to Environment and Climate Change Canada, was the sense of urgency of helping Nova Scotians transition off oil. We have a significant number of people in this province still on home heating oil. We need to ensure that just transition.

Just this past Summer, working with my Atlantic colleagues, we formed the Atlantic Alliance, where we clearly told Ottawa how critical it is to get assistance to get Nova Scotians off home heating oil. I'm very pleased with what Ottawa has offered. We

think there's so much more that can be done. Make no mistake, on this side we continuously and rigorously defend Nova Scotians.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I have a good idea for this government. Anyway, another idea for our government: we can use the Low Carbon Economy Fund to help people with their fuel bills and bring people out of energy poverty. Prince Edward Island is installing free heat pumps for anybody making less than \$55,000 a year. That's right, free, no strings attached, no paperwork or rebate applications needed. Here's an idea for you, Mr. Minister - a very simple and effective program.

Mr. Speaker, will this government take some action to help people deal with the rising cost of living by putting heat pumps in the homes of people for free?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: How about \$100 million worth of action, Mr. Speaker? How do you like that? That's what this government's done since forming government last August. We'll continue to make those investments to support Nova Scotians, because for Nova Scotians, the transition to clean, renewable energy is a priority, and we'll continue to make those investments, work with Nova Scotians to ensure that just transition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

EECD: UNIV. SCHOOL FOOD PGM. - IMPLEMENT

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: One year ago, last Fall, I tabled a notice of motion asking the government to have a universal school food program. Unfortunately, the government voted no.

A universal school food program would ensure that no one goes hungry, so students can learn. Learning does not happen if all you can hear is your stomach growling. Will the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development tell us today if her government is committed to starting a universal school food program here in Nova Scotia?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I recall when the member tabled that last year, and I recall answering that our government is absolutely committed to the provision of healthy food in schools. We know how important it is for students to get healthy access to food for learning and for well-being. I can assure the member opposite that I am working with the department and with the federal colleagues who've identified in their mandate letters that they are committed to expanding access to food in schools to make sure we do exactly that.

I will also say that as we look at systemic ways to improve access to food in schools, we continue to support our students every day who need that access. We do that through programs that already exist, including the breakfast program that provides breakfast to students all across the province who need it - universal access to breakfast.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, we all got an education of how not to answer a question. The question was: Will this government start a universal school lunch program? I did not hear a yes.

As a nurse, I can tell you it is a lot cheaper to prevent problems. It is a lot cheaper for this government to provide healthy, nutritious food to the students who are trying to learn in our schools. Chips are cheaper than fresh fruit. Pop is cheaper than milk

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

ELIZABETH SMITH MCCROSSIN: Will this government start a universal school lunch program? I want to hear yes, and I'm sure everyone else in this gallery would like to hear a yes as well.

BECKY DRUHAN: I will assure the member opposite once again that we are committed to working towards ensuring that our students have broader access to food in schools. But I will also say, because this is really important, because people need to know now what's available, we're working very hard to expand the systems that exist.

We're one year in, we inherited the systems that are there and we're working hard to expand them, but in the meantime, we want all students and families to understand if they need access to food in schools, they have access to food in schools. We see food in rural schools that are delivered through small food programs where we have staff who provide homemade meals every day. We have schools across the province who provide salad . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has the floor.

BECKY DRUHAN: We have food pantries; we have local organizations that provide food. We work with agriculture to make sure that food is available to all students who need it as we continue to work to expand the system to make universal access.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

ECC: NEW CARBON PLAN COSTS - RESPOND

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I do want to reference the fact that the minister keeps referencing the \$100 million of action - that's from the Green Fund. That money was raised through cap and trade. That's what they voted against, and if they would have had their way when we negotiated back in the day, we'd have a carbon tax right now.

Soaring energy costs are a large burden for Nova Scotians, especially outside of HRM. A recent study by Energize Bridgewater showed that residents there paid an average

of \$6,500 a year to heat and power their homes - and I will table that - and that \$6,500 is without the carbon tax being added. The carbon tax will add at best hundreds, and at worst thousands of dollars to this yearly bill.

Across the province, they're going to be left with a bill because of this government's inaction. Will the minister responsible take accountability for this new tax?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: The bottom line is it's Ottawa that's imposing this tax on Nova Scotians, and we have consistently over the past year presented a number of options for Ottawa to work with us on. (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister for Environment and Climate Change has the floor.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, I feel like I'm in a scene in *Alice in Wonderland* here. Everything that is down is up, everything that is up is down. Imagine Liberals trying to convince Nova Scotians that they won't have anything to do with the Liberal carbon tax. That's the world we're in, though, Mr. Speaker.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: We convinced Nova Scotians we didn't want to do anything with the carbon tax. That's why we negotiated a deal. Ottawa told us a carbon tax was coming, and we got to the table and we negotiated a deal and we avoided it. Not only did we do that, we reduced our GHG reductions, we built amazing programs, and this government is using the same money that we used to generate all of the funds for those programs through our negotiations and through cap and trade.

The same report reveals that one in three of Bridgewater households are juggling bills to pay for utilities, and 32 per cent reported cutting back on groceries to pay for power and heating in the past year - and I'll table that. That means less food on the table for their families, just so they can keep the lights on and their homes warm . . .

THE SPEAKER: Is there a question?

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm out of time already? Wow.

Mr. Speaker, the minister knew his options. Why did he choose the one that would cost Nova Scotians the most?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, in point of fact, the bill that is before this Legislature will protect Nova Scotia ratepayers, along with protecting the environment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again, let's be crystal clear. We have been negotiating, working with Ottawa for the past year. The Premier and I have met with Minister Guilbeault in the Summer. We were crystal clear that a carbon tax at the pump, on home heating oil, is not

necessary for us to achieve our greenhouse gas targets. Rather, to this very moment, we are still saying to Ottawa, put the brakes on this punitive tax on Nova Scotians because the bottom line is we don't need it to achieve our targets, we don't need it to reduce pollution.

[1:45 p.m.]

What we need is Ottawa to continue to work with us more aggressively to develop the clean, renewable sector. That's the path forward for Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

ECC: CARBON PLAN INACTION - EXPLAIN

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotia families are struggling to just get by. They simply cannot afford the costs of this government's failure to act on carbon pricing. They cannot afford the PC carbon tax.

Nova Scotia families are paying over \$1,000 more for food this year, and I can table that. Those who own a home are paying hundreds more in mortgage payments because there was just another hike moments ago, another 50 basis points.

Considering the cost of living crisis, why did this government choose to turn in their homework late, to download the cost of the carbon tax on Nova Scotia families?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, we've rigorously defended this province from the punitive carbon tax that potentially could come from Ottawa. We've been clear that this is not necessary. We certainly understand and want to work with Nova Scotians to ensure affordability. We want to ensure that Nova Scotians are set up for success so that as we transition to clean, renewable energy, it's manageable.

What Nova Scotians want is practical, realistic alternatives to fossil fuels. They don't want a federal carbon tax at the pumps, on home heating oil. Join us in that opposition to Ottawa.

KELLY REGAN: If they were so concerned, they could have rigorously defended the cap and trade that was already in place and earning money for Nova Scotians.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of this tax for a household of two could be upwards of \$1,100 a year. For a household of four, it's upwards of \$1,500 and for a household of six, upwards of \$2,000. I can table those estimates. Under the cap and trade system, the carbon price on households was basically zero and we were able to make investments in greening our province so we could meet our emission targets, too.

I ask the minister: Does he not understand that his lack of a plan to address carbon pricing will result in a carbon tax, or is he content to just sit on his hands and blame somebody else?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I understand all too well that cap and trade is not compliant under the new, strict, almost dogmatic federal regulations on pricing carbon - \$65 this year, going up \$15 next year until we get \$170 a tonne by 2030.

Again, we all want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We all want to ensure we deal with climate change. We all want to ensure a prosperous future, but on this side of the House a federal consumer carbon tax, in our estimation, should not be part of the future for Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FTB: MOTIVE FUEL TAX PROFITS - SHARE

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, in the Spring, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board told us there would be no windfall on tax revenue from fuel. Yet here we are now with a \$20 million surplus in the motive fuel tax. Why is this government not putting that in the hands of Nova Scotians and hoarding the profits?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: The reality is, Mr. Speaker, people in this province have to drive to get to where they're going. A Liberal carbon tax is not going to make it any easier. It's not going to reduce people's driving habits either. I think you will see, if you look at the numbers, demand has stayed consistent. Even though we've had significant price increases, people still had to drive.

FRED TILLEY: I'm going to table those documents where the minister talked about that there would not be a surplus on fuel tax revenue, and the fact that there is a \$20 million surplus on fuel tax revenue.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 233.

Bill No. 233 - Need a Family Practice Registry Accountability Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'm very pleased to stand in my place and bring forward this piece of legislation. To clarify for the House, what this legislation will do is enshrine in law that the Need a Family Practice Registry is reported every single month.

For anyone who's not aware, the Need a Family Practice Registry is the list that collects all the individuals and their data who do not have a family doctor in Nova Scotia. That was brought in by the previous government to hold ourselves accountable in our efforts to attach patients to family practitioners.

It has been key in terms of informing government strategy on doctor recruitment and doctor retention. It has been critical in understanding whether these strategies are working or not or where future resources need to be applied.

The reason we feel this is necessary to bring is because we've heard recently the Premier bring into question the validity of these numbers. I will remind the House that for years, no less than thousands of times did the Premier and the PC Party use that Need a Family Practice Registry as a bludgeon to say that there's a health care crisis in Nova Scotia. I'll remind this House that that was done when that number was at 50,000. The PCs were claiming there was a health care crisis with primary care when that list was at 50,000.

We are now reaching close to 120,000 people on that list, and now we're actually hearing the Premier say things like the management of the health care system is actually remarkable, when this situation has gotten at least twice as bad since the last election, since the PCs have taken office.

I will table the Premier's quotes on this particular issue when he was asked by media on October 12, 2022 about the Need a Family Practice Registry numbers going up, to get to 116,000. Again, at the time of the last election, it was at not even 72,000 people who needed a family doctor. At that time the Premier said, this is a crisis, 70,000 people without a family doctor. We know that all the members opposite were knocking on doors and other PC candidates saying, we've got a crisis, do you have a family doctor, there are 70,000 people without a family doctor. That number has now reached 116,000. It's nearly

doubled in the amount since the time that the PCs started saying that we had a health care crisis in this province.

The Premier was asked about the family registry wait-list going up, and actually having not had the most updated numbers released yet. I will remind the House the government did not release those numbers until they were pressured by the Opposition to do so - those numbers were two weeks late being reported.

I'll quote from the article, "[The Premier] often referred to the same list when he was in the Official Opposition, describing the province's health-care system as being in crisis. While the number of people on the list is still a concern, [the Premier] said it may not be entirely accurate.'

Another quote from the Premier: "We also know there are people accessing care who are attaching themselves to a primary health-care provider and are not necessarily coming off the list, they're still showing up."

When pressed by the media how accurate that number was, the Premier said, "It is accurate in the sense that there is a problem to be solved. How accurate the actual number is, I don't know. When people do get attached the first thing they do is probably not call and say that their name can come off the list." In fact, Mr. Speaker, we know that that is the process that's in place. People do come off the list when they are attached.

I will say that the minister has said in this House that that list is not going to be touched, and we appreciate that answer, but we have not had that same commitment from the Premier.

I will table some quotes by the minister that also brought into question whether or not the government is going to change the metrics on this list or not. The minister echoed what the Premier said, suggesting that there is a gap in the reporting and that it takes longer for accounting to remove patients from the list. She said, "We're not going to take the list away right now, but I do think there's an opportunity to have a look at the list and see if there's increased functionality in the future."

I'll table all of these quotes. Again, the media pointed out that while in Opposition, the Progressive Conservatives used the doctor wait-list to question the Liberals' handling of the health care portfolio - again, when the situation was drastically and demonstrably better by every single metric that you look at with patient attachment.

The reason why we are tabling this piece of legislation is to protect that critical data, to ensure that we know how many people are without a family doctor, to know where those folks are, and how we can best deploy government resources to attach them to either a family practitioner or another primary care provider, like a nurse practitioner.

Again, it wasn't just family doctors that the previous government used to attach folks to primary care providers. We doubled the number of nurse practitioners over the eight years that we were in government. That took probably about 30,000 people off the Need a Family Practice Registry. I believe that number got even below 30,000 at one point.

We know that there are challenges on this front. This is not something that there is an easy solution to. Everywhere across the Western Hemisphere - because of the nature of the practice changing with family practitioners, because of retirements that are happening, because of a growing population - of course, all these pressures are contributing to the current situation. There are no easy solutions to this, and we do need to think outside of the box in terms of what those solutions are.

However, having that data point, understanding where the problems are, where the primary care access points are is most challenging. That is key to solving this issue or at least improving it over time. We've actually seen the number of people in Halifax without a family doctor skyrocket over the last year. We have not seen that happen in 10 years. This, I believe, is directly related to the government policy of removing the family practice incentive in the HRM region.

You cannot say that removing an incentive that was working to increase patient attachment and ensuring there was a strong supply of doctors in the capital region, where we do have the greatest amount of population growth, where we are seeing incredible development, where more and more people are immigrating to this province and staying in the city.

You can't say that taking away a doctor incentive at that time, then seeing that patient unattachment shoot up exponentially - I think, by 4,000 per cent? You cannot say that there's not a correlation there. That is a direct correlation to government policy. They removed an incentive that was working. Now, for the first time in living memory of the people in this Chamber - myself and the member for Bedford Basin have served here the longest on our side - we have never seen that happen in the capital region.

Our fear is that this story will continue to get worse. We've heard reports from physicians, health care providers, and academics that we are looking at potentially the Need a Family Practice registry list going up to 150,000, perhaps by early next year. If you look at StatsCan, they're actually suggesting that there are 200,000 people in Nova Scotia right now without a family doctor.

We have to protect this data. For one reason, the most practical, is to know where these challenges are, how we're going to deal with them, what strategies and incentives are working, and where those resources need to be deployed.

It's also critical in terms of holding this government to account on their very specific promises in relation to health care that they sold Nova Scotians, and that they were

elected on. Those promises included 300 new doctors a year, fixing the health care situation. We heard, I would say, at least 1,200 times, 3,000 times, during the campaign that the Premier was going to fix the health care situation.

[2:00 p.m.]

Now that we're seeing that situation get worse, the Premier is now bringing into question the actual data that is telling the accurate story of what's happening in the health care system. It's not the first time that we have seen this happen. This is why we believe it's very important to enshrine this in legislation here in the Chamber.

We saw this happen with COVID-19. That was a big mistake, I believe, on behalf of the government. We are getting to a point in COVID-19 management where we are self-managing more. We have higher levels of vaccinations - even though we have a shortage right now of bivalent vaccines, or at least access . . . (Interruption) Okay, great, the minister will correct me if I'm mistaken on that.

I know there have been challenges in terms of finding appointments over the last couple of weeks. I have seen that even in my own family. My wife has been trying for a couple of weeks to get a bivalent appointment in Yarmouth.

We do have a very strong immunization program that did happen over the five months when I was minister. I am happy that the government - who were very critical of that program when in Opposition - is now defending it because it is one of the best programs in the country. It's the most equitable program in the country.

Back to my comment about the HRM region. We now have close to 50,000 residents in the Central Zone without a family doctor. I think that has gone up from around 3,000 to 4,000. That has happened in a year. We have never seen that kind of increase.

As we saw the COVID-19 situation getting worse and worse in Nova Scotia, I do believe part of that was also linked to the government marketing plan at the beginning of the Omicron wave. We saw a marketing plan come out from the government, which Dr. Strang actually said in this House at the Public Accounts Committee was not recommended by Public Health, and they tried to hold that marketing campaign back. They were at least successful on two occasions.

After that marketing campaign came in, telling everyone to get back out there, shop again, everything's safe - this was at the dawn of the Omicron wave - we saw rapid spread of COVID-19 across the province. We saw numbers shooting up and our hospital system getting overwhelmed. I believe we had over 800 people - staff within our hospital system - who were actually out sick with COVID-19. They weren't able to conduct a variety of services from emergency to ambulatory to CT scans to colonoscopies. The system is still not recovered from the Omicron wave.

What did we see after that as the situation was getting worse and worse? Government actually reduced the information more and more on the impacts of COVID-19, from an epidemiological perspective, on deaths, on hospitalizations, and on impacts to hospital operations.

We did see a pattern with this government. When the data was telling a story that was contrary to the political narrative coming from the government, they actually limited that information from public consumption. That is still having an impact when it comes to the pandemic, which hasn't gone away. We are now up to 572 deaths here in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the honourable member to speak to the bill at hand, which is about the Need a Family Practice Registry.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: This bill is about preserving data and protecting critical data for the public. These comments are on data and the importance of it because it does have serious implications.

We have had 572 deaths related to COVID-19. These numbers have been reported less to the public. Eighty per cent of those deaths have happened over the last year. More people have died over the last year than in the previous two years. What has happened is that reporting is actually happening less and less.

I believe that limiting that reporting is actually contributing to these numbers going up, and the increased impacts that COVID-19 is happening on our hospitals, which impacts primary care, emergency care, ambulatory care, CT scans, colonoscopies. We had a Nova Scotian who had to go to Quebec for a colonoscopy, a fairly routine procedure here in Nova Scotia.

What we want to do with this bill is make sure that the same thing that happened with COVID-19 reporting - which I believe is still contributing to a lack of public awareness on the current state of the pandemic, and impacts on our hospitals, and on loss of life - is protect this critical data for primary care. We do not want to see the situation get worse and worse, and information being reduced that the public is able to consume.

It is about keeping the government accountable, for sure, but it's also about practicality. Just know where these people are and make sure we're doing our best to attach them.

Also, if the government initiatives are working, as they did under the previous government - for a long while we saw those numbers coming down. If the government initiatives, which they have been touting very much - and there are some interesting things that the government is working on. We have to see if those are going to work or not.

I spoke with the minister, whom I know is working very diligently on these files. I know she cares deeply about this. She comes from the sector. If we do start seeing those numbers decrease, then that will also tell a positive story for the government and for the public.

I do urge the members opposite to please protect this data - it's critical - and support this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am glad to rise and speak to this bill. It's supportable, but it seems to me some of the stuff in this bill is already being done. I just want to talk about that for a second.

I guess anything that can be more codified and more enacted officially is always good in these situations, but I do definitely see a lot of the information that is listed in this bill in the information that is released. I think perhaps part of the issue is that there is not a set time when it is released or, as we saw this month, where the numbers didn't come out until much later. That's an issue.

Some of the things on this bill would be helpful, new information - in particular, things like the number of medical practitioners and nurse practitioners who have accepted new patients from the registry, and the average time between a person being added to the registry and being connected with a practitioner. That kind of stuff is very good. It's very important for us to analyze the data and see the real picture of what is happening with primary care in Nova Scotia.

Also, the number of persons on the registry who are connected with a practitioner but do not become patients of that practitioner - I think that's a really important one. I actually hear that a lot - where new clinics or new practitioners take you off the registry for an interview appointment. Then folks find out that they actually aren't connected or aren't attached to the clinic or the care provider. That's troubling.

I guess the thing I want to talk about is why we need this registry in the first place. We need the registry because we have a serious issue with the primary care providers. Not with the providers, but with the number of providers. Most of the providers are pretty good, I am sure. So that is the issue.

As my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned, we heard the Premier in the last couple of weeks speak publicly that maybe the registry is not so important, maybe the numbers are not so important. There was some allusion to the fact that maybe the list wasn't as important as it used to be. Of course, one thinks, well, that's rich because now that there are a whole bunch of people on the list, it's not as important.

The minister talked about how there is an issue with the system of getting people off the list when they are attached. I totally get that. Surely, there must be a way to just figure that out pretty easily.

We know, especially in many communities, and in my own community, - and when I say “we” I am talking about people who are actually working in primary care in the community on the ground - there are plenty of people who aren’t on the registry for a variety of reasons. One is access to the information about the registry - a distrust of government systems. Of course, there are vulnerable people who might have a distrust of government systems for a lot of good reasons.

We know that people don’t have access to phones and the internet. We know that people just simply think that it’s not going to help. So there are a lot of reasons why people aren’t on the registry.

Again, I will go back to my main point, which is why we need it in the first place. Statistics Canada numbers say that an entire quarter of Nova Scotians may not have access to a regular primary care provider. We know that a regular care provider is really, really important. So the virtual care system is really good for many reasons - phone appointments, awesome. I’m going to give you an example about that in a second. Walk-in clinics are obviously super important because when we can’t get to see our own provider - if we are lucky enough to have one - then we need an option to go somewhere quite quickly.

But those - the virtual care and the walk-in clinics - are not a regular provider. It’s not someone who knows our story, the history of our medications or our health and family history, or social history for that matter. That is why we want to have people connected to a practice.

Again, what I’d like to spend most of my time talking about is the fact that we don’t necessarily need to be connected to a physician to have good primary care. There are a lot of ways to receive primary care. My feeling, and our feeling, is that people should be connected to at least a practice.

We know that collaborative care delivers huge results. Research shows that community health centres offer significantly more comprehensive services than other primary care models, like fee-for-service practice and clinical care only teams. We know that clients of community health centres report higher satisfaction scores across accessibility, prevention, health promotion, client and family centredness, and chronic disease management, compared to clients of other models of primary care.

Community health centres provide superior chronic disease management. Clinicians in community health centres find it easier to promote high-quality care through longer consultations and inter-professional collaboration. I am sure that adds to their

happiness and pleasure with their employment, and probably keeps them in their employment longer.

We know that community health centres foster environments in which community members and staff feel empowered to participate in decision making. Collaborative care provides a triple bottom line solution, improved individual health, improved community and population health, and much more cost-effective health care and social service systems.

I want to shout out a collaborative care centre in Preston - a group of folks I am working with on primary care in Dartmouth North. We went on a little field trip a couple of years ago to visit the centre in Preston, and it was really awesome. We got to sit down with the folks who are working there. It was an NSHA turnkey collaborative care centre. There were physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners. There was an administrator. There were other allied health professionals. I forget which ones they were now. They talked about how through community trust-building in the community of North Preston, they were able to build trust between them and the community.

One of the significant aspects of that organization or that clinic was that there was a patient advisory committee. There was a group of people from the community who were the advisors to the clinic.

Now, they weren't the decision-makers. It wasn't a board of directors or anything like that, but there was a trust built between community and the care providers. Their input was sought, and their input was listened to. It really seemed like a gold star model, a gold standard. We would love to see more of that type of system in Nova Scotia.

We saw the benefits of a similar model of care in the NDP-developed collaborative emergency departments that this government is shuttering but opening kind of a new version of, and the Liberals did not invest in at all. A 2014 evaluation of CECs found that at all CEC sites, that patients had better access to primary care. When the CEC model was implemented, there was a dramatic decrease in unplanned closures of local emergency departments. Patients are far more likely to have access to the right provider at the right time in the right place than they did before the CEC was introduced.

Despite mountains of evidence that these models work, we know that there's only a handful of allied health care professionals working in collaborative care. There are not more than a few social workers, licensed practical nurses, or dietitians working in primary care in the province right now, and, again, I will say that Preston seems to be - or at least was at the time when I went to visit - a really good example of that kind of allied health professional working with the primary care team.

As far as we know, there's no collaborative primary care clinics right now that employ paramedics, physician assistants, midwives, occupational therapists, or psychologists anywhere in the province, and there's incredible potential here to make sure

that we're making the best and highest use of health care professionals, but other jurisdictions in Canada do have that type of health care delivery. Ontario, B.C., and New Brunswick are some examples.

[2:15 p.m.]

There's a range of funding models that could be used to encourage team-based care. The government has taken some steps in this direction, but we need to take huge leaps. One example of something the government could do right now is fund the Nova Scotia Association of Community Health Centres to operate to its maximum capacity and treat that association as full partners in primary care delivery.

Also, our caucus has introduced the Collaborative Care Act, and that would require the government to speedily appoint a task force to consult with physicians, nurses, midwives, occupational therapists, paramedics, pharmacists, physician assistants, physiotherapists, psychologists, counsellors, respiratory therapists, social workers, speech language pathologists, dentists, dental hygienists, community health centres, community health organizations, health education programs, patient advisory groups, First Nations, African Nova Scotian communities, Acadian communities, and other bodies as needed. The task force would report to the minister on current payment models, staffing ratios, scopes of practice, models from other jurisdictions, health equity, and the areas of greatest need.

Obviously, this primary care is going to look different in different communities. I know that the minister understands that, that we need a flexible model, I guess, is the best way to put it, so that a community has access to the type of primary care that best suits it. Of course, the people who know that for real are the people who live in the communities, and so, again, I bring your attention to the idea of patient advisory committees and how important they are.

I also just want to use the last bit of my time to talk about how with this registry, it's one thing to not have a family care provider. It's another thing to not be able to get in to see your family care provider. It feels like there needs to be a whole other registry for that - how long does that take you? That should be a part of this registry, actually, I think.

I'll give you a quick example from my own life. In the first week of August, I was sick in bed with COVID-19. I will say this, that the medical system worked perfectly on that day for me. I was super sick. From bed, I called my doctor. They answered on the first ring. My doctor called me back in an hour and I told her that I believed I needed some puffers that I have been prescribed at other times in my life, and I could tell her which they were.

She prescribed them, called them in to the pharmacy, I called the pharmacy from my sickbed and said: Could you please call me back when the prescription is ready? They

did an hour later, and an hour later my friend went and picked them up for me. I was in bed, sick as a dog, but I had the care I needed.

The part that I want to highlight is that when I called the doctor, the administrative person said: Now, if you have a phone call appointment, the doctor always likes to do a next-available in-person appointment to follow up. I said, sure. This is the first week of August, Mx. Speaker, and the next available appointment was on October 18th. That is almost two and a half months until I could see my doctor in person. I cancelled that appointment, as October 18th was a sitting day, and my COVID-19 has gone away, thank God, but that freed up that appointment for somebody else. It does speak to a real concern that if you're not on the registry, you still might not have timely access to primary care, and that is something we really need to look at.

Like I said in my opening remarks, Mx. Speaker, this bill is good and supportable, and we would support it if it went to a vote. Some of the information is already available; some of the information would be great to add to it. I encourage the minister and the department and the Nova Scotia Health Authority to add those parts that are missing from the information that is available. I would also encourage the department to make sure that those numbers are available early and every month, just so we have a good picture.

I would also say that what we really need to do is make sure that we don't need to add any more people on the registry and make sure that we are full-force investing in primary care options.

I kind of believe that if we build things and models and plans, then people will come to work there. It will be easier to recruit primary care physicians to a collaborative team. We know that many, and I think newer, family care providers - whether they're nurse practitioners, or nurses, or physicians - are wanting to work in a team. Let's make the teams. Let's make the models. Let's invest heavily in that idea, and we'll be able to recruit the folks to work in them.

With that, Mx. Speaker, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'm happy to stand to speak to the need for family practices and the list. As I sit here, I was thinking about working in health care. I brought the idea of the newcomer clinic and why it was so important. It was to have a baseline for new patients arriving in our country. Without it, it is so difficult for doctors to treat and to know - they would spend hours just to get the history so that they could give them the proper treatment.

Now I see 116,000 people who are showing up at emergency, are showing up at Virtual Care NS, and the doctors know nothing about their history. This is a huge problem

for the future. We need to see that - without this registry and knowing where these people are - in fact, not just the registry but how long have they been? Where is that information of the history, of their medical issues?

When you give medication, we advise people to stay with the same pharmacy so that you can have some kind of history and for doctors and pharmacists to track any complications.

We are really creating a much bigger issue for our future without having attachment with family doctors. Even if you don't have a family doctor, that information has to be kept in a system that all health providers can access.

I went to the minister the other day and asked what is happening about that. This is a huge issue for our future of delivering health care. Those 120,000 people now have no history. They might as well be similar to the newcomers and the refugees. They have no history when they get treated - whether it is by Virtual Care NS or whether it is at a pharmacy.

How are those professionals going to be able to provide this care without any history of the medical issues?

I'm hoping the minister can answer: What is this government - I see they're doing a lot of pilots and new ideas. Fantastic. They're all silos. Nobody is talking to each other, and there is nowhere where that information - when they get treated - is being stored.

When you get treated at a pharmacy, is your information going somewhere? No, it's staying with the pharmacy. When you get treated by Virtual Care NS, is your information of what has happened - maybe you don't have an appointment next time with Virtual Care NS, but you have to go to a pharmacy or you have to go to a walk-in clinic, and there is no tracking of that information.

The One Person One Record is so important, but I know how expensive that is. I'm really hoping that when the minister replies to this, she has some timelines. I know also that One Person One Record is very expensive, and it's unlikely that this government is going to spend money on it. So what options are they going to come up with that will get all that information in one place if that system is not going to be coming?

I know she said it's in procurement and they're going to purchase it, but I really doubt that. I'd love to hear that this is going to happen, and that this new government is going to make - I don't know, \$1 billion? I would love for the minister to let us know how much One Person One Record is going to cost the government. They need to be honest with people that this is not coming, instead of saying, yes, it's coming, it's coming. And now we're having more and more people who have no records of treatment. It's been a

year, two years, you're on that list? You need to know - to have them on that list gives you an idea of how long and how serious. Their history has been lost - truly lost.

The silos are going to be a big issue in a few years for all of those 120,000 - and it'll probably be 200,000, because I know in Clayton Park, when I started in 2017, I rarely got a call that they didn't have a doctor. Never. Maybe every two or three months, if we're lucky, because someone moved in and we'd connect them to the community health team and they'd find them a doctor. Now? I get two or three calls a week about that. The number of unattached people now in Halifax is worse than rural areas. Honestly, it went from 4,000 to 47,000 in one year. That is scary. That is really scary, and all these people, my heart goes out to them. They will not have a baseline when they go to speak to anybody, which is so important in receiving proper treatment.

I'm just baffled on how this government is going to solve this issue for these hundreds - I'm going to say 120,000 right now, I'm sure, because there are a lot of people who are not registering, and they just arrived new to this province. They're moving here, and really, the biggest issue for people moving here is housing and finding a doctor. It has become so difficult for them. I would love to hear what the minister has that she can offer those people as well, and how we can keep their records. Are they bringing their files of information and folders from their doctors, and where is that information? Is it reaching anyone in order to help them?

Most doctors are not taking anybody with chronic disease. They're actually checking them out before they take them in because it really is a lot of work for doctors to look at old files and to go through them. Are these doctors being paid to accept new patients and to go through the history and to add? I'm puzzled at how Virtual Care NS can treat people properly - how, without any history, if it's your first time with that doctor? Then you go on and then you get a different doctor who has none of that information, as well, and the pharmacies. This is a liability to both doctors who are working in virtual care and in pharmacies. It is an issue that is going to be much bigger as time passes on and more people are unattached.

The list is very important, that we know how many, for how long, and where their information is, if they have gone to other temporary solutions, and those pilots that the minister is producing. To me, it doesn't seem - I'm happy that they're coming out with these ideas and new things, but it's all bits and pieces that don't talk to each other. There's a really big issue of these - and the doctors are truly frustrated, because there's no connection of knowing where the information is - unless you have a family doctor.

This is a huge advantage, to have a list of those people who have no history now. They might as well have moved from a different country to our country.

The other issue that I really am concerned about is the number of doctors who are about to retire. For example, at my doctor's office there are only three doctors. They're not

allowed to have a nurse practitioner. They've asked for a nurse practitioner, but because there are only three doctors instead of five or six doctors, they do not get a nurse practitioner.

[2:30 p.m.]

It makes so much sense to have a nurse practitioner so those 3,000 patients are staying in the same location with the same history and treated. No one is thinking of that and making sure that we are already attaching new family doctors or nurse practitioners in the clinics where we know that doctors are about to retire.

Do we have anything like that? I would love to hear from the minister if they've got some kind of program to make sure that they know every retiring doctor and they attach them with a nurse practitioner. That would be amazing.

The emergency departments are another place where people are going, being treated in the emergency, and if you have no family doctor, all that work and information for a very important disease or new issue, is lost. Where is it if the patient doesn't understand what is happening to them? That information is gone and the treatment from the following doctor would not be adequate or wouldn't be safe, if I may say so. The importance of keeping the record and information and the history of all those patients who are now without a doctor - they are at a huge disadvantage and it's serious to their health.

I hear it a lot: If you have a doctor, you're so lucky. Even if the doctor is not the right doctor for you or you're not happy with the doctor, people are terrified to leave a doctor. No way would I leave my doctor now and go try somebody else just because I feel that they may not be the right doctor or the right fit. There is zero possibility of having a new doctor take you if they know that you have a doctor.

Also, if the minister can also give us some information about the competitive salaries and how many doctors we're losing. We're actually losing more than we're gaining in the number of doctors because our salaries are not competitive at all.

My niece and her husband, who are both family doctors, are working in B.C. She says to me that it is not just a small amount in the difference between what they're paid here and what they're paid in B.C. It's a huge difference and there are incentives that they were both attracted to, to go work in B.C. instead of working here in Nova Scotia. I would love to attract her back. We have many specialists that we are losing to the United States for the same reason. It's actually increasing.

There are so many doctors who are burned out, literally quitting early. Just burned out. They don't feel that they're compensated properly for their time. They're asked to go into emergency and they're not compensated properly for their work.

There are many issues but I truly believe that the biggest issue for the future - for those 116,000 or 120,000 people - is the record of their information. I implore the minister to make sure that we have some answers to tell those 120,000 or 116,000 people when they're going to have the One Person One Record. Where is their information being kept every time they use one of their new ideas, whether it's a pharmacy, virtual care, walk-in clinics and the community collaboratives - the information is not sent to anyone.

That is a serious issue for our future and for those people. I'm really looking forward to the minister answering a few of my questions here.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I am happy to rise today and talk about some of the initiatives the government has undertaken. I do want to talk briefly about some of the things I said earlier in the House around the Need a Family Practice Registry.

The Need a Family Practice Registry was developed by the former government in 2016 as a way for people to self-identify if they did not have a family practice for which they were attached. The functionality of that list is really limited - actually very limited. When we talk about the Need a Family Practice Registry, we want to talk about the functionality and how we can support Nova Scotians in using that list and how we use, as policy and decision makers, that list to attach people to practices.

It would be good for Nova Scotians to be able to see where they are on the list, as an example, and where they can update and make changes to their health status, so very different. Currently I am in a fortunate position where I don't have a lot of medical needs and, as a result of that, don't need to see my primary care provider on a regular basis. However, there are Nova Scotians who are not as fortunate as I am.

We want to be able to identify people who are in need of care more quickly, in order to get them on a list. We need to be able to prioritize them.

We'd also like to better connect people in the ways that they want to get their needs met. Providing a variety of options for folks to have access to care is very important so virtual care is important for some folks, but it's not for everybody, as we understand. But those folks on the Need a Family Practice Registry have access to virtual care providers through Virtual Care Nova Scotia. Through that appointment, they are able to actually access in-patient or in-person appointments if required and deemed necessary by the practitioner.

These are some of the things that we are very interested in, and I think the Need a Family Practice Registry is going to be with us for as long as we need it. It's a one data point, one data set that we use. It isn't automatic.

The member opposite mentioned that it's automatic that people come off the list, but you actually have to bring yourself off the list. So when we attach people through data, we should be able to remove people from the list so that we do have an accurate number and we do know how we're planning for future needs.

I do want to talk a little bit about accountability. I think it is very important that we are accountable. I certainly would say that when we came into government, we came in with a mandate of accountability. We started by travelling around this province and talking to health care workers for a number of days to hear about their lived experience as health care workers, and to hear how they felt that the health care system had deteriorated. We sat with them and we listened to them.

In addition to that, I had a number of stakeholder gatherings throughout the Fall and we did talk to over 2,500 people about their health care experiences, health care workers. Those voices, Mx. Speaker, informed our Action for Health care plan, which is the first health care plan in this province that leads the way in over a dozen years.

Action for Health was built on the voices of health care workers. As I said, it's the first plan in over a dozen years. It articulates six strategic pillars that tell us, based on those voices, where we need to focus our time, our energy, and our money. Each pillar is accompanied by actions that will help alleviate or improve health care throughout this province. It has short-, medium- and long-term solutions. It also articulates metrics to measure our progress as we work through our mandate.

The issues in health care happened over a long period of time and they are going to take a significant amount of time for us to address, but we are acting very quickly. Our government has a bias towards action, and we have been working diligently over the past 13 months.

The important thing as well with Action for Health is to know there is an accompanying tool, which is a website called *Action for Health*. It regularly updates our progress in terms of how we are meeting and measuring the changes that we see in health care. This has never been available to Nova Scotians in the history of this province. We update this on a regular basis, sometimes annually, sometimes quarterly, in order to bring the information to Nova Scotians so they can see our progress in Action for Health.

We also have a daily dashboard that reflects the previous day or the previous week, the status in the health care system. Again, this is data that Nova Scotians never had access to in the past. It isn't always politically advantageous, I would say, but we do that because we ran on a platform to fix health care. We ran on a platform of accountability, and we are delivering that for Nova Scotians. The website also provides the ability for folks to look over the last 18-24 months and understand how we're trending in health care to the point that this has never happened, and we continue to be accountable to Nova Scotians.

Also, in terms of accountability, we have been travelling the province. We have stayed connected to health care workers. The CEO of Nova Scotia Health Authority, the deputy minister, myself, and the Premier visit health care organizations on a regular basis - not only hospitals, but we have been able to go into different communities across the province.

As an example, we spent a day in Clare and we talked to the folks down there about the wonderful model that they have around the residency program there and how we could understand why they are doing so well. The Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration was with me. We talked to them, we were in Digby, we talked to health care workers, and these test-and-try models are really important because when things are working well, it's important we understand how and why so that we can scale them up and deliver that to other parts of the province.

We don't shy away from difficult conversations. We have gone to community sessions in Canso, Annapolis, and in Baddeck to talk about the current situation of health care, as three examples where we have limited resources, why we have limited resources, and how we work with community around the needs of that community in order to deliver timely health care in their communities.

You'll also notice that over the next several months, the deputy minister, the CEO of Nova Scotia Health Authority, and I have a number of community engagement sessions. Not only do we continue to talk to health care workers, but we go into communities and we talk to them about the health care situation, the progress that we're making on a number of initiatives, and we want to hear directly from them, because one of the things that we heard very distinctly on the tour was that the centralization of decision-making in this province was not advantageous to health care workers or the delivery of health care in communities across this province.

Data is a key issue. We are working constantly toward being a data-driven decision making team. We know that there are dated platforms. We certainly have been working very closely with the Nova Scotia Health Authority analytics team, working with Nova Scotia Digital Services because we need to strengthen the information that we have in real time so that we don't wait for ages in order for us to be able to make decisions. We need to modernize our digital platforms, and we have committed to that. OPOR - One Person One Record - is an important tool. We are currently under an act of procurement process. We need to look at the ways in which all of these platforms speak to one another so that they do interact, and we can share data.

We're the first government to initiate and undertake, and just started race-based data collection to understand health inequity in our province, and to work in and with communities to collect data, to show the data, and allow communities to work with us to use that data to inform how we best deliver services. I'm proud of the work that happens with the Department of Health and Wellness, with Tajikeimik, which is a group of health

directors throughout this province from First Nation communities, working with the Department of Health and Wellness to better understand how we can deliver culturally responsive care to First Nation communities.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with Chief Bernard and the Band Council in Wagmatcook to understand the concerns that they have in relation to health care and how we can best support their collaborative care team. We're also working with HAAC - Health Association of African Canadians - to better understand, as well as ISANS and a number of other members of the primary reference group so that we can understand the needs of folks who are experiencing and historically have experienced health inequity in this province. We continue to do that work, and we will continue to be accountable to communities when we're asked.

What else can I tell you - so much to say. I do want to talk a little bit about the importance of primary (Interruption) Something new? I'm going to talk about the onboarding. Well, we could talk about the old forever because the list goes on and on and on and on and on and on and on, but you know what? We are a forward-looking government, and we are not going to talk about all of the things that the former government, including the NDP government, failed to do over the last number of years.

To my point, Madam Speaker, I want to address some of the issues around access. We do know that approximately 80 per cent of the people who present to the emergency rooms in this province actually are patients who are already attached. That tells us that the primary care providers need some support.

We do have a rapid onboarding team that was recently developed in Nova Scotia to support our primary care providers in attaching patients and supporting them and looking at how they deliver service - how we can support people to move from long wait times for appointments to same-day or next-day appointments. We continue to look at those.

I'm really proud of the work that has happened at Dalhousie Family Medicine Clinics, where, through the work of that rapid onboarding team, it was identified that 3,500 people can come off the Need a Family Practice Registry and be attached to that practice.

In addition is the incubator model that we're using to work with new physicians in order to help them panel in a collaborative environment, so that they can work with a team, get to know their patients over a 6- to 12-month period and then they and their patients can transition to a practice throughout the HRM area. This will be very important and certainly an available tool to us across the province when we look at some of the residency programs across the province moving forward.

We are committed to expanding access to people in communities through the increase of primary care providers, Virtual Care NS, understanding how we can use that. It's not just for primary care appointments. We have a number of initiatives like virtual

care in the emergency rooms in Truro. Also looking at the virtual care hallway, where specialist physicians can work with primary care physicians or rural physicians around how best to treat so that patients no longer need to travel. They can not only share documents, but they can share patient information. They can also share diagnostics in order to help the specialists support our regional physicians to provide care.

[2:45 p.m.]

The Newcomer Health Clinic - we have expanded practice there. We have expanded our financial support to the newcomer to support folks coming to live in Nova Scotia, making sure that they are stabilized. Once they have been with the clinic for a year, they actually are attached to a primary care provider and moved into community-based care.

We have committed to increasing our surgeries as well by 2,500 additional surgeries this year.

To the point about the importance of having streamlined processes, we have committed to a single-entry referral and triage system to make sure that Nova Scotians have a single entry point so that we can really confirm and understand that surgical wait-list, making sure that patients have timely access to care. We are also looking at stabilizing the workforce for this specialized area to make sure that we have enough surgical nurses and anaesthesia as an example.

We do have a number of physician retirements in this province. Those have been known for a very long time, similar to our nursing workforce, as two examples. Historically, there has been no tool so that we can understand who is retiring. That's information that has not been shared.

We know that physicians are not one for one anymore. Team-based care is important to physicians, the new physicians. We know that we can't always replace one physician with one new physician. It may take two physicians. It may take a physician and a nurse practitioner. The information on that Need a Family Practice Registry, when we increase the functionality of it, would be very helpful for us in terms of planning requirements.

I would like to close simply by saying that I feel that over the past year, we have been a very accountable government. I certainly feel that we have been present in communities.

We know that there is a lot of work to do in this province, that there have been a number of things that have needed to be addressed for a long time. We see our counterparts across the country recognizing that they too are in similar situations. We are very focused.

We are working with colleges, and we are working with national bodies as well around immigration, growing our own workforce.

I can assure you again, Madam Speaker, that we continue to deliver and will deliver on health care promises in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: It's a privilege to be able to speak to this Liberal Opposition bill today for a couple of minutes.

The Need a Family Practice Registry is a good idea in theory. I think when the former government brought it in, many people were grateful because they felt like, oh, finally someone knows that I need a family physician and will make sure that I get one. But there are people in the Town of Amherst and throughout Cumberland North who have been on a family practice registry list for five years and they still don't have a family physician.

It was encouraging also to hear the minister share the other day that they are looking at improving the functionality of the Need a Family Practice Registry list to look at patients' needs - so if someone has chronic disease and has several co-morbidities, they may be given a higher priority for a new family physician than someone who may be 30 years old with no previous health conditions.

All that to say, Madam Speaker, we're only seeing things worsen. This government can only for so long blame the previous government.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allotted for consideration of this bill has elapsed.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Madam Speaker, I was wondering if I could make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Absolutely. Of course, yes.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you. Madam Speaker, I'd like to draw the House's attention to the gallery opposite, where we have members of CUPE 3912 with their Local President Cameron Ells. CUPE 3912, as everyone will know, is a union of part-time academics, teaching assistants, and demonstrators at Dalhousie University, and they are on the eighth day of their strike. They are striking for pay equity with institutions of similar size and scope across the country.

CUPE 3912 is my former union. I was a part-time academic and teaching assistant at Dal for about 15 years, all told. I know very well the struggle that part-time academics and TAs have to make ends meet with the low, low pay that Dalhousie pays.

We welcome you to the House. We stand in solidarity and we hope your strike is over soon. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for joining us.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 217.

Bill No. 217 - Residential Tenancies Act (amended).

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

LORELEI NICOLL: I would like to speak on the bill tabled by my colleague for Bedford South. We all are well aware that there's a housing crisis in Nova Scotia, especially regarding rental properties, with the highest rents in Canada, or at least higher than Toronto.

While I don't see this trend ending any time soon, there's another area that has a big issue, and that is the lack of enforcement in the Residential Tenancies Act. This bill will address that gap and aim to make it easier for both tenants and landlords when going through what we like to call disputes. If you are a tenant, it will make it easier for you to get your deposit back from a landlord. If you are a landlord having issues with a tenant, it will make it easier to get a resolution.

We have enforcements for so many issues in our province, yet we don't have enforcement for landlords or tenants. We hear all too often that the laws that are in place are not being rightfully enforced and that there are loopholes to avoid proper enforcement. I've heard from landlords, property owners, who feel that an enforcement piece, as it relates to the Residential Tenancies Act, is critical. But more, they feel, needs to be done with regard to provisions on the non-compliance side of the tenant. Destruction of property in particular, repeated non-payment of rent, and a proper definition of what "repeatedly" means is to be defined going forward.

Many who have reached out to me have said that they've been the victim of fraudsters who have a history of non-payment, and that they need to be identified somehow and dealt with, judicially or other.

An enforcement strategy could also provide role clarity. Many don't know who to call and when they do call the police, the police tell them they have no authority.

As it stands, no one is charged for destruction of property or willful damage. I am sure everyone in this room has heard from people and the situations they've had to deal with. The police say, well, if it's extensive damage, maybe we'll charge. It shouldn't be subjective. Putting an enforcement piece into the Residential Tenancies Act is critical.

In closing, I just want to say that I believe this bill can start to address many of the big issues facing renters and landlords. We all hope the government will support this bill, but I also encourage them to look deeper on how to better support landlords and tenants.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I am happy to direct a few comments to this piece of legislation that the member for Bedford South is bringing forward, providing for the creation of a provincial residential tenancy enforcement unit. The issue of compliance and enforcement is one that we often hear talked about in the world of residential tenancies advocacy, although I must say that in my experience the concerns around enforcement are much more commonly heard on the side of tenants who have been egregiously dealt with by their landlords than had been indicated by the previous speaker.

One very common frustration that tenants who exercise their rights against the wrongdoing of landlords through residential tenancies, one very common frustration they express is how long it can take to get redress for the tenant's illegal treatment from the landlord, even once it has been established through the residential tenancies process.

Over and over, if you ask advocates in the residential tenancies world what sort of changes they think are most necessary in the residential tenancies system, one of the things they'll emphasize continually is the frustration they have about the inefficient system of enforcement of the adjudication orders that tenants receive through the residential tenancies system.

Professor Wayne MacKay from the Schulich School of Law spoke to this just a few weeks ago. He was commenting on a renoviction case in which inadequate enforcement had made it possible for a landlord to continue with the very delinquent behaviour a residential tenancies hearing had brought to light. Professor MacKay said - I'll table his remarks - "Any legislation is only as good as its enforcement. There has to be people and resources to ensure the legislation achieves its purpose . . . Unless the Act is achieving its purpose on the front lines, then it's not effective public policy."

It is true that the recent renoviction amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act contain some provisions around penalties, but it's also true that in general in Nova Scotia we don't have the comprehensive kind of enforcement and compliance mechanisms in our

legislation that tenants enjoy, for example, in B.C. or in Ontario. In those provinces, where the kinds of provisions around enforcement, the kind of system this bill is putting forward, are actually in force already, there are very clear penalties, for example, for landlords who repeatedly require illegal rent increases.

[3:00 p.m.]

So if you live in Ontario or in B.C., there are very clear penalties prescribed for landlords who refuse chronically to make repairs, very clear penalties for landlords who repeatedly evict tenants illegally. In those provinces - and this is the key point - their equivalent of residential tenancies officers have the authority, under law, to enforce those penalties on the spot. This is what we're lacking in Nova Scotia.

In general, this idea that the bill is bringing forward - that an expeditious enforcement mechanism to see that tenant's rights are made effective - is a sound suggestion and idea. I do, however, want to point out a particular concern I have with this bill as it's brought forward, and this particular enforcement mechanism that's being proposed.

In the piece of legislation, particularly at Section 21(b) where the definition of non-compliance is expressed for tenants, these are the words of the bill: "repeatedly not paying rent." It seems to me that the Liberal Party authors of this bill surely would not want to have this legislation used in such a way that it would penalize poverty, and those who find themselves in a situation where they are not able to meet their rent. I think that the misuse of this bill's idea in order to penalize poverty is something that is altogether possible within the quite non-specific, vague, and general wording of this section.

Presumably, what the Liberal Party wishes to do with this section is to provide some provisions in which we could clearly penalize fraud. That's a different matter, but that's not made clear in this legislation. I think in the legislation, the whole idea would be much improved and accomplish its goal if the distinction between the world of fraud - which we wish to avoid and we wish to have penalized - and the world of penalizing poverty - which we would need to stay away from - were more clearly drawn out. It is not drawn out at all clearly in the key definition of Section 21(b) in this proposal.

Members of the government, when we talk about this issue, sometimes speak about the need to, as they put it, balance the interests of landlords and tenants. This betrays, I want to suggest, a confused understanding of this whole issue.

From the outset, the world of landlord-tenant relationships is a world of total structural imbalance. It's an imbalance that's built right into the market. What balance can exist when one party is angling to improve their investment or revenue position, and the other party is often fighting, quite literally, for their lives, for their roof, for their family's survival?

This defining imbalance in landlord relations in the market is only heightened, intensified and exacerbated when we find ourselves in a situation like the present - of an extremely tight and constricted rental market, as has been made glaringly clear this week in Halifax by the very public case of the eviction of Stacey Gomez.

This is why such a series of things today is required from the government in the area of residential tenancies legislation in order to counteract - at least to some modest degree - what in Nova Scotia has become at this moment a pronounced and often desperate imbalance.

Some of the things that are required: 1) The reinstatement of the ban on renovations; 2) replacing the temporary rent cap set to expire in not so many months with a comprehensive and permanent system of rent control such as most Canadians enjoy; 3) a change in the rules about fixed-term leases so as to end the current altogether common landlord practice of using fixed-term leases to get around the rent cap; and 4) the kind of residential tenancies enforcement and compliance reform which, in general, is envisioned in this proposed piece of legislation, which the government, were it forward thinking, in general would support.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Residential Tenancies Act.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: It's an honour to speak to Bill No. 217 regarding some amendments brought forward by the Liberal caucus about the Residential Tenancies Act, a bill that was tabled on October 20th, if I'm not mistaken. First of all, thank you to both of my colleagues opposite for their comments.

Before I provide some comments regarding the content of the bill and actions within the department, I want to take an opportunity to thank the staff within the residential tenancy program, including the residential tenancy officers for their hard work within this sector. I'll get this right out there - I support the spirit of the bill, and I'll get into that a little bit further.

We've heard the calls for the need for compliance and enforcement, at least within my time as the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. We've certainly heightened up over the last number of months. Through our ongoing stakeholder engagement, whether that be with the Investment Property Owners of Nova Scotia or IPONS, Nova Scotia Legal Aid, or Dal Legal Aid, we've heard the desire to have a residential tenancy compliance and enforcement division. I want to thank those stakeholders for their ongoing input and engagement within the department as we look continuously to modernize this Act.

Madam Speaker, it was one of the first files on my desk when I walked into my office as the minister responsible. It is one of the first files we got to talk about. Frankly, it

was the first piece of legislation that I brought forward - amendments to this Act regarding renovations. To talk very quickly about the security deposit point that the member from Cole Harbour-Dartmouth talked about, we did pass last Fall improvements to the security deposit claim process. The final touches are going through that and making their way through Cabinet for final approval to be proclaimed.

As has been stated so far, the RTA has provisions for fines, but there's no designated or set authority to enforce that. Clearly, as has been echoed by colleagues from across the aisle, there's a lack of teeth regarding this Act. Whether we're talking about the Motor Vehicle Act, whether we're talking about hunting and fishing or alcohol and gaming, there needs to be a process to ensure that Nova Scotians are aware, educated, and informed about the rules - a process to bring them into compliance, and then further, a process where required, a mechanism of enforcement.

What I want to make clear for the record is that the vast majority of Nova Scotian tenants and landlords do, in fact, follow the rules. I do not want the acts that we hear about to overshadow the work that's taking place or this discussion, or the positive relationships that do exist between tenants and landlords.

Although I've been criticized just moments ago for saying this, I'm going to say it again because I'm a firm believer in this. When we look at the Residential Tenancies Act - when I look at it at least - we continuously look at it through a lens of modernization, and always bringing the lens of balancing the rights, needs and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. That is a lens that I will continue to look through as I continuously look at modernizing this Act and bringing further amendments to the floor of this Legislature.

I believe it was the member for Timberlea-Prospect yesterday who echoed a statement that I'd made before - that a third of Nova Scotians are renters. That's the reality in this province. So when I, or another minister in my place, bring amendments to this Act, we have to make sure that we're getting it right. As the member for Halifax Chebucto pointed out, a possible area of concern in the bill that we're debating right now, an element has consequences as it's currently written.

When we talk about the changes to the Act and the consequential impacts on the program and impacts on Nova Scotians, I want to make sure that we're getting that right and we're not rushing into things without truly understanding the implications and the impacts.

On this matter, I want to reassure the members of this House and all Nova Scotians that the work has already begun on a compliance and enforcement unit for the Residential Tenancies program. Conversations have been ongoing for months now at the department. As I indicated previously to the media, staff have done their internal work looking at what's being done across the country. It has been stated earlier in debate that different provinces have different models.

There are only two provinces that have a stand-alone enforcement division. Others have complementary enforcement through other mechanisms such as administrative penalties. The work has already begun. B.C. and Ontario have their stand-alone units, and like I said, some of the other ones have administrative penalties.

I think most members of this House would agree that this is a complicated space, so it's critical that we get it right. I fully understand the impacts and implications that it has for our constituents, for our friends and neighbours to ensure that a solution that's developed and implemented is not only effective but also sustainable and meeting the needs of Nova Scotians.

At the department, we also have to look at our internal resources - whether it be human resources or other capacity issues - understanding how one change within the program can perhaps complement another sector of the program. Also understanding other consequential legislative amendments that have to be made to either this Act here or other Acts, perhaps - ensuring that staff have the required training, for example.

How we deliver this has to be timely, effective, and sustainable. To acknowledge the fact of the matter when we're talking about this bill, the reality is that all three political parties in this province have had an opportunity to address the lack of enforcement. I want to share with members that our government is actually taking action on this. A couple weeks ago, we posted a request for an external consultant to support my department in looking at the creation, design, and implementation of a residential tenancies compliance and enforcement unit.

It's imperative that we understand the entirety of the potential impacts on Nova Scotians. That's why - to recognize that we do not want to further delay this years down the road - within a few months, the department is expected to have a report in hand to further guide the decision-making that will be made at the department and within our government to best position Nova Scotia to have a compliance and enforcement division that meets the needs of both tenants and landlords.

As I noted earlier about understanding the law and the rules, whether it be motor vehicle or whether it be hunting and fishing, I'm going to stick to what we have done as a government to help inform Nova Scotians of their rights and responsibilities. Whether it's tenants or landlords, before you can impose a fine, it's incumbent on anybody to make sure they understand the rules, that they are provided an opportunity of compliance, and at a later date - depending, of course, on the infraction - it would be enforcement.

I'll go through this quickly, Mr. Speaker. After the amendments that were passed last Fall, the staff created two fact sheets for stakeholders including tenancy advocacy groups, landlord groups, and legal aid societies, and were actually offered to other colleagues. That was done late last calendar year and into this year. If members of the

House wish to have copies of that, we can certainly pass those around. I have already tabled them in the House on a previous day.

[3:15 p.m.]

We also did some targeted online advertising on platforms such as Google, Kijiji, and Facebook. It was part of a targeted awareness campaign for both tenants and landlords to understand their rights and responsibilities, including the new rules that were announced in the Fall session last year. These ads had a reach of almost 4.8 million views, with over 24,000 engagements. That started in February of this year and was ongoing.

We've done a direct mailout to explain to tenants and landlords the new rules for evictions. That was sent to over 94,000 tenants in the province. Of course, we have ongoing regular meetings with stakeholders. Staff meet regularly with them, and I will look forward to meeting with the stakeholders after this session.

We have also implemented a new addition to our website, the residential tenancies website, regarding legislative changes to inform Nova Scotians of the program changes and make it easy for them to find. I'll table some of the information that we've have, Mr. Speaker.

With the couple of minutes remaining, I want to again reassure members of the House that work has started months ago within the department. Again, we will be having the support of an external consultant to expedite the process to get that report to further understand what's taking place in other parts of the country, but also ensuring that when we do bring forward changes, whether it's legislative changes or the creation of a new program, that we ensure we are meeting the needs of tenants and landlords.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that I am committed, as minister, to modernize this Act and always will be looking through a lens of balancing those rights and needs, despite perhaps what other members believe of that. I truly believe that it is a balance of the rights of both tenants and landlords.

As always, I appreciate the feedback from members opposite and our stakeholder organizations. With those few comments, I thank you very much for your time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand today in support of this bill. I am happy to hear that the government supports this bill and the fact that they recognize the work that needs to be done and have been working on it for months, so I think that's definitely a good thing.

With regard to a consultant, I'm not sure that that is completely necessary, but we've been working on it for months so let's move it forward, another report. Let's just hope that the report becomes public and gets shared. In Nova Scotia right now we are seriously lacking in an enforcement branch to cover residential tenancies. Yes, the Residential Tenancies Act is in place, there are rules and there are regulations and I think the minister indicated, as well, that the teeth are not there right now for compliance.

As mentioned, there are many programs within the provincial government that the minister mentioned - hunting, fishing, motor vehicles - all these types of things have an enforcement piece to them. Right now, from the perspective of a tenant or a landlord, it can be a long, drawn-out process in order to make sure, if you're a tenant, that you can get your damage deposit back, or things are not unreasonably held from you such as the damage deposit, such as a renovation, such as a rent hike that's currently beyond the rent cap that's in place right now. Having that entity that you can call to come and take the facts, investigate the facts, and then enforce the rules that are in place with the Residential Tenancies Act is definitely much-needed.

Just to address the comments of the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, I absolutely agree that this Act should not be a poverty increaser, I guess - if you could call it that. That shouldn't be the nature of the enforcement on this piece. The enforcement should be around blatant acts of breach. If it comes down to a poverty issue, then there should be other mechanisms within the system to help people in that particular area, and the enforcement piece should be around making sure that the rules and regulations of the Residential Tenancies Act are followed.

I think the only way to do that is whether it be its own branch - and I love to hear the minister talk about modernization of legislation because I think that's very important. As we, as society evolves . . . (Interruption) Yeah, it's a compliment, but compliments where compliments are due, right? If we don't modernize legislation, then we continue to fall further behind. I think that's definitely a great thing.

I think whether or not this needs to be a stand-alone enforcement branch, or it can be brought in to one of our other enforcement branches with some specialized training and additional materials, I think that is yet to be seen. Hopefully, our consultant will dig into that, and will understand what the best practices are across this country and then take those best practices and develop them into a made-in-Nova Scotia or made-for-Nova Scotia process.

With that, I just want to say that I do fully support this bill, and look forward to the legislation as it comes in.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleagues on the bills today.

THE SPEAKER: We'll take a short recess.

[3:24 p.m. The House recessed.]

[3:25 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues on all sides. I'm rising first to adjourn debate on Bill No. 217, the Residential Tenancies Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I thought the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services was going to ring the bells there. (Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, that concludes Opposition Business for the day. I now pass it over to the Government House Leader to advise the House of business for tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That concludes government business for the day, Mr. Speaker. I move the House do now rise to meet again on Thursday, October 27th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Government business will include second reading of Bill Nos. 208, 212, 214, 215, 216, 219, 222, 223, 224, 225, 227, and 228.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Thursday, October 27th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The adjournment notice was submitted by the member for Dartmouth North and reads:

“Whereas the federal government’s carbon reduction requirements compelled the Nova Scotia government to put together a plan that would both protect Nova Scotians from high costs and also tackle climate change; and

“Whereas the provincial government has had ample time but failed to submit a comprehensive plan to do this;

“Therefore be it resolved the people of Nova Scotia are facing the real possibility of high costs and a changing climate as a result of this government’s inaction.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

GOV’T. (N.S.) - CARBON RED. PLAN: FAILURE TO ACT - IMPACT

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am very happy to rise in this late debate to discuss this very, very urgent and important issue to Nova Scotians, to Canadians - to the world, Mr. Speaker. We know that we are facing a great existential threat. We know that the Earth is warming at an unsustainable rate, and we know that we have to do something about it right now.

Earlier in Question Period today, Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition asked a number of questions to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Some of the thoughts that came to my mind when I was observing that debate were Orwellian. I heard the minister speak, and what he said reminded me of people like Jason Kenney, Doug Ford - people who rejected and refused to work with the federal government. Some people might take that as a compliment, but I for one think it’s a sad road to go down. Don’t forget that Alberta and Ontario now have carbon taxes.

I also heard the minister say, join us - let the Opposition join us. I would like to say to the minister: If the minister would give us something to join, if the minister would show us a way to price carbon, then we would join in that plan. However, we don’t see anything like that happening right now.

The government has fallen short of its responsibility to Nova Scotians to protect our climate but also to ensure affordability for families in our province. The environment bill that we have seen presented this session is a half-measure, a half-hybrid - as I said the other day - one that is a product of a government that has stalled and dragged its heels for months on end. This government has known for a year and a half that this was coming from

the federal government, that there is a price on carbon that is legislated, and they have refused to present any real plan to the federal government.

[3:30 p.m.]

The government's tantrum about the carbon tax lies in the idea that we cannot have both affordability and action on climate change. We know that this is simply false, Mr. Speaker. We've seen other provinces adapt to the demands of a federal carbon price, and put programming in place in their provinces to help reduce people's bills. Those are oil bills and power bills.

We've also put forward a number of suggestions on how we can meet both goals, but doing it requires co-operation with our federal counterparts, not vilifying our federal counterparts while our country makes this important transition.

This government, and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Premier, need to go to the table with the federal government and make a deal, but that is something that they simply refuse to do. We have been told in numerous press conferences that they put forward a plan. The plan was to not have a carbon tax and not have any substantial plan to show them. Yes, we have great goals. Yes, we have great ambitions to attack the climate crisis in this province, but if we don't see a set-out plan with goals, and guidelines, and steps, and how-to lists, then it's not really a plan.

This is some of the reason why our caucus has been talking for years about the need for a massive investment in energy efficiency and programs that lower people's bills while tackling the climate change crisis. In order to meet our climate goals and to help people afford to heat their homes, we will need to retrofit virtually every single home in the province, but we have no plan from the government to do this.

This is why we also know that we need a performance-based regulation system for our power utility that ties its profits to environmental performance and reliability. It is simply disingenuous for the Progressive Conservative government to act shocked and surprised that the federal government do what they said they were going to do for years - i.e., price carbon - and ask for a plan to price carbon and then tackle the climate crisis. This government is outraged by this idea. I am outraged by the fact that we've done nothing knowing that this was coming.

I will also remind the House that we are still waiting for an overdue climate plan from this government.

Because this government has refused to engage in this co-operative process, and did not submit an adequate carbon pricing system, Nova Scotians will instead be subject to the federal system, one which does not account for the unique needs and realities of this province. I am tired of hearing that the Opposition parties are imposing this tax on Nova

Scotians. It's simply not true. It is this government that will hold the responsibility for that tax being brought into Nova Scotia.

Because of our reliance on carbon-heavy sources of electricity and heating in the province, the rebates that residents in other provinces subject to the federal carbon pricing get will not be sufficient here. We will have to do more.

Dalhousie professor Larry Hughes has argued that there are other ways that the government could have proposed to regulate our province's carbon usage. As our main emission sources are heating and transportation, Hughes suggested more comprehensive efficiency programs - sounds familiar - and home retrofitting - sounds familiar - that could be undertaken to reduce carbon consumption.

All of this requires that we have a government that has done its homework when it comes to this. This government has had ample time and resources that could have been directed towards developing a carbon pricing system that equitably addressed the needs of Nova Scotians while still working towards a reduction in emissions.

On top of refusing to come up with a plan, the government has also taken the position that they should be allowed to keep the revenues from the carbon tax. This is not an arrangement that is happening in any other province. It doesn't seem that this government is operating from a point of view that is informed by the reality of the situation at hand. Again, I will say: We knew this was coming. It knew that this was coming all along. Instead, we have seen this government pick a fight with the federal government in a blatant act of politicking rather than genuine concern for Nova Scotians.

If this government truly had concern about the welfare of Nova Scotians and had done its homework, it would have become very clear that its chosen approach to bury its head in the sand would be more costly than a co-operative approach.

Our caucus fully supports measures taken to reduce carbon emissions. However, we know that this can be done in a way that does not cause undue hardship on Nova Scotian households.

The priority here has not been the average Nova Scotian household. This government is rushing through a bill and warns that if we don't have our regulations in place to hold large emitters accountable by January 1st, the federal backstop on large emitters could be imposed. Well, where is that sense of urgency when it comes to protecting the rest of the province?

Nova Scotians know that it is fully possible to tackle the climate crisis and make life affordable for regular people. We can do this but we need a government with the vision and imagination to make it happen.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on an introduction.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd just like to bring the House's attention to the West Gallery. We're joined by Colin Mitchell, a grad from Acadia University who has worked, I believe, for at least two MPs. He's a resident of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, a keener, and I'm very glad that he's proud to wear red shirts during campaigns. Thank you so much, Colin, for being here to join this evening's proceedings.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. We do welcome all guests to the Legislature.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'm pleased to rise to support what was put forward by my colleague, the member from Dartmouth North, on the question of carbon pricing and imploring the government to go back to negotiating or start negotiations. They've been in government for more than a year now.

Carbon pricing has been part of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change for more than five years, and this province has signed on, as did other provinces, to the need to work together to fight this challenge of climate change. What we're seeing here is an old playbook. What we're seeing here is putting politics before what's in the public interest. What we're seeing here is an unjustifiable defiance of what's in the public interest, especially for those that the increase, the sticker shock at the pump, the increase to home heating will impact the most.

With increasing costs already happening for market forces, with the increases that are being put forward by Nova Scotia Power, this is going to compound those issues for people.

The legislation that this government has brought forward, in fact, exposes people to a carbon tax on their home heating and in their transportation. Some of the arguments they made on the other side of the House, we could make too, because that is what is important on home heating.

I've heard in Question Period some odd arguments that the minister and the government will continuously defend Nova Scotians, and they're against a carbon tax. They think that is enough. I suppose you could say you're against GST, but that's not stopping GST as part of our HST in our province, because it's been the law. It's like saying I'm against hurricanes and asking: what are you going to do, minister, to prepare yourself for a hurricane that's coming to Nova Scotia? And the minister saying, well, you know what - I'm against hurricanes. I don't like hurricanes. (Laughter) We in Nova Scotia don't want hurricanes.

Being against something doesn't mean that you're escaping the reality of it coming true. The only people who don't think the carbon pricing is coming because of their actions are the members on that side of the House.

The report was already tabled - and this is an unbiased view. A credible source, Larry Hughes, said that, "In 2023, Nova Scotians will begin paying the federal benchmark carbon price of \$65 per tonne of CO₂e emitted." That's how he opens his report. Just a matter of fact. Right now, our carbon price is \$50 a tonne; it started at \$10. That's an incremental increase.

Why not protect the cap and trade program that has been in place for some time? Why not modify that program to meet the benchmark of \$65 a tonne?

The government says that cap and trade won't work. Well, it has worked pretty well in the last five years, protecting people, protecting the costs at the pump, and power rates, while investing the \$100 million - that that government has taken over and takes credit for - in the Green Fund.

My colleague mentioned that if they were in government over that last five years, we would basically have the same system that's going to come our way, the same system that Doug Ford let come in, the same system that Jason Kenney let in, and now I guess we're going to be added to that list. It's a good thing they weren't in government because just think of the costs that Nova Scotians would have had to incur over the last number of years, right? They voted against cap and trade, so Nova Scotians shouldn't be surprised that they are now removing cap and trade. The peculiar argument that somehow cap and trade is expiring - if it is naturally expiring, why do you have to remove it in legislation?

They are removing a program that protects Nova Scotians. What troubles me, as well, is when we asked about the impacts to Nova Scotians and when this gets applied to Nova Scotians, what rebate do they get? Different provinces get different types of rebates, based on their energy mix. I am concerned because it has been analyzed by a credible source, again, that shows Nova Scotia's energy mix will require the federal tax to be higher in Nova Scotia than in any other province currently subject to the federal carbon price. So we're going to go from having the lowest carbon price, impacting people the least in the country, to the highest. That's what concerns me.

This report that was already tabled argues that rather than fighting the federal government, the Nova Scotia government should take the recommendations made in the report and develop a better, more equitable carbon pricing plan. That's what we're asking for and I think that's the purpose of the debate: to make sure that Nova Scotians are aware that there is another way. Put the public interest before the politics of carbon tax.

We had a system here - we do still have a system - that encompasses roughly 90 per cent of our emission sources, everything except methane. They are removing that plan

and they are only going to take up 40 per cent of the emissions with the power electricity system and a large emitter at Lafarge, doing less for the environment. How is the federal government supposed to accept something like that?

What about exemptions? There's a similar plan in Newfoundland with performance standards and they actually give an exemption for home heating. Is that considered? Over 50 per cent of Nova Scotians heat their home with oil. They will be exposed because of PC legislation. That's the trigger, that's the choice.

As I explained, there are three choices. They chose the hybrid choice, which includes the carbon tax. It doesn't matter who is in the federal government. That's the law of the land. This was tested in court and went all the way to the Supreme Court.

Does this government plan to challenge that ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada? There was a PC government in Manitoba that actually realized this and did not want to join that fight and signed on to the agreement at the last minute because they realized they had to find a way to work to ensure that they had programs that met the needs of their province. That's what's good about a federation: recognizing that there are different circumstances in different parts of our country. In Nova Scotia, where we don't have access to lower-cost natural gas that emits less, where we don't have access to hydro, the federal government recognized that and that's the important part here. All that tough negotiation, by passing the bill they have before the House, is gone and that's what's important here.

What's different in Nova Scotia? We had a plan, we had the highest electricity rates, and that was recognized. They're giving up. This government lacks vision, lacks creativity, and lacks the will.

I'm glad that the NDP brought this forward to shine a light. This is an important issue that will face Nova Scotians when they see a 10 cent increase at the pump and higher home heating costs. This government is complicit in allowing that to happen.

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

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: I most certainly welcome this opportunity to speak on an extremely important topic to Nova Scotians, to Canadians, and to citizens of the world. I do agree with the NDP that this is the issue of our times. I do agree with the Liberals on that as well. Most certainly, one of the most urgent issues that came to me early on in my mandate as minister was the future of carbon pricing in this province. I can say to this House, I can say to my colleagues unequivocally, my department - working with other departments - have certainly done the analysis in terms of what is best for Nova Scotians, what's best for the residents of our province.

Absolutely, we know how urgent the situation is when it comes to climate change, how rapidly climate change is impacting our society and our economy and our future. The

only way to deal with reality is head-on. You have to look at some key facts. The federal government has changed the rules around carbon pricing, so therefore, on the industrial side, our rules will need to change with that. The current cap and trade system will not be compliant under the new federal rules.

[3:45 p.m.]

For our province, in our fight against climate change, we need to utilize many different tools to achieve the outcomes that we've set out. We've been very systematic and strategic in our fight against climate change. That is why one of the most perennial preeminent pieces of legislation to be brought forward by this government was the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, with 28 goals legislated to guide the Province in our fight against climate change.

This is a fundamental component in our overall plan, along with the bill that's before this Legislature, as it pertains to the new federal rules on pricing carbon. We know we have to be compliant with that. We want to hold our industrial emitters accountable. That is a key component in fighting climate change. Therefore, we know with EGCCRA, with the bill that's before this Legislature, we have a solid plan. Along with that, later on this year it's our intention to bring forward the climate plan. That is legislated in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, and it's the intention of this government to honour that commitment because it's so critical, that path forward, in terms of energy efficiency, in terms of using that equity lens as we fight climate change.

For the past few months, I've been clear with Nova Scotians, and the Premier has been clear, that we don't feel a carbon tax at the pump is appropriate, it's not appropriate on home heating oil. We have to recognize the times in which we're in. These are high inflationary times. Policy decisions are choices. They're choices. Ottawa has a choice. In our negotiations with Ottawa, we were very crystal clear with that. You are dealing with a province that is recognized in Confederation as a leader on the climate change file, and that is due to the work previous governments have done, and it's where we landed. I've been consistent in acknowledging that because it's absolutely true. It's a collective effort.

The federal government is being very rigid on the application of carbon as it pertains to the consumer side. As a Province, for us, it is critical that we continue to advocate for Nova Scotians, and we'll continue to do that. For months we've been saying this is completely unnecessary. How does increasing the price at the pump by 14 cents assist Nova Scotians when right now, the last time I checked, it was like, \$1.71 per litre? How does that change behaviour?

If that's the end goal, I get it, we want to change behaviour, but the market's already done that. Those were some of the key arguments that we made with the federal government, that it's simply not necessary in a province where we are leading the way in Canada on our initiatives to move to clean, renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, I think about some of the amazing experiences I had this Summer. For example, being down in Brier Island in beautiful southwestern Nova Scotia to visit Sustainable Marine and to have the opportunity to engage the four turbines that are now harnessing the power of the Bay of Fundy. This is the future, right? Clean, renewable energy. To be at COVE a few weeks ago, in downtown Dartmouth; to be with Minister Rushton and the Premier and MP Andy Fillmore and Melanie Nadeau, the executive director of COVE, to announce our intentions to move quickly to bring offshore wind development.

These are significant, cutting-edge initiatives that the Province is showing. That's the stuff we want Ottawa to get behind even more because that's the path forward - initiatives like that. Then, obviously, our work with green hydrogen. Our work with green hydrogen is going to also lead the way in terms of us moving to clean, renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a laser focus in moving to clean, renewable energy. This government has a laser focus in opposing the federal carbon tax on consumers, because we feel it's not appropriate. Certainly, with respect to that, bottom line, the federal government is going to need to speak to their choice if they so choose to impose that.

I truly believe Nova Scotians, from Yarmouth to Sydney, truly care about the environment. They truly are engaged on the climate issues that we're having. They want to see action. I believe we are delivering actions in the monetary investments that we've made, the legislation that we've put forward, and quite frankly, the bill that we have before this House, which will hold large emitters accountable, which will protect ratepayers as we move forward.

That bill is simply reality. The current system that we have will not be compliant under the new rules. As I said, you've got to deal with reality head-on, face-on.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe our plan on the industrial side will hold specifically Nova Scotia Power and industry accountable to do their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to do so in a way that aligns with and supports our aggressive provincial targets here in Nova Scotia - 80 per cent renewables by 2030, greenhouse gas emission reductions of 53 per cent, below 2005 levels.

As all of us know who have served in government that these are achievable. These are achievable, but we have to work together. We don't factor in a federal carbon tax on the consumer side to be part of that plan. We've been clear with Ottawa: You need to rethink this. Is this right for Nova Scotia? Is this right for Canada?

Look, I understand that the purpose of a tax is to alter behaviour. I understand that. But you need to look at it in the context in which we're in, and that context is the most inflationary times that we've seen since the early 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake: I still believe Nova Scotia, within Canada - within the world, for that matter - maintains a leadership position when it comes to climate change. Certainly, my discussions with my provincial counterparts, while I was in Yukon, were very good discussions. You could tell they were impressed with the work that's been done thus far, and the work we intend to do on climate change, and the bill that we have before the House.

I really feel that the federal government's approach to pricing carbon isn't the way to go in the context in which we're in. I encourage my colleagues in this House to join us and oppose a federal carbon tax

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou, with about two and a half minutes left.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: In 2 minutes and 45 seconds, what can I talk about? I can talk about the last number of years of energy stability. I can talk about a Green Fund that generated tens of millions of dollars to support programs. I can talk about a strong relationship with the federal government. Also, as I said, I can talk about rate stability that we were able to negotiate with Nova Scotia Power. All of these things are in jeopardy.

We heard today in Question Period - I'm happy that the minister said that they're going to continue to fund those programs. Those programs represent \$100 million. Our solar program, our efficiency programs, our educational programs, our retrofits - all of that is in jeopardy right now because the money that was generated from the cap and trade program was used to fund those, and the government doesn't have any idea whether or not that money is going to exist because they're here with a bill on the floor that the federal government hasn't said yea or nay to yet, whether they accept their plan. That is a huge problem. You're negotiating backwards.

I go back to the fact in my time in Energy that we spent time building some of the most successful programs in North America when it came to energy efficiency. It is trans-political. Every party had a say at some point in some of the programs that have been put forward. When I look at our solar program, which was the best in the country, when I look at all the work that we did to expand our efficiency programs to keep people in their homes, saving families hundreds of dollars on their power bills and at the same time keeping rates low - we kept rates low over a period of time.

All of this is in jeopardy. I really am extremely concerned because the cost of everything is so high now. We saw this coming years ago. It isn't like a carbon tax is new. They came to us and said, we're imposing a carbon tax, and we said, we're getting back to the table and negotiating. Not only did we negotiate a deal, we had a strong relationship with them. There were millions of dollars invested in programs to help Nova Scotians every day. Power rates were low. There was stability across the system.

I just had a note passed to me by my Leader: if Newfoundland and Labrador can get an exemption, why can't these guys? Why can't they get an exemption on gas or furnace oil? It's because they didn't negotiate it. They waited until the last minute and tens and tens of millions are going to have to be found to support Nova Scotians in these projects.

THE SPEAKER: I wish to thank all the members who participated in the adjournment debate this evening.

The House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

[The House rose at 3:58 p.m.]