



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2022

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we get into the daily routine, the honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park on a point of order.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a brief point of order. This is a simple point of order relating to the decorum of the House - as has been ruled on by both yourself and by previous Speakers many times in the past - regarding the use of cellphones during Question Period, which is not permitted.

Most recently, on Wednesday, July 27, 2022, when the Speaker said, "Before I recognize the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, I forgot to say that QP will be over at 2:56 p.m. I am also going to say once more about people - whether they are using their cell phones or not - cell phones do not belong in the Legislature during Question Period and I'll ask that people respect it."

I know that many of us in this Chamber, myself included, often fall victim to bad habits. However, I would ask that the Rules be respected, specifically during Question Period. In particular, during our most recent Question Period, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development was openly and directly reading from her cellphone responding to oral questions put to her as minister.

I simply ask on this point of order that members be reminded of your Rules for this House. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: We'll take the point of order under advisement and report tomorrow.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to clarify and assert definitively that I was not reading from my cellphone.

The member might recall that I had tabled a document but had wanted to retain it to continue to use and refer to during the course. At one point I did pick up my cellphone to take a photo of that document to enable me to table it. Subsequently, paper copies were brought in. That was the only reason I had my cellphone in my hand, to use the photo. I did not ever use it for its cellphone purposes.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, we're taking it under advisement at this point.

The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: There was no disrespect, and I am not questioning the integrity or the usage of the honourable minister, Mr. Speaker. It's just that there have been many times in this House where even the holding of a cellphone has been called to the member's attention by the Speaker or by the Sergeant-At-Arms.

Again, I am just hoping that we respect that one Rule. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: We'll put this to rest early. Members are not to use their cellphones during Question Period, period. Let's put a little bit more on it: if you are spotted using your cellphone, you might be asked to leave the Chamber for the remainder of Question Period.

Is everybody okay with that? Okay. We'll move on to the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

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

Bill No. 212 - Public Utilities Act (amended)

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House, with certain amendments.

As Chair of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bills:

Bill No. 208 - Environment Act (amended).

Bill No. 214 - Invest Nova Scotia Act.

Bill No. 215 - Invest Nova Scotia Board Act (amended).

Bill No. 216 - Build Nova Scotia Act.

Bill No. 219 - Gaming Control Act (amended).

Bill No. 222 - Housing Supply and Services Act.

Bill No. 223 - Municipal Finance Corporation Dissolution Act.

Bill No. 224 - Perennia Food and Agriculture Corporation Act.

Bill No. 225 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended).

Bill No. 227 - Financial Measures (Fall 2022) Act.

Bill No. 228 - Public Utilities Act (amended).

Bill No. 230 - Provincial Lichen Act.

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

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 240 - An Act to Amend Chapter 12 of the Acts of 2011, the Public Procurement Act, Respecting Fair Wages and Community Benefits. (Gary Burrill)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Before I introduce the bill, Mr. Speaker, could I make an introduction please?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you. I'd like to bring the House's attention to the West Gallery, where we are joined by Robert MacDonald, president and CEO of the Lung Association of Nova Scotia - I'd ask that you stand, please, as you're introduced, as well; Michelle Donaldson, director of communications for the Lung Association of Nova Scotia; Connor Mulders, public policy coordinator for the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network; and Lindsey Timm, community engagement manager for the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network.

We are also joined by Heather Mulligan, well known to this House, who is now working for the Canadian Cancer Society as well.

I ask the House to join me in thanking these folks here today. Thank you all for being here. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to everyone. I hope you enjoy your stay in the Legislature.

Bill No. 241 - An Act to Amend Chapter 197 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Health Services and Insurance Act, Respecting Lung Cancer Screening. (Hon. Zach Churchill)

Bill No. 242 - An Act to Reform Public Body Executive Compensation. (Kendra Coombes)

Bill No. 243 - An Act to Support Sexual Assault Victims. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 244 - An Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Income Tax Act, Respecting Tax Brackets. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 245 - An Act to Establish a Diabetes Framework for Nova Scotia. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HOLOCAUST EDUC. WK.: PGMS. IN HFX. - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Holocaust Education Week. During this week, we reflect on the memory of the six million Jews who were murdered by Nazis during the Holocaust.

Unfortunately, Holocaust misinformation and denial still exists around the world. We must never allow history to repeat itself, which is why Holocaust education is so crucial. Learning about the Holocaust provides an opportunity to develop an understanding of issues that can lead to discrimination and genocide.

To further our understanding, the Atlantic Jewish Council is holding a series of programs in Halifax during their 19th Annual Holocaust Education Week. These programs range from discussing Nazi treasure hunters and what is being done to recover family property, to a dance film paying tribute to the nearly half a million Hungarian Jews who were murdered to the personal recollections of surviving a concentration camp.

During Holocaust Education Week, I encourage all Nova Scotians to reflect on and acknowledge the resiliency of Jewish Nova Scotians and their contributions to our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HELPAID, KEITH & PAT: CITIZENS ON PATROL - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to recognize Keith and Pat Helpard of Timberlea who recently volunteered their time at the Bay Treasure Chest count as the selected honorarium group representing Citizens on Patrol.

[1:15 p.m.]

Keith and Pat are active members of Citizens on Patrol, which is a group of citizens who participate in community-based crime prevention programs in co-operation with the local law enforcement agency. Through observation, documentation, and reporting, members of Citizens on Patrol provide an active presence in their community while patrolling by vehicle, on foot, by bicycle, or other means.

COP members are educated volunteers who increase the awareness of suspicious and dangerous or unusual activities happening in the community. Members are trained to always use safe practices, and have some fun while patrolling and acting as the extended eyes and ears of local law enforcement.

I'd like the members of the House of Assembly to join me in thanking Keith and Pat for their interest and work to ensure a safe community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

PROV. PARKS: IMPORTANCE - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the beauty, immeasurable ecological importance, and tourism value of our provincial parks, particularly the West Mabou Beach Provincial Park.

A park since 2001, this piece of coastline has unparalleled beauty, beach dunes full of piping plovers, and solitude. As Rodney MacDonald, then Minister of Tourism and Culture said in 2001: "We cannot overstate the importance of nature to tourism and to our quality of life. The vast majority of visitors come to Nova Scotia because of our natural environment, and access to the coastline is a critical part of the Nova Scotia experience."

As time continues to pass without our long-awaited Coastal Protection Act, I ask all members of this House to join me in affirming that our provincial parks are not for sale.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

DEEP SKY EYE OBSERV.: BUS. AWD. RECIP. - RECOG.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: The Yarmouth and Area Chamber of Commerce celebrated their 15th Annual Business Awards on October 20th. The event is for the region's business community to recognize their peers and show the importance of a strong business community.

At this year's Annual Business Awards, Deep Sky Eye Observatory was awarded Tourism Business of the Year. Local astronomer Tim Doucette's Deep Sky Eye

Observatory in my community of Quinan is a great place to experience the beauty of the night sky. The clear dark sky with unobstructed viewing makes this a premiere stargazing location that attracts visitors from near and around the world.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Deep Sky Eye on this remarkable achievement, and wish them astronomical success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

LEB. HER. MO.: CONTRIBS. OF LEB. COM. - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place to recognize that we are now entering Lebanese Heritage Month. I want to recognize the strong contributions that the Lebanese community have made in the growth of Sydney through entrepreneurship, health care and education. There's a rich and vibrant Lebanese community - and politics. Thank you to the member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

A lot of my friends are also involved with hockey. There have been some NHL players and Olympians from the Lebanese community who have had very successful hockey careers as well. I rise in my place at the beginning of Lebanese Heritage Month to recognize the Lebanese community, my friends and family. I look forward to celebrating with everyone in Sydney and the greater area as we all celebrate Lebanese Heritage Month.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite where we're joined by a number of friends. I'll ask that you stand as I say your name. I'd like to introduce Sandra Mullen, President of the NSGEU; bargaining committee members from Local 73, Annette Leyenaar, Lead Early Childhood Educator; Nanette Doherty, Education Assistant 1; Veronica Carr, Education Assistant 1 - who I saw yesterday; picket captain Lindsay Ahearn, Education Assistant 1; bargaining committee members from Local 70, Bev Waddell, Payroll Clerk, Stacey Jenson, School Administrative Assistant; Tracey Cook, Accounting Clerk; picket captain Shannon Uhlman, Support Early Childhood Educator; and Dave MacKenzie, to whom this House is no stranger.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

EDUC. SUPP. WKRS. STRIKE: LOW WAGES - SOLIDARITY

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, members of the NDP caucus and I visited the striking education support workers in Windsor and New Minas on the picket line. These workers, who are mainly women, have left their schools, students, and the people they work for to stand up for a basic value - same pay for same work.

Every MLA in this Chamber is paid the same basic pay regardless of where they are from. This is not the case in our education system. If you work outside of HRM, regardless of your education, you are paid less. It is unclear why the government values these rural workers less than others, but that is what is happening.

These dedicated education support workers do not want to be on the picket line. They want to be in their schools doing their jobs. I heard this yesterday over and over again. They have had enough. Same pay for the same work is a fundamental principle, and it is mainly women who are being marginalized by this wage disparity. This government has not said definitively if they believe school support workers in the Valley and the South Shore should be paid the same as someone working in Halifax right now.

New Democrats stand in solidarity with school support workers in their fight to be treated fairly. I ask all members of this House to join me in affirming the same.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, we welcome all visitors to the Legislature. Thank you very much for being here.

The honourable member for Richmond.

JOHNSON, JOHN DUNCAN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge the life of John Duncan Johnson of Potlotek. On September 30, 2022, he passed away at the age of 92. He was the beloved husband of Agnes and the father of 13 children. John Duncan's legacy also includes 53 grandchildren, 78 great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

In 1960, John Duncan had to have a lobe of his lung removed due to tuberculosis, and doctors encouraged him to never work again. He did the complete opposite, and with instruction from his father, became a master carpenter. John Duncan in turn passed on his skills to his children and many others who were fortunate enough to learn from him.

A man of deep faith, he was instrumental in the construction of a new church in Potlotek in 1976, and in the upkeep of the church for many years. He was a leader and a well-respected elder in his community.

Please join me in recognizing the well-lived life of John Duncan Johnson.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

LEB. HER. MO.: CONTRIBS. OF LEB. COM. - RECOG.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lebanese Heritage Month.

Since 2018, November has become a time when members of the Lebanese community come together to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Lebanese people in Nova Scotia since the 1800s. I'm proud to rise today to recognize the work and contributions of the Lebanese community. I look forward to celebrating with my community over the next month.

I would like to ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing the great contribution of the Lebanese community to Halifax and our province, and the great work that continues to happen to this day.

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

SCHOOL SUPP. STRIKE: FAIRNESS - SOLIDARITY

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, youth in Kingston and, indeed, all students on the South Shore and Annapolis Valley are getting a lesson in public discourse and in the rights of workers. Today, Kingston students left school and were met by their parents to march in support of their school's support staff. It has been nine days since workers walked off the job. The main issue is fairness and wage parity. Just like gender should not be a reason to pay individuals less, neither should your region and location.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in solidarity, and our caucus stands in solidarity, with the workers of NSGEU.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HARNISH, RHYS: TASTE OF N.S. AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, every year, the Taste of Nova Scotia Awards celebrate the people and products at the heart of our province's culinary industry. As always, the 2022 recipients represent the best of the best.

I want to extend particular congratulations to the recipient of the 2022 Award for Service, Mr. Rhys Harnish. Rhys is best known as the affable owner of the Shore Club - Nova Scotia's last great dance hall and home of the original lobster supper. He also

operated the former Captain Angus Restaurant at the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg for many years. It's the place where my husband, Jody, got his start in the food service industry, and where he and I met. We'll be married 31 years as of next week.

Rhys, either I owe you a lot, or you owe me. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HICKS, HANNAH: ART CONTEST WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today to congratulate a constituent, Hannah Hicks, who earlier this year won an art contest. Hannah won for her painting, Lava Dance. The contest was held by the Canadian Association for Supported Employment. What winning that particular contest meant was, in fact, that Hannah would be the artist in residence for CASE's annual conference, which was held in Winnipeg in June.

I would like to congratulate Hannah, who is no stranger to this House. I've talked about her before. She is a Special Olympian. I was in Chester this Summer and visited a glass shop. They told me that Hannah's cards were among their best sellers. I want to congratulate Hannah for all her work on art and in the Special Olympics, and wish her well in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SCHOOL SUPP. STRIKE: INCLUSIVITY - SOLIDARITY

SUZY HANSEN: I stand today in solidarity with my brothers and sisters who are on the front lines, who have been there for a number of days. I got the opportunity and the privilege to be able to walk with a few of you, and in different locations as well. I felt that passion and that determination. I understand that you would rather be in class with the students. You'd rather be with our young people who need you the most. As well, I know that the staff are appreciative of you being there with these students because we know how valuable your role is there.

I want to say that we stand in solidarity with all the EA students, support workers, and staff who are on the front line. As well, I also want to say to this government that if we say we have an inclusive education system, we need to include every single student - not just some students.

I think that's where we need to look deep into our negotiations. When we talk about what is valuable, crucial and essential, we don't have to look far. They are on the front lines right now.

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

HAYDEN, ERIK: CAN. GAMES MEDAL WIN - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a talented young athlete, Erik Hayden. Erik was the Cobequid Educational Centre's basketball MVP and Male Athlete of the Year in his senior season last year. He graduated from the CEC in June, and has just begun kinesiology studies at Acadia University.

In August, Erik and his teammates brought home the bronze medal in basketball at the 2022 Canada Summer Games, where Team Nova Scotia defeated Alberta 90-83. This bronze medal is Nova Scotia's first medal in Canada Games men's basketball since 2009.

Erik displayed his dedication this Summer as he regularly travelled to Halifax for practices while preparing for his post-secondary path. He still found time to practise at home in Truro, and anywhere in between.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Erik on his Canada Games bronze medal, and wish him all the best at Acadia University this year.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

U16 GIRLS HOCKEY TEAM: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the U16 Nova Scotia girls' hockey team on their Atlantic Challenge Cup victory. Not only did they win, but they actually went undefeated.

These are outstanding athletes, and I want to congratulate the following people: Sinead Beanlands, Paige MacPhee, Avery Cohen, Calla Desrosiers, Emma Macintyre, Brooklyn MacNeil, Alara Murphy, Claire Sanford, Grace Allison, Ava Beaton, Jenna Beaton, Kendall Doiron, Aylee Glenn, Lucy Harland, Greyce Kennedy, Emerson MacDonald, Skylar MacLean, Jaylee Mackinnon, Genevieve Rothenburg, and Hilary Wilkin. We are all so very proud of you. Congratulations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DAL UNIV. STRIKE: RALLY – RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Today is Day 14 of the strike at Dalhousie University of CUPE Local 3912, representing the university's 1,500 sessional teachers, teaching assistants, markers, and demonstrators.

Yesterday, on Day 13, a rally was held at Dal in support of the striking academic workers, sponsored by the Dalhousie Student Union. It was held in conjunction with the students' strike in support of the union. The rally was loud, energetic, and very well attended.

One of the many speakers at the rally, a teaching assistant, spoke about having to work three part-time jobs in addition to her TA position in order to survive.

The Leader of the NDP and the NDP House Leader both spoke at the rally and amplified the fundamental reasonableness of the fair wages that are being called for by the union. It is much to be hoped that Dal will not continue on a path that is such a stain on its reputation.

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

CHICKEN SHACK: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, Cape Bretoners are a resilient people. We are known for banding together when times get tough. I believe that an accurate indicator of a community's resiliency is its reaction to a traumatic event.

Well Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Fiona was the greatest natural disaster that our generation has witnessed and I am proud to say that our town reacted. More often than not, small businesses are behind the success of any benefit event in our community. The Chicken Shack is exactly that kind of business, so their reaction should not be surprising.

In the days following the storm, the restaurant had no power and was operating with a generator and flashlights only. These challenging conditions did not deter the staff and they continued cooking and giving away food until close to a thousand meals were served. Knowing that businesses like the Chicken Shack are there to help our community ride out the storm is indeed a comforting thought.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SIMMONDS, A'DRE: MEETING CHALLENGES - CONGRATS.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give a shout-out to the Saint Mary's Huskies Football team who played their last regular season game this past Saturday.

Even more, I want to give a shout-out to my son, A'dre Simmonds, who scored the first touchdown of the game. He was then, sadly, off in an ambulance because he was injured. I just want to say that one of the things that I was able to speak to him after he was injured. I asked how he was doing and he said: Mom - also known as Mama Dukes - did you see my last run? Did you see me get in?

I just want to give a shout-out and say Dre, that is what you do. You always finish and I just want to remind you that your determination, passion, grit, and your ability to enter a room and demand energy and attention will follow you. I'm extremely proud of you.

I also want to say that you have redefined the stereotype of what a football player is and what a football person is. You're redefining your future. I look forward to seeing what's next for you. You have endured several struggles and challenges these last few years and I'm extremely proud to be called your mom. You have fallen more than six times but have gotten up seven.

I look forward to seeing what you will do in the future and how you will leave your legacy of Simmonds. Congratulations!

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

GRANDY, FRANK - CUTE AS A BUTTON BAND: COM. SERV. - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, many in this House know that I love a good sing-along. If people don't know that, then they should just come and talk to me and I will let them know.

I rise today to recognize Frank Grandy and his band, Cute as a Button for the goodwill and great music that they bring to Dartmouth North. For many years, Frank Grandy and Cute as a Button have brought their classic country, gospel, and rock and roll to the Holy Trinity Emmanuel church hall on Sunday afternoons.

The price of admission is by donation and all the money goes to the upkeep and work of the church itself such as initiatives like the church's free clothing depot. Frank and the band, who donate their time and talent have also provided the soundtrack for community events such as the fundraiser to help cover the costs of a specialized wheelchair for Dartmouth North resident, Bob Anthony's 85th birthday.

I ask that this House join me in saying thank you to Frank and the members of Cute as a Button for the music and fun and their dedication to Holy Trinity Emmanuel and the community of Dartmouth North.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

GRANT, CHRISTOPHER (C.J.): CANADA GAMES PERF. - CONGRATS.

TOM TAGGART: Mr. Speaker, Christopher "C.J." Grant from Valley had the opportunity to represent our province at the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games. C.J.

competed in the difficult sport of hammer. His goals for the Games were to make the top eight and throw his personal best record.

He far exceeded these goals, coming in an impressive fourth place with a throw of 52.18 metres, besting his previous record of 50.88 metres. Christopher exhibited the passion that burns in the hearts of athletes, using his abilities to compete at his highest level on the national stage.

Colchester North residents are proud of the way Christopher represented our community. I ask that all members of this Legislature join me in congratulating Christopher for his successful trip to the Canada Games and achieving the goals he set for himself.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

MLA FOR RICHMOND: CHIROPRACTOR OF THE YEAR - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I know that we have lots of lively debates in here, but when a Cape Bretoner does well, it's important that other Cape Bretoners celebrate them. The member for Richmond was named Chiropractor of the Year. (Applause)

I saw that on Facebook and we as a caucus want to congratulate him. As I said, it's always nice. Cape Bretoners are strategically placed to take over the world whenever we're called. Now we have the Chiropractor of the Year. I do want to say congratulations to the member. He's adjusting very well to the job. We want to offer him congratulations. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: And congratulations from all of us to the member.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

LOW WAGES: IMPACT - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, low-wage work represents a significant portion of the labour market in Nova Scotia.

Low wages have a significant impact on the economy and on government expenses and revenues. If individuals had good and reliable paycheques, they would not need to work multiple jobs to get by. They could spend time with family, community, and volunteering.

Low-wage work takes its toll on a person's health and wellness and on family life. That's all to say Nova Scotians need a raise.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

REDMOND, DARLENE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

KENT SMITH: I rise today to recognize Darlene Redmond of Porters Lake. Darlene has been a volunteer with Scouts Canada for over 35 years.

It may not be known that Darlene lives with a disability. She received the Medal of Fortitude in 2020. Despite this, she is an amazing volunteer who gives freely of her time and energy. She has served Scouts Canada on a national level through the Canadian Scout Jamboree 2017, and she volunteers provincially as well as in her home community.

She organizes provincial conferences and local area events for youth as well as offering workshops for volunteers. Her mentorship of new scouters is deeply appreciated. Darlene is both well-known and well-respected in Nova Scotia for her dedication to Scouts.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in thanking Darlene for her incredible work in the community through Scouts Canada.

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

BROWN, KAREN: SCHOOL VOLUN. WK. - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I rise today to recognize lifelong Fairview resident Karen Brown, or as two decades of students at École Burton Ettinger School have called her, Ms. Karen.

Karen started volunteering at the elementary school when her son Chris started Primary more than 15 years ago. During those first seven years, Karen was a devoted volunteer helping in classrooms, volunteering in the office, and was a mentor and friend to hundreds of young students.

Karen's love for the school has continued to grow long after her son graduated. She is a dedicated employee working with the EXCEL program, is the head of the lunch monitors, and continues to volunteer any extra time with Safe Arrivals, lost and found, and as a substitute secretary when needed. Karen has also recently added one new role to her busy days - grandmother to baby Joshua.

People like Karen Brown are one in a million, and we are so lucky to have her working with the students here in Fairview-Clayton Park.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member Halifax Needham.

SAINT GEORGE'S YOUTHNET: PGMS. FOR YOUTH - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize Saint George's YouthNet. Saint George's YouthNet provides free programs to children and youth living in and near Uniacke Square in the north end of Halifax.

YouthNet has offered friendship and supports to my community since it was founded in 1998. It's tied to the long legacy of Saint George's Round Church, and if you don't know, you've got to look it up. Their programs for local youth ages seven to 17 strive to encourage participants to discover their talents, gain self-confidence, and dream of bright futures.

They fulfill this goal through their wide range of programs, including after-school, lunch, and teen programs throughout the school year and have a wilderness camping trip and many trips and day camps during the Summer.

I would like all the members to join me in recognizing the dedication and love that the staff and volunteers show our young people every day, and I thank them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MATTHEWS, DARLENE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to recognize Darlene Matthews of Amherst. Even though Darlene has had her own significant health challenges and has had to overcome much, she has a huge heart and cares for our most vulnerable in our community.

She came up with an idea recently to adopt a person who is currently living unsheltered or vulnerable. Her idea was to bring that person a hot meal or make sure they have warm blankets. Darlene really wants to see people being taken care of and not having to worry about getting a meal or staying warm this Winter.

I am grateful to have Darlene Matthews as part of my constituency and someone who truly cares and is outward-focused.

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

BLANDFORD HOLIDAY ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR: 32ND YR. - RECOG.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: On Sunday, November 6th, the community of Blandford will host their 32nd Annual Holiday Arts and Crafts Fair at the District No. 1 Community Centre.

The Community Centre board of directors, under the leadership of Karen Overholt, is bringing together artisans to provide unique handcrafted gifts and decor options for the many attendees. They are even offering door prizes every hour.

Traditions are so important, and I want to thank the board, volunteers, vendors, and shoppers for making this event a success for 32 years.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

BROWN, PHIL: SPEC. OLYMP. WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I rise today to share with the House the accomplishments of a remarkable athlete from New Minas.

Since being introduced to weightlifting when he was 17, Phil Brown has won 185 Special Olympics medals in powerlifting, speed skating, and soccer. This past Spring, Phil was part of a team of Nova Scotian competitors at the Canadian Powerlifting Union Nationals in St. John's, Newfoundland. Phil became the first Nova Scotian Special Olympian to win a medal in two divisions. He proudly took two of the 14 medals won by the team, receiving a gold medal in the 66-kilogram Master 2 Special Olympics division and a bronze medal competing in the generic open division. Phil is an inspiration to us all.

I would ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Phil Brown on his outstanding athletic achievements and in wishing him great success in his future competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

ESTEY, STEVEN: ADVOCACY FOR DISABLED - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Dartmouth North is home to many brilliant and committed activists. Today, I would like to recognize an internationally respected activist, Steven Estey, for over 30 years of fierce advocacy for people with disabilities.

Steve was an adviser to the Canadian government delegation to the United Nations which helped draft the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international treaty aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of people with disabilities.

Here in Canada, Steve has testified before several parliamentary committees. He has worked for organizations such as Disabled Peoples' International and as a human rights officer and as national coordinator of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. In 2021, Steve was presented with a Nova Scotia Human Rights Award, recognizing his exemplary lifelong advocacy, education, and leadership in the realm of disability rights, a well-deserved honour.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in expressing deep gratitude to Steven Estey. Because of the work he does, we are progressing toward a more universally accessible, equitable, and just province and world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

HOWIE CTR. VOL. FIRE DEPT.: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and thank the Howie Centre Volunteer Fire Department and the community of Howie Centre for their hard work and dedication to our residents during the recent hurricane.

The fire department and its many community volunteers worked tirelessly, providing their comfort centre with everything needed for many people. The compassion shown is overwhelming and will never be forgotten.

Today Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to commend those community members and the volunteer fire department for coming together to help those in need.

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

HODDER, JEREMY: COM. SERV. - THANKS

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, as we all wear our poppies today, I stand to recognize an outstanding resident serving with our Canadian Armed Forces.

Master Sailor Jeremy Hodder deployed with HMCS *Fredericton* during the Stalker 22 Cyclone helicopter crash in 2020. He heavily contributed to recovery efforts and spent nearly two days straight on infrared cameras searching for remains and debris. He was deployed twice with the Royal Canadian Navy on Operation REASSURANCE. Jeremy participated in Run the Rock as part of the HMCS *St. John's* and helped raise \$100,000 for the Children's Wish Foundation. He has been nominated for the exceptional sailor award and the Remembrance Day Sentry Program to be the RCN's representative in Ottawa for Remembrance Day. Jeremy has volunteered 100-plus hours with the independent cinema Carbon Arc in Halifax helping expand the art form to the city. He also volunteers with Feed Nova Scotia, Argyle Fine Art gallery, and numerous women's transition houses throughout Atlantic Canada. As a proud Nova Scotian, Jeremy has contributed greatly to our province and Canadian Forces as a whole.

I wish to thank Jeremy for his service to Nova Scotia and Canada.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

HICKS, CINDY: POWERLIFT CH'SHIPS WIN - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Cindy Hicks of Amherst. Cindy is 51 years old, and in September this year, she competed in the Amateur World Powerlifting Congress World Championships 2022 in Manchester, England. Cindy brought home a gold medal for Team Canada in the 90-kilogram women category. Cindy has only been powerlifting for two years and has qualified to participate in the world championships after her very first competition.

I would like to congratulate Cindy for her hard work, determination, and achievement and for representing Cumberland County and Nova Scotia internationally. This is a great accomplishment for Cindy, and I ask everyone to join me in congratulating her on winning an international gold medal.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

CHACKO, ANDREW: NATL. LIT. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and congratulate Andrew Chacko of Antigonish on receiving a national literacy award. As part of International Literacy Day, on September 8th, the Council of the Federation recognized Andrew as the Nova Scotia recipient for his leadership, resilience, and dedication to literacy and American Sign Language.

Andrew, born without hearing, grew up in India and came to Canada in 2008. He settled in Antigonish in 2015. Andrew joined the Antigonish County Adult Learning Association to improve his reading and writing skills to better connect with others and improve his employment opportunities. After learning ASL, with other students and instructors, they met to study and practice ASL and started a group of ASL learners in our community. He continues to volunteer at ACALA with ASL learners.

I ask all members to congratulate Andrew as he continues to dedicate his time to making his community more connective and inclusive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

HUNTER, RAYANNE: RH FITNESS & WELLNESS LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Rayanne Hunter for her business success. Rayanne is a certified personal trainer who recently launched RH Fitness & Wellness in Bayers Lake. She strongly believes that health is wealth and that everyone should be able to access the resources they need to stay well.

Rayanne also launched monthly health workshops to educate members and non-members alike. Her most recent workshop was on plantar fasciitis. Rayanne's passion for health and wellness motivates her to make a difference in her clients' lives.

I would ask that the House join me in recognizing Rayanne for her successful business launch.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

DEXTER CONSTR.: MENTAL HEALTH SUPP. - RECOG.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: I rise today to applaud the human resources team at Dexter Construction Company Limited. One of my constituents has been an employee of Dexter Construction for many years. When he began struggling with his mental health, the human resources team at Dexter were there for him and have been supporting him on his road to recovery.

Even though he is currently not able to work, Dexter's staff have assured him that his job is waiting for him whenever he is ready to return.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of World Mental Health Day, which was observed on October 10th of this year, I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in applauding Dexter Construction Company Limited for understanding and appreciating the challenges faced by those living with mental health illness.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

LOCAL GRPS.: HALLOWEEN EVENTS - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Halloween spirit is alive and well in Northside-Westmount. I'd like to recognize some groups that put on great events for the children of Northside-Westmount. Starting off over a week ago, the business community in North Sydney put on a children's walk where the kids could come by different businesses and fill up their treat bags.

This past Sunday, the folks at Holy Family parish worked together with the local business community - led by Edna and Glen Burton - and put on an amazing event at the church hall for all the children. On Halloween night, the Westmount Fire Department put on a great event for the children, with fireworks and all kinds of candy. Also, in Alder Point, the Kiwanis Golden K put on an event at the Alder Point hall, recognizing Halloween for the kids of Alder Point and surrounding area.

Congratulations to everyone in Northside-Westmount, well done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

CANSO LIONS CLUB: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to recognize the Canso Lions Club. For many years, the Canso Lions have been a key community fundraising organization in the Canso area.

Recently the Lions donated \$10,000 to the Eastern Memorial Hospital for the purchase of an ultrasound machine, and they were able to help secure additional funding from the Lions Club International. The Eastern Tip Trail Association welcomed a \$2,000 donation from the Lions Club for work on the Chapel Gully Trail, and Pines Manor seniors complex was provided a compact wheelchair to help residents move within and outside the complex more easily.

Mr. Speaker, the Canso Lions Club volunteers seldom rest. If they are not delivering Meals on Wheels three days a week or installing Lifeline systems for seniors, they are selling tickets or organizing other fundraising activities for the community. They certainly are a true example of the Lions Club motto, “We Serve”.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of the House to join me in acknowledging the dedication the Canso Lions Club continues to demonstrate in their community and the example they set for others.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

LEJEUNE, LISE & BRAD: BRÛLERIE DU VIEUX MOULIN - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, recently Lise and Brad LeJeune opened their new company, Brûlerie du vieux moulin, a coffee roasting business. The name of the new company is a nod from this new Acadian company to one opened years ago by Lise’s ancestor, her great grandfather Élisée Robichaud.

Based out of the couple’s home, Brad and Lise will be roasting beans from a variety of countries, always trying to ensure that they are fair trade beans. On April 3rd the couple officially launched their new coffee roasting business at Chez Jean, a Belliveau Cove restaurant that will sell the beans as well as brew their coffee using the locally roasted beans.

As the LeJeunes continue with the plans for their new company, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Brûlerie du vieux moulin on the successful launch of their new coffee roasting business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

SHEA, BRYDON: COVID LEADERSHIP - RECOG.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dartmouth East resident Brydon Shea, a constable with the RCMP, and a dedicated army reservist with the Princess Louise Fusiliers in Halifax.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Brydon was amongst the first army reserve soldiers in Nova Scotia to volunteer to participate on Operation LASER, the Canadian Armed Forces response to COVID-19. As the Training Warrant Officer for Arnhem Company, Brydon Shea led COVID training both in person and helped initiate virtual training when health restrictions prevented collective training.

Brydon's dedication helped to ensure army reserve soldiers in Halifax were fit, trained, and prepared to deploy on any COVID-19 request for assistance in Nova Scotia or across Canada, and this was throughout the entire pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Brydon for his sense of duty and leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

THORPE, REV. ARRAN: ST. PETER'S PASTOR - WELCOME

BRAEDON CLARK: Today I rise to recognize and welcome Rev. Arran Thorpe who has recently taken up his position at St. Peter's Anglican Church in my constituency of Bedford South. Opened in 1951, St. Peter's has been a pillar of the community ever since, Drawing from the growing and diverse areas of Clayton Park and Bedford, St. Peter's has always been a place of welcome and good cheer.

A graduate of St. Mary's University and the Atlantic School of Theology, Rev. Thorpe served Trinity Church and Epiphany Anglican Church in Ottawa before returning - or, before moving here to Nova Scotia last month.

I ask all members of the House to welcome Rev. Thorpe to St. Peter's, and wish him nothing but the best as he settles into the wonderful constituency of Bedford South.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

DEMINGS, MYRTLE: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

NOLAN YOUNG: I rise today to recognize Myrtle Demings. Myrtle has been a committed community volunteer for most of her life as a member of Toddy's Crafts, the Roseway Hospital Auxiliary, and a founding member of Meals on Wheels. She is also an elder of St. Paul's United Church in Carleton Village, St. Paul's UCW, and the United

Church in Shelburne before moving to Carleton Village. As well, Myrtle donates her time to the Bedora Club of South Shore Shrine Club in Bridgewater and the Order of the Eastern Star. Myrtle also found time to volunteer for the Canadian Cancer Society, the Nova Scotia Kidney Foundation, and the Nova Scotia Alzheimer's Society.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask all members of this House join me in thanking Myrtle for her volunteer commitment to her community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

RAFUSE, J./MACLEOD, S.: CHARITY EVENT - CONGRATS.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'd like to take a moment to recognize two amazing people, Jacob Rafuse and Stephen MacLeod. Every year, Jacob and Stephen turn Theakston Avenue into a spooky Halloween celebration. This year, there were two bouncy castles, popcorn, a haunted house, a creepy clown that kind of creeped me out a little bit, and so much more.

Jacob and Stephen throw this event every year to raise funds for charity. This year, they threw it to raise money for the Youth Project. The event brings smiles to many kids' faces and money to organizations that need it the most. Congratulations, Jacob and Stephen, for all you do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

VOLUNS.: SCHOOL HOUSE CAFÉ - THANKS

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the School House Café, a local café that is operated by volunteers at the Digby Neck Consolidated School in Sandy Cove. The School House Café is run by the Digby Neck Collective, a group of residents who work together to maintain a positive community. The café is open on the third Saturday of every month. During these days, the café holds a Community Conversation Table where guest hosts have the chance to lead a discussion among community members.

The School House Café was founded by Melissa Merritt and Gwen Wilson and opened in 2017. This community run café has brought together so many people throughout the years, hosting events, activities, and even hosting CBC's Information Morning with Portia Clark in 2018. Even during times of uncertainty and closure during the pandemic, the School House Café continues to operate today with the help of so many incredible volunteers.

I'd like to say thank you to all of the organizers and volunteers of the School House Café for your commitment to serving the community.

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

MURRAY, MARY: SWIMMING MEDAL WINS - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: I rise today to recognize an outstanding Cole Harbour-Dartmouth athlete, Mary Murray.

At 80 years of age, Mary represented Nova Scotia in the Canadian 55+ Games held in Kamloops, B.C., this past August. She's a self-taught swimmer with the breaststroke and the backstroke her favourites. The Butterfly is her nemesis. She trains at the Cole Harbour Place pool.

Mary has a book written after her called *Homegirl* as she was one of 12 children who grew up in the Halifax Orphanage on Tower Road. She impersonates Elvis in the as-yet-to-be-released Trailer Park Boys movie and has billeted international students in her home for the past 15 years. That's just a few things she told me during her visit to my constituency office. Her philosophy in life is to make every day a fun day, something she spreads to everyone she meets.

Please join me in congratulating Mary who did Nova Scotia proud in the pool by bringing home two gold and two silver medals in her recent competition. Congratulations to Mary Murray.

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

VOLUNS.: WAV. GOLD RUSH DAYS - THANKS

HON. BRIAN WONG: Mr. Speaker, I would like to send a huge thank you to all the tremendous volunteers and businesses that made the Waverley Gold Rush Days a striking success.

Waverley Gold Rush Days is an amazing local event that sees trivia nights, barbecues, fireworks, live music, and even a pancake breakfast served up by Station 41's volunteer firefighters. After several years of having this event on hold due the pandemic, it was an amazing turnout. Children and adults alike enjoyed reconnecting and celebrating with so many familiar faces.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking the wonderful volunteers for their time and effort in making this event so enjoyable and the community of Waverley an amazing place to call home.

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

HEADSTART TENNIS: PGMS. FOR ALL AGES - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight a tremendous organization in my constituency, HEADStart Tennis, located on Clayton Park Drive.

HEADStart Tennis was established in May of 2010 and has been operating continuously and successfully ever since. Under the leadership of Ted Misztela and Jamie Power, programs are offered for players of all ages. From the youngest players at 3 years old learning the basics, to advanced players representing the club at local and national tournaments.

This summer, the club once again partnered with the Canadian Tire Jumpstart to offer the Girls Leading Girls tennis program. More than 80 girls, many from diverse communities, were able to participate in this program and learn to play, stay, and enjoy tennis. This Fall, parents are able to register their little ones in an after-school junior Primary program for free trail lessons.

Mr. Speaker, we are so lucky to have such an amazing program operating here in Fairview-Clayton Park. I ask all members to join me in wishing the staff, coaches, and players a successful Winter season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

LEWIS, MANDY: HOSTING SRS. LUNCH - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring recognition to Mandy Lewis. In addition to dozens of other fundraisers, Mandy hosts a senior's lunch each and every Friday for seniors near and far.

Offering a hearty, nutritious homecooked meal is important. Not only do these seniors leave the lunch with full bellies, they have a chance to socialize and see friends from around the community and meet and welcome new faces to the group. It is so important for our health to be able to get out and socialize.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing Mandy for her decades-long commitment, compassion, her ability to see a need within her community, and have the heart to reach out and to make a difference every single day. Thank you, Mandy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

SALV. ARMY: HURR. SUPP. - THANKS

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, many organizations stepped up during Hurricane Fiona. I would like to thank the Salvation Army for the work that they did in our community.

The Salvation Army delivered hundreds and hundreds of meals to the residents of Northside-Westmount. They brought the bus over. The organizations from Community Cares and the different churches made sure people were aware of the service that was available.

Mr. Speaker, there were many local people involved from the Salvation Army but also people from across the country who came into Cape Breton to help. I would just like to thank them.

I'd also like to thank the folks from Cape Breton Regional Housing who delivered meals to residents in the housing developments in Cape Breton. It was a service that was very much needed, and people really appreciated it in the constituency.

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

[2:00 p.m.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: COST OF LIVING CRISIS - ACTION

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the cost of living crisis is really putting the squeeze on Nova Scotians and people across this country. The cost of living crisis has seen Canadians skipping more meals. There's a new report out that says 20 per cent of Canadians are skipping meals because they're unable to afford them. I'll table that.

The price of fuel has gone up 41 per cent in the past year. I'll table that. The average price for housing is up nearly 40 per cent. Despite these consequential things, the Premier's focus this session has been on consolidating power with Crown corporations and municipalities.

Will the Premier use his newfound power - and the new levers of funding that are coming into place under his control - to actually do something consequential about the cost of living crisis that is impacting Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): We know the affordability crisis. The inflation is record-breaking inflation. It's showing up in all kinds of places and having tremendous stress on families across this province. That's why we've taken some of the steps that we can. We're focused on sustainability programs, CCA wages, the Seniors Care Grant, making child care more affordable - supporting families in ways that are meaningful to those families and sustainable in the long term. We'll continue to look for ways to support Nova Scotians through this crisis.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We have not seen an overall strategy to deal with the situation. We have not seen a plan to tackle the increasing cost of food even. The Nova Scotia food banks are seeing close to a 20 per cent increase in use of their services. This is a very disturbing trend that we're seeing, and we know why. The cost of living is affecting everybody.

Will the Premier please tell us what he's going to do to ensure that this disturbing trend is curtailed during this cost of living crisis?

THE PREMIER: We know that the pressures on families are showing up in many ways, and food is certainly one of them. That's front and centre. There's no question about that. We know that, unfortunately, many families are turning to food banks in this time of need. That's why we're supporting food banks with additional funding to try to get them through.

In the long term, there's a lot we can do in terms of supporting the agricultural sector to make sure we're growing more of what we consume. There are a lot of things that need to be done, and none of them can happen fast enough. I accept that. We're moving at a pace that we think is completely possible to support Nova Scotians through this crisis.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, one thing the government could do is what this Liberal caucus has asked his party to do - and that's provide lunch in schools for every single Nova Scotian who is struggling to make ends meet. It's also not just low-income Nova Scotians or fixed-income seniors who are being impacted by this. Inflation is squeezing working-class individuals, individuals in the middle class, new millennials who are coming to the market who can't afford homes.

In fact, Dalhousie Legal Aid has said that with inflation at 6.9 per cent, and the Bank of Canada increasing interest rates by 350 basis points in the last seven months, Nova Scotians who were once financially secure are no longer secure. I'll table that. What is the plan to support those individuals in our society who don't meet the criteria for the specified programs that the Premier has mentioned?

THE PREMIER: Healthy eating in schools, supporting our children with nutritious meals - that's, of course, a priority of this government. We're looking at the school lunch program. There's a significant amount of work being done on that. We know that's something that can help a lot of families.

Inflation is certainly putting a lot of pressure on families. There's no question about that. On this side of the House, we know, and we have a fear - we try to control what we can, but some things we can't control. One thing we can control is we can put a united voice from this Chamber to the federal government and say no to a carbon tax that will put more pressure on families. We do not need a carbon tax in this province. I ask the members opposite to join me in sending that message to Ottawa. Protect Nova Scotians. Put politics aside. Protect Nova Scotians.

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

PREM.: NSP ACCOUNTABILITY - ENSURE

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm going to ask the Premier about some things that he can control. The CEO of Nova Scotia Power told reporters this week that he doesn't see a path that will allow the utility to move off coal by 2030. The Province's legislated sustainability goals require a phaseout of coal by 2030, as well as having 80 per cent of our electricity supplied by renewable energy. Nova Scotia Power produces the vast majority of the province's electricity and is our greatest emitter of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Speaker, how will the Premier ensure that Nova Scotia Power is accountable to meeting our legislated goal to be off coal by 2030?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I believe we're the province, the region in the country that has the most ambitious legislated environmental targets - very extensive. We're serious about it. We're so serious that we put them into legislation. That's not something that's happened in other jurisdictions. We are serious. We're on a path to meet them. We know it means greening the grid, and we fully expect that Nova Scotia Power will not only help us in that, but will be a willing partner in that process because that's what matters to Nova Scotians.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: They have said they're not going to do it. They're not a willing partner, so the question stands - but I'll move on.

Nova Scotia Power's current rate application is looking to set power rates until 2024. That means rates for 2025 will be up for discussion again in just two short years, and Nova Scotians will again face the uncertainty of massively unaffordable energy bills. As we have seen over this past year, when Nova Scotia Power increases their rates, families pay the price, while shareholders and executives see no change to their investment returns and salaries.

What will this government do to ensure that rates won't dramatically spike in two years' time?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I think we have made it very clear as a government that we are very concerned and very focused on the ratepayers of this province. We're concerned about reliable energy. Nova Scotians have a right to expect reliable energy. We're focused on that. There is a lot of work being done on that around standards and holding Nova Scotia Power to standards. That will come. We are also very focused on affordability. I think the bill that is before this House says that loud and clear. We will not lose sight of ratepayers in this province.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: It says it for two years, and even the Consumer Advocate is wary of this kind of intervention. In 1992, the Progressive Conservative government of the day sold our province's public energy utility, creating the private company we know today as Nova Scotia Power. The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board was granted powers to regulate the company which included setting rates. This was done to remove political interference in the process and place the onus on Nova Scotia Power to justify their rates in an open and transparent way.

Running the health care system, housing, education, business development, and now power regulation off the side of the Premier's desk is not going to work for everyday families.

My question to the Premier is: When will this government stop its interference into independent arms-length organizations and start focusing on helping everyday people?

THE PREMIER: I wish you could make this stuff up, but you can't. The first part of the question says can you please interfere for rates two or three years out down the road, and the second part says don't interfere. In this House right now. . . (Interruption)

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

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: In this House right now, we have an Opposition party that on the one hand talks about affordability crisis and on the other hand promotes a carbon tax pushdown on Nova Scotians. In this House right now, we have Opposition parties that talk about housing concerns and then get up in arms when we tell HRM you will not slow down housing. They want us to go slow. They want us to go fast. They want us to go in the middle.

I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, we will do what is necessary to move this province forward, and we will not be deterred by it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

FTB: COST OF LIVING CRISIS - PLAN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says that he's moving this province forward, but we're seeing more and more people fall backward under this government. That's the fact of the matter. Dal Legal Aid is noting that we're seeing a lot of folks in the higher income groups who we work with who would not have been having these financial issues before.

The cost of living crisis is impacting everybody - not just low-income individuals and fixed-income seniors. We have a huge swath of middle-class and working-class Nova Scotians, young families who are trying to make ends meet and chart out a life here in this province, and they aren't able to do so. When can we see a plan from this Premier to actually help those folks get through this difficult time period?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: There's no question that people are struggling. I have said it many times because we have gotten the question many times. The people who I think about are the people who are at the lowest income levels. That is why . . . (Interruption) I won't even bother, Mr. Speaker. I won't even bother.

At the end of the day, we have given targeted supports. We have had new measures in the budget that were never in any budget before. We made additional announcements this Summer in advance of the home heating season to provide further relief. This is something that's on our minds. I have no doubt that as time goes on, we hope that the central bank's efforts are helpful, but we will consider looking at options.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Those were one-time financial supports for those who have the lowest incomes in our province, but the cost of living crisis is affecting a lot more people, which is then affecting our economy. We've looked at other provinces that actually take broad-based initiatives to support middle income individuals. We see that in Newfoundland and Labrador, which just offered residents supports to deal with increased costs. We've seen that in P.E.I., which is actually providing supports to individuals who have a net income of up to \$100,000. This is a recognition of how far the cost of living crisis is impacting our society and our economy.

My question to the Premier is: When will we see initiatives here in Nova Scotia to help these very same individuals who are struggling to make ends meet during this time?

ALLAN MACMASTER: I do need to correct the member. Not all the measures we've taken or put in place are one-time. I think about the Nova Scotia Child Benefit that was increased in the last budget. I also think about the new Seniors Care Grant. Those are not one-time measures. Those are measures that are here to stay. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker,

it's not all just government giving out money, it's also government trying to protect Nova Scotians.

I think about the carbon tax. It's a Liberal carbon tax, and it's something that parties in this Legislature could . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has the floor.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

ALLAN MACMASTER: That is going to be a real cost for people - 14 cents per litre come January. That is something we're standing up against.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DCS: COST OF LIVING CRISIS - SUPPORT

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is something that this government should have done something about, not complain about it now.

The economic stress in this province is palpable. We feel it in our communities. People dread the trip to the grocery store, and there are many sleepless nights before payday. A recent study showed that almost 60 per cent of Nova Scotians are economically struggling and uncomfortable. I'll table that. This is the result of a government that isn't making the economic hardship of Nova Scotians a priority.

To the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board: With six out of ten Nova Scotians in poor economic condition, does he feel that this government has provided adequate amount of support to address the cost of living crisis?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: I thank the member for this important question. This government is acutely aware of the challenges that are happening here, the increasing inflation and everything. This government has taken a broad number of steps. We have increased minimum wage. We have increased the wages of ECEs and CCAs. We have reduced childcare. We have increased the Child Tax Benefit. We look at the Seniors Care Grant - and we could go on. There are a number of other things. When you look at that, we are focusing on all different levels of income and making sure that we tap into all of it. We know there's more work to do, but this government is committed to doing that work.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, awareness does not equal action. There's nothing being done for the middle class in this province. The same Angus Reid poll that I just tabled shows that 66 per cent of people are cutting back on spending, 50 per cent are delaying

major and needed purchases, and 46 per cent of people are worse off than they were a year ago. That is more than what has been done by this government.

[2:15 p.m.]

We need more. People are struggling, and this government continues to place its focus elsewhere. Does the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board believe that Nova Scotians have adequate support to get them through this current cost of living crisis?

KARLA MACFARLANE: The only thing that's going to hurt Nova Scotians is having government support a Liberal carbon tax and having the NDP support them. That's what's going to hurt Nova Scotians. We've increased . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The Honourable Minister of Community Services has the floor.

KARLA MACFARLANE: We have just introduced legislation to help power rates. We have taken a stand, unlike these guys, with the federal carbon tax. We continue to increase rent supplements. We have also been proactive in creating affordable housing. We could go on and on. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

FTB - COST OF LIVING: SUPPORT DELAY - EXPLAIN

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, this government had options to deal with the price on carbon - they chose a carbon tax. They have only themselves to blame. (Applause)

The cost of food is a major driver of this cost of living crisis. This Premier has failed to provide broad-based support. It cannot be because he's not hearing about it from his own community. In fact, in the Premier's backyard in Pictou County, there have been over 17,000 visits to a food bank this past year.

To the Premier: Considering his own community and the people across this province are struggling to put food on the table, why are Nova Scotians still waiting for broad-based cost of living support?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I know that we've heard some comments today and last week as well. We had a question from the NDP about handing out cheques to people.

I guess the challenge I have with that is that not everybody is hurting as much as the next person. There are people who are hurting more. If somebody questions that, I can't imagine. What good does it do to hand a \$500 cheque to a single person making \$100,000

a year, when somebody else is making a small fraction of that and they're dealing with the costs of living.

I'm surprised at the Opposition when they are raising that kind of a question. In my heart, I believe that supports need to be targeted to those who most need it.

KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, no one is suggesting that we give cheques to people making \$100,000 because that would mean that MLAs would get them. We know that's not going to happen.

Food inflation continues to hover around 10 per cent. We know that this means Nova Scotians have less on their plates as a result. Members of the government don't need to look outside their constituencies to see the impacts of their lack of support.

For instance, in Antigonish, in the constituency of the Minister of Health and Wellness, almost 6,000 food bank visits were made in the last year; in Lunenburg, in the constituency of the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, 7,500 visits in the last year; and in Inverness, in the constituency of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, 4,800 visits to food banks in the last year. I could go on and on.

With so many constituents seeing less food on their dinner tables, why isn't support being addressed at the Cabinet Table?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, we have made substantial and significant investments. I know that the Opposition is against food banks, but let me tell you about the 160-some food banks (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. The honourable Minister of Community Services has the floor.

KARLA MACFARLANE: We have over 160 food banks in this province that this government has made substantial investments in.

Many of those food banks aren't just about ensuring that there's food there. It is a hub so that kids can come in and learn how to cook. They might have a health component to it. The Opposition is against this. It's shameful. We need to be putting a positive, proactive spin on our food banks in Nova Scotia.

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

EECD - SUPP. WORKERS: PAY DISCREP. - ADDRESS

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Today, education support workers are on strike on both the South Shore and in the Annapolis Valley. The core issue is fairness. The same work should mean the same wage. A payroll clerk working on the South Shore makes \$24.34 per hour. The same person working in HRM earns \$30.65 per hour.

My question to the minister: Why does her government think that the education worker on the South Shore is worth \$6 less than someone working in the same job in Halifax?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I can be, and have been really, really clear about this. Our government fully supports wage parity and fully supports equivalent compensation across the province: equal pay for equal work. An EA who works in Digby should be making the same amount as an EA who works in Antigonish or an EA who works in Glace Bay.

However, the education system we have inherited has eight separate employers as entities. Across the province right now, we have incredible disparities and differences in pay. However, we understand that the regions have tabled a path to that pay equity and we are hopeful that the regions and the unions can get back together and negotiate a deal.

KENDRA COOMBES The path is to give it to them now. Mr. Speaker, the minister's constituency office replied to a striking worker by referencing a resolution from the government which stated, ". . . be it resolved that all Members of this House endorse a process that will lead to wage parity across the education entities". I will table that.

Does the minister's definition of wage parity mean that every education support worker in the Valley and South Shore will be paid the same as those working in Halifax, now - yes or no?

BECKY DRUHAN: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. There seems to be a misconception across the table as to who exactly is party to the collective agreements that we have in place in Education and Early Childhood Development.

I'd like to remind the members that the parties to our agreements in education are the regions, or the CSAP, and the unions. Those are the parties who bargain these deals. Those are the parties who are negotiating.

The process here is that those parties bargain so we are very encouraging of those parties to get back to the table and bargain the parity and the path to parity that we are looking for so that we can have equivalencies and compensation and our students can get back to school.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

FTB: FOOD SECURITY - IMPROVE

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make one thing clear: we in the Opposition are not opposed to food banks. What we are opposed to, very clearly, is that more and more Nova Scotians are having to use food banks because of the continued inaction of this government. Almost one in five Nova Scotians do not have enough to eat - 20 per cent of Nova Scotians do not have enough to eat. This number is going to keep going up.

Mr. Speaker, this government has lacked focus to provide significant and meaningful cost of living support. My question to the minister is: What is the plan to improve the abysmal state of food security in this province?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of elements to that question. Even as he finished asking it, I was thinking: should that be Agriculture answering that? I am the one who got up so I am going to have to take a crack at it.

Mr. Speaker, I think we are in an economy right now - we saw a lot of activity during the pandemic where some people were really hurt and yet other sectors of the economy did well. I think we're seeing some of the same now - there are people who are doing okay but there are people who are not. That's why I keep coming back to the fact that supports have to be targeted.

The member asked broad-based and sustainable. What I took from broad based is that the members opposite feel we should be doing something for everyone. In the end, Mr. Speaker, it's the ones who are most hurt who we need to be focused on.

BRAEDON CLARK: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of clarity, this question will be for the Minister of Community Services.

To the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board's point, we agree that there should be significant help for those who need it the most. As we've seen from food bank usage, there's not enough happening on that front from this government. A survey done by Feed Nova Scotia showed that 80 per cent of food bank clients identified a lack of income and cost of living as the major reason behind their food insecurity. I'll table that.

It's not surprising, Mr. Speaker - no money, no food, yet this government has not made support to help Nova Scotians put food on the table a serious priority. My question to the Minister of Community Services is: Does this government recognize that by failing to prioritize the cost of living crisis that more and more Nova Scotians do not have enough to eat?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: We know that vulnerable Nova Scotians need a variety of supports. For those who are food insecure, I believe that all our food banks across

this province do an exceptional job. I believe that us working with our food banks, locally as MLAs, and becoming very aware of their needs - you're more than welcome to come to me with those. I know some of you have, and I am grateful for that because we can then make those investments in those areas, even schools.

We're open to making investments wherever the community wants the help to ensure that people are eating healthy and well.

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

DCS - IA RATES: NO INCREASE - EXPLAIN

HON. BEN JESSOME: Folks on income assistance are struggling, perhaps more than ever. Forty-six respondents of a Feed Nova Scotia survey for those that use food banks are on income support. Ninety-one per cent of them said that the amount they are receiving monthly is inadequate to feed themselves and their families - I'll table that.

The cost of inflation is further supressing their ability to meet their basic needs, so I'd like to ask the Minister of Community Services: Why did this government choose not to increase income assistance last budget?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Vulnerable Nova Scotians need a broad range of supports. We know that, and that is why this government has taken a very thoughtful approach to it. My colleagues didn't leave this all up to the Department of Community Services. We sit together collectively, talking about what needs are needed by Nova Scotians, and that's why we've increased and created the Seniors Care Grant. That's why we reduced child care. That's why we're talking about possibly having a lunch program in the schools, increased wages for ECEs and CCAs, rent supplements - we've covered a broad range.

BEN JESSOME: I can appreciate, Mr. Speaker to the minister, that there are many initiatives that are ongoing, but there seems to be a piecemeal nature to the funding that's being distributed, and that creates a challenge. We as a Liberal caucus believe that there needs to be a baseline that is set that gives people a stronger ability to meet their basic needs. New Brunswick, for example, has stepped up to increase income assistance to inflation.

I'll ask the minister: Will she step up and index income assistance to inflation?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think about this carbon tax that's coming, and what amazes me is that the Liberals don't realize the drag that it's going to place on the economy. Even if people were handed money back, there's still going to be a drag on the economy that they're not even accounting for. I think about how that is going

to hurt people across this province. We don't understand how the parties opposite can support that tax.

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

DCS: FOOD SECURITY - PRIORITIZE

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Feed Nova Scotia notes that food insecurity can be devastating. People who are food insecure are more likely to experience poor mental and physical health concerns, health outcomes, which I can table. This government was elected on a promise to fix our health care system. Access to healthy food is critical to a person's well-being and a key social determinant of health.

My question to the Minister of Community Services is: If this government is so committed to the health of Nova Scotians, why hasn't this government made, specifically, food security a priority?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: This government absolutely has and has been discussing and has made food security a priority. That's why I have ongoing conversations with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, with the Minister of Health and Wellness, and with the Minister of Agriculture. We are working as hard as we can to look at everything and come up with solutions.

That's why we are discussing a lunch program. That is why during Hurricane Fiona we increased income assistance \$150 to help with food loss, but we also invested over \$40 million during Hurricane Fiona. That's why the Department of Community Services continues putting millions of dollars toward Feed Nova Scotia. We continue making those necessary investments. We know it's tough, but we are committed.

PATRICIA ARAB: I thank the minister for her answer, and I'm hopeful that the conversations turn into actions sooner rather than later. Feed Nova Scotia, which she has mentioned they have funded, states in the document that I just tabled, "Household food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

The cost of living crisis is putting food security out of reach of many Nova Scotians. One in six households in Nova Scotia is currently food insecure - one in six. With the way things are going, this is only expected to increase.

Mr. Speaker, will this government make food security a priority, not just a conversation with other departments, and provide support to Nova Scotians who are just trying to eat?

[2:30 p.m.]

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, when we think about food, we have to think about fuel because the two often travel together. When it comes to the production of food and the transport of food, the price of fuel is a big cost contributor to the price of food. So why is the federal government choosing to put forward a federal carbon tax - a Liberal carbon tax - at this time? Why?

We don't understand it, and that's why we have stood up to fight against it, because we know it's going to make the price of food more expensive. It's as simple as that. If you have a tractor in the field or if you have a truck on the highway, if it has to do with food, you're adding a carbon tax and you're making things more expensive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

NRR: FED. HOME HEATING ASSISTANCE - INFORM

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. The installation of a heat pump system has the potential to save households thousands in annual heating bills and could also play an important role in reducing our province's carbon emissions. The upfront cost of the systems, however, pose a real barrier to low-income households, making these long-term savings inaccessible. While the province offers some relief in the form of rebates, these are a far cry from the relief offered in New Brunswick, where households that make under \$70,000 can receive a free heat pump and installation.

Will this government follow New Brunswick's lead and offer a similar program in Nova Scotia?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: This is part of how we're going to assist some low-income families. We advocated very hard, Mr. Speaker, to the federal government, and they made a commitment to my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, a few months ago of \$200 million that's going to go out to Canadians for things like heat pumps, and \$120 million of that \$200 million is coming to Atlantic Canada.

Nova Scotia has one of the highest rates of home heating oil to be used. I'm very pleased to say that my department is right now in communications with the federal government. We're waiting for a response from the federal government, but we're looking to get that program installed ASAP and, hopefully, before the Winter months come.

SUSAN LEBLANC: As the nights are getting colder, Nova Scotians are growing concerned, as the minister has said, about the cost of heating their homes. Someone from Dartmouth told us: The price of oil is insane. Combined with the increase in price of

everything else and Winter now coming, we need to pay double the price to heat our home or pay \$10,000 to change our furnace to go with a heat pump.

Last we heard the federal government is waiting for our government to submit a proposal for a home heating assistance program - I believe this is the one the minister just mentioned - which could grant our province over \$60.5 million. The deadline is fast approaching, and our province - we heard - has not yet submitted a plan.

Mr. Speaker, the clock is ticking. Nova Scotian families are paying the price. Is the minister leaving this money on the table, or can we expect to hear something soon?

TORY RUSHTON: Absolutely not; we're not leaving anything on the table. That program was installed by the federal government because of the advocacy of this government here in Nova Scotia. We have no idea who the federal spokesperson was in the news article last week. We have no clue who that was. I went and clarified it with our department staff. We were actually waiting to hear back from them. We were waiting to hear back from them on that program.

Mr. Speaker, there's \$120 million allotted to Atlantic Canada. This government is going to take every cent that we can get.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DCS: LONG-TERM FOOD SECURITY PLAN - INFORM

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, we hear this government talk about food banks as if they were the solution to food insecurity. Earlier this session, the Minister of Community Services stated again we have invested in a number of food banks, in response to a question about Nova Scotians not having enough money for food. Feed Nova Scotia has noted that charity is not the path forward to address food insecurity in the long term. I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, food banks are a stopgap. They are not a long-term plan to fight food insecurity, so I would ask the minister: What is the long-term plan to end food insecurity in this province?

HON. KARLA MACFARLANE: Mr. Speaker, I never, ever said that food banks were the solution to food insecurity. I believe that everyone in this House knows that food banks are there to help when people are unexpectedly having a challenging time in their life, and some people need to use them more than others. But again, we are working as a government to collectively come up with ideas and solutions on how we can reduce poverty, how we can ensure that Nova Scotians are eating well and that their basic needs are met.

That's why, again, if you're against us working collaboratively to find solutions, well, then, I can't help you with that. But I assure you that we're working together. It goes to show that we're working together when we're talking about a lunch . . .

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about collaboratively - we provided two great solutions. One was the lunch program, universal for kids, and school supplies in September, and the government didn't act on any one of them. They could have made that decision yesterday.

With the rising cost of food for families, more and more Nova Scotia children are at risk of becoming food insecure and impoverished. Currently, one in three children is at risk of going to school hungry. I'll table that.

The minister's mandate letter directs the minister to establish a five-year target for the reduction of childhood poverty in the province. I'll table that as well. It appears this is still incomplete. Mr. Speaker, this mandate item was supposed to be completed within 90 days. Will the Minister of Community Services tell Nova Scotians when they will see the five-year target and when this government will make reducing childhood poverty a priority?

KARLA MACFARLANE: The Department of Community Services has been working extremely hard for that part of my mandate, which I take extremely seriously. There's a lot of work that's been happening to work on that strategy. I would say that we are basically at the end of that. I believe that the individuals in my department have got it right. We are very proud of them. They have worked really hard.

Stay tuned. We are looking at that strategy and I believe that it will be coming out soon. We'll have more to say then.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

EECD: UNIV. HEALTHY SCHOOL LUNCH PGM. - UPDATE

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I guess Nova Scotians are going to have to fill their bellies on ideas and meetings.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's Report findings on healthy school food makes one thing very clear: we need a healthy universal school lunch program now. For over a year, we've heard vague answers from this government on when and if this important program will happen.

Now, with the cost of food at a record-breaking high, this program is more important than ever. Mr. Speaker, I will keep my question to this government very short

and simple: When will a universal healthy school lunch program be available in all of our public schools?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I want to assure the members opposite that we are in fact working very hard with our federal counterparts and within our department and across departments to look at what options are available for the expansion of access to food in schools.

We know that having availability of healthy food in schools is important not only for learning but also to support students' well-being. I also want to remind the member opposite and families - any families who need or want to know this - that there is food available in schools. Not only do we have the very successful breakfast program that a PC government first introduced in 2005 but we also have food that's available throughout the day for any students who need it. No student will go hungry in school. We will make sure of that.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So to be very clear, there is not food available at all times in every single school. In fact, if you talk to people at schools, they'll tell you that the \$6,200 that's being provided is not enough, and those programs rely on volunteerism. The minister should know that.

Last Wednesday at Public Accounts Committee, we heard from the deputy minister that a healthy school lunch program has been in development for some time. I'll table that. Yet when the minister was asked in Question Period if the government was committed to a universal healthy school lunch program, she was less clear. The minister stated that she was "committed to the provision of healthy food in schools" and that she was "working towards ensuring that our students have broader access to food in schools." She never said if the department and the government were committed to a universal school program.

I will ask the minister very simply: Will she commit to a universal healthy school program before the beginning of the next school year, yes or no?

BECKY DRUHAN: I also want to be really clear about some of the incredible strengths that we have in our system around healthy food in schools. One of those strengths is the diversity and variety of programming that we have across the province.

Food in schools looks different from school to school and from community to community because different communities and different schools have different needs. So we see things like salad bars in some areas, we see things like food pantries in other areas. We have great partners in Nourish Nova Scotia and in other community partners.

What we want to do, as we look to expand the availability and access to food in schools, is make sure we understand all those incredible strengths and leverage those

strengths. That's the work that's under way, that's the discussion we're having with our government and with . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

SLTC: SRS. MEDICATION UNAFFORDABLE - EXPLAIN

ANGELA SIMMONDS: The cost of living crisis is having a significant impact on our seniors and despite the increase to the Seniors Care Grant, it is not accessible enough for struggling seniors. Seniors are having to choose between paying for their prescriptions or putting food on the table. I'll table that.

I am not exaggerating, Mr. Speaker. A report by Feed Nova Scotia noted that 56 per cent of the food bank clients had to sacrifice expenditures on food to pay for prescription medications. I'll table that, which is in the same article.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care: Why is this government leaving our seniors to choose between being hungry or going without medication?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I totally disagree with the fact that we are leaving seniors behind. There has been unprecedented investment in seniors by this government. We are not the government that, in fact, cut back on food and budgets in long-term care two years in a row. We are, in fact, not the government that saw 500,000 fewer home care visits by the previous Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, the wait time for home care in the province of Nova Scotia has dropped 50 per cent in the past year, so I disregard the fact that seniors are being left behind.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I thank the minister for the response. I would say as someone in my constituency, the gap is in African Nova Scotians seniors being left behind, inadequately served by this government.

My question to the minister is: The Seniors Care Grant, while helpful for some, is not covering it. The Seniors Care Grant covers delivery for fee for food and prescriptions, not for food and prescriptions themselves. No senior in this province should have to choose between paying for food or getting a much-needed prescription.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: Will the government increase aid to seniors for prescriptions so they no longer have to make impossible decisions?

BARBARA ADAMS: One of the things we did do was we brought in a Seniors Care Grant for the first time ever. That's Number 1. Number 2, we are always looking for ways to improve things. Last year it was for yard work and snow shovelling. This year you

can apply it to your phone bill. If you can now put it on your phone bill, there is an opportunity to use that money that you would have used on your phone bill for other things, including medication and food.

Let me make it clear, Mr. Speaker, every single minister and every single department on this side of the aisle is focused on targeted, sustainable investments, unlike the previous government.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

DOJ: NDAs AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS - ACTION

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Premier. Jennifer Graves recently bravely spoke out against the abuse of non-disclosure agreements used to silence victims of sexual assault. She describes this government's waffling on the issue as a failure of leadership. She says, "So basically what you're saying is that you agree that it's abusive, but you just don't think that it is necessary to take any action. The time is now. It needs to happen now. This is an unacceptable response from this government." I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier agree with the Minister of Justice that action on this important issue is not a priority of this government right now?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member, I think we all agree that nobody wants to see non-disclosure agreements used to silence victims. We want to make sure that when they are used, they are used in the proper way.

As I've said in the past, we're continuing to look to see what other jurisdictions across the country are doing. We know that P.E.I. has just put theirs in place. It came in active in May of this year so it's been in place for six months. We'll continue to see what Manitoba and British Columbia are doing as well.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, Christina Freefeld, a trauma therapist with the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre explains that because allegations are not made public, NDAs also have the effect of protecting perpetrators of assault. This potentially leaves them free to continue their behaviour, causing an additional cause of worry for survivors.

She says that our province must pay attention to when we minimize and when we act on violence. This is a public safety issue. The government says they are waiting for results of a jurisdictional scan, but this issue does not need waiting and seeing. It needs leadership.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is delaying action on this issue. Who are you protecting?

[2:45 p.m.]

BRAD JOHNS: As I said previously, so far P.E.I. is the only jurisdiction that has these in place. We'll continue to see and monitor the situation.

Once again, I will say that trying to support survivors of abuse and dealing with that in a sensitive, respectful manner is certainly a priority of this government and I'm sure it's a priority of everybody in this House.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

ECC: GAS TAX IMPACT - PLAN

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The government's new gas tax that they admit will come in in January will mean a massive increase to home heating. After this year, home heating has already increased by 50 per cent. We know that homes that tend to use oil furnaces are proportionately more frequent in rural areas across the province.

The carbon levy that this government is letting in, just as other Conservative governments have in Ontario, Alberta, and so on down the list, will only add additional pressures for these residents.

Mr. Speaker, this is to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Considering that the Houston gas tax will have disproportional impacts on rural Nova Scotians and our seniors trying to stay warm this Winter, what is the government's plan . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'll ask the member to retract the name of the gas tax.

IAIN RANKIN: Thank you, I'll retract that statement.

What is the government's plan to support them with these increased costs, what will the rebate be, exactly, of this gas tax plan that has been brought in by this government?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Protecting Nova Scotians is the top priority of this government. Protecting the environment is a top priority of this government. That's why, out of general revenues this year, we invested \$57 million in energy efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to make those key investments to support Nova Scotians. The most clear and present danger to affordability is a Liberal carbon tax. I won't retract that.

IAIN RANKIN: This government has shown no interest in negotiating with the federal government to get the best deal for Nova Scotia as we have right now.

The federal Department of Environment and Climate Change is still awaiting a plan from the government on how they'll roll out the province's \$60.5 million share of the federal fund to make home heating more affordable for families.

My colleague brought this up. A source in Minister Guilbeault office is quoted in this article as saying: "They (Nova Scotia) know all the terms but we haven't received even just a draft proposal or any idea of how they want to roll it out." I'll table that for everyone to read. That's from the federal minister's office - that they refuse to negotiate on anything.

Handing in the homework late seems to be a trend with this government especially when it comes to energy and the environment. I want to ask the minister of either relevant department: Winter is coming. When will they submit a plan, proposal, or even a draft? Before the Winter or not? This is home heating that most Nova Scotians will depend on.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: We've negotiated with Ottawa and we've been crystal clear. We have a bill before the Legislature that will hold large emitters accountable. We've been clear . . . (Interruption)

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Third Reading.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 196.

BILL NO. 196 - Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act (amended).

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

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I gingerly get to my place here and I now move that Bill No. 196, amendments to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act be read a third time.

We've had the opportunity to discuss this bill in depth. I only want to take a moment to reiterate that these amendments are intended to strengthen and modernize the gallery's governance and operations. They arise from this government's commitment to make sure agencies, offices, and Crown corporations are efficient, effective, and accountable.

They also reflect what we have heard directly from the Gallery Board of Governors and leadership. We worked closely with them on preparing amendments to this Act, to address its governance challenges, and to find solutions. By establishing a nominating committee, we are taking steps to ensure that the board will reflect the diversity of the communities that it serves.

My colleagues across the aisle asked earlier about the clause to move gallery staff into the broader Public Service, to become direct employees of the gallery. I want to assure them that the NSGEU were consulted on the change in advance and had no issues with it. This change will give the gallery greater flexibility to meet its operational needs.

There was also some discussion about the clause that gives the minister authority to approve the hiring or determination of a CEO following a board recommendation. This step is simply another layer of accountability. It gives the minister an opportunity to review options put forward by the board, adding one more check and balance to the process. This is a positive step as we support the board to position the gallery for success, both now and in the future.

With those few words, I'll take my seat. I look forward to the passage of Bill No. 196.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: I'm sure we have talked about the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia last week for enough time to emphasize the value of the Nova Scotia Art Gallery and our culture - the history of those institutions.

It's fair to say those values and those cultures just summarized an hour a day - I think that will not be fair. Having said that, for the sake of the time of this House, I stood at this subject matter last week for almost an hour. I still believe that has not been lost.

The Art Gallery and other important culture sectors should maintain their independence from the minister's office. I still stand with that. We know how important it is to have an independent entity and board, and community-oriented individuals who believe what they do and their expertise.

That's why I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is wise to maintain this independence. We support the work of the Art Gallery, but we want to ensure that the Art Gallery Board remains independent and can do their work without political pressure from this government. I say this government - that could be a future government. That could be any government. We know the function of a sitting government is political ideas. That's why we need to have an independent board, individuals, members of the community who can maintain this independence.

Mr. Speaker, that's my belief, and I stand with it. There's nothing to be against the minister's leadership. As I stated last week, I think the minister has enough in his folder. He has enough responsibility, and it's unhealthy to add more responsibilities, especially on the subject matter of arts and culture because those issues have no political boundaries. We know that. Because of that reason, we need to maintain this independence. That doesn't mean the minister and his staff do not have the capacity. They do, but this will add more responsibility in their daily schedule.

I could not emphasize more than I said last week how important it is to respect and to honour those citizens who cherish certain aspects of our life, especially when it comes to heritage, culture, and arts. We do have a lot of members of this community, Mr. Speaker, who have the passion, who have the skills, and who can do this job independently. We as elected officials, if we don't recognize that, I think we are making a great mistake.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be mindful of the decisions we make in this House, especially on issues that unite us as a people of this province, issues that have no boundaries, issues that we all cherish. The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is one of them. I urge the minister to not ignore the valuable suggestions, and ideas, and recommendations we as members of this House are offering. I ask the minister to reconsider this action, and I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I just want to say a few words about this bill and about the discussion we have been having over the last week or so on this bill. I recognize that in a normal sitting, perhaps we wouldn't have had this much discussion about the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and what originally appeared to be some housekeeping amendments to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act.

I do want to stand and speak for just a couple of minutes on it. There are a lot of good things about this bill, as I have said, Mr. Speaker, at different times of standing.

[3:00 p.m.]

One thing I think is really good about it is the diversity panel. I actually haven't spoken about that. It's a very important step, especially for an arts organization. I don't know the ins and outs of the board governance and the challenges the board has faced. I suspect that it has had difficulty in making sure that the diversity on the board of directors reflects the diversity in the province and the diversity of artists in the province. Obviously, anything that can help the board recruit and encourage folks to put their name forward for the board is great.

I also think that a smaller board is a good idea. I have been on several boards of arts organizations throughout my life. I know that they can be unruly, especially when we're talking about arts and culture where passions are big. Sometimes creative people find themselves in these positions on boards of directors. It can be difficult to reach agreement, so I'm sure a bit of a smaller board will be very helpful for the art gallery. It becomes much more manageable, makes quorum easier to achieve - all of that.

Lastly, I think that this shift of the gallery staff to become civil servants seems to make a lot of sense - especially as someone who has run an arts organization. To be able to have flexibility with staff and staffing, and flexibility in how to use one's budget, I think is really important. For all of those reasons, I think this bill is good.

Here's the problem, Mr. Speaker. Like many of the bills we have seen that are on the order paper or that we have been discussing in this sitting, this feels a little bit like an omnibus bill. It's not, because it's all in the same department, but there's a whole bunch of good stuff and a little bit of bad stuff. So it's difficult to support the bill. I wish the bill could be separated. I wish there could be two different bills to address the needed amendments to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. I think this question of governance and of ministerial oversight in matters of board governance - and in matters of art in particular - is a real problem. It's a real issue.

The minister will say that it's a layer of accountability that adds checks and balances. But there's really no reason. If a board of directors has chosen a new director - a new CEO, CAO or whatever the role of the person is - then there shouldn't need to be ministerial oversight. There shouldn't need to be a rubber stamp by the minister. If we have put our faith in the board of governors to run the organization properly and with the best interests of Nova Scotians at heart, then there's no reason for the minister to have to check and balance that decision.

I will remind the House that it was a Progressive Conservative government under John Hamm that was responsible for the demise of the Nova Scotia Arts Council - an arm's-length arts council that provided grant funding that was by peer-assessed juries. We do now have some grants in Nova Scotia that are back to being peer assessed, but a large chunk of the ones that were peer assessed are not now.

I'm seeing nods over here. We have a former minister of CCTH right here, and he can attest to that. It's not a good precedent for that type of granting to be done without peer assessment and without an arm's-length relationship to the government.

This is more in line with that government of Dr. John Hamm in terms of taking away the arm's-length relationship of art making and art producing and the government. I know it sounds bananas to ask, what if the government was to overreach and decide that a piece of art was not worthy of being shown in the gallery? Or what if it was too controversial to be shown in the gallery? Or what if it challenged the policies of a government and therefore shouldn't be under public view? These are things that we in Nova Scotia think will never happen - but it happens. All over the world it happens. Artists are killed because of the art that they make.

They are the challengers of public policy. They are the challengers of ideas. They are the presenters of new ideas and new ways of thinking. That can be extremely threatening to governments. Just because that kind of thing has never happened in our happy little province of Nova Scotia doesn't mean it couldn't happen.

It might seem hyperbolic, but this is the type of legislation, the type of amendment that paves the way to that kind of change and that kind of action. It's a dangerous precedent.

We need artists, and we need art making, and we need an Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. We need a new Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, for that matter. We need investment in art. As Gabrielle Roy famously said, and as is printed on our \$20 bill - or used to be - "Could we ever know each other in the slightest without the arts?"

That's quite a thing to contemplate - that it's art and culture that help us to know each other in a real way, to meet each other and to see each other. We need to protect that. This bill, in its tiny little way, cuts away at that protection.

I really urge the government to think about that. If we must pass this legislation, the government should protect the value of art and artists. It should show artists, art makers, art buyers, and art consumers - art lookers - that it understands how important an artist's voice or an artist's statement is in this province, and that it will never threaten the independence of artists.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I know we have spoken at length about our particular concerns on this bill at Committee of the Whole House on Bills, but since the Committee of the Whole House on Bills is not in Hansard, I just want to go on the record here with our major and significant concerns with this bill. It is, in fact, the first of many bills in which this government is really choosing to go backwards with respect to good governance of Crown corporations.

Again, these documents were tabled previously. I will quote succinctly from the Ivey School of Business on *Best Practice Principles of Corporate Governance for Crown Corporations*. It discusses the problems when the minister has a direct relationship with the CEOs of organizations. We're seeing it in a number of bills, including this bill concerning the art gallery. From Page 34 of that report, it says, "It can be perceived that the CEO is more responsive to government and less responsive to the board's input and influence." That came from the Auditor General's Report in Manitoba in 2009.

The crux of the matter here is that good governance sets a very logical line of accountability, which is being deviated from by this legislation and other pieces of legislation. I quoted previously from a 2005 report by the Treasury Board of Canada with respect to Crown corporation governance entitled, *The Review of the Governance Framework for Canada's Crown Corporations Meeting the Expectations of Canadians*. They spoke to this issue of governance and how important it is that those governance trails of accountability are clear and how they need to be reinforced.

The federal government made it very clear some 17 years ago that the minister is responsible to Parliament, that the board of directors is responsible to the minister, and the CEO is responsible to the board of directors. That is very clear, researched evidence on how good governance should and shall be done in this country.

This bill, unfortunately, is a huge step backwards, creating inconsistencies in those lines of accountability that may lead to significant problems in our Crown corporations, including the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

We on this side of the House feel that these are dangerous approaches to be taking with respect to our relationship with our partner organizations - with our Crown corporations - and can lead to either the actual or the perceived indication of political interference in the hiring and firing of the key employee in any organization, the CEO.

It's for that reason that we vehemently oppose this approach of a politician having the direct power of hiring and firing of CEOs; having the power to go around the board of directors who are the ones meeting on a monthly basis, setting out the strategic directions, directing staff, and doing performance appraisals of staff.

That work is undermined by this legislation by giving the power of hiring and firing to one person who is a politician - a politician who may have friends who find their way into these positions, or friends who want to find their way into these positions. There is a real and perceived possibility that political influence will undermine the effectiveness of these organizations.

I just wanted to go on the record once again on how potentially serious this can be to undermining our Crown corporations, and their ability to effectively serve Nova Scotians.

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

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

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, the government certainly values artists and artwork. We've had considerable engagement with the sector prior to and through the creation of this here legislation.

Although I don't agree with everything my colleagues have mentioned in the last few minutes, I'm going to thank them for their comments and suggestions. With that, I will close debate of third reading on Bill No. 196.

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that the bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 198.

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

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 198 be now read a third time.

I am pleased to rise again to speak about amendments to the Emergency Management Act and the Emergency "911" Act that will compel critical service providers - including local telecommunications service providers - to provide reliable service and better communication to Nova Scotians during an emergency.

These proposed changes will require critical service providers to take reasonable actions to ensure continuation of service and develop an annual emergency response plan that must be approved by the minister. The changes provide the minister with authority to develop an emergency response table, which could request the physical attendance of critical service providers, and records associated with the response to the emergency at the provincial coordination centre.

[3:15 p.m.]

The changes will add a rebate to the customer equal to the financial benefit acquired by the critical service provider from customers while customers were not receiving a service. Failure to comply with the legislation and/or regulations could result in significant daily fines.

As a result of Fiona's destruction, many residents were unable to access telephone services to communicate with others or to access emergency 911 services. Even though many Nova Scotians were disconnected from phone, internet, and emergency services, they continued to be charged for these services by telecommunications companies.

To further exacerbate the situation during Hurricane Fiona, emergency responders and electrical repair line personnel were unable to communicate with each other or with coordination centres. This resulted in many parties wondering what solutions were being used to resolve the effects of the disaster.

If telecommunications companies are charging Nova Scotians hundreds of dollars a month for service, they owe it to their customers to ensure that they are receiving the services they are paying for.

These communications issues are not unique to Nova Scotia. This is nationwide. There are federal regulations for telecommunications, but the Province is responsible for emergency management in local matters.

We are coming at this issue with critical service providers, including local telecom companies from an emergency preparation and response position. Telecommunications are critical during and after any weather event, and Nova Scotians need to be able to call 911 and connect with loved ones during an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, we need our telecommunication companies to step up and do better. We will no longer accept the status quo. We need to see significant improvements before the next storm. Fiona taught us an important lesson. We have to take action now to be ready for the next event.

With all that said, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing the comments on this bill from my colleagues in the House.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this bill. I just wanted to know that collaboration - we've heard many times it's a working practice among individuals to go to get and arrive at a common purpose.

In this case, as the minister spoke, keeping the telecoms operating for residents to communicate with one another during severe weather events - something we all desire. Charging the telecoms \$250,000 a day, as he said, to step up if they don't - that may not be viewed as collaboration. That being said, it is what it is.

I want to speak to the amendment I made during this discussion to actually implement a vulnerable persons' registry. At that time, the Minister of Justice rose and said that he would work with me as the member opposite to formulate and make the vulnerable persons' registry happen. I just want to ask the minister, in his closing remarks, to speak to that.

On the bill, I just want to say, again, it's just about having the telecom companies formulate a collaborative partnership with this government, but they will be charged on a daily basis when they don't come.

I have nothing further to say to this. I think the Clerk got up to say something to you - I notice when that happens. I will close my remarks in saying that we support this bill.

THE SPEAKER: To the member, it's a sign that you're learning. So am I.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: The only thing I will say is that I do support this bill. I think it is a great step forward with regards to what occurred during Hurricane Fiona. The minister and I have had this conversation regarding the constitutionality of being able to fine them. While I understand the reasoning, my only big concern really is the constitutionality of doing so.

I know the minister said it was a subject of internal debate, but the concept was that the department said that it feels like it's constitutional. My only big question to the minister - and I hope he addresses it in his closing - is, does it feel constitutional or has legal said that it is constitutional? I think that's very important with this bill. As I said, I do support the fact that we are going to hold the telecoms to account. I think it's really important to do that and make sure they are at the table.

As I said this before, in second reading I believe it was, or it was Committee of the Whole House on Bills - the days are blending together at times here. It's extremely important that Nova Scotians are able to communicate with their loved ones from one end of the province to the other during these types of events, but it's also important that EMO information is getting to the public.

When our telecoms go down, as well as when our radio airwaves, our news on the radio is also gone down and is unable to provide a signal, that we need some form of being

able to communicate. That is why the telecoms being at the table is extremely important. The fact that it seems we've kind of had to coax them and beg them to come to the table is an extreme problem.

I hope this solves it, but again, as much as I appreciate this bill and I support what it is trying to do, I do hope that the minister can talk about whether legal has brought forward that this bill is constitutional. One thing I do not want to see, Mr. Speaker, is what we've seen in the past: unconstitutional bills being struck down by the courts. That is a huge expense on our government.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk very briefly to this bill. I'll give you the reason why right now. In 1975, there was a young telecommunications power engineer who started his 30-year career with the telephone company. He stands before you today. Through that, I understand how telecommunications worked. You had the ability to pick up your phone and make a telephone call because the power went through the wires right to that phone you had in your house; and 911 service was the operator when you dialed zero. We had that.

Communications has evolved tremendously over these last close to 50 years. The telecommunications companies, as we call them - the industry has a duty to all of its customers, all of Canada. When the PC was invented, and yes, I started in my career before the PC was invented, the talk of the day was about CITE - about communications, information, telecommunications, and entertainment. You have companies today that are providing communications, such as Bell Media, that provide content and everything else.

With that evolution, though, comes great responsibility for the primary focus of this discussion, and that is the safety of all our citizens. There are challenges in how they will keep networks up and how they will keep individual consumers communicating, but I will tell you this: the industry has the ability through their network operations centres to understand where the failures are. They understand redundancy, they understand single point of failures, and they also understand mean time to restore service.

I think what we're asking here is not unexpected. In fact, I would suggest that communications companies have huge regulatory environments and groups who understand what's at stake here. I'm looking forward to them coming forward and to help not only the Province understand, but to keep our 911 services up and to help everybody in events of emergency.

I absolutely support this, understanding where we've come from 50 years ago to today. With that evolution, with that reliance our society now has on communications, I think it's also incumbent upon the service providers to make sure that they are stepping up to ensure the safety of all our citizens. With that, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of this bill. I would like to make a couple of comments, similar to what I made in second reading.

In addition to holding our telecommunications companies accountable, I hope the minister responsible will also hold someone accountable on areas that currently have no cellphone coverage - meaning they have no 911 service. To ensure that all areas of Nova Scotia, especially where there are roads where people could be breaking down or having accidents, or where people are living - that they actually have cellphone service so that they can call 911 in the event of an emergency on a regular day, and not just times when we have storms like Hurricane Fiona. I think that's been an ongoing issue.

The second issue I want to bring up is something that is maybe more of an issue along the northern shore from Tignish down - I know Pictou County has had the same problem. When people along the shore call 911, the calls are often rerouted or they go directly to Prince Edward Island or New Brunswick, and this causes delays. In the past, I've sent letters to the minister responsible for Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Emergency "911" Act asking for this to be fixed, and they punted it back to the telecommunications company, not taking any responsibility.

My request to the minister is that if this is something that is the responsibility of telecommunications, find a way to make them accountable for that too. There have been times where there's been up to seven to eight minutes of delays in calling a fire service because calls were rerouted to P.E.I. In one case, a call went to the P.E.I. 911, then they sent it to New Brunswick, and then New Brunswick sent it to Nova Scotia. It caused even more delay. That is a problem for many taxpayers of Nova Scotia. It's an area that should be fixed.

I also hope the ministers responsible, who have talked about the volunteer persons registry, do take that under advisement from the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, and that that is put in place. We saw all too well this last hurricane that there were many vulnerable people that we did not have a health database for, to ensure that people could be cared for.

I do support this bill, but I think I would be remiss if I didn't highlight the fact that the government is very concerned about people being able to call 911, but we have a huge issue of the government not holding to account the private company that's supposed to provide 911 service. Last week in the Legislature, I highlighted a woman who fractured her hip, waited six hours, and there's story after story after story after their delays.

We need the government to also hold the private company that's supposed to be providing 911 service accountable, as well as the telecommunications companies. With those few words, I will end debate.

[3:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to talk quickly on this one. I, too, support this bill. I will say that we have a government now that's holding two of the utilities accountable, that being Nova Scotia Power and telecommunications.

I will say that there was just an announcement today that Halifax Water, for example, is increasing their water rates 7.2 per cent. I'm hoping that this government, which likes to intervene and step in to protect taxpayers - whether it's rising costs or a utility like telecommunication that is going down - maybe they'll step in and do something about the Halifax Water rates.

We know that water is a basic need, and a lot of people who - we had a discussion today about inflation and people on income assistance and the working class - now they get hit with another 7.2 per cent increase.

The other thing I will say is, yes, it's important to have access to telecommunications. We saw that during one of the hurricanes where the cell network went down in my community. It took quite a bit of time to come back up.

Something that we have been asking for, for quite some time, is an expansion of comfort stations. So when hurricanes and storms do hit - and we know that they're becoming more and more because of climate change - communities have access to comfort stations.

Part of those comfort stations is charging for cellular and access to a satellite phone for when the services do go down. If you look at my community, for example, if you live in the Pennants or Sambro, the nearest comfort station is in Fairview. Well, we don't have a bus.

They asked people during I think it was Hurricane Fiona, which made landfall in Ketch Harbour - they asked people to evacuate those areas. A lot of those people are seniors. A lot of those people are without vehicles. They actually could not evacuate those areas. They had to ride out the storm. They lost phone service.

One of the things that I would ask is maybe the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing could have this discussion - I know it was something that I tried to push during my short time as minister - which is more funding and more money for comfort stations in rural Nova Scotia and rural parts of urban areas. That way, when the cell service and the phone services do go down, if they do go down again, seniors and vulnerable people and individuals who live in those communities have a place to go. And they would have access to a satellite phone.

I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing himself has a satellite phone that he has to have on him at all times because the department needs to be in contact with him.

I would say that I would hope that this is something. If we're going to do something like this - a federally regulated utility - if we're going to step in and hold them accountable, and again I will say they need to be held accountable, then we take it a little further. Do things that are really needed and really prepare our communities for hurricanes.

Those of us who live in coastal communities know that they're especially vulnerable. The infrastructure that's in place there has aged and with the rising sea levels - the breakwaters are constructed for water levels of decades ago - those communities are very vulnerable now. The water levels are much higher than those breakwaters are able to handle.

There're a lot of things that can be done, and we're here talking about what's needed during hurricanes and storms. It can't just be passing legislation. That does help, but communities are asking for so much more.

My request to the minister would be to look into the breakwaters of these coastal communities; look into soaring water rates that are going to put more and more Nova Scotians into poverty and look into . . . (Interruption).

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I think you're straying from the intent of the bill.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, to not only look into the cell service but look into access to people who, when cell service does go down - and maybe this is a discussion they could be having with our utility, it's Bell Aliant now, I almost said MT&T; it was MT&T when I worked there - that they could have a discussion with them about supplying satellite phones to communities, vulnerable communities. When these types of storm hit they have a massive impact on infrastructure.

I can tell you, and I'll close with this, when Hurricane Fiona hit us, the bridge in Ketch Harbour, for example, was hit pretty hard. A large part of that community was cut off from the rest of HRM. We're asking those people to seek shelter, and then they lose cellphones and they lose access to communication. People became very desperate. Maybe the minister could, in those communications, look at expanding access to comfort centres and protecting our coastal communities.

So with that, I'll sit down.

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: I will attempt to address several of the concerns. To begin with, for the comfort of the member for Halifax Atlantic, you may have missed it, but we did announce a \$2-million program to have generators in comfort stations. That will address some of the issues which we saw during Hurricane Fiona. When there were extended power outages, there was no power in the comfort stations either. This will help alleviate that. That's one thing we've already done.

There are several other things that had been mentioned. As the member for Cumberland North knows, one of the things that we have in the works is next generation 911. We're working very hard on that. It's my belief, and I could confirm that, but some of the issues that the member mentions with which tower picks up the call, some of that will be addressed by next generation 911. It's not only us who are doing next generation 911, it is the entire country. The phase-in date is in 2025. There's an intense amount of work being done right now so that we're ready for that.

It's my hope that that will address some of those concerns and, as everyone knows, we have more ways than ever of calling 911. We can call it on our phones, some people have a wristwatch that can call 911, our cars may call 911 for us. There are a lot of different things happening in the sphere that will necessitate next generation 911.

As I mentioned I believe, can't remember if it was Committee of the Whole House on Bills or second reading, but in terms of the constitutional aspects of this, as all members of this House know, the Emergency Management Act is a powerful Act. We have massive responsibility, not only us, but our municipal partners in the emergency measures. There is considerable power there. We believe that this bill is constitutional.

In terms of the vulnerable persons' registry, we haven't said yes or no. We've said that we just can't say yes without knowing who's doing it, what's involved, what's the cost, how it is maintained. There are just a lot of questions around the vulnerable persons' registry. We're saying we're looking at it. I don't know the answer to that, don't know what it will look like exactly, but it's something that may come.

With those few words, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 198.

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that the bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 200.

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

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

HON. PAT DUNN: I move that Bill No. 200 be now read a third time.

These amendments came based on recommendations from the review of agencies, offices, and Crown corporations that was completed this Summer. The amendments will include the Sherbrooke Restoration Commission Board Chair as a member of the Nova Scotia Museum Board of Governors. This addition includes an important rural locally managed museum voice to our province's museum governance. It is another step in our commitment to helping agencies, boards, and commissions operate efficiently and effectively.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place. I look forward to the passage of Bill No. 200.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to take a few moments and say a few words to this amendment. Up front I will say I am in favor of this change. As I said before in this House, we don't always disagree. Some good things have been here and we need to cherish when those moments arise in this House.

One of the things in this amendment that got my attention is the two words that go side by side - culture and tourism. They link one another and they cherish one another. Because of that reason, I am in favour of this amendment.

The other things that got my attention in this is the willingness of inclusivity and to allow those who are decision makers in this province to include other members of the community. Sometimes it's very disheartening when I see decisions that are based on rural versus urban, central zone versus people who live in rural communities. Some people take advantage of those differences and divide it for the people.

What I see here is the good will. Bring all Nova Scotians to one place, to one table, to make a collective decision, what is the best interests of Nova Scotians. That is another reason, Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of this change. Having said that, I would like to see this good will to continue - this government, their decisions, and their willingness to include members of our communities, irrespective of our differences.

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

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

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the honourable colleague for his comments.

Again, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 200.

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that the bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 204.

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

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 204 - An Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998, the Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, Respecting Marketing Levies - be now read for a third time.

As I've said before, as part of my mandate I made a commitment to work with municipalities to review and modernize the HRM Charter and the MGA.

Municipalities from across the province have asked me for increased authority and ability to make decisions that allow them to generate more revenue to attract events, people, and tourists to their communities.

These amendments to the MGA and the Charter allow for a consistent province-wide approach to allow all municipalities across the province to charge a marketing levy toward the purchase price of accommodations. As I've said before, marketing levies already exist in many jurisdictions across the country, and in only four municipalities across our province. Currently, the process for implementing and administering levies is time consuming, inconsistent, and has caused confusion for municipalities, tourism and marketing organizations, event organizers, sponsors, and visitors.

[3:45 p.m.]

This legislation creates consistency and a fair playing field, and has generated wide support from our municipal partners. As I shared earlier in earlier discussion, under the proposed legislation, municipalities will have the authority to choose if they want to impose a levy and at what rate, up to a maximum of 3 per cent of the total cost of accommodation. This legislation is enabling, not prescriptive. A levy could look different depending on the needs of the municipalities.

With today's increased cost of living, it was critical that these amendments struck a strong balance. We know we have to address the needs and concerns of our valued municipal partners and to enhance consistency and fairness around the levies, but we also have to ensure the levies remain one of the lowest in the country. These amendments achieve that. I want to repeat an important fact: These levies won't be charged for people who are staying in a hotel for a medical visit or procedure. Consultation has taken place with key stakeholders, including all Nova Scotian municipalities and the tourism industry, and they are supportive.

In closing, the current process is outdated and unfair. The proposed legislation will fix that and enhance consistency and fairness for all municipalities who want to impose a marketing levy. The legislation reduces red tape and aligns us with neighbouring provinces. The legislation will open the door for municipalities to generate revenue in their communities and enhance tourism. I look forward to hearing the comments of my colleagues.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this because it's interesting. As a former board member for Discover Halifax, this was discussed at that very time when Airbnbs started to become an issue, and the unfairness of the Hotel Association of Nova Scotia charging a hotel levy tax where the Airbnbs did not. This is, as the minister said, is about a fair playing field for all across the board, and the funds will go back to Discover Halifax to promote tourism, like they say, for "heads and beds" in the future.

I'm totally in support of this, and I'm glad to see that it's mostly just the ability to impose a levy. Going forward, we all know tourism is everyone's role here in Nova Scotia. People love to come to Nova Scotia. We all have a part to promote that, and hopefully, sometime all other municipal units in Nova Scotia will take on the same business case as Discover Halifax has and promote the great province that we live in.

In this case, like I said, I like to see consultation and collaboration, and this bill actually says this, and it is in response to Discover Halifax and the Hotel Association of Nova Scotia, so thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: My comments will be brief. First, I'd like to say that it's great that the three Cs were involved in this bill: consultation, cooperation, and collaboration. That has not been the case for some other bills, so I'm glad to see it happening here.

I would also like to add that adding Airbnbs and short-term rentals into the levies does create that even playing field that the hotel industry has been asking for, and I think that it is great that the government has included those Airbnbs and short-term rentals into this bill. I would like to see the government take stronger action on regulating those Airbnbs and those short-term rentals, but this is a good bill.

This is a bill that was done with cooperation, collaboration, and consultation, specifically with the tourism industry and the NSFM. With that, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, when I reached out to my local constituents on this bill, I did receive some feedback. I think the feedback was more a reflection of how business owners are feeling in general, not just those in the tourism sector.

The messages that I got back are that business owners are tired of government putting more taxes and levies on them. I realize that this bill is more an enabling piece of legislation that will allow municipalities to charge a levy, but I need to make sure that I'm representing the people I'm here to represent. They have communicated to me that the message they want me to send is that they're tired of being taxed. They're tired of new levies being placed on them.

I know when I was in business it was very frustrating how much I had to spend on accounting to collect all of the different taxes to send to government. I think it's always important, and I hope our municipal governments take that into consideration when they're deciding how much they're going to charge.

Just yesterday I met with a property owner who was asking for advice on how to appeal her property tax assessment that has gone up by over 10 per cent year over year over year. Although municipal governments are saying they're holding taxes and not putting your tax rate up, when the Property Valuation Services Corporation is putting market value assessments up by so much year after year, the municipalities are getting a windfall because of that.

My only comment on this is that I hope municipal governments will take the consideration of small business operators into consideration when they're deciding what

levies to put on. They have a very significant tax base that's growing year after year after year because of the increasing market value assessments.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I will just try to address a couple of points. One is, as the members may know, there are four jurisdictions now in the province that have these levies. HRM has it, CBRM has it, Digby has it, and Yarmouth has it.

To the point of the member for Cumberland North, the reality is that we are being asked by other jurisdictions who want the levy. Early on in my tenure as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I was in a room with a South Shore municipality. I won't say which one, but they were very adamant. They had been asking the previous government for this right. They wanted to have this levy, and they wanted to put it in their area, but had been told, no, it wasn't being done. We said, well, Digby got it during that same time frame, and they weren't even aware of that.

This is not about us picking winners and losers. This is about enabling jurisdictions to charge this levy. The purpose of the levy will be for tourism. Whether particular - and we certainly don't expect every one of the 49 municipalities in the province to have a levy - it'll be up to the jurisdictions, the municipalities, to decide. It won't be us picking one and not another, which was really literally the case when Digby was chosen and this particular South Shore municipality was told no, at the very same time.

We just want there to be a straightforward process where we're not saying yes or no. The Act is there, and they have the power to do it. I believe we're on the right track with that. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading on this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 204.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 206.

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

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 206 - amendments to the Underground Hydrocarbons Storage Act - be now read a third time.

The amendments to Bill No. 206 have paved the way for the production and use of green hydrogen in Nova Scotia. It's a clear alternative to fossil fuels and can help Nova Scotia meet our ambitious climate change goals.

We have a goal of reaching net zero by 2050, Mr. Speaker. We are diversifying our options, and this is helping us get there. Pursuing green hydrogen is one of those options. This is an exciting new industry with many economic benefits for all of Nova Scotia. We're taking the necessary steps to get the sector up and running as quickly as possible.

Bill No. 207 also makes a handful of administrative amendments for those three pieces of existing legislation that are applied to green hydrogen projects that are being designed, built, and operated right here in Nova Scotia.

This is not the full extent of the regulatory regime that will need to be in place for this industry to take shape. There are many more steps to take, and I look forward to talking about them in the next year as we speak about our green hydrogen action plan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I have just a few comments. Green hydrogen is emerging technology. We hear a lot about it on the Island and the potential in the Strait area. We're starting to see some heavy investment and looking at some of the infrastructure that has already been in place. We're happy with that.

One of the things we would like to see as the government moves forward in their plan - this industry going to be very competitive, so what is going to give Nova Scotia the edge? This is something that multiple jurisdictions are going to be in some pretty heavy competition about. Whether there's tax incentives or something that the government could be offering through their strategy, I think that would also be beneficial. I'll leave my comments there for now.

Again, this is emerging technology. We look forward to seeing what potential is there for Nova Scotia. We appreciate the investments that we're starting to see companies make in the province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I will just have a couple of comments too. This bill is tied with the other bill that we're going to be debating as well today. In his introduction, we heard the minister refer to green hydrogen, an exciting new technology. But we don't see the word green in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. We're concerned about that, and I'll have more to say in the next debate.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I would have been remiss not to get up and talk a little bit about this bill and the next bill that's coming as well. It's exciting times for the province, and for the Strait Region as well. It's no secret to anybody here that the Strait of Canso and Point Tupper in particular are a hotbed for discussions with respect to green hydrogen and offshore wind.

I will say I think the discussions about offshore wind have been going on for a while. I do believe that what makes it appealing to organizations and to government and to all of us is the idea of green hydrogen with it.

I do want to let everybody know about the work that has been ongoing in the Strait Region. The community and the organization that's happening in the Strait Region is quite impressive. We have a task force that has been meeting for over a year now. This task force represents a great deal of stakeholders in the community. We have three municipal units that are involved in this. The mayor of the Town of Port Hawkesbury, the warden of Richmond County, and the economic development officer for Guysborough are all meeting regularly, along with other stakeholders that include the Strait Superport, the NSCC, the Indigenous community, the First Nations community.

I had Chief Terry Paul on a tour of the Strait of Canso in a tugboat several months back to take a look at what is going on in the Strait area and the opportunity that is there. They have been reaching out to the fisheries as well, in the inshore fishermen's association.

I will say this is a great opportunity for the province. It's a great opportunity for the Strait of Canso. The Strait of Canso is ready and willing and looking forward to seeing the progress that our wonderful minister and the department are taking on with this.

With that having been said, I am going to have a seat but again, looking forward to the developments coming forward.

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the members opposite and the member behind me for making me blush.

[4:00 p.m.]

In all seriousness, I look forward to having more regulations come into play as, even as government, we learn more of this regime to come. I just want to rest assured that the ultimate goal for us here is to get to that green hydrogen action plan in the years to come. I look forward to speaking about that at further opportunities next year.

I do want to give credit to the task force group that's on the Strait. They were actually one of my very first meetings after becoming the minister. I was totally set back at how much of an area was open, with open arms, for the offshore wind, for the development of green hydrogen. That task force has reached out across the province to sort of be an ambassador for green hydrogen to come to this province.

We have some of the best offshore winds, worldwide. We are recognized for that. That's why the companies are coming here to Nova Scotia to put that investment here. That's why they're coming to this government to allow them, with these regulation changes and amendments, to make sure that we are a step ahead of everyone else.

It's a bit of a competition, but there's a whole realm that could be hidden in here for all of Nova Scotia.

We also look at the other shore in the Bay of Fundy, the highest tides. One flush of the tide has more power and force than all the rivers combined in all the world. Once we harness that tide at an affordable expense, can that be going into our grids? Can that be going into more production of green hydrogen?

The world is knocking at our door. With that, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 206. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 206.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that the bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, will you please call Bill No. 207.

Bill No. 207 - Electricity Act (amended).

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I move now that Bill No. 207 be read a third time, the Electricity Act amendments, green hydrogen.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 207 is another bill that will help pave the way for hydrogen production, green hydrogen in the province of Nova Scotia. This bill amends the Electricity Act by changing the definition of a wholesale customer.

The current legislation only considers Nova Scotia Power or municipal utilities to be wholesale customers. We are expanding on this definition to include businesses that are advancing green hydrogen projects for domestic use. We're working on a separate path for developers who are inspired for export.

This bill will allow us to create a new hydrogen innovation program to support this budding industry. This program will ensure that projects align with our provincial goals to reach net zero. It will ensure regulatory consistency for those projects.

The changes to Bill Nos. 206 and 207 are among the many steps we are looking to make to make Nova Scotia a leader in the world for green hydrogen. It will also ensure that Nova Scotia reaps economic and environmental benefits through these bills.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Very quickly, these are regulatory changes that need to happen with the legislation. As I said before, lots of potential.

I think that we'll be watching closely as they build a strategy around it. Like I said, it's going to be a pretty competitive market, so we support the required changes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm happy to speak to this bill. We in the NDP caucus were disappointed that the amendments which we'd brought during Committee of the Whole House on Bills were not accepted, as they would have resolved many of our issues and concerns with the bill.

The government's press release and following conversations, and in fact, the minister's comments just now have celebrated it as paving the way for green hydrogen and envisioning our province as a leader in this field. I hope that is true, but we and many others are left wondering why, then, this bill contains no language referring to green or renewables.

The wording of this bill, instead, if we take it at its face value and what it actually says, is paving the way for all forms of hydrogen development, including hydrogen made with coal. These concerns have been echoed by stakeholders at Law Amendments Committee, as well as in the media. One recent article pointed out that these projects will still rely on the Nova Scotia Power grid which, even in 2025, will largely be coal-based. The whole bill is wholly misleading, and we have to wonder what the actual intentions are.

If the government truly were looking to support green and only green hydrogen, then the language of the bill should reflect that. Since the government refused to pass our amendments in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, then I have to wonder why. The bill not only supports the development of dirty forms of hydrogen but incentivizes them. We do not see how potentially increasing industrial use of coal-derived electricity will help our province meet our 2030 climate goals.

Another area of concern is around consultation. The existing bill does not provide for any consultation with community or stakeholders for projects under the hydrogen innovation program. We think this is a major oversight. Large industrial projects can have innumerable impacts on local environments and communities, and we think that these are important voices that need to be heard before such projects can be in receipt of government assistance. We've seen in this very session how problematic legislation and projects can be without community consultation. We know about it; we know about the lack of consultation on one of the Municipal Government Act bills. We know about the lack of consultation on Eisner Cove.

There are all kinds of things that are happening in our midst right now, and we need to enshrine community consultation into our legislation to make sure everybody is at the table when decisions are being made. We were disappointed that these proposed amendments were also not accepted.

Finally, we've heard from various stakeholders that the benefits of green hydrogen, and I'm talking green hydrogen, and of course I'll reiterate that this bill doesn't necessarily mean green hydrogen, are being exaggerated, and that investment in the industry has potential to lead to a bubble. We heard yesterday in Law Amendments Committee from Tynette Deveaux at the Sierra Club who talked a little bit about how green hydrogen, even if it's green, is okay if it's a by-product of other types of clean energy, but in and of itself, it's very expensive and not very efficient.

Once again, we're concerned that the government is leaping into an idea without doing the homework on the subject, a point that has been made clear by the glaring omissions in the bill's language. I will leave it there, but I urge the government to take another look, especially when making regulations about this bill, to make sure that we are enshrining the idea of green hydrogen in this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I will be brief with my comments. People obviously know where I stand on green hydrogen and the opportunity. I just wanted to make sure that people are aware of what's going on in the communities. The task force does represent a large group of stakeholders who are being consulted. I will suggest from the discussions I've had with developers what makes this appealing here in Nova Scotia is the fact that it's green. Organizations and groups and countries in Europe are not looking for grey hydrogen or blue hydrogen, they're looking for green hydrogen.

Just on the community consultation again, just for everybody's information, there are two community consultation meetings going on today in Richmond, with one of the proponents of green hydrogen in our area.

I just want to recognize how excited I am that the Strait area has this opportunity that is being provided and looking forward to the coming months and years and what's going to happen.

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Just in wrapping up, I thank the members all for their comments. The whole concept of the world coming to Nova Scotia for our leading renewables in offshore, our leading wind power, and our leading tidal power is the concept of getting green hydrogen. Green hydrogen has to be created with renewables. It can't be coal.

The ultimate goal for my department right now is to work with these stakeholders and communities to reach that, to come up with the green hydrogen action plan that will be developed out of renewables.

With that, I move to close debate on Bill No. 207.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 207.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 210.

Bill No. 210 - Regulations Act (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 210, the Regulations Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

I will be brief. Bill No. 210 will improve the way that government makes official notice of important legislative and regulatory changes available to the public. The online versions of the Royal Gazette, which publishes notices of laws, proclamations, and other important government and legal information will now be considered official. Currently, only the print version, which is available through a paid subscription, is considered official. The official online Royal Gazette will now be free.

The amendments will also allow the regulations to be filed electronically, and digital signatures will be accepted on documents filed with the Registry of Regulations. The proposed changes are consistent with a general move towards electronic legislation information in other jurisdictions. These regulations that govern the laws of Nova Scotia impact the everyday lives of Nova Scotians. It is important that they're easily accessible to the public and the legal community.

With those brief remarks, I'll take my seat and look forward to hearing closing comments from my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Of course.

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

HON. BRAD JOHNS: I rise to close debate on Bill No. 210.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 210.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk.
Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 211.

[4:15 p.m.]

Bill No. 211 - Builders' Lien Act (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Speaker, that last one just went so quick. Let's not break a trend here, okay?

I move that Bill No. 211, the Builders' Lien Act, now be read a third time and do pass.

Once again, I will be brief. This important legislation is advanced jointly by the Department of Justice as well as the Department of Public Works. I would like to thank my Cabinet colleague the Minister of Public Works, Hon. Kim Masland.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

BRAD JOHNS: I'm sorry - the Minister of Public Works.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

BRAD JOHNS: The Province is ensuring members of the construction industry are paid promptly for the work that they do. This legislation will give the government the authority to appoint an external body to adjudicate disputes among developers, contractors, and subcontractors. The amendments give authority to the external body to collect and manage fees to cover the costs associated with adjudicating disputes. They will also define the body's duties and powers related to training adjudicators, and setting and collecting adjudication fees. The legislation further strengthens the prompt payment process by defining the scope of disputes that can be referred to an adjudicator and by setting out parameters for the timing of decisions.

The construction industry is essential to the economic growth of our province. It is important that disputes over payments are resolved in a fair and timely manner. The Construction Association of Nova Scotia has welcomed this legislation.

In 2011, there was direct employment of 28,500 workers in the construction industry, more than 6 per cent of the province's total workforce. Many other businesses and workers benefit from this sector.

The province will continue to consult with stakeholders, including municipalities and sectors to manage infrastructure and construction projects on the development of the regulations.

With those brief remarks, I'll take my seat and look forward to hearing closing remarks.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for his comments. I'll be quick as well. This is an important piece of legislation that I'm familiar with from my past. I was working for the minister when this was introduced in 2019 at TIR, as it was called then, and as well at the Department of Justice with Minister Furey. I know how much work has gone into this through both departments, and through two governments as well. It has been a long time coming on this.

I think it's particularly important - even more so than when it was first introduced - due to the issues around labour shortages, issues in construction, issues in housing. It's more important than ever that construction companies are paid on time and in full because we know that many businesses, on a yearly basis, were going out of business simply because they couldn't get paid on time. When a construction company goes out of business, obviously they're no longer building things, and we need things built in this province. There's no question about that.

I think this is an important piece of legislation. I hope that the parameters around the adjudication authority - how that process is going to work - gets rolled out as quickly as possible once this bill is passed. I know that the Prompt Payment Coalition, which has been on this issue for many years now, wants to see this fully in place by the end of the year, so we only have about two months left to get that done.

Before I conclude, I did want to give a shoutout in particular to Duncan Williams of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia. I know he has been spearheading this issue for many years, and has taken it from basically nothing to where we are now on the cusp of legislation. I want to thank him for that and thank everybody who has participated in making this bill happen.

With those words, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I am glad to see this come forward as well, and I'm glad to speak to this bill. I know that this bill has come from extensive work done with those in the sector, in the construction sector specifically, and reflects years' work to accomplish this piece. This is a great example of the three Cs that my colleague had spoken of earlier - consultation, co-operation, and collaboration - and see the wonderful piece of work that is before us.

These measures have already been implemented in other jurisdictions. I appreciate this step to ensure the protection of Nova Scotians who work in this sector.

Delays in payments have impacts, as we know, that trickle down to all the workers in the construction sector. I am glad that the concerns of those in this sector are actually being acknowledged. I would like to thank the minister for bringing this forward, and I'll take my seat.

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

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, I want to thank my Opposition colleagues for their comments on this as well. I move to close debate on Bill No. 211.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 211.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ordered that this bill do pass. Ordered that the title be as read by the Clerk. Ordered that the bill be engrossed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 203.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to say a few words on this bill. As we know, this has been an emotional journey for many - for many of us in this House and for many of our constituents, friends, and families. I just want to be able to take the opportunity to thank all Nova Scotians who were brave enough to also share their stories throughout this entire process with me personally and I know many members in this House have probably heard stories as well. To all those Nova Scotians, thank you.

I want to sincerely thank the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for bringing this to our attention and for sharing her daughter's story, for sharing Ruby's mom's story. I

want to thank the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier for sharing her story as well, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the team at the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration for their care and their hard work to make this a reality. I believe that we have brought forward a strong and inclusive bill.

When we heard about this concern, my department went into action. We undertook a broad and thorough consultation. We heard from women's centres and advocacy groups, employers and employer organizations, labour organizations, and from individuals directly. We appreciated each and every person and organization who shared their perspective on this topic because these are real stories by real people.

In addition to consultation, the department conducted a jurisdictional scan across the country. The department further considered the benefits provided by other protected leaves under our Labour Standards Code. Taking all of this into account, and being mindful of the balance that we are always trying to strike between employees' rights and protections and costs to Nova Scotia employers, the majority of which are small and medium businesses, we are proposing an unpaid leave for the end of pregnancy.

The proposed amendments to the code set a minimum standard that employers must follow. We know that many employers go further than this minimum and we thank those who go above and beyond. We recommend that Nova Scotians who have questions about the different leave benefits that their employers may offer reach out to their employer. We also recommend that employees who are eligible for the proposed 16-week end of pregnancy leave contact the federal government to determine the potential eligibility under Employment Insurance.

We have considered the amendments brought forward by my colleagues. While we have not accepted all the changes, your perspectives and stories will stay with me and will be considered when we have the opportunity to look at future changes to the Labour Standards Code. With that, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Thank you, minister, and your staff for all the work that they have done. I've actually written on an IWK card this morning just what I wanted to say. I want to actually acknowledge all the work that the IWK does for loss parents. (Applause)

Much has been said in this House and throughout, but the most prevalent of all is the feeling of gratitude. Thank you to each and every one in this room for your support. It means a lot, not only to me, my daughter Elizabeth and her husband, Stephen, but to honour the thousands of loss babies over generations and, sadly, through all the pregnancy losses that will continue.

I'd like to acknowledge and express my sincere appreciation to those who approached me to let me know how important this bill was to them. This bill awakened many voices of silent grief, and it's all these voices that gave me the strength to pursue what I felt was right in this House.

The bill ensures that the immense grief parents of lost pregnancies - that they will not have the added grief of worrying about job security. Their job will be there for them. As the minister said, there's so much more that could be done. Hopefully, those things will be explored in the future with regard to pregnancy loss.

It is about women. It is about their partners. It is about all parents wishing to have children. But we all know that women make up the largest part of low entry-level jobs, and they do deserve to have children as well, and they do deserve to be paid.

I didn't know this was going to be spoken on today, but as Ruby's memory and magic works in mysterious ways, I happen to be wearing ruby red. Every time we see ruby red, we are reminded of her.

I want to thank all of you as well, for putting it into law, and known as Ruby's Law. We have our ways of remembering it, but to all of those who approached me, they love the fact that it's called Ruby's Law.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. (Applause)

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

KENDRA COOMBES: First, I want to say thank you to the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, and to her daughter, for Ruby's Law. This is a transformational change that we are making here today in this Legislature. It is important. It is because of Ruby, your daughter Elizabeth, and the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth that we are here today. My gratitude for the member is immense today.

To the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration, I want to express my gratitude to her for hearing the bill and seeing what it was for, seeing what it could do - the healing that could come from that - and bringing it back into this Legislature so that we can enact the bill. I want to thank her, because as the minister, she deserves that thank you for bringing this forward so that we can enact it.

As someone who has had pregnancy loss, I've expressed all that before - my story. I just want to thank all of you as well for hearing those stories, for hearing the stories of those of us who have lost in pregnancy, and really hearing it and really listening. Also for those who have expressed their own stories, the more that we talk about pregnancy loss, the more we bring those stories forward - there's a healing in that pain. There's a healing when we get to talk about it. It takes great bravery for people to be that vulnerable. So

thank you for hearing those stories with the respect that they deserve. I cannot thank the members enough for that.

[4:30 p.m.]

I do want to say that to have pregnancy loss protected for job security is fantastic. As the minister said, there's more to do because although we have it, we need people to be able to take advantage of that.

I hope sometime in the future that we can make this a paid leave so that those who are in precarious work, those who are low income, can really take advantage of this bill so they can grieve, they can heal, not just emotionally and mentally but physically as well. I think that is extremely important. I am going to continue to talk to the minister on that because I think it's the next step forward.

This is the first step, and I am very proud to be here for this. Again, my gratitude and my thanks to the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, her family, and to the minister. I want to add just one thing: the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth is a grandmother, and the one thing I have learned during my journey was that grandparents suffer along with their children. They have been the one holding their child's hand, trying to be strong, but they are grieving also.

I want to acknowledge all those family members who sat with a family member who had lost a pregnancy, that we see you, we hear you, and we know your story too.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I'm pleased to rise to speak on this bill today. I spoke in second reading, but I didn't speak after that. When second reading took place, I was a grandmother-in-waiting, and I am not now. In fact, I just came from visiting the funeral home with my daughter and her partner to pick up the ashes of little Asher who entered this world last Monday, unexpectedly, and left it.

My family really didn't have any experience with this when we first began talking about this particular issue with the then-candidate for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, but we have experience with it now. I want to thank her, and I want to thank the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, and I want to thank the minister for moving on this particular bill because it means a lot to the families affected by this, not just the parents but the grandparents too.

I want to thank the many people - mostly women but not all women - who have reached out to us in recent days to talk about our loss and who told me the stories of their miscarriages or their stillbirths and then told me their stories about their subsequent births, too, so we know there's hope.

While I have the microphone, I might as well thank the nurses and the doctors of the IWK who were amazing. It was clear to us because Asher hadn't even reached the 20-week mark - he was just shy of that - that we were not going to go home with a baby that Monday morning. They were beyond lovely, so gentle with him after he was born.

I want to thank the volunteers who actually made - I don't even know what to call it - a little sleeping bag, and a knitted cap and blanket for Asher. You leave with a memory box - I thank Snow's Funeral Home as well. The boxes could fit in the palm of my hand.

Thank you to all those people who made that journey for our family easier. Thank you to the minister and the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration for moving on this and for making what is a tragic time in any family easier. Thank you. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: To the member, I know I speak for everyone here to express our sincere and deepest sympathy. Please know that our thoughts are with you and your family.

The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I rise to say a few words on Bill No. 203 - The Labour Standards Code. There is a lot of emotion around the subject of infant loss. We've talked a lot about the impact on our daughters or ourselves or our grandmothers and mothers.

I know the impact that the #MeToo movement had on my sons. When they saw their friends putting #MeToo on their Facebook pages, it changed them for the better. We had conversations that weren't very easy to have. I tell my sons what I'm doing here in the Legislature and I explain to them what this bill means.

My sons know that there are three siblings they don't have. Only one of them did we give a name to. I'm not sure why now, as I'm listening. I don't know why. I know I have one figurine at home that's a little bunny rabbit to represent the one that was taken from me as opposed to the ones that I lost. By naming this Ruby's Law, we've given a name to something that is very personal to almost all of us here.

I wanted to comment on the impact that this bill has had on my sons. It caused a conversation that may not have ever happened. It is something that they certainly knew about when they were younger, but they are gentlemen now, contemplating having their own children. I just felt that I wanted to say that the loss impacts everyone in the family, our sons as well as our daughters. I just wanted to thank my sons for being willing to have that conversation with me.

I thank the minister for bringing this forward and the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth and all those who've spoken. We don't talk about it very much. I forget the constituency for the member who said that that's what happens when you have women in

the Legislature. I think that there is some value in that the more we talk about it, the better the care gets, the better the supports we get for ourselves.

I think about the children that I don't have that I thought I would. I'm grateful that there is a law now that will give families the opportunity to have more time to grieve. I'm grateful to everyone who supported that. (Applause)

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, when this bill came to the floor of the Legislature, I told the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth that she would have my support and the support of our caucus. I wasn't able to be here to speak to it before, so I want to speak to it now.

So much has already been said that is so true and moving, but what I want to say is that this bill recognizes our humanity. We grieve. We love. We get sick. We are human beings, and all of these things happen to us. I think that this process is a great example of what happens when we have real life in this Chamber, when we're talking about real people and their real experiences and we're able to do that. I would suggest that for everything we discuss here, there are real people affected in their real lives.

I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. I do also want to acknowledge that we have so much work to do to make sure, particularly in a work environment, that we can show up as our whole selves and that we can live the lives that we need to live. This bill recognizes that we need to be able to grieve and be employed. But we also need to be able to eat and be employed, and we also need to be able to do a lot of other things.

This is at the heart of so much of the conversations we have with our constituents and with our families. My hope is that we can have more conversations like this in this Chamber where our debates and our decisions are not abstract, are not based on partisanship or theory but are based in reality.

This is a great example of how the reality of the fact that we all experience grief is impossible to deny, and the humanity of needing to recognize that in legislation is also impossible to deny. I thank the minister, and I thank the member for bringing this forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 203.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call the order of business, Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 385.

Res. No. 385, re Dep. Spkr. Salary: Change Req'd. - Recog. - notice given Oct. 13/22 - (Hon. John Lohr)

THE SPEAKER: We'll take a very short recess for a second.

[4:44 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:45 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. We are moving back now to the debate on Resolution No. 385.

We'll take another brief recess.

[4:46 p.m. The House recessed.]

[4:51 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Resolution No. 385.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Resolution No. 385.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, I pass it over to the NDP House Leader to call business for tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable New Democratic Party House Leader.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Following daily business and Question Period tomorrow, Opposition business will include second reading of Bill Nos. 209 and 98. There might be more, but it will be a surprise.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: That concludes business for today. I move that the House do now rise and meet again Wednesday, November 2nd, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Wednesday, November 2nd, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 4:53 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 490**

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Dr. Harris Crooks graduated from Dalhousie Medical School in 1976 at the top of his class and immediately set up a medical practice in his home community in Prospect Bay; and

Whereas Caring for his patients with an old-school style, he would always extend his work well beyond what is expected of a primary care physician to ensure patients in his community received excellent health care; and

Whereas Dr. Crooks retired - the first time - in December 2019 and returned to practice in 2020 to serve the medical needs of residents in the Prospect communities because of the overwhelming strain of the COVID-19 pandemic and due to the lack of qualified doctors in the area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in expressing our gratitude to Dr. Crooks for his outstanding service and wish him well as he "officially" retires again and closes his practice on December 31, 2022.

RESOLUTION NO. 491

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Lynette Richards, a graphic novelist, gathered historic details and took a new approach to tell the story of a sailor and who ran away from New Jersey to find adventure, anonymity and true self; and

Whereas Lynette's gorgeously illustrated, historical graphic novel, *Call Me Bill*, is based on a real person who swapped a dress for a pair of pants to work on the cargo streamliner *SS Atlantic*; and

Whereas in 1873 when *SS Atlantic* crashed off the coast of Nova Scotia and Bill was retrieved from the sea, it was revealed the sailor was defying gender expectations in search of a more authentic life;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing Lynette's creative approach to storytelling to help readers find the courage to recognize the importance of self discovery and being true to yourself.

RESOLUTION NO. 492

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Shirley Coolen has served the patrons of the Community Guardian in Hatchet Lake for fifteen years; and

Whereas Shirley is known for always having a big smile and friendly chat with everyone who comes in the store; and

Whereas Shirley has demonstrated excellence in customer service and has gone above and beyond her employers expectations to offer exceptional service to customers;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Shirley all the best and a wonderful retirement.