



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

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First Session

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022

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House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 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. We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition.
The operative clause reads as follows:

“Request our road, the Newburne Road - commencing at the intersection of the Cornwall Road and the Newburne Road; north on the Newburne Road for 6.7 kilometres to the intersection of the Newburne Road and the Walburne Road - be added to the five (5) year Highway Improvement Plan - and be paved.”

I have affixed my signature, as required.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition. The operative clause reads as follows:

“Request our road, the Milbury Road - commencing at the intersection of the Walburne Road; northeast on the Milbury Road for 1.6 kilometres; be added to the five (5) year Highway Improvement Plan (Gravel Road Upgrade) - and be brush cut, ditched, with appropriate drainage, and be re-resurfaced.”

I have affixed my signature, as required.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition, the operative clause of which is:

“Request our road, the Barss Corner Road - commencing at the intersection of the Forties Road and Barss Corner Road at Franey Corner, south 4.7 kilometres to High Landing Road, be added to the five (5) year Highway Improvement Plan and be paved.”

I have affixed my signature, as required.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The petition is tabled. It looks like there’ll be nobody else getting paving next year. (Laughter)

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Private and Local Bills, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 239 - Amherst Curling Club, An Act to Incorporate the (amended).

and the committee recommends this bill to the favourable consideration of the House without amendments.

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

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act Review Board's annual report for 2021-22.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the Fish Harvesters Registration and Certification Board's 2021 annual report.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills, and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a report entitled *Growing Nova Scotia's Francophone Population: An Action plan for Success (2022-2025)*; and a French copy as well: *Croissance de la population francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse: Un plan d'action pour le succès (2022-2025)*.

THE SPEAKER: Très bien. The report is tabled.

I have two reports to table.

As Speaker of the House of Assembly, and pursuant to Section 163 of the Elections Act, I am pleased to table the annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer, 2021-2022.

As well, pursuant to Section 18(4) of the Auditor General Act, I'm tabling the *2022 Report of the Auditor General to the House of Assembly, Immigration and Population Growth: Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration*.

The reports are tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, later this month, lobster fishing season will begin in southwest Nova Scotia. The last Monday in November, known as Dumping Day, marks the start of the province's longest and most lucrative commercial lobster fishery. From where I stand here today in downtown Halifax, it can be hard to imagine, let alone appreciate, the importance of the lobster fishery to Nova Scotia's coastal communities.

During my time as Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, I've had the privilege to see this first-hand and to hear directly from the people who live in these communities, who make it clear that working in the fishery is much more than a job. It is food on their plates, the roofs over their heads, and the legacy left to them - and in turn, the legacy they'll leave to their children and grandchildren.

For generations, fish harvesters have been waking before dawn, boarding boats in the cold and the dark, and spending their days on the water - their lives on the water - at the mercy of the weather and a sea that will take just as much as it gives. It's hard work, Mr. Speaker, honest work. And as I'm sure all of us in this House today know, it is also dangerous work.

We have come a long way in this province. Fishing is a safer job than it was a generation ago, not by accident nor by luck but through the hard work of organizations like Fish Safe Nova Scotia, which, along with partners in industry and government, has led what can only be described as a wholesale cultural shift in the fishery - a shift that has almost certainly saved lives.

Fishing is a safer job, but it is still among the most dangerous in Nova Scotia. This is what makes the work of organizations like Fish Safe Nova Scotia; the Workers' Compensation Board; the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration; the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture; our federal partners DFO, the Coast Guard, and Transport Canada; and the many dedicated fish harvester associations throughout the province, still so crucially important.

Our economy depends on the safety of our fishery. Our communities depend on the fishery and the safety of our people in that fishery. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians depend on fish harvesters who board those vessels in the cold and in the dark, whose days on the water puts food on the table and a roof overhead, and whose lives off the water really matter the most of all.

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward to November 28th, as the fishermen prepare to head out on their "dumping day," I ask all my colleagues in the House to join me in wishing fish harvesters in Lobster Fishing Area Nos. 33 and 34 a safe and successful season. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for his statement and echo a lot of his comments.

The last Monday in November, weather permitting, is Dumping Day, and LFA 34 and LFA 33 are some of the most lucrative lobster grounds in the world. For many of our rural communities, that's what our economy is based on. For weeks now, I've seen fishermen preparing their gear, making sure that their vessels are seaworthy, and making sure that everything will go smoothly when the season begins. Safety is number one.

I've had the opportunity - or the privilege, honestly - of being on the water for the last 32 years for Dumping Day. My intention is to go again this year. I can say that it brings with it, for the entire community, a lot of excitement and energy. It also brings a lot of anxiety, because it is a dangerous job. For many of the fishers and their families and the community, I can tell you a lot of people have a sleepless night before Dumping Day.

The minister is correct that it is a much safer industry than it has ever been, but it is still dangerous. We leave at all hours of the night in the dark and cold, with frozen decks and wind. These people work extremely hard and, in saying that, they wouldn't be anywhere else. I wish all the fishermen a safe and prosperous season and I thank the minister, again, for his comments. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I do thank the minister and I thank the member for Clare for their reflections on the significance of Dumping Day upcoming in LFAs 33 and 34.

Dumping Day in southwestern Nova Scotia this year will come at a time of growing uncertainty in our lobster fishery in Nova Scotia: uncertainty related to matters of international trade policy, uncertainty about the continuing strength of export demand, and uncertainty relative to all the issues of long-term sustainability which stand before the industry as a whole.

In the face of this fluidity, it is a fitting moment to reassert, as my colleagues have done, that the core truth about our economy in Nova Scotia is that the fishery is its backbone and foundation, a priority to be held beyond compromise by policy in our province.

It's also a fitting moment to echo the minister's and the member's clear statements that there is no value greater - neither price nor catch nor any commercial consideration - there's no value greater than the safety of those who do this work. In the language of my own tradition, may they be watched over. (Applause)

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

[1:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

RESOLUTION NO. 507

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Pursuant to Rule No. 32 of the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Section 7(1) of the Elections Act provides that, “Subject to the approval of the House of Assembly by majority vote, the Governor in Council shall appoint a person to be the Chief Electoral Officer”; and

Whereas open competition was held and the Electoral Commission’s hiring panel has made a unanimous recommendation on a successful candidate to be appointed as the Chief Electoral Officer;

Therefore be it resolved that this House of Assembly, pursuant to Section 7(1) of the Elections Act, approve the appointment by Governor in Council of Dorothy Rice as the Chief Electoral Officer.

I hereby further request waiver of notice and passage without debate. Dated today, Brad Johns, Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver. Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, permission to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

PAT DUNN: In the West Gallery, there is a group. This group was instrumental in organizing Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Anti-Racism Week this month in our province. Although not all the members of this group were able to attend today, I will read their names. The ones who are present, I’ll ask them to stand: Tex Marshall, Andrew Paris, Nick Lenehan, Elana Liberman, Jennie Greencorn, Marc Seguin, Graham Mounsey,

DeRico Symonds, Sheila Srinivasan-Thomas, Michelle Aucoin, and Bill Greenlaw.
(Applause)

THE SPEAKER: We welcome all visitors to the Gallery today. We hope you enjoy your stay here in the Legislature.

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

RESOLUTION NO. 508

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

Whereas there can be no tolerance for racism in any form in sport and recreation programs in Nova Scotia, as everyone deserves the right to participate in sport and recreation free of harassment, maltreatment, racism, and discrimination; and

Whereas sport and recreation leaders across Nova Scotia, including the Canadian Sport Institute Atlantic, Sport Nova Scotia, Recreation Nova Scotia, the Recreation Facility Association of Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, and the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage are collaborating to improve awareness of racism in sport and recreation, encourage everyone to speak up when they witness or experience racism, and ensure that we are accountable for addressing instances of racism when they occur; and

Whereas the responsibility lies within all of us to learn how racism shows up, to listen to the experiences of those who have faced racism in sport and recreation, and to act as active allies to support Black, Indigenous, and racialized participants in sport and recreation;

Therefore be it resolved that this House declare the week of November 14th to 18th as Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Anti-Racism Week and express our gratitude and support to all those who are working to make sport and recreation in Nova Scotia a welcoming, equitable, and inclusive environment for all.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

RESOLUTION NO. 509

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

Whereas Kiwanis International has been a thriving organization of service and community-minded individuals supporting children and youth since 1915; and

Whereas on the weekend of October 22nd, Gerry Lethbridge and the youth of the 865 Dartmouth Kiwanis Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron planted 1,000 trees in Viscount Park in the name of climate change; and

Whereas this group, through their actions, are raising awareness in the community of the importance of reducing the impacts of climate change while improving the environment;

Therefore, be it resolved that all members of this Legislature recognize the 865 Dartmouth Kiwanis Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron and their efforts to raise awareness about climate change while positively impacting the Viscount Park community.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 510

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Monsieur le Président, à une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante :

Attendu que la Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse remet le certificat Léger-Comeau, la plus haute distinction de la communauté acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, lors de son assemblée générale et cette année elle a été remise à Glenda Doucet-Boudreau qui a oeuvré d'arrache-pied pour l'éducation en français, la condition des femmes acadiennes et encore pour la culture acadienne en Nouvelle-Écosse; et

Attendu que les batailles menées par madame Glenda Doucet-Boudreau sont devenues des références pour les générations actuelles et futures, tel que l'arrêt Doucet-Boudreau pour le respect des droits à l'instruction dans la langue de la minorité en vertu de l'article 23 de la *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés*; et

Attendu que ses contributions et son engagement dans l'avancement de la condition des femmes dans notre province ont permis la création de l'Association Madeleine LeBlanc en 1975 puis de la Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse en 1982;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour féliciter madame Glenda Doucet-Boudreau pour son investissement et ses contributions pour le développement, la vitalité, et l'épanouissement de la communauté acadienne et francophone de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Monsieur le Président, je demande l'adoption de cette résolution sans préavis et sans débat.

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

Whereas the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse presents the Léger-Comeau Certificate, the highest distinction of the Acadian community of Nova Scotia, at its annual general meeting, and this year's award was presented to Glenda Doucet-Boudreau, who has worked tirelessly for education in French, the status of Acadian women and Acadian culture in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas the battles waged by Ms. Glenda Doucet-Boudreau have become references for current and future generations, such as the Doucet-Boudreau decision for the respect of minority language education rights under Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; and

Whereas her contributions and commitment to the advancement of the status of women in our province led to the creation of the Association Madeleine LeBlanc in 1975 and the Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse in 1982;

Therefore, be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ms. Glenda Doucet-Boudreau on her investment and contributions to the development and vitality of Nova Scotia's Acadian and francophone community.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

WORTH, BERNARD: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of Remembrance Day and to honour my late grandfather and veteran Bernie Worth of Guysborough.

As many did, he lied about his age so he could enlist, and served overseas as a member of the Canadian Grenadier Guards. For many months they faced the challenge of liberating the towns, villages, and farms in the heavily populated Netherlands. They were successful in their fight. My grandfather was a gunner in a tank and witnessed a fellow soldier, Private Edmund Brown from Musquodoboit, lose his life to a sniper on their way back from Germany.

These are the stories that I know haunted him and all veterans who fought then and now.

Years later, he made three trips back to Holland for anniversary visits, two with my grandmother Barb and another with my uncle Danny. He was a proud member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 81 and walked yearly in the parade on November 11th. He would also be proud to see the banners that are hoisted to the lampposts in Guysborough since 2020 remembering all who served.

I ask that on this Remembrance Week we take the time to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country and those who came home to their freedom. Lest We Forget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

CBU SOCCER TEAMS: CH'SHIP WINS - CONGRATS.

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate both the men's and women's soccer teams from Cape Breton University, who are both AUS champions again this year.

For the men's team - they have captured their sixth title in a row, which ties a record from 1954, when UNB did a six-peat, so congratulations to the men. The women's team have captured their 12th title since 2003.

These are both amazing feats and it's a wonderful soccer program, both the men's and women's at Cape Breton University. Congratulations to the players, the coaches, all those involved, and congratulations at the national tournament. Go Capers, go.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, may I make a quick introduction before my colleague does a member's statement?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite where there's a handsome young Grade 10 student from Halifax West, my nephew, Malachi Leblanc. He was honoured last year in this House by his MLA, the member for Timberlea-Prospect, because of his entrepreneurial spirit with his business, Malachi's Mowing.

He is here today because he likes politics. He is hoping for some action in Question Period, so I hope we can gently provide that for him. I'd like all members to welcome Malachi to the House.

THE SPEAKER: Just as long as Question Period is somewhat controlled (Inaudible). Welcome to the Legislature, enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

LITTLE, CATHERINE: N.S. MUSIC AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Catherine Little of Dartmouth South. Catherine is a talented cellist on a mission to build a bridge to classical music. Besides a thorough classical repertoire, she also works in pop, folk, blues, and rap,

and has performed with the likes of Il Divo, Jenn Grant, and Rod Stewart. She performs solo, in orchestra, for theatre, and in film.

This year Catherine was nominated for - and won - the 2022 Nova Scotia Music Awards Classical Recording of the Year for her record *Taking Five*.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Catherine Little on her win.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

DESMOND, VIOLA: CIVIL RIGHTS STAND - RECOG.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of Viola Irene Desmond. Viola Desmond is an icon of the battle for civil rights in Nova Scotia and in Canada. On this day in 1946, Viola challenged racial segregation by refusing to give up her seat in a theatre in New Glasgow. She had paid for her seat and believed she was rightfully entitled to it. Unfortunately, others did not.

She was charged, arrested, and brought to jail. Against the wishes of her husband, Viola fought her charges in court. Although she was unable to win the case, her actions were widely publicized and significantly impacted the fight for equal rights in our province.

In 2010, Viola was granted a posthumous Free Pardon by Lieutenant-Governor Mayann Francis, the first to be granted in our country. Nearly 80 years after her courageous battle, we continue to honour Viola's legacy, including on our nation's ten-dollar bill.

I ask my fellow members to join me in honouring Viola Desmond on her valiant stand for civil rights in our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

VETS.: REP. OF KOREA AMB. FOR PEACE MEDAL RECIPS. - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, as we approach Remembrance Day, I want to pay special homage to three veterans who recently received the Republic of Korea Ambassador for Peace Medal. This medal is presented to veterans who served in Korea during the Korean war or in the U.N. peacekeeping operations from 1953 to 1955.

Last July, one medal was presented to Ulysse Deveau and two were presented posthumously to the families of Alvin Deveau and Robert Comeau. The three had served in the conflict with Alvin Deveau spending part of the war as a prisoner of war after being captured.

[1:30 p.m.]

As South Korea has done for these three veterans, I ask all members to recognize the service and sacrifice of these three men as well as the service and sacrifice of all of Canada's present and past servicemen and servicewomen. Merci.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HOOPER-DIXON, TAYA: BASKETBALL ACCOMPLISHMENTS - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a beautiful young lady whom I've had the pleasure of knowing since she was born, Taya Hooper-Dixon. She is a brilliant mind and an exceptional athlete.

In April of this year, Taya played her last high school basketball game to end her chapter on the court with her many friends, playing in the Metro All-Star game with some of the best players in the city. At this game, she was named Metro High School League's MVP.

Taya Hooper-Dixon is arguably the best female high school basketball player. She was one of two Nova Scotians on the Can. Athlete Top 50 list. In August, Taya represented Nova Scotia women's basketball at the Canada Games, and they finished 6th, top of the Atlantic Provinces.

Above all, Taya is a brilliant mind and wants to pursue her studies in the health sector. This year, she has committed her skills on the court and in the classroom to Acadia University. I would like all members of this House to help me celebrate this brilliant young lady, Taya Hooper-Dixon, on her journey to success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the West Gallery, where we have a young Dalhousie University first-year student, Jonathan Hakim. I'll ask him to stand, and I'd like everyone to welcome him to the Legislature. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Once again, a warm welcome to all visitors in the Legislature today. We hope you enjoy your stay.

The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

INDIG. VETS.: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Today on November 8th, we honour the contributions of Indigenous peoples in service to our country.

The military service of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples is deeply rooted in the shared history of our province. While Indigenous veterans have served valiantly around the world during times of both war and peace, their contributions have not been observed often enough.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to rise and join me in paying tribute to Indigenous veterans, remembering those who lost their lives, and holding their communities in our hearts.

THE SPEAKER: Please rise.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

RECIPS.: QUEEN'S PLAT. JUB. MEDAL - CONGRATS.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize 15 exceptional individuals from my constituency of Bedford South who will be receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal.

I know it's a great honour for all members of the House to bestow this upon individuals from our constituencies who are contributing in so many ways. I had the chance to call the folks on this list just before the House started today. It was great to hear their excitement and surprise at receiving this honour.

I'd like to recognize John Moore, Pascal Rodier, Morgan MacDonald, Mary Dable Arab, Simardeep Hundal, Jagdeep Hundal, Michael Ruan, Joanne Bernard, Catherine Fares, Nancy Muise, Laura Mitchell, Robert Thomas, Dale Robertson, Hoda Ibrahim, and Sharan Sidhu.

Again, I'm looking forward to presenting these medals in person to these 15 individuals who have made such a great contribution to our province in business, in politics, in non-profits, and in so much more.

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

INDIG. VETS.: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker today, November 8th, is Indigenous Veterans Day, when we pay tribute to the important contributions and sacrifices made by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in service to Canada.

There is a long history of Indigenous peoples in Canada overcoming barriers of racism, discrimination, distance, and language to volunteer to contribute to its defence, but often in turn did not receive the same benefits and respect as other veterans. Today, Indigenous members of our military forces number over 2,700. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities across Canada set an important example for all of us and the respect and honour they express for veterans. If you are at a mawiomni or pow wow and you are also a veteran, you'll be welcomed to join the opening ceremony.

Indigenous members also belong to the reserves. One unique role is that of the Canadian Rangers. This group of army reservists is active predominantly in the north, as well as the remote stretches of our east and west coasts.

Let us unite in our respect and gratitude for what Indigenous veterans have done for Canada, lest we forget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

SIKH RELIGION FOUNDER: BIRTHDAY CELEB. - RECOG.

HON. JILL BALSER: I rise in the legislature today to recognize the celebration of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh religion and their first guru.

Today, Sikh families in Nova Scotia come together to celebrate Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings of equality, compassion, virtue, goodness, and unity, which are core values of their faith. These qualities have been inherent in the religion since its inception in the late 15th century and are still incredibly relevant today.

We are grateful for the contributions of Sikhs to the fabric of our province. Their culture of seva, or selfless service without the expectation of reward, is one that we can all work to emulate in our lives.

I ask that all members of this Legislature join me in commemorating the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and wishing all Nova Scotia Sikhs a glorious day of celebration.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

GILLESPIE HORTICULTURE & SAN.: BUS. AWD. RECIP. - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: Each year, the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce hosts their Business Awards, celebrating nominees from the local business community in seven separate categories.

This year, a business from my constituency, Gillespie Horticulture & Sanitation, took home the award for Large Business of the Year. Gillespie offers a wide range of services, including landscape construction and maintenance, residential construction and renovation, snow removal, excavation and dump truck services, and commercial cleaning and janitorial service.

This business is innovative, progressive, and community-minded, and provides a great example of the positive results of hard work and entrepreneurial spirit.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Michael, Althea, and the entire Gillespie team on receiving this award.

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

VETS. & FAMILIES: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise to recognize all veterans during this week of remembrance. I also want to recognize the families of veterans. It is not just veterans and presently serving military personnel who serve, but so do their families.

This week, remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, as well as their families. We also honour all service personnel who came home with wounds visible and invisible.

I also want to recognize the three Legions that service Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier: Branch No. 15, New Waterford and area; Branch No. 78, Dominion Reserve and Gardiner; and Branch No. 128, Whitney Pier and South Bar.

These branches do incredible work providing support, referrals, advocacy, and financial assistance to vets, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, and the RCMP.

On this week of remembrance, lest we forget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage on an introduction.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: We have a lot of visitors to the House, but the first one that I want to introduce is my constituency assistant, Lisa Rochon in the West Gallery. As we've said all the last few weeks, our constituency assistants hold down the fort while

we're in the Legislature. Lisa has been my right and left hand for the last five years. With her is Karina Sanford, who was the candidate of record for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, and also with her is Darlene Hiltz, a good community volunteer and friend of mine.

I'd ask all members of the Legislature to welcome them to the House.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, a very warm welcome to everyone.

The honourable member for Queens.

DIXIE LEE FAM. REST.: 10TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: The owners and staff of Dixie Lee Family Restaurant in Liverpool are proudly celebrating their 10th anniversary today.

Originally operated by the Bursey family from 1972 until 1993, the business was returned to Main Street in Liverpool via the entrepreneurial spirit of Andrew Bursey, much to the delight of Queens County residents.

Since its reopening, the popularity of this community-minded business has continued to grow, and local folks and visitors alike enjoy its warm atmosphere, great service, friendly staff, and of course its delicious menu.

Please join me as I congratulate Andrew and the entire Bursey family on this exciting milestone anniversary and in thanking them for continuing to contribute to the business community and economic development of Queens.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston on an introduction.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce up in the gallery my constituency assistant, Fawn Logan-Young, who has been a tremendous support and worked with me during leadership. She is more than a colleague but part of the family now. I really appreciate all the work that she has done and definitely holds the fort down and engages community. I would be remiss if I did not extend the introduction of my good friend and colleague, Mr. DeRico Simmonds, from the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, welcome to all.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MACINNIS, RANKIN: BLUEBERRY JAM EVENT - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize Rankin MacInnis and all those involved in making the Blueberry Jam a big success. Just this past Sunday, they were

awarded the Live Sector Award from Music Nova Scotia. This is a live annual concert that takes place at the Big Belle Farm.

Lots of people are involved in this - lead tech Patrick Coleman; Jim Kaine; the Broken Reeds; the MacNeil, MacInnis, Nemis; and Meagher families; lots of local talented musical artists; lots of volunteers and food vendors. It's a friendly and entertaining atmosphere, and the members may have seen some unique apparel and some hats worn by many people. I encourage all members to check it out.

To Rankin MacInnis, we're proud of you. Keep living your dream

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DAL. CUPE STRIKE: LOW WAGES - RECOG.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, today is Day 21 of the strike of CUPE 3912, the 1,500 part-time faculty, teaching assistants, markers, and demonstrators at Dalhousie. The wages of part-time teachers, TAs, and related academic workers at Dal are a reputational black eye across the country for Dalhousie.

Sessional teachers at Dal make between \$5,200 and \$6,300 per four-month class. They're limited in the number of classes they may teach, which means that the maximum possible pay under the last collective agreement for the highest seniority sessional person teaching all three terms is less than \$32,000 a year. Sessional teachers are striking for pay at Dalhousie, this region's only U15 university, pay that will come up enough to meet just the average for part-time academic workers across Canada in general. Morale on the picket line continues to reflect the absolute reasonableness of this demand.

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

ORGANIZERS: WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN - THANKS

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, this year and last I was honoured to deliver white ribbons to the Legislature on behalf of the White Ribbon Campaign.

People are asked to wear the ribbon during 16 the Days of Activism to Eliminate Gender Based Violence, which runs from November 25th to Dec 10th. This represents the pledge "I will never commit, condone, nor remain silent about violence against women and girls." The white ribbon also serves as a reminder to us that on December 6, 1989, 14 females, most of them engineering students, were killed while going to classes at the École Polytechnique in Montreal.

In 1991, following this tragic event, the White Ribbon Campaign was started by men in Canada to work towards ending violence against women. It has become one of the largest men's anti-violence programs in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the organizers and my colleagues for their support of this important campaign. I also would like to thank the French Village Parish, who provided these white ribbons to the 55 members.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HOUSE LEADERS: COLLEGIALLY - THANKS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, every session, I like to just rise and recognize the two other House Leaders that I work with, which sometimes can be fun and sometimes not so much - always interesting, nonetheless. I think it's important we try our best to keep communication going between each other. I have a tremendous amount of respect for both of them.

I rise in my place today to recognize the Government House Leader and the NDP House Leader and thank them for putting up with me a little bit sometimes but thank them ultimately for their collegiality and their friendship.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

BOULET, MARCEL: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the performing arts community of Nova Scotia lost an important and much-loved member last week when Marcel Boulet passed away at the age of 51.

I first met Marcel when we were students in the Dalhousie Theatre Department. I remember with great fondness his performance of Father Flote in *Red Noses* in his graduating year. After he finished his acting training, he went right back to school and studied the technical side of theatre, and it is there that he mostly made his career.

A lifelong learner, he became certified in entertainment rigging and occupational health and safety. He worked with countless theatre, dance, and entertainment companies. Performers always knew that if Marcel was working on your show, you would be safe and in good hands.

A champion of workers in the industry, Marcel served as president of IACTE Local 680 and also secretary and president of IACTE Local 849 for several years. He also served several terms on the Occupational Health and Safety Committee of the Nova Scotia

Federation of Labour. His presence in and commitment to our community was profound, and he will be deeply missed by very many.

I send my condolences to his wife, Kim; his mother, Linda; and his whole family, and his many, many friends.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

SINGLETON, MANDY & CHAD: BUS. ASSISTANCE - THANKS

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend my good friends Mandy and Chad Singleton on being the entrepreneurs our small community needs. Both Mandy and Chad are hard-working individuals and the proud parents to two beautiful girls, Hayden and Quinn. Chad is the owner of OK Tire Windsor and Greenwood franchise locations, as well as a property owner through Q&H Holdings Limited, offering commercial leasing, and is a residential landlord.

Last spring, Mandy, owner of Purple Lilac Digital Media, created a shared community office space called The Hive on Gerrish. It was a brilliant idea because it gave people working from home a meeting space, with rental rates by the month, day, or even the hour. More recently, when our local and only laundromat closed, Mandy and Chad stepped up again and Chad purchased the old Windsor Wharf building, which will soon be the home to the Fluff & Fold Laundromat.

Mr. Speaker, please join me thanking Mandy and Chad for not only being outstanding entrepreneurs, but for being the kind, caring, good people they are.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

YAR. & ACAD. SHORES TOURISM ASSOC.: AWD. NOM. - CONGRATS.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Yarmouth and Acadian Shores Tourism Association has been nominated for the Tourism Industry Association of Canada's Floor 13 Business Event award for its work in hosting the Travel Media Association of Canada's conference this past year.

I would like to congratulate YASTA and its executive director Neil Mackenzie on being nominated for this prestigious award. Also, I thank him and YASTA's dedicated group of volunteers for always doing such an amazing job of promoting our beautiful region and all it has to offer, and the critical ferry connection that links Nova Scotia to one of the world's largest and most lucrative tourism markets.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

YOSHIDA, MEGUMI: ARTISTIC CONTRIBS. - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize an outstanding community member, Megumi Yoshida. Meg is a multi-disciplinary artist originally from Osaka, Japan. Her talents range from graphic design - I have worked with her as a colleague and freelance employer - to photography to drumming.

She is a self-taught experimental musician whom you will have seen on stages across the city in bands such as Bad Vibrations, Century Egg, Diamondtown, Dog Day, Not You, Shoulder Season, and The Reference Desk. She is an integral thread in the artistic fabric that makes Nova Scotia such a wonderful place to live in.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing Meg Yoshida for the many years of creativity she has given to our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

REGAN, WALTER N.: SACK. RIVERS ASSOC. SERV. - THANKS

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Walter N. Regan of Lower Sackville.

For the past 34 years, as a member of the Sackville Rivers Association, Walter Regan has dedicated his time and heart to the preservation of the Sackville River watershed. During that time, Walter served as SRA president for 22 years and is well-regarded and respected throughout Nova Scotia and beyond.

The mission statement of the Sackville Rivers Association is to restore, enhance, and protect the environmental health of the Sackville River watershed for present and future generations by providing river restoration, promoting recreational use, delivering educational programs, and encouraging stewardship.

I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in thanking Walter Regan for his determination and commitment to keeping our community's waterways clean and healthy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

GULLAGE, MARGARET : VOL. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise today to recognize Margaret Gullage and give her congratulations on winning the Central Region Volunteer Award at the Provincial Volunteer Awards.

Margaret is well known in Bedford as a long-time Guider and an all-round fantastic person, who is probably the most organized person I have ever met. She has also been a board member of the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and continues to support that particular organization. She has mentored many young people and ensured that they have a really good start as they head into adulthood.

I want to say congratulations to Margaret and honour her for her service to Bedford.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HOOPER-DIXON, DÉJÀ: ATHLETIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an amazing young person whom I've had the privilege to be around for all of their life. Déjà Hooper Dixon is a fierce, brilliant, athletic, hard-working, and beautiful soul.

From Day 1, Déjà was a very unique baby. The faces they would give were quite funny, and if they liked you, they liked you. Déjà and I butted heads many times throughout their young years because, as an adult, I'm used to being spoken to and Déjà wasn't having that. She had nothing to do with it until late in elementary school. In Grade 6, Déjà started to warm up to me.

Déjà as an athlete is a force to be reckoned with. She represented Nova Scotian women's flag football at UPEI in the eastern Canadian flag championship this Summer, and won the gold medal in the tough final game in Quebec, going undefeated throughout the tournament - as well as Football Nova Scotia's U16 Provincial Tackle Team.

Déjà was selected to represent Nova Scotia at Mount Allison and at the Atlantic Bowl at Acadia. I'd like all members to join me in celebrating this beautiful, fierce young person, Déjà Hooper Dixon.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

EMP. BEY. BARRS. CMTE.: MITTENS PGM. - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the Cheryls Cozy's Mittens Program led by the Empowering Beyond Barriers Committee.

This program began during the Winter of 2018-19, when the committee began giving away free mittens and hats in plastic bags by attaching them with yarn to streetlights in downtown Amherst. The project is named after the late Cheryl Lefler, the long-time treasurer of Empowering Beyond Barriers Committee. Cheryl had a big heart for the vulnerable people in our community.

There are now wooden boxes put up downtown that were made by high school students. Anyone needing anything can pick up items directly from the box, or items can be placed in the box for others to use.

I would like to thank the Empowering Beyond Barriers Committee and the late Cheryl Lefler for continuing to help those in need in our community.

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

BORDEN, CHARLES & EVELYN: 66TH WEDDING ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

DAVE RITCEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a loving couple on an incredible milestone. On August 28th of this past Summer, Charles and Evelyn Borden celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary.

The Bordens raised their nine children - six boys and three girls - as well as one of their grandchildren in a historically Black community in Truro known as The Marsh.

Charlie and Evie have both been retired for over 30 years and are the proud grandparents of 21 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren, and 3 great-great-grandchildren. Now in their nineties, Charlie and Evie were fortunate enough to be able to spend the day with many members of their loving extended family.

Congratulations to the Bordens on this beautiful milestone. May you be blessed with many, many more years of health and happiness together.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

WHITMAN, MAURA: *INTROSPECTION* ALBUM RELEASE - CONGRATS.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize and congratulate Maura Whitman on her debut album, *Introspection*.

Maura, who's from Herring Cove, penned a very personal album. Her most recent single, "Anxiety," reflects on her personal journey and path dealing with her own anxiety. Her album explores themes of self-discovery, personal growth, and mental health with an emphasis on loving yourself - a beautiful subject to sing about and celebrate.

Maura, I wish you all the success in this amazing journey. Your music is beautiful and inspirational.

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

MATSELL, RALPH: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a life well-lived. Ralph Matsell passed away a few days ago in Kentville at the age of 83.

Ralph was a dedicated partner to Theo, father to Lisa, Mark, and Rosemary and their partners, and loved his three grandchildren, Alex, Joshua, and Ivy.

For me, Ralph played that important role of an adult in the life of a teenager who needs an adult. He was both a very cool parent in his style of music and reading, but also modelled the expectations he had for his children and his extra children like me. He was a good model in how he took care of his health with food and exercise. He didn't preach, but made healthy choices look pretty good.

After high school, when I returned home to the Valley on holiday, an important part of that trip was making myself at home at Ralph's for a couple of days.

After working 35 years for Canada Post, Ralph kept up an amazing walking schedule for decades. Over the years, he loved all of the family weddings and gatherings for birthdays and holidays.

I ask all members to join me in extending our condolences to Ralph's family and friends.

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

JAMIESON, TANYA: PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMIN. AWD. - CONGRATS.

JOHN WHITE: Mr. Speaker, as a teacher myself, I've seen first-hand the impact great school administrators can have, and I'm privileged to say that I've worked with Ms. Tanya Jamieson.

As vice principal of Glace Bay High, she fosters a culture that helps students know they are cared for and believed in. On a daily basis, Ms. Jamieson makes sure that students receive the services they need to feel empowered and successful.

Ms. Jamieson earns the trust of students and families, yet she demands accountability. She is always willing to accommodate the individual need, but she is able to balance this against the impact on others.

Ms. Jamieson understands that everyone arrives daily with their own life experiences. She does everything she can in her power to make sure that these experiences do not negatively impact the school day.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in sending congratulations to Tanya Jamieson on receiving the 2022 Public School Administrator Award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

CAIN, VIOLA: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Viola Cain. She's from North Preston and she's a leader in faith and believes her gift from God was to support children and families.

Most recently, Viola was recognized by the Department of Community Services for 50 years of service fostering 135 children. A strong woman with a vision and a long-time member of the St. Thomas United Baptist Church and Ladies Auxiliary, she's a proud mother, grandmother, sister, auntie - just admired and loved within the community.

I further want to congratulate Ms. Viola Cain - which I haven't had the opportunity to tell you - for being nominated, and is one of the recipients of the Jubilee Award this year. I very much wanted to say congratulations. I would ask this House to congratulate Ms. Viola Cain.

If I may beg for a brief introduction.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston on another introduction.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I just wanted to thank Ms. Dolly Williams from East Preston and also Mr. Morton Simmonds for joining us here in QP. They're long-time members of the community and the Road to Economic Prosperity for African Nova Scotian Communities action plan.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, we welcome you to the Legislature and hope you enjoy your stay here.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

SYMS, LOUIS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Louis Syms. Louis is a man who gives so much to our community, many times quietly and not in the public eye. I just know that he's always there, participating and giving.

A few of the things I was able to dig up are his love for children and adults with physical and intellectual disabilities, where Louis has been a huge supporter and part of the Kinsmen. He takes these amazing people bowling a couple times a year for a night of laughter, bowling, and pizza. Pizza's a must, as well as prizes for each person.

Louis has tow trucks where you'll always see him part of every parade. He volunteers his trucks for children's birthday parties, and he's also a huge supporter of our three volunteer fire departments. Louis is a proponent with Mothers Against Drunk Driving - MADD - and you will often see Louis's trucks with smashed vehicles on display, reminding people to not drink and drive.

Please join me in thanking Louis Syms for his volunteerism and his love for our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

RECIPS.: QUEEN'S PLAT. JUB. MEDAL - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, I had the honour of presenting 15 residents of Cumberland North with Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal.

These individuals are representative of the diverse, caring communities that I have the privilege of serving in this House. They are everyday people from across Cumberland North whose names were submitted to our selection committee by their friends and neighbours who wanted to recognize them for what they have done and continue to do to make Cumberland North a better place to live: Dick Bristol, Ray Colson, Marian Durling, Charlotte Ferguson, Morris Hagg, Corey Hunter Chaisson, Sherri Kearney, Terri McKillop, Merrill Murray, Greg Nix, Carol O'Regan, Dwayne Ripley, Elizabeth Cooke Sumbu, Dorris Walton, and Michael Wilson of Amherst.

I ask all of you to join me in commending the Cumberland North medal winners and all those in your constituencies across the province who are being celebrated with these truly wonderful medals.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

SOC. OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Joseph Conference, Bridgewater. Their volunteer work, kindness, and caring is an invaluable support for those who are most vulnerable in Lunenburg County.

The organization's mission is one of service with love, respect, justice, and joy. Its Neighbours in Need program assists those who are in crisis with their rent, food, gas, power bills, home repairs, property taxes, medication, emergency housing, and more.

This incredible group of volunteers takes turns being on call for two weeks at a time. Some of these dedicated people have been volunteering with the organization for as long as 34 years. Requests for help have been on the rise following the challenges presented over the last . . .

[2:00 p.m.]

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

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Rule 43(1), I am making a motion for an emergency debate.

A Point-In-Time Count of the homeless population in HRM earlier this year found that 15 per cent were aged 60 or older. The senior homeless population is growing at an alarming rate. That same report found that of those who were first homeless in the past 12 months, 26 per cent were seniors. Seniors in this province are facing enormous difficulties as a result of the housing crisis.

In a province with skyrocketing rental housing prices, seniors are struggling to keep up. People aged 65 and older now represent 22 per cent of renter households, and they have the lowest household income among age groups of renters. Despite an average wait time of over two years, this government has no plans to build any new public housing units. As this sitting is coming to a close, it is clear that no business was going to be brought forward by the government to address this issue, and we will not have another chance to address this urgent question in the House before another cold Winter.

This issue requires immediate government action. Its urgency is apparent, amongst other places, in Bridgewater, where a group of 18 seniors is in immediate risk of homelessness by December after a change in the ownership of their assisted living home.

Therefore, I wish to move that the business of the House be set aside for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance. That matter is the clear and present emergency of seniors' housing and homelessness in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: Prior to the opening of today's sitting, I received from the honourable member for Halifax Chebucto a Notice of Intention as required by Rule 43(2)

to move for an emergency debate. Under Rule 43(4), I'm now required to issue a Speaker's Ruling to decide whether the matter is proper to be discussed for emergency debate.

SPEAKER'S RULING

There are two factors set out in Rule 43(4)(a). The first factor is the extent to which the matter concerns the administrative responsibilities of the government or could come within the scope of ministerial action. The second factor is whether the matter is likely to be debated by the House by any other means within reasonable time. I've considered both these factors.

Under the first factor, it's clear that seniors' housing and homelessness falls within the administrative responsibilities of government and could come within the scope of ministerial action. Under the second factor, there have been a number of bills introduced since the first session of this General Assembly began in the Fall 2021 that touch on the more general subject of housing and homelessness. A motion for emergency debate made earlier this session, on October 13, 2021, on the subject of homelessness and the housing crisis was dismissed in part on the basis of such bills.

Since then, both the government and numerous private members have continued to introduce bills that touch either directly or indirectly on the subject of homelessness and housing. Examples of bills addressing this topic include Bills No. 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 97, 110, 169, 183, 188, 221, 232, and 234. With limited exceptions, such as Bill No. 221 - the Youth Housing Strategy Act - which explicitly deal with specific aspects of housing and homelessness that do not relate to seniors - these bills are broad enough in scope to encompass seniors' housing and homelessness.

They are all viable means by which this topic might be raised in the House. Indeed, the subject of seniors' housing and homelessness has already been raised during debate on bills. For example, during second reading debate of Bill No. 5 - 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 Inclusionary Zoning for Affordable, Temporary, and Emergency Housing - earlier in this first session on October 13, 2021, the subject of seniors' housing and homelessness was raised at length by the honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

Accordingly, I find that the matter is not proper to be discussed within the meaning of Rule 43(4). There are other matters on the order paper which, under this matter, could be discussed. Therefore, the motion for an emergency debate is dismissed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The time is 2:05 p.m. We'll go until 2:55 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: COST OF LIVING MEASURES - CONSIDER

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this cost of living crisis is impacting low-income families in Nova Scotia, but it's also impacting working families as well. Yet this government has not indexed income assistance to inflation nor changed the income criteria for any of its critical supports, like home assistance grants as well.

This situation, this cost of living crisis, is not only going to affect individuals, it's going to impact our economy and potentially tax revenue to the province.

Considering that, my question to the Premier: Will he consider indexing income assistance to inflation and changing the income criteria so that more Nova Scotians can access critical supports during this very difficult time?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important topic and that is the cost of living crisis that is striking Nova Scotia, but really, the entire country and North America in so many ways.

We know that families are under pressure. We see that every day. We hear that every day as well. As a government, we'll continue to look for ways to support Nova Scotians. We're continuing to look at possibly indexing some of the programs. HARP is one that we're looking at. There are a number of other initiatives that we're looking at. We'll look for ways to support Nova Scotians. We know this cost of living crisis is devastating for many families.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The CBC released an article yesterday about the Crawleys, and I'll table that, which states that each month they are seeing money in their bank account dwindle as bills increase. The Crawleys are part of a growing class of working-class and middle-income class Nova Scotians who are unable to access any means of government support but who are having a very difficult time making ends meet, supporting their families and contributing to the economy.

What is the Premier going to do? What concrete actions will he take before the end of the session to ensure that families like the Crawleys get the support they need to get through this Winter and continue to contribute to our economy?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we know this situation is impacting families as we talked about the inflation that is having a big impact on families. We've taken a number of steps. We're looking for steps that are sustainable in the long term. Members will know about the initiatives we made around CCAs, around ECEs, the family tax benefits, work

on affordable child care. There are a number of initiatives that we are taking, and we'll continue to look for other initiatives we can do to support Nova Scotians.

This is a global phenom and it's impacting people all over. There are some things that are out of our control. There are some things that are in our control. Of course, that is why, on this side of the House, we're standing up against the Liberal carbon tax. That is something that will impact the cost of living to Nova Scotian families in a big way and it's not necessary.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The PC caucus has certainly postured when it comes to the carbon tax, but they've actually done nothing to negotiate a better model for Nova Scotians to keep more money in their pockets and that has become clear.

Meanwhile, Jason and Sharalene Crawley are trying to make it in this province. These are actually working-class families. Jason is a bookkeeper, working as a chartered accountant, and Sharalene is an LPN, but like so many other Nova Scotians who find themselves in the working middle class of our province, they are having a hard time making ends meet during this very difficult period.

I'll table a quote from Jason where he says that, "We're in a section of middle-class people, and there's a lot of us, where we make too much gross . . . that we don't get access to any of these extra supports."

Mr. Speaker, families like the Crawleys need the supports. Can the Premier please commit today to expand the income threshold so that more Nova Scotians can access these critical supports during this difficult time?

THE PREMIER: As we've stated, we'll continue to look at these thresholds. We know that some of them are in need of being updated, for sure. We're doing that analysis to look for ways that are sustainable to support Nova Scotia families. That's what our focus is: making sure we can support families in sustainable ways for the long term, to get through this crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to be very clear and emphatic on this: There is nobody on this side of the House who thinks a carbon tax is necessary. There's nobody on this side of the House who wants a carbon tax. I encourage the members opposite that if they are in agreement that a carbon tax is not necessary and if they are in agreement that a carbon tax will cause undue hardship for Nova Scotians, then they should stand up and say so. Join us in saying that for Nova Scotians.

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

PREM.: INCOME SUPP. THRESHOLDS - INCREASE

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The price of heating oil in Halifax is now at \$2.14 a litre. Mr. Speaker, 40 per cent of Nova Scotians heat their homes with furnace oil, and service providers are clear about what this means: People will go cold this Winter. Working families are feeling the pinch, and this government could help by raising the income cut-off for support.

Is this government prepared to leave working and middle-income families in the cold this Winter?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we know that the cost of home heating oil, as the member referenced, is certainly very high in HRM. It's even higher in the rural parts of this province. We know that it's having a devastating effect on so many families - 200,000 homes in Nova Scotia heat with home heating oil. We're desperately concerned about the impact on those families this coming Winter, for sure.

To the member's very specific question, yes, we are looking at what we can do around programs like HARP to support Nova Scotian families. We'll continue to do that work and look for ways to support Nova Scotians. We know it's important at this time.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, the thermostat will dip below zero any day now. It's November, and with all due respect, now is not the time for looking. Now is the time for action. Targets don't work if the thresholds are too low. Right now we know, and it sounds like the government knows, that the thresholds are too low. The Premier says that the government is providing targeted supports. These targeted supports are leaving people behind. When will the thresholds be raised?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, look, we know there's more work to be done for sure. But I disagree with the characterization that we're not doing anything. Go through the list of important initiatives that are supporting Nova Scotians. They might not matter to some people in this House, but I will tell you, they matter to us, and they matter to those Nova Scotians who are benefiting from them.

There's more to do, of course. That's the job of government. We will look for ways to support Nova Scotians that are sustainable and help them in the long term. That's what our focus is on.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, unlike other provinces, Nova Scotia's income supports are not indexed to inflation. We all know what is happening in the world of inflation. We have been talking about it all session. They don't adjust as costs rise.

I'm going to offer another quote from Mr. Crawley, who was mentioned earlier. He volunteers at Souls Harbour, and he said “. . . it's very, very humbling where I can go up

to chef Ryan at Souls Harbour and say, ‘I hate to ask you, but I need a bowl of soup, too, because I can’t afford groceries.’”

Winter is coming. This government’s support scheme is leaving too many families behind. The time for looking is done. When will we see action?

THE PREMIER: Nova Scotians will continue to see action. I think we need to be clear on that - the programs that have come forward. We have put forward a number of programs to support Nova Scotians. I agree that there is more work to be done, and I commit to doing that work to make sure that we’re supporting Nova Scotians in the best way that government possibly can.

We can’t do it all, Mr. Speaker. There should be no expectation of that. But we can support Nova Scotians through the time of need, and that’s what our focus will continue to be on.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

MAH: HOUSING CRISIS - ADDRESS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I’ll remind the Premier that the Official Opposition actually voted with the government’s resolution to oppose a federal carbon tax. I’ll remind the House - what good did it do if you don’t have an Executive Council that’s actually going to get to the table to negotiate an alternative with the federal government? It’s no good. So for the Premier to continue to blame the Opposition parties for his mismanagement of this situation and the cost of living challenge that we have in Nova Scotia, I think, is absolutely ridiculous.

You don’t have to look far to see that the situation in the cost of living crisis is getting worse. We have tents popping up not just in Halifax - we have homeless people living in every community across this province - in communities we never even dreamed this happening in.

We have homelessness and a housing crisis - when is the Premier going to respond to that so that these people have shelter as we head into Winter?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Look, my apologies. I’m just going to ask you to repeat the question, because I wasn’t really listening. I know that doesn’t happen very often, but can it be done again?

ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, temperatures are dropping. We have homeless encampments that are popping up, not just in Halifax, but in rural communities across this province. We are heading into a very desperate time for a lot of people. When will this

government have an answer to the homelessness situation? Will we help these people before the real cold Winter months hit this province?

[2:15 p.m.]

JOHN LOHR: Thank you to the member for the question. Again, my apologies. There are a number of things that we are doing. We're investing across the province in organizations like The Portal in Kentville that we've provided funding to, and I believe your government provided funding to them as well. The past government did.

We're looking forward to The Overlook opening in Metro here, in HRM, very soon, which will provide housing for 60 homeless people. I believe that will open in November. It's November now, so we're expecting it to be open very, very soon. We've done that in partnership with the Affordable Housing Commission - Jim Graham, right? Those are just two things that we have been doing. There's more.

ZACH CHURCHILL: We've seen a lot of back-patting in this session of the Legislature by the government while the situation gets obviously worse by the week. Feed Nova Scotia has seen more people access their food services this year than ever before. The housing wait-list is larger than it's ever been in Nova Scotia; there are currently now 6,000 people that are on that wait-list. The number of people experiencing homelessness in Halifax alone has doubled, and it's expanded across Nova Scotia. There are currently close to 700 people in Halifax experiencing homelessness, and I'll table that.

Some of these people are children. We've got children who are living in a very precarious situation. Winter is coming, we're heading into cold temperatures, and we have hundreds - if not thousands - of Nova Scotians without shelter. When will this government act?

JOHN LOHR: Again, I will say that we continue to act, and we know there's more to do. Clearly, there's more to do, but we continue to act across the province. We recognize it's not only a problem in HRM, it's a problem in every municipality across the province. It's a major concern to us, and through our contacts with these homeless individuals, through the Department of Community Services, we continue to work on that.

There's funding that we've done for a number of community organizations, and we will continue to do that. We are deeply concerned, and I would share the member's concern about homeless children. We know that shows up in many different ways, so we will continue to do more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

DCS: CHILD EMERG. PLACEMENTS - CLARIFY

ANGELA SIMMONDS: When the Department of Community Services deems it necessary to place a child in a designated place of safety, they have complex needs to consider. However, there are limited options in terms of providers for these places of safety. According to a FOIPOP, which I'll table, in the past calendar year, the department has spent over \$29 million to house children and youth in emergency placements. To the Premier: How much of the \$29 million is paid to private and for non-profit entities?

HON. JILL BALSER: As acting minister for the Minister of Community Services, this will be something I'll have to take back to her and provide the member with a thoughtful answer in reply.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: A report that I've tabled from the Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine and the IWK shows that there's overrepresentation of marginalized communities in these places of safety. I'll quote directly from the report: The overrepresentation of racialized and Indigenous people in places of safety reflects systemic racism within Nova Scotia's provincial institutions.

Mr. Speaker, what is this government doing to address the broken child welfare system that is disproportionately impacting marginalized communities?

JILL BALSER: This will be something that I take back to the minister in her absence. Even just thinking about the safety factor, I know that my Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, when we think of safety, we're thinking of it as a wholesome approach. We want to make sure that, in this case, individuals in care are safe and protected.

Again, I will definitely take that back to the minister and make sure that the member gets an appropriate response.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston on a new question.

DCS: NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS LOSING TAX BENEFIT - ADDRESS

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Due to the legislative inconsistency between the federal and provincial governments, when children are temporarily removed from care under the Children and Family Services Act, non-custodial parents are losing their child tax benefit.

Mr. Speaker, this is the exact wrong time for this to be happening. Very often, temporary orders under the Department of Community Services have certain conditions for parents to regain custody of their children - conditions that cannot be met without the material resources.

Would the Premier commit to reviewing this situation and working with the federal government to ensure that parents subject to the Department of Community Services aren't being penalized in a way that ultimately hurts the children and families?

HON. JILL BALSER: I wasn't sure if someone else had stepped up. I thank the member; this is really important. I do recall the minister bringing this to our attention as something that we do need to look at. Again, I'll make sure that the minister is aware that this question was asked and take it back to her. We will make a commitment to look into this.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I appreciate the response. I hope with my final question that there might be an actual answer, but I do appreciate that they're going to take it back to the minister.

Speaking of children in difficult situations, this government committed in the minister's mandate letter to a five-year target for the reduction of childhood poverty in this province. This mandate letter also commits the minister to a timeline for completion of this task. Mr. Speaker, we know that childhood poverty is unacceptable and that our marginalized communities suffer the most. In Sipekne'katik First Nation, the child poverty rate is as high as 73.3 per cent. I can table that. Is this government or the Premier going to provide the House with an update on this target now that we are about a third of the way into the mandate?

JILL BALSER: Of course, where the minister is absent at this point in time, I know that we can't address the actual timeline that the member is looking for. I do know that the minister has compassion and cares and definitely is dedicated to reducing poverty within this province. It is within her mandate letter, and I know upon her return, she'll definitely be able to provide an answer and the timeline that the member is looking for.

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

DHW: DOCTOR SHORTAGE IN CAPE BRETON - ADDRESS

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Since this government was elected, the doctor wait-list for Cape Breton has grown by over 5,000 people. Since April of this year, only four family doctors have been hired for the Eastern Zone, the lowest number across all health zones, while 18 vacancies remain.

More than half of the people added to the wait-list this month in Cape Breton reported that their doctor has either closed their practice or retired. Meanwhile, other provinces are becoming more competitive in doctor recruitment by offering higher pay.

My question: When will Cape Bretoners get the doctors they need?

HON. BRIAN COMER: We remain deeply committed to improving access to primary health care. It's certainly a complex and long-standing issue in the system. We had recruited a record number of doctors last year and we are guaranteeing every nurse a job upon graduation. This is also a great initiative that I would have loved to have seen in my time working in the sector. We continue to work diligently at this, Mr. Speaker.

KENDRA COOMBES: I hope we're working on retention, as well, Mr. Speaker.

Cape Breton has a serious shortage of specialists and is seeing doctors pack up and leave faster than this government is replacing them. This Summer our office heard from a Cape Breton woman who had to spend nearly \$2,000 in travel costs to access a surgery only available in Halifax.

This government has no program in place to reimburse this kind of travel within the province, which is an increasingly common reality for Cape Bretoners. Other jurisdictions have programs that pay for medical travel inside the province. Will this government help Cape Bretoners cover the costs of accessing care?

BRIAN COMER: I have had situations in my own portfolio where I have helped people get reimbursed, depending on the specific client situation.

In regard to specialists' services, I had the opportunity to make a very positive announcement yesterday in Cape Breton. We have two new psychiatrists actually coming from the United Kingdom, which I think is great.

There are also many avenues, Mr. Speaker, to access primary health care including mobile clinics, virtual care, and pharmacists who continue to expand on their scope of practice. There's certainly much more work to do and we remain committed to that work.

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

MAH: SUPP. FOR HOMELESS INADEQ. - ACKNOWLEDGE

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, we continue to urge the government and all Nova Scotians to take homelessness in the province very seriously. Unfortunately, the current supports have not been adequate, and everyone in Nova Scotia can see the drastic increases of those experiencing homelessness. We can see it in the numbers. Over the last year, those experiencing homelessness have doubled in Halifax alone. I can table that. That's more than 690 people facing homelessness.

Considering that those experiencing homelessness in Halifax have doubled in the last year, will the Premier acknowledge that the current levels of supports are not enough and that much more needs to be done?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I would like to say that homelessness is a concern for all of us in this Legislature. We're very deeply concerned about it too. What we're seeing in the increase in homelessness is the fact that the most vulnerable in our society are the least able to adapt when costs rise - housing costs, affordability, all of those things we're attempting to address through adding - basically, the fundamental way is to have more homes for people to live in. We are trying to address it in a number of different ways, through my department and other departments. We are deeply concerned, and we continue, and remain, to be concerned and we will do more.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, we know that more and more people are experiencing homelessness because of the cost of living. The inflationary pressures and the inability to access support mean that more people are finding it impossible to keep a roof over their heads. It's clear that more support is needed. We know that the government is not planning to build any new affordable housing units, as per some of the announcements that we've listened to recently. My question is to the Premier: Can we talk about something tangible in terms of addressing homelessness that the government may be doing in the foreseeable future?

JOHN LOHR: I will point out to the Rapid Housing Initiative, which we put \$16.6 million into to provide, I believe - well, for example, in New Glasgow, 36 units in Coady's Place; in the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre here, 21 units in the city; Adsum for Women and Children's Sunflower, 25 units; and the North End Community Health Centre - we also invested \$1.6 million there.

We're investing in that. We've provided inclusionary zoning to all municipalities across the province. We're working on a provincial needs assessment, which was a recommendation from the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission for both - and also for the African Nova Scotian community as well as right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, we're working on a number of different areas and more than that.

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

MAH: CHILDREN HOMELESS - ADDRESS

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely devastating that children are now going homeless due to this cost of living crisis. The South Shore Open Doors Association found that in their October tracking, there are 93 children experiencing homelessness in Lunenburg and Queens Counties alone - 93 children. I think we can all agree that this is an experience no child should have to face. Some of these children are living in tents. To the Premier: What changes is this government making to ensure that these children can get out of the cold and into a home?

[2:30 p.m.]

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that the member is right. We're very, very concerned. I've heard my colleague the Minister of Community Services express her deep concern about those numbers as well. We recognize that this is not only happening in that community but in other communities as well. As a government, we are working very hard through the Department of Community Services and through all the different ways we've invested in homelessness in trying to help, but we know there's more to do; we recognize that.

We recognize that this is part of the housing crisis that we have in this province. That's why we're working very hard to increase supply, which is one part of it, and also to provide more assistance to these individuals, as I mentioned in the previous answer.

LORELEI NICOLL: To use the words the minister just used - these are children. They are least able to adapt to what's going on currently.

In the emergency Summer session, we asked the minister to act on this issue when there were 25 children experiencing homelessness in Lunenburg and Queens Counties. She assured the House she'd make all the necessary investments. I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, in three short months the number of children experiencing homelessness in this area of the province has nearly quadrupled. We know that there are hundreds of children experiencing homelessness province-wide. Something needs to change - and change now. It is incumbent on all of us in this place to do better. We cannot accept that there are children living in tents. This is an emergency.

My question to the Premier is: Does he accept that and is he going to take immediate action?

JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, again to the member, I would say that this is a matter of concern for this side of the House, as well as that side of the House. We all share this. All Nova Scotians share this concern.

We have worked with community groups around the province and housing groups around the province in different ways to fund different things. One of the first things we did when we came into government was the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission report quick-start initiatives which recommended quick starts, \$25 million. We put in \$35 million at that point because there were some opportunities. Some of that involved construction of new housing. Some of that construction is just under way. It takes two years so we're in an issue of supply, which is also part of it. We also have an issue of affordability. We recognize that. We are concerned. We have acted and we will continue to act more.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

MAH: HOUSING FOR DOM. VIOL. SUFFERERS - ADDRESS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: The housing crisis is having a devastating impact on women experiencing domestic violence. The executive director of Alice House stated that “potentially the only option is to go to a crisis shelter” but those crisis shelters “are also often at maximum capacity.” I will table that. No woman should have to stay in a domestic violence situation because they cannot find affordable housing. Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable. My question to the Premier is: What does he have to say to a woman making these impossible choices, due to the lack of affordable housing in this province?

HON. JOHN LOHR: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and say absolutely that women fleeing domestic violence is a massive concern to us - a heartbreaking one, in reality. We are concerned about it. Many of the things we’ve done I’ve mentioned already - the Rapid Housing Initiative and different programs we have. All of them - I mean we ask ourselves, do we need to do more? Yes, we need to do more. Can we do more? Yes, we will do more.

We are working hard on that and I know that in partnership with the federal government, we have programs coming down the pipeline that are in progress to address this issue as well, which in my department we look forward to announcing when they actually arrive, but they are coming and we’ve been talking about that.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, even in Clayton Park West we are having women being offered a tent and they are experiencing domestic violence. This is a case that we’ve come across. The Executive Director of Alice House also stated that creating more affordable housing for families, and for women in particular, could be life-saving, and I will repeat, live-saving. My question to the minister is: Will the minister - I actually will move it to the Premier - Will the Premier commit, and I repeat, commit, to making an investment needed today to ensure that housing does not leave women in domestic violence situations?

JOHN LOHR: As the members know, and all members of the House know, we’ve made nearly \$100 million investment in the last year in affordable housing, on all different fronts. We annually make almost \$100 million investment in partnership with our federal and provincial government, in public housing. These are massive investments we’re making. We are constantly looking at everything. We are asking ourselves, is this the right way to do this or can we do it better?

I know the answer is that we can do better. We have a needs assessment under way right now across the province to look at what the needs are. That will inform our activity going forward, just like the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission report informed our activity for the last year. We will continue to do more. We recognize these . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EECD: GRANTS WITHHELD FROM DAYCARES - EXPLAIN

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Last Friday the minister was asked about the withholding of parent fee reduction grants from child care operators. The minister said, and I'll quote: "Operators are receiving their parent fee reductions, absolutely, 100 per cent." I'll table that.

What we do know is that these amounts are absolutely, 100 per cent, not being received. Daycares have not received their November amounts and have been told that they cannot apply for reimbursements until after November 14th, and only after they sign on to the new funding agreement.

These child care operators have been struggling to keep their doors open, and now they're saying they can no longer pay their employees. How does the minister plan to prevent more inevitable closures?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I thank the member opposite for an opportunity to correct misinformation that has been floating around that seems to keep resurfacing. I would like to read from the QIG operator grant guide that was provided to assist with these transitions - QIG funding for the period of October 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, was provided to operators:

"As part of the process to move to funding based on actuals, operators will be able to retain the full Q3 historical QIG payment, despite new funding for wage scales effective November 1, 2022. This will support operators with necessary funding to pay wages and operating expenses" - including fee reductions - "as they transition to the new reporting model."

THE SPEAKER: I would ask the minister if she would table that as well.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I would like to think that the operators would have that manual, but as we know, there's not a lot of clarity. I want to share an excerpt from a letter our office received. A daycare operator in Antigonish said that the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, ". . . lied to the house and to the people" about the parent fee reduction grants . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. That's unparliamentary language whether it's a quote or not.

SUZY HANSEN: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I'll retract that. I'll also table it. Despite what the minister told this House, this operator reports that centres have not received their November funding. This is not just one centre experiencing challenges. A media report from yesterday stated at least 28 centres . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

SUZY HANSEN: I hope the minister can clarify what happened here - were her statements intentionally misleading, or were they . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the member for Halifax Needham to retract the fact that she said that the minister was misleading. That is definitely unparliamentary. The word "misleading" is unparliamentary. I'll show it to you in the book here if you wish.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I will retract that, with respect to you. Could the minister clarify this?

BECKY DRUHAN: As I believe I said last week, the fact that the Opposition keeps repeating something doesn't mean it's true. I can assure the public and operators . . . (Interruptions)

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

BECKY DRUHAN: I can assure the public and operators that funding has continued to flow and will be available. I will also say, though, that this transformation is challenging. We know that. This is a five-year shift, and we are fundamentally changing the nature of child care from an individually operated system that is funded by parents to something that is publicly funded and available to support all communities. It's not easy. We understand, and we are supporting our operators.

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

EECD: PARENT FEE REDUCTIONS - CLARIFY

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Keeping along the lines of this questioning with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, a clarification that the QIG funding that she read from is not the parent fee reductions. These are two separate things. I also want to table the statement that the minister made in last week's House sitting where she said, "Operators are receiving their parent fee reductions, absolutely, 100 per cent."

Since the minister made that statement here in the House, I received numerous emails, text messages, phone calls, Facebook messages which I'm happy to table as well.

It's not the Opposition saying it, but daycare operators stating in writing that they have not received their November parent fee reductions.

My question is simply: Can the minister explain the disconnect?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I would say we encourage any operators who have questions about this - because we know it's complex, we know this shift is a big change for them - rather than reaching out to the media or to MLAs opposite, I suggest they reach out to the department because we can provide support and information . . . (Interruption).

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

BECKY DRUHAN: The department has been working very hard to communicate with operators - multiple sector calls, multiple individual calls, multiple written communications including this guide, which is complex but very helpful. I look forward tonight to having sector calls with our for-profit and our not-for-profit operators to help discuss and navigate this complex change. This is a huge and important change for Nova Scotia families, and it is a big shift. We know it makes people nervous, but we're. . . (Interruption).

PATRICIA ARAB: In April, daycare operators and the department came to a funding agreement. This agreement ensured that daycare operators would be receiving their parent fee reduction grant on November 1st. This particular funding which, as I've tabled, numerous daycare operators have not received, is what many of them rely on to pay their employees and keep their daycares running.

We already have a shortage of seats within our province. We can't afford to lose more daycare operators. Families, if not our operators, need to be assured that their children will have spaces for them to go to. So my question on November 8th: Is the minister ready to commit to releasing those parent fee reductions today?

BECKY DRUHAN: As I've explained in multiple questions before, operators have received funding and they will continue to receive funding. I can't emphasize enough how big a shift this is. We understand that it's complex, and we understand that it's a change. Let me remind the members opposite that we are shifting to a system that is a funded system to support parents to be able to better afford child care - down to \$10 a day. We've already reduced fees by 25 per cent. Our operators are being supported with that.

We are also increasing wages for our ECEs, adding \$75 million a year to the tune of \$100 million a year total to support our ECEs to be better compensated, and we are working with our operators to support them through this complex change.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

MAH: PUBLIC HOUSING NEED - RECTIFY

BRAEDON CLARK: To return to the issue of housing here, just this week, Prince Edward Island released its capital budget for the upcoming year. Very interesting in one respect: it includes a historic investment in public housing. Over \$60 million to directly fund public housing construction, 365 new units. I'll table that.

We have an unprecedented number of people living on the streets, living in tents in this province, and they are certainly not going to be able to afford the vast majority of apartments that are going up in the city or across this province.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Why is P.E.I. - a province more than five times smaller than Nova Scotia - building more public housing units than we are?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I'd like to thank the member for the question and say that we, annually, are investing \$100 million every year in public housing. That's part of the annual budget. We continue beyond that to invest - nearly \$100 million in the last year in housing across the province and in many different ways. I'm very proud of that. I know there's more to do.

We've invested in a program to maintain 300-and-some in five different buildings here in Halifax called CHAP - Community Housing Acquisition Program. This Summer, we funded the Housing Trust of Nova Scotia. We assisted them in purchasing these naturally occurring affordable units.

We will continue to work across the housing spectrum, helping people, helping Nova Scotians - thousands and thousands of them - maintain their homes.

BRAEDON CLARK: With respect to the minister, there is a big difference between maintaining and building new housing. We are doing no building here in this province.

People are experiencing homelessness on the streets right now, in parks across the province. They have no place to live, and the problem is getting significantly worse under this government. New Brunswick has committed \$102 million to build close to 400 units - I will table that. This government has refused to answer why we are not doing the same.

I would like to ask the minister: Why is this government allowing the homelessness crisis to grow, and taking no action to build public housing, and to give people a safe, secure, and affordable place to live?

JOHN LOHR: The truth is if you were to ask me when should this have started, we should have started three years ago or four years ago. We're in a housing crisis now.

[2:45 p.m.]

Last year we invested \$22 million for 374 affordable houses in Mount Hope-Southdale and that's under construction so it's under way. We've committed to a cross range of affordability. We're spending millions of dollars to keep it. In fact, last week we announced an upgrade of \$5.3 million to help seniors and vulnerable people stay in their own homes through our home repair program, which we realized was oversubscribed. That's for roofs and furnaces, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic

FTB: COST OF LIVING SUPPORT - IMPLEMENT

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, food inflation continues to hover around 10 per cent. We know that means that Nova Scotians have less on their plates as a result. The Premier doesn't have to look too far outside of his own community, where there have been 1,276 trips to the food bank in the last year alone because people do not have enough money to feed themselves and their families. To the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board: People across Nova Scotia need cost of living support - why haven't they seen it?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, we have provided targeted support. When I think of food - look at food, fuel, grain, and all those things that are being affected by the price of fuel. We can see the extreme reaction in the marketplace from the invasion of Ukraine. Fuel is the chief component in petrochemicals and petrochemicals are the chief component in fertilizers. You have a part of the world that's the breadbasket of the world in terms of grain. All of these things are rising in price and now what's going to happen is the federal Liberals are going to raise a carbon tax and tax all of those things, raising their prices even further.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll remind the minister that he is the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board for Nova Scotia, not Ukraine. This minister continues to have his hands on the levers of the finances of Nova Scotia and yet they refuse to do anything for working class Nova Scotians. Last week, the Minister of Community Services stated that the Opposition is against the food bank. Mr. Speaker, if you ask any food bank, they'd prefer not to exist.

The record number of people using food banks is unsustainable. This government is choosing to support food banks because they are not supporting people. I'll remind this government: How many working-class people have enough hours in the day to go to a food bank?

We as MLAs across party lines have a duty to strive toward a future where Nova Scotians do not have to rely on food banks to feed themselves and their children. What

steps is this Minister of Finance and Treasury Board making here in Nova Scotia to ensure that this happens?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, this is a cross-government effort. We've heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing talk about all the supports to get people housed by increasing the supply of housing and providing rental supplements to help people attain housing. We have direct supports for seniors and for children in the province. It's cross-government supports.

The members are right to raise this concern, because there are a lot of people hurting out there. We continue to listen, and we will continue to act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: IWK OVERCROWDING - ADDRESS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, we are hearing concerns from parents and health care professionals alike about emergency department overcrowding at the IWK.

This past weekend, numbers at the IWK emergency department reached a record high of 200 visits, nearly double the levels from this time last year. Parents have turned to social media to describe lengthy wait-times - some as high as 15 hours. In the past week both the Chief of Pediatrics at the IWK and the Chief of Emergency Department have raised concerns to local news outlets warning that, "The health-care system will become unsafe if it gets stretched too much more, which none of us wants." I'll table that.

Why are our health care leaders having to work so hard to get this government's attention?

HON. BRIAN COMER: We're certainly aware of the increased pressures in our health care system, especially with the IWK. It's certainly an issue with RSV and other sorts of respiratory illnesses that have peaked a little bit early this year.

Having experienced the system myself with a young child, I can say that the care is certainly tremendous at the IWK. I certainly thank them for everything they're doing. We will continue to support them.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Earlier this year, the Minister of Health and Wellness suggested that the surging emergency numbers were due to "a number of people who have never experienced a child being sick because they have toddlers who were born during COVID-19." I'll table that.

We know that parents aren't waiting for 10-plus hours in a crowded ER without good cause. One-third of all IWK Health Centre emergency visits are triaged as having

high risk for loss of limb or functions or signs of a serious problem. Many families don't have alternate means of accessing care.

Mr. Speaker, my question is: When will families get the pediatric emergency care they need?

BRIAN COMER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for an important question. I think it's always important to know that within our health care system, within the IWK there is a triaging system in place. Anyone who needs urgent care will always receive it, especially a sick child. I certainly know that clinicians are definitely doing the best they can. We'll continue to monitor the situation very closely.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

DHW: PERIOD POVERTY - ADDRESS

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, people across the province are facing extraordinary pressures when it comes to the cost of living crisis. Period poverty has continued to be an issue that many women across Nova Scotia face. This has gotten even worse during this cost of living crisis. My question to the Premier is: Will he commit to increasing funding and access to menstrual products across the province?

HON. JILL BALSER: Thank you to the member opposite for this important question. Again, as acting minister, this is an important issue, and we want to make sure that women across this province have access to menstrual products. We know that this issue has been raised from a labour perspective. I know the minister would be interested in knowing that this was raised, and we'll definitely take it back to her, upon her return, for further discussion.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, in 2019 the previous government made menstrual products available for free in schools, from Grades 4 to 12. I was there at the announcement, very proud of that. My question to the Minister of Advanced Education is: When will this government commit to providing free menstrual products for people in community colleges and universities? It is an idea for you.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Thank you for that question; that is important. As a husband, as the father of a daughter, I do understand the importance of that. That is certainly something I will take back as part of a discussion. It is a new idea that has been presented to me since I have been Minister of Advanced Education.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FTB: HIGH GROCERY COSTS - ADDRESS

FRED TILLEY: While Nova Scotians struggle to feed themselves and their families, major grocers are making record profits. It's easy to call the cost of living a global crisis but perhaps it could also be an issue of some corporate greed. It was reported last week that Loblaws cleared \$436 million in profit and Sobeys cleared \$56 million in profit. I'll table that. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is: What does the Premier have to say to Nova Scotians whose wallets and fridges are empty while corporate grocers are filling theirs?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I think the member might be dipping into more federal competition legislation, perhaps. There are no tools we have here at the provincial level to control activities - and I won't expound on them, maybe the member will in his follow-up question. At the end of the day there's not something we can go and target grocers in this specific instance and say, what are you doing there? We just don't have that ability.

FRED TILLEY: They may not have the ability to dictate what grocers do but they have the ability to help Nova Scotians. That should happen right now. While food bank visits are at a record high, Sobeys and Loblaws are making record profits. It would be understandable for food costs to be so high if it was caused solely by supply chain issues and the invasion in Ukraine. But we're seeing major grocers' desire to increase profits to their shareholders as a driver of food inflation in this country and province. In fact, the Competition Bureau Canada announced last week that it has launched an investigation into price fixing and other anti-competitive behaviour. I'll table that.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: What action will this government take to hold these grocers accountable and reduce the cost of food for struggling Nova Scotians?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this is a question that is difficult to answer.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 212.

Bill No. 212 - Public Utilities Act (amended).

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 212, the Public Utilities Act amendments, power rates and profits, now be read a third time and do pass.

There's been a lot of discussion about affordability in this House, and rightly so. We know that Nova Scotians are having a hard time making ends meet. We know that high global fuel prices are the main cause, and we're taking action to help where we can. Through Bill No. 212, we're capping power rates to help cushion the impacts of high fuel prices for Nova Scotians, and we're limiting Nova Scotia Power's profit. Now is not the time to seek higher profits.

Every other company in Nova Scotia is doing what it has to do through this hard time. We expect no different from Emera and Nova Scotia Power. We've already helped reduce the fuel cost by giving some relief from greenhouse gas requirements. We will continue to look for more solutions on fuel stability and costs, but at the end of the day, fuel is one unavoidable cost that ratepayers may need to pay.

We are not restricting the NSUARB on their decisions related to fuel costs. We're saying that if they choose to raise power rates on non-fuel costs like operations and maintenance, they have to limit it to a maximum of 1.8 per cent over two years, and that revenue must be used to improve the reliability of the power services to all Nova Scotians. It's not going into profits. It's not going into pockets. Any increase on the non-fuel side of the equation is for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.

If the NSUARB chooses 1.8 per cent, that's about \$25 million to \$30 million more for Nova Scotia Power to invest in reliability. That is enough for the 60 new utility positions that they've been talking about. We haven't prevented them from coming to the NSUARB with proposals on any capital expenditures.

Everyone knows that operating and capital budgets are two different things. The cap on rates is on the operating side. There are no restrictions that we've imposed on capital projects. They can continue to make the necessary investments to get off coal and meet our climate change goals.

[3:00 p.m.]

Nova Scotia Power made unprecedented profits in recent years. They can invest some of that money into power services for ratepayers that are not only reliable and affordable but also clean and green. Ultimately, that is how we get ourselves out of this vicious cycle of Nova Scotians being at the mercy of global fuel costs: reaching our climate change goals; generating electricity from renewables; finding made-in-Nova Scotia solutions that lower our energy bills, protect our environment, and create green jobs right here at home.

That's how we create a bright, sustainable future for Nova Scotia, and Nova Scotians will have a voice in how we get there. That's why we created the Performance Partnership Advisory Table. It will bring Nova Scotians together to provide advice on performance standards and penalties.

Protecting Nova Scotia ratepayers is what this bill is about. I know there are some who disagree with our method, and I want to be clear that I do value the role of the NSUARB. This is a temporary measure for affordability for Nova Scotians that gives the NSUARB the tools they need at this particular point in time to ensure that Nova Scotians pay the lowest cost possible for electricity.

For the next two years, we as a government are controlling what we can control, and we expect Nova Scotia Power to control what they can control.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I'll keep my comments brief. The last part of that speech is where I'd like to see some more information in terms of when the increases will end up coming to Nova Scotians and ratepayers. The minister did say that this will control rates for two years, but what's the impact in the long term for rates? We have a number of people like the Consumer Advocate - an unbiased representer at the Law Amendments Committee - who have concerns, and we have our utility that has expressed concerns.

We do see elements from a bill that we tabled a year ago that would limit the profits of Nova Scotia Power. We proposed that, so we thank the government for ensuring that the profit margin couldn't be increased. That's something that should have been approved a year ago - before the hearing has taken place. We have questions of whether 1.8 per cent is the appropriate amount to restrict the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board and the disadvantages to interfering in a rate application, whether it's legal or otherwise.

Those are my comments. There are a number of media reports that the Atlantic Loop is now at risk. We would have concerns if this does negate the opportunity to get off coal in a sustainable way that protects ratepayers and jobs by 2030. We have heard other

concerns raised by a number of reputable people, so we'll continue to watch this. We thank the government for restricting the ability for the return on equity to be increased.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm happy to rise and say a few brief words about this bill. It's hard to know what to say about this bill.

Obviously, it's important that Nova Scotians' power rates don't go through the roof. This is one way of making sure that that doesn't happen, although I will say right from the outset that Nova Scotians' power rates will be rising more than 1.8 per cent in spite of this bill because of the fuel adjustment. I don't know exactly what that number will be, but it has been predicted to be around 11 per cent or 12 per cent, but I guess that's definitely better than 22 per cent.

The point is that we need more sustainable ways of making sure that power rates are stable and that power bills get lowered while we concentrate on greening our grid and making sure that we're meeting our greenhouse gas reduction targets.

This bill seems to be the government's eleventh hour attempt to intervene in the outcome in the ongoing hearing at the NSUARB. We appreciate this government's final acknowledgement of the very valid concerns raised by Nova Scotians, but this bill seems rushed and poorly thought out.

I will remind folks about our Spring legislative session, when we had just heard about the plan for Nova Scotia Power to put in a rate increase. There was much discussion in this House, and the government, at the time, said that they would do whatever they could, and all stops necessary or all tools available in their tool kit to make sure that a rate increase didn't happen. Then they didn't do anything until after the NSUARB process was basically finished. It's a bit rich.

The previous Liberal government undertook a similar strategy of pushing off eventual power rates to an unknown future. And while this does provide - and I have said this - some short-term relief to Nova Scotians, it is short-sighted. It does not address the root problems.

We have discussed at length our concerns about the interference into the independence of the regulatory process, a process which, by design, is intended to operate separately from the government to allow for transparency and accountability. We put forward multiple amendments to this House which would have accomplished these long-term and systemic changes that are desperately needed. The amendments that we put forward, and which were rejected by this government, would have strengthened the regulatory process, not undermined it like this bill does.

We wanted to see this government take stronger action in holding Nova Scotia Power accountable to Nova Scotia's climate targets, to protecting Nova Scotians from energy poverty, and to providing reliable service. The amendments that we proposed would have made sure that all of that was possible.

We heard at the Law Amendments Committee multiple concerns from experts in the industry that these changes will bring negative lasting effects and will only harm the interests of Nova Scotians in the long run. We are disappointed in the short-term thinking presented by the government in this bill and disappointed by their dismissal of expert concerns at the Law Amendments Committee and our suggested amendments.

Mr. Speaker, again, I will just reiterate that these changes at this time are necessary to make sure that power rates do not run rampant in the next couple of months. But they will rise.

I urge this government to make this change and then look in a real systemic way at the ways that the Public Utilities Act could be amended to make sure that we do not collide with this issue again, and that we can get some proper or improved regulatory changes at the NSUARB level so that when we are looking at these issues in the future, there will be more for the NSUARB to do to help Nova Scotians to both meet their climate targets and make sure that they are not living in energy poverty.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Affordability, inflation and the rising cost of living - all three common things that we've heard in this Fall session of the Legislature. They're all important things to the people of Nova Scotia. It's no exception to the people I represent in Cumberland North.

The global impact of geopolitical influences from the war in Ukraine affects commodity prices of oil, and the ongoing pandemic affects what we're still feeling with pressures on supply chains. All are influencing the real costs of daily living here in Nova Scotia in our homes and in our businesses, small and large.

The price of home heating fuel, the price of gas at the pumps, rising costs of transportation affects everything, including the price of food. We've seen the cost of inflation anywhere between 7 per cent and 9 per cent over the last few months. Home fuel costs have risen. That price is determined by the NSUARB. We've seen market value assessments rising dramatically. That is decided by the property valuation assessments. We have not seen the government take any action on either of these two decisions of rising costs.

The government has the ability to affect the price at the pumps. There's a ton of tax being charged on the price of fuel, and the government absolutely has the ability to reduce

the price that people are paying at the pumps, as well as for home heating fuel. They are choosing to take no action on either of those things that affect the daily living for people. They are also choosing not to take any action on the rising costs of market value assessments that people are paying that's affecting them as well. No one wants to see electricity rates rise either.

This amendment to the Public Utilities Act will limit the increase of electricity rates by 1.8 per cent. No one wants to see the increase of power rates. Instinctively, at first glance, many people see this bill and they are happy that the government is taking control. But as with most things in life, there is more than meets the eye. This past year, when it was reported that Nova Scotia Power made a general rate application to the NSUARB asking for 11.6 per cent over the next three years, I think we heard a collective groan across the entire province of Nova Scotia.

However, as a legislator, I had faith that the independent utility regulator would take everything into consideration before they made a decision on the request - the general rate application from Nova Scotia Power.

I had faith in the independent utility regulator that they would take all relevant information and make an independent and fair decision. Fast forward to this Fall session, when we have the government-proposed Bill No. 212, which seeks to set utility rates from the floor of the Legislature, stripping away the independent power of the utility regulator.

I am being told that this is the first time this has happened since the Public Utilities Act was first brought forward in 1989. This undermines the work of the NSUARB. When I study who is on the board and the people who work within the NSUARB, they are very intelligent, professional, highly respected individuals throughout Nova Scotia.

This bill that the government has tabled is telling them that the government does not trust them to do their job, to provide an independent view and decision on this general rate application. This does not build trust. It does not build unity. It does not build a strong province. Utility regulators independently set utility rates across all of Canada, in every province, and throughout all of the United States.

The Utility and Review Board is guided by the Public Utilities Act, and also the UARB Act. As MLA, I strive to understand every piece of legislation that comes through this House of Assembly. Some bills I read once and understand right away. Most of those are the health care-related ones. Other bills I sometimes need to read a few times, including ones that are relating to electricity.

I've always found the Law Amendments Committee to be the most educative opportunity as a legislator. Experts in the field present facts and figures for and against proposed legislation. Bill No. 212 was no different.

I actually watched Law Amendments Committees several times, and while driving back and forth to Cumberland County, listened to Law Amendments Committee a couple of times. Some of the presenters, in particular the consumer advocate for the NSUARB - I listened to his presentation four times because he is there as a consumer advocate. He, as well as many of the other presenters, spoke very intelligently. I certainly learned a great deal from them.

There are things that I learned, like the fact that some people feel the self-interest of Nova Scotia Power can be contrary to the long-term interests of Nova Scotia ratepayers, but Nova Scotia Power has not put in a general rate application for 10 years. There is a concern of interference - of the independence of the utility rate regulation in Nova Scotia.

Some said the Public Utilities Act provided that utility rates in Nova Scotia are set on a cost-of-service model. It is how utility rates are set in every province in Canada, and every state in the U.S. That was emphasized, and how that is now being interfered with.

Some mentioned that under a cost-of-service model, for a utility seeking to adjust rates - included in a revenue requirement as its cost of debt and its fair return on equity. The significance of that, we saw with those who determine the credit rating of publicly traded companies, and the dramatic impact in change that we saw to our utility here in Nova Scotia.

Other comments that I heard in Law Amendments Committee were that Nova Scotia Power must be able to offer a fair rate of return in order to attract investment; that the Utility Review Board has been reviewing the request for the last 10 months; that many people presented and “intervened,” including the government, as well as my colleagues on this side of the House, the NDP and the Liberals; that the NSUARB have penalized Nova Scotia Power in the past when appropriate and have placed performance standards for the utility; that the credit rating of Nova Scotia Power is important for servicing debt, and that when the cost of debt increases, there is less money for the company to spend on things like maintenance, as well as employees; and, that there’s a real risk if financing costs rise and that in the long run, taxpayers will pay more.

I think that I can speak for the people I represent in Cumberland North. One of the biggest and most concerning comments that we heard over and over again in the Law Amendments Committee regarding Bill No. 212 was that decarbonization of the economy will be pushed back.

The dramatic and very fast response regarding the Atlantic Loop is a huge concern to the future of electricity here in Nova Scotia. We’ve all been told, and we’ve all seen our government pressure the federal government to look for financing and funding to fund this Atlantic Loop. So now to have our utility say it’s no longer even on the table is a real concern to the people I represent.

[3:15 p.m.]

It has been said that the Atlantic Loop is the only realistically affordable way to transition off of coal by 2030, and it cannot happen with the constraints of this legislation. Wind, solar, and green hydrogen are wonderful but not nearly enough - again, comments made in the Law Amendments Committee.

The company has clearly communicated what will happen if this bill passes. I hope that the government was listening. I hope that the government was listening to all the presenters in the Law Amendments Committee. When we don't listen, it only leads to problems. I think we all know that, in our personal lives and in our professional lives.

As a legislator representing Cumberland North, I support the NSUARB. I trust the regulatory independence of the NSUARB, and I trust the expertise of the persons who work with the NSUARB. I urge the Premier and his ministers to work with the people, work with the businesses, work with Nova Scotia Power, and find ways to accomplish great things.

This week, there are leaders from around the world who are meeting in Egypt to talk about global climate change. Here in Nova Scotia today, we are facing passing a bill that will prevent our province from meeting the climate goals for 2030. We are looking at passing a bill and voting on a bill that it's been made very clear will prevent us from getting off coal by 2030. It seems very conflicting for us to be voting on this in our Legislature while we're watching the rest of the world talk about how important it is to take action and make changes that will help our climate, global economy and our world as we face the impacts of climate change.

This bill may take one step forward in limiting power rates, but it will take us two steps backwards. I don't think any of our children want us taking two steps backwards, especially when it comes to our environment and climate. I believe it's important for the government to work with the people and the industries like Nova Scotia Power, like the NSUARB, and work at building strong relationships. That comes from listening, understanding, and striving to work collaboratively. I believe that we can do that here in this province.

I respect Emera. I respect Nova Scotia Power. I know that can be controversial to say. I could talk to 10 people in my constituency and not one of them would necessarily say they support the company. That's because we have seen problems with reliability of service, with power outages - unplanned power outages - where businesses had to close, send employees home, have reduced production, reduced revenues. We have seen storms where we have lost power way too often.

I want to say, after Hurricane Dorian back in 2019, I had several meetings with the company. There was significant investment made in Cumberland North around vegetation management after that. They listened to the concerns that a lot of the loss of power after

Hurricane Dorian didn't have to happen, and much of it happened because of the lack of vegetation management and the lack of maintenance that they had done.

I have also had complaints from our manufacturing sector due to the lack of reliability of electricity and the number of power outages. When I told the company, they came, and they met with our manufacturers and they did make investment to improve the reliability. I want to give them credit: When I've gone to them, they have listened and they have made some very positive changes, but there's much more work to be done.

I think the government is proposing this bill knowing that most people in the province are not big fans of this company. There's a monopoly. There's no competition. It's not like if you are not happy with one store that you can go to another because there's competition. We don't have that choice here in Nova Scotia.

Having said all that, I do think you need to look at the history and the fact that there are women and men in this province who have built that company, that they took a bankrupt utility that the Province, the government, owned and they have grown and expanded it throughout the world and built a strong, publicly traded company that under this bill took the legs from under them and embarrassed them on the world stage. They saw their credit score go down dramatically because of this bill that the government here chose to table.

When you are trying to work with people, when you choose to embarrass them, it's not helpful in building trusting relationships. We've seen this as a positive theme. Just earlier I was watching the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing going and meeting with the Halifax Regional Council. Again, we've seen this theme of not working collaboratively with stakeholders, with partners.

I encourage the government to listen. It will reap much better results for the people of Nova Scotia, including the people I represent in Cumberland North. Sit at the table, have a coffee, talk, make a plan together where the utility and the province will both benefit.

This bill is taking us on a different path. It actually creates conflict within our own government. Passing Bill No. 212 will prevent Bill No. 57 from actually accomplishing its goals with regards to getting off coal in 2030. As a government, you are tabling bills that actually create conflict with one another.

Doing the hard work and working collaboratively takes time and effort, but I believe it will put Nova Scotia on a much healthier and positive path if the government was willing to do that, to create a real vision for a future that will benefit all Nova Scotians - not only today, not only in the next three years but for a future for many years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston on an introduction.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, emotional. First I want to acknowledge my oldest son, A.J. Simmonds, who is in the gallery today with his partner Falon and my two beautiful grandsons, Amari - I can only see the hat, I can't actually see you. If you want to stand up so Nanny can see you, I'd love it. Okay, if not... (Applause)

Today is an important day because our voices are going to show up here. I have to further extend the African Nova Scotian community from all over this province to come in here and support our MLAs. I know how our people are, so I'm going to apologize, I did not name everyone's name, but you are all here. I want to just thank you and I would ask the House to rise once again to acknowledge the spirit and culture that sits in this gallery today. (Standing ovation)

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I do have to recognize I think the one person I see up there from my home constituency in Yarmouth and that's Vanessa Fells, who has been an incredible advocate for education for the African Nova Scotian community. I've known her since we were children together. Vanessa and everyone, thanks so much for being here today. It's really lovely to see everybody. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West on an introduction.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I noticed this young gentleman, Nathan Mendel, who came in. I thought, oh, is that the little boy who took the bus in front of my house 15 years ago? He is 23 now. He had curly cute hair, and he went to French immersion with my daughter at the time and took the bus.

I want to welcome Nathan. He's doing the Parliamentary Internship Programme in Ottawa, and I am so proud of him, that he's here today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to everyone in the gallery.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I want to rise briefly on this bill and say a few words. I think most has been said, but I was struck by the minister's introduction of this bill. In the introduction to the bill, the minister noted that he wanted to stop the vicious cycle that we're in. The vicious cycle is that we're paying more and more for power, but the nature of a cycle is that it needs a systemic intervention to break it.

This bill is exactly the opposite. It's an eleventh hour reactive band-aid that will provide some measure of relief for Nova Scotians. I want to be clear that that's really

important because that's what we have talked about all session. That's what we spend all of our days doing, looking for some measure of relief for Nova Scotians because they certainly need it. The change in this bill is not the change that is required. It is maybe necessary. It is not at all sufficient.

Mr. Speaker, we have been putting forward solutions for months and months and months and months, since this government took office, of how this government could in fact stop this vicious cycle. They have fallen on deaf ears. It's not just us - in the Law Amendments Committee, in editorials, yesterday at the pub where Sue and I had lunch - experts have presented information to us that is really germane to this about different models of regulation.

These are things that are pretty boring to 99 per cent of people but that are really, really important for our government to pay attention to: energy regulation, rate design, efficiency, the systemic interventions we need to make so that Nova Scotians know that they can afford their power bills. As we discussed earlier in Question Period, there are a lot of Nova Scotians right now who do not know whether their homes will be warm this Winter. That is a terrifying thing to contemplate.

Mr. Speaker, the other note that I want to make based on the way in which this bill was presented - I want to refute the idea that this government respects the role of the UARB. We're at the end of a hearing of an independent body. The government said themselves, we are going to intervene. I was there when the government intervened. They didn't say much. So they intervened.

They stood up here day after day after day and said we need the independent process to go forward, we need to understand what the regulators are going to do, Nova Scotians need to have their say - and then they cut the legs right out from under it. It is likely that, given the parameters that they had to make a decision, that the decision that the UARB made on the rate increase would have been unsatisfactory. It would have been a rate increase that Nova Scotians could not afford. There may have been action required at that point if it hadn't been taken already.

I reluctantly need to say again that while this reduction is something, it won't be enough for many. People's power bills are still going to skyrocket because of the cost of fuel. We still haven't seen an indexing of the heating assistance rebate programs that would allow people to accommodate this increase. We haven't seen the introduction of a low-income power program which would allow people to afford power regardless of their income.

This bill may be too little, too late. It may provide some measure of comfort to some people, but it's not enough and it's not the right kind of intervention we need to break the cycle.

[3:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I do want to recognize that both parties in the Opposition have been urging this government - and particularly ours, I believe - for legislative intervention on power rate increases in the province. That is something - not to live in the past eight years - that our government was very focused on previously under Premiers McNeil and Rankin in terms of rate stability in the province and ensuring that ratepayers could expect stability.

We do support the intention to limit rate increases to Nova Scotians, particularly in this inflationary environment where the cost of living pressures - as we have expressed daily in this Chamber - are impacting peoples' lives in very significant and consequential ways. These pressures are impacting our economy and increasing the potential factors that are going to contribute to a recessionary environment here, where job growth and wealth growth slow down and stop for many individuals.

I will say I do believe this is a very reactionary bill, however. There are some concerns that I do want to register with this Chamber. It's hard to not see this as being solely reactionary, because the day before, when the Liberal caucus was focusing all of our questions, actually, on this very issue, we had the Premier and the minister stand up throughout that 50 minutes and suggest we need to let this process conclude, we're following the process, Nova Scotians need to have their say. We did hear that repeatedly. That was a message that was also dominating government communication in the Summer when we brought these issues up as well as last year since this government's been elected.

There are some concerns I do want to register with this piece of legislation. One is we might be limiting rate increases in the short-term, but because of the impact this legislation seems like it's going to have based on what we're hearing from Nova Scotia Power and Emera on the renewable projects in this province like the Atlantic Loop, like the many solar and wind farm initiatives that our province was relying on to get to 80 per cent reduction from coal by 2030 - a goal that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Premier have lauded - we may now be at risk of the continuation of those renewable projects where they might all be scrapped.

This is one that's going to potentially severely impact Nova Scotia's ability to get off coal and have an 80 per cent reduction by 2030. We all know the impacts that that is going to have on our weather and our economy. It's not just dangerous hurricanes that are going to impact this province. As our waters continue to warm, watch out what's going to happen in the communities where the lobster fishery is a dominant economic driver, my area in particular. We are seeing a migration of some of our seafood species, lobster in particular, as this water continues to warm.

The effects of climate change aren't just on our comfort, our safety, and impacts to infrastructure. There's going to be some fundamental, really consequential impacts to the foundations of our economy and our future here in the province. This legislation does jeopardize our ability to do our part to combat climate change, potentially, based on what we're hearing.

The other thing that that's going to impact if we fail to get off of coal and fossil fuels and fail to execute on these renewable projects is that medium- and longer-term rates are also going to go up because we're seeing fossil fuels getting more and more expensive. Of course, global market factors are contributing to that. Also, this government's environment legislation is going to trigger Part 1 of the federal carbon tax.

We're going to see fossil fuels become more and more expensive, and if we're not utilizing those, or completing those renewable energy projects, our grid is going to remain dependent on fossil fuels - it looks like they're going to get more and more expensive here. This is going to drive rates up, whereas these renewable projects actually are getting to the point where they can start driving rates down. This is something to be very concerned about from a ratepayer perspective.

There is a risk, medium- and long-term, with this piece of legislation that rates are going to be driven up as a consequence of this. We don't know yet what the economic impact is going to be, but if we're losing these renewable projects - projects that governments have invested significant amounts of public dollars in, projects that many communities like Membertou in Sydney are depending on for economic growth and job creation - we're also going to see an economic impact from this.

I do want to commend the government for finally coming to the table to address power rate increases. This is very important. We have to limit the rates as we head into Winter, I believe. But I'm worried that we're cutting off our nose to spite our face with this piece of legislation. There's going to be some medium- and long-term, if not shorter-term, hurt that's going to come as a result of this. I believe this does meet the character I've seen of the government in terms of reacting very quickly to things when they become a political issue, but not necessarily thinking the consequences of those decisions through all the way.

We really hope that the negatives from this piece of legislation don't come to pass. We believe there's also sufficient evidence to suggest that they will, but we hope this will be sufficient to help people get through the Winter and keep rates as low as they can be. But I still think people should be prepared for a 15 to 20 per cent increase with fuel prices going up. Again, we don't know that this piece of legislation is going to cut it. We believe it was very reactionary. When you're governing in that way, to own headlines, you might not be thinking about all the consequences as a result of your decisions.

We want to register those concerns with this piece of legislation with the House.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Thank you to the members opposite for the comments and everything.

Just quickly, very quickly - the Leader of the Official Opposition knows me well and has sat on this side of the Chamber before. If this was an eleventh hour, 12 hours later after the questioning, I think he knows that I probably wouldn't throw legislation together that quickly. It is well thought out.

But at the end of the day, I just want to point out that this is about affordability for Nova Scotians. We have heard from Nova Scotians. We heard loud and clear about the affordability. I know the members on the opposite side are concerned about their constituents; they care about their communities; they care about the environment. We do too. That's what's driving us to do what we're doing today. That's why we're taking action on power rates. It's on power rates, not on capital expenditures like the Atlantic Loop.

I will emphasize that most solar and wind projects are independent, away from Nova Scotia Power. That's not what this application of the rate hearing was about. It was about rate increases, not capital expenditures.

It's been a very volatile year in the last year, and as we did listen to Nova Scotians, we knew that affordability was top of mind. As we get questioned by the opposite side of the House about affordability, we put a piece of legislation in front that is going to assist with the affordability. That's why we're cushioning what we can with the fuel. My colleague at Environment and Climate Change gave a credit to Nova Scotia Power of \$160 million for the fuel charges - \$165 million, to be exact, is what Nova Scotia Power rated it at - \$165 million, what we could do at the time for fuel rates that are going back to the ratepayers.

Every government has followed through with fuel, walking through the whole process. It's why we're making sure that power rates increase for the reliability for Nova Scotians. It's why we're empowering the Performance Partnership Advisory Table to work with the NSUARB. How do we better the power system in Nova Scotia? Is it ideal that we're set with this volatile situation worldwide? No, Mr. Speaker. It's not a great story for anybody in the world. But it's affordability - that's what we put this on the table for.

I've always been very clear that just because we have a piece of legislation open right now doesn't mean that, as minister, I won't open it down the road. There are many other things to be done. I've been very open about that. So has this government. But everything that we do in this government will be for the betterment of all Nova Scotians.

That's why we're saying no to an increase for profits for the utility that's made more than \$125 million every year for the past 12 years.

We understand that this means that Nova Scotia Power needs to switch gears. They need to work with the considerable resources to produce power that is affordable, reliable, and clean. I have confidence they will do that. I have confidence. We still have conversations with Nova Scotia Power on other issues, and they're collaborative conversations.

I firmly believe that Nova Scotia Power will continue to be at the table with the Atlantic Loop. They don't need to do it on their own. A big portion of that Atlantic Loop is funds from the federal government that we have been advocating for along with the other provinces. But I do expect them to be a main partner at that table as we carry on the conversations. I was very encouraged last week to hear from my staff that Nova Scotia Power still were at that table and having those conversations.

We can have a clean, bright future for Nova Scotia with built-in Nova Scotia assets and resources right here at home. I know Nova Scotia Power will still be at that table with us as this government, as we move on to better the power system for Nova Scotia and have a brighter, cleaner future for all Nova Scotia.

With that, I close third reading of Bill No. 212.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading.

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 Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 214.

Bill No. 214 - Invest Nova Scotia Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I move that Bill No. 214, An Act to Establish Invest Nova Scotia, be now read a third time.

As its core, this legislation is about better supporting businesses through their growth and development in Nova Scotia. It's also about accelerating our economic growth and ensuring we have a more effective and accountable government for Nova Scotians. This is an exciting new direction for our province and one that will help modernize the way we approach economic development.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Similar to the themes that we have talked about through the various stages of this bill, as a caucus we do not support this. We have said this multiple times, that we see this as a consolidation of power within the offices. We have had independent boards with CEOs who were award-winning, who have done outstanding work across the province, representing not only us here at home but representing us internationally.

Some of the big projects that you have seen over the years, whether it was through our connectivity across the province with internet, these were award-winning CEOs who had independence from the political wing of government. Ultimately, of course, Cabinet makes a lot of decisions on it, but these were the people who were advising. These were the boards that were providing strategic advice with representation all over the province. This is one case, with Invest Nova Scotia, we wholeheartedly disagree with the direction.

I go back to the comments that were said during the last piece of this legislation. It was said, and it's a dangerous practice - in the comments, the minister at the time referenced that decision-making was going back into the offices and referenced it as the decision-making was being brought back to the politicians, essentially. That is a huge concern for me. We saw that in the past, under the previous NDP government. We saw investments that were made that I believe, and that have been proven over the years, should have seen more scrutiny, when investments were made to support businesses and organizations across the province.

There are a couple of bills that we'll talk about along with this Invest Nova Scotia bill, but you had award-winning CEOs. They were internationally recognized - they have all, I think, for the most part, landed in very successful positions because of their talent and what they brought to the table. The government is taking this away and we think that it is fundamentally wrong. We have oversight, we have independence, we had good people and it protected - government protected the taxpayers.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll stop there and leave my comments. We do not support this.

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

[3:45 p.m.]

LISA LACHANCE: I rise to outline as well our continued concerns about this bill. Throughout the debate many of us have asked very reasonable questions for more information and that hasn't been forthcoming. The minister's brief remarks about better supporting businesses, more effective and accountable government, and modernizing the way we support economic development are all aims that I think we probably all share, but they actually don't tell us anything about how that's going to be undertaken and why this change is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the decisions that the government is taking are not in a vacuum. In fact, the decisions around structure and organization and mandate are nested within systems of public administration, public policy, and political governance that have actually evolved over hundreds of years. Really, in many cases, it's hard to say that new ideas haven't already been considered, that we've actually been around the block of where ministers have decision-making around what economic development projects are funded and actually for very good reasons, we chose to move away from that.

Perhaps the government considered this in their review, but they resisted sharing any of the review, analysis, and decision-making that are guiding current policy. We could have a much better discussion in this House, in fact, if we were able to access and understand the foundation for these policies and respond to the specific issues.

I am going to take some time in this third read to outline where I see the challenges and difficulties with the current path of this government, as well as discuss my specific concerns with the new Invest Nova Scotia organization as detailed in Bill Nos. 214 and 215.

First of all, I've talked about the fact that we've actually moved away from the culture of patronage, that we've actually thought about how we build governments. In the 1980s this all came together in a movement called New Public Management. The idea of rethinking public management, how governments were run, was undertaken, emerged due to a few concerns. There was a feeling that there is a need to focus on performance and improve performance in response to increasingly complex government programs, at the same time as there were often central budget productions.

I think the idea around the increasingly complex government programs is really important. Combining Innovacorp and the functions of Innovacorp and NSBI - again, I haven't seen the analysis, but do you know what? I'll bet you that that makes a lot of sense. I also think that encompasses a huge range of activities that are quite complex. I think that's why we had boards and governance models that brought expertise together to adequately address everything from venture capital through to supporting businesses to expand to export.

The other part of the new public management and public administration that was really important was a recognition for the increased professionalization of the Public Service based on merits. So not hiring friends, getting away from nepotism but also really realizing that there's a core set of values and ethics, as well as skills and training that are necessary to effectively and accountably, as the minister said, implement government programs.

There are a few other key items that I think for me are what has been missing from this discussion and the discussion of other bills. A couple of the other principles were around results-based management: What are you aiming for? How are you going to measure progress? How do you know you are on the way there? And how do you know when you have reached your goal? As I said, an increased focus on public sector values and ethics so that we weren't making decisions that favoured our friends, that we were making accountable decisions based on the results that we wanted to see, and an increased emphasis on evaluation in response to the need for improved efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Again, because we don't have access to what happened during the Crown corporations review, we have no idea what sort of evaluation work was undertaken. So it is within that that we have to look at Crown corporations and arm's-length institutions as a really important policy instrument. I think during second reading I outlined some of the reasons why we want to have Crown corporations in their current/past form in Nova Scotia.

I think it's really important that often we ask Crown corporations to undertake sector activities or undertake initiatives that are in the public interest - that are absolutely for the public good - but they're also quite risky. They also involve the need to have a diversity perspective and approach, be able to respond to emerging issues. I can think of export venture capital - these are all areas that are constantly evolving. We need to limit the liability of government but retain some public interest.

The minister has expressed concern about the fact, well, the minister always has accountability. So what's so different about what's going to happen now? In fact, the answer is it's very different.

Normally, with agencies, boards, and commissions or Crown corporations, the set-up is a statute that outlines their roles and responsibilities. Appointments to the board are made by the Governor in Council, which I think we all understand. Maybe some folks who are going to be really bored about public administration really soon don't necessarily know.

As a bureaucrat in the Department of Finance and Treasury Board, I spent a lot of time reviewing all of the applications we got from amazing Nova Scotians who wanted to serve on agencies, boards, and commissions. We provided an evaluative recommendation to government about those board appointments. Again, it's not about hand-picking. It's not

about giving these spots to your friends. It's about a process to establish a board that can do all the things that boards are supposed to do.

The whole idea of board management, corporate governance, is in and of itself its own specialty. We ask that corporate governance provides the structure of how decisions will be made and the ways that maybe make more important about the "how" rather than the "what."

I have a couple of documents that I'll table from the C.D. Howe Institute, the Ivey School of Business, and the University of Calgary about corporate governance and Crown corporations. I would say that across those reports - they're all quite recent - there were some really important pieces around Crown corporations and their boards. They note that ineffective or dysfunctional corporate governance and Crown corporations increases the odds that organizations will veer from mandates, inefficiently manage operations and investments, or fail to adapt to changing external circumstances. They all really emphasize that fact that a Crown corporation requires a rigorous approach to governance.

They also talk about the fact that the board provides an important supervisory and guidance role for the head of the organization - in most cases with a Crown corporation, the CEO - and of course, also the important roles of board committees.

We have board committees that are strategy, audit, and communications, but these are all things that we're losing. What's being proposed here is the loss of a board of governors to be replaced with an advisory council that simply doesn't hold the same level of fiduciary responsibility, and engagement in the process. In fact, it's not clear from the bill that's been tabled how that advisory committee will be used.

I had a chance to look across the country in terms of other organizations like NSBI, in particular, to understand how they were structured. What I will say from reading various Acts across the country is that, really, they are structured like we had with NSBI or with Innovacorp.

In various cases, like in Alberta - Invest Alberta for instance - the minister may attend meetings but doesn't have a vote, so is actually not involved in the picking of winners and losers for economic development decisions. Innovate BC, the minister is not on the board. Investment Manitoba, the minister is allowed to appoint one of nine members of the board. Invest Ontario, the minister is more engaged by designating a Chair and a vice chair, and of course reviewing the bylaws and being able to issue policies and directives, but again there's still a board of governors that actually is vested with the responsibility for decision making. I would say Opportunities New Brunswick, P.E.I., and Newfoundland and Labrador are similar.

I think we're standing out by developing a structure that actually puts the minister at the end of this. Instead of having the minister responsible for the structure, the

governance, making sure the bylaws are in place, making sure the Governor in Council process is running well, and trusting that board of directors to make good decisions, the minister is going to be making decisions about who gets funding and who doesn't. I think that's a very dangerous switch and return in the way we're making decisions in this province.

Recently in Manitoba in 2017, they also undertook a long review of Crown corporations and agencies, boards, and commissions. They actually developed an overarching Act to guide decision-making for Crown corporations that really sets out what the minister's role is. Again, in this case, the minister - and I will table this after, I didn't bring it with me - in 13.1, the minister may, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, issue directives to the corporation respecting matters of policy, requiring the corporation to conduct an organizational review, requiring the corporation to do something in accordance with its approved annual business plan, or prohibiting it from doing anything inconsistent, to ensure practices of two or more corporations are consistent, and to ensure that two or more corporations act in concert.

Here we can see very clearly and specifically what role is set out for the minister and their accountability, but it's not the decision-making. It goes on to say in 17.3, despite any other Act, no member of the Executive Council shall be appointed as Chair, Vice Chair, or member of any board, so then separating those powers, governance and decision-making.

I walked through, during an earlier reading of this bill, as well this idea of reviews. I do have the minister's mandate letter to table, because again, we have very few publicly available documents that actually outline how we got to here. Certainly, the Minister of Economic Development is called upon to co-operate across mandates and departments, and also be part of the ABCs review. But that's about all that's given in the mandate letter. I can table that.

Of course, I love the infamous two-page report that they spat out, and this is what we know about what happened during that review.

I think that's insufficient, and the minister has given us some hints along the way. In the previous reading, she talked about how this would be one particular objective of this process, that there would be one place to call. Great, but I think we're far beyond single-window service initiatives in public administration. Today, she talked about better support and modernizing, yet we don't know what this means. Because we don't know what it means, we don't know what was evaluated. We have no idea why this particular structure is being proposed, and we are greatly concerned by this consolidation of power.

We have, from the same excerpt from Hansard that I just tabled, the minister said that whether we call it an advisory board, I would assure all those present that the opinions of those from the business community will always be held in the highest esteem and

consideration. That is a lovely sentiment. I think we would all share that, but we have structures and mechanisms that actually put the rubber on the road - that actually make this operationalized and accountable.

[4:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I would ask that since you made a quote, that the member table those remarks. (Interruption) Okay, thank you.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: In the same Hansard excerpt that I've already tabled, we also ask the minister - great, how does this all fit into an economic development strategy? That's the other piece that's lacking. It's not clear to us what the goals are. The minister said that we should be able to grasp the basic tenets of the economic development policy. Tenets is defined as a principle, belief, or doctrine generally held to be true. About the only principle, belief, or doctrine that I can discern from the proposal that's made here for Invest Nova Scotia and for other organizations is that power is being consolidated in ministers' offices and ultimately the Premier's Office.

I think I've already tabled these documents, but I will table them again. Hopefully, the minister will have a chance to have a look at them. I keep talking about an economic development plan. Maybe it's just not clear what I'm talking about. But if you have a look from 2022 from StrongerBC, B.C.'s economic plan - in here, it outlines the economic vision, mission, what sectors, how they need to grow, and how government's actions do that. It considers climate action within that.

Also, they have metrics that they're publicly accountable for. Sorry, I'm waving them around. I'm just going to table them. Sorry, I'm a hand talker. It's part of my heritage. I keep hitting everything.

Again, I think asking the Minister of Economic Development for an economic development plan - particularly in the state that the world economy is in - is not an unreasonable expectation. It would really allow us to better understand why, in this role, the minister is seizing control of private sector development investments in the province.

I shared in Law Amendments Committee similar concerns voiced by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. They spoke at length about the concerns and misunderstanding that they felt in the Crown corporation governance model for this and for Build Nova Scotia, and for other initiatives.

I'll come to a close. I'm sure everyone's enjoyed talking about Crown corporation governance. When I was doing reading for this, thinking about this, wondering, how are we here - that we have a government that thinks that all Crown corporations should actually

not be Crown corporations, shouldn't be arm's-length, should be under the control of ministers - and where did this all come from?

In fact, there is a new term that a lot of folks like Peter Aucoin and others are using to talk about the new dynamic of the new political governance. So instead of new public management, which was what we worked at for decades, in fact, this new political governance - that after fighting our way out of a political culture of patronage and nepotism, we're going back into an age of overtly political management. I think there are many pitfalls to consider.

We know that political factors can impact efficient operation and decision-making, whether they're Crown corporations or departments. For instance, we have seen that people have been hand-picked to lead these organizations. That is not part of how we had built our public administration traditions here in Nova Scotia. It's causing great uncertainty. I think it will also be met by the possibility of thinking about elections, thinking about government priorities in the decision-making for private sector investment. In a Crown corporation model, that's not what would be taking place.

In one of the reports that I tabled from the C.D. Howe Institute, they said, "Governance is a key element . . . and a Crown that is 'well governed' should be expected to achieve success at balancing the delivery of services and conducting business in the public interest, while operating in a commercial (i.e., business-oriented) manner."

We are greatly concerned by this initiative and others by this government that puts control back in the hands of ministers. We won't be supporting this bill. What we would hope for is better information and better reporting from the government going forward about how decision-making and investments are being made in the department.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle on an introduction.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: It's a great pleasure to welcome to your gallery a familiar face to many in this Chamber: A member who spent 16 years, prior to my time, as MLA for Argyle-Barrington and subsequently Argyle, now the Member of Parliament for West Nova and also the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, joined by his lovely wife, Anne d'Entremont. Please welcome Chris d'Entremont to the House. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: I can inform our guest that sometimes, although we're only 55 in here, it can be just as rowdy as the House of Commons.

The honourable member for Preston on an introduction.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: No one can see, but I just wanted to let everybody know that downstairs - I don't know if the cameras can go down in the gallery here or not, but it

is packed with community folks from the African Nova Scotian community and allies - I would say Preston to East Preston to Beechville and Hammonds Plains.

I just want to say thank you. Because of the MLAs who sit here, what happened this afternoon is possible. I went downstairs, and I wish that downstairs you could see me, you were up here, but we're running out of space, so I appreciate you all being here. (Interruption) They can see me, but we can't see them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say hi to my friend the current Member of Parliament for West Nova as well. I do want to apologize to him because all the times I complained about him being in this House - you're better off with the devil you know. I know that now. We miss him. He was a great representative for our area. Of course, I know the member could appreciate the jest in that comment. It's also very nice working with him as the current Member of Parliament as well.

I do want to rise in opposition to the current bill. I'll be very brief in explaining why. One, the report and recommendations done on this serious consolidation of Crown corporations, pulling them into ministerial control, has not been made public. We have not seen the recommendations from that report. We have not seen the rationale in that report. For a government that ran on transparency, this is a very concerning thing. Why has that not been made available to the public or this House to consider?

Any big decisions like this that have been made when there have been independent reports made in the past - the government might want to bring up the one I was involved with involving school boards. There was an independent report done. In the case of school boards, there were three. All of those reports were made public. This is a big move here to take political control over all of these organizations that were doing things from venture capital to trade work to implementing our high-speed broadband initiatives, and we have not been given a report to explain as to why this is happening.

We have only had high-level comments from the minister and Premier that this is important to consolidate and find efficiencies. Anyone who has actually done that sort of work knows that you don't just find efficiencies by having this broad-based consolidation. There are oftentimes even more costs associated with these sorts of transitions, as we in this House have learned.

We have also not been given an agenda from this government of what they want to do in terms of economic development or even economic resilience as we go through this period of inflation and potentially a recession. We have not had a vision. We have not had a plan from this government. They have not even tied into the communications on this bill why they're doing it and what they plan to do with this move. That's also concerning.

It just seems like it's power for the sake of power without necessarily an agenda. As a result, we have lost three of, I would say, Canada's leading CEOs of Crown corporations - Malcolm Fraser being among them, who had probably one of the best records when it comes to venture capital and having returns on investment with venture capital that was delivered. You cannot tell me that the minister is going to have better experience than that gentleman on dealing in the complicated world of venture capital.

We have also lost Laurel Broten, who was very successful in expanding markets for our lobster in particular, our seafood market among other things. Also Jennifer Angel, CEO of Develop Nova Scotia, who successfully implemented the broadband initiative that's going to see 95 per cent of Nova Scotia covered with high-speed broadband. These were serious experts in the fields, so much so they were picked up by national organizations almost immediately after they were fired by this government.

We are seeing also a tendency to hire people that the Premier has referred to as his "personal friends." That is also concerning. We also saw this government not follow normal fair hiring practices that are actually detailed in Public Service regulations. Those hiring processes were not even close to being followed to appoint these large positions where people are getting paid \$1,500 a day and we don't know why. We haven't seen the resumés of these individuals. We are told they are friends of the Premier and that's good enough.

It's not good enough for this House and it's not good enough for Nova Scotians, because now these folks are going to be in charge of distributing hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of public money into the private sector, without an agenda attached to that at this point, without even a rationale provided as to why, without even a report being provided to the public.

Our chief concern here, Mr. Speaker, is that we're returning to 1980s Progressive Conservative politics where patronage and slush funds are the name of the game to get re-elected. The Progressive Conservative government previously brought in the Economic Development Fund that was used to pump up, for partisan reasons, certain businesses in this province, businesses that oftentimes did not even deliver on the promises that they were given that money on, or the terms of their contract.

This was used by the NDP as well, for two big, failed projects - the Bowater bailout, we saw what happened as a result of that, and the other one in the northern part of the province - not Port Hawkesbury, but I believe there was a wind farm that received millions of dollars and they closed down. (Interruption) Trenton, thank you. I thank my members. We've seen the record of political and partisan decision-making when it comes to economic development in this province - it has been a failure. That is why the previous government got rid of these sorts of slush funds.

We worry that this is going to happen again and that this government, for partisan reasons, is going to have access, particularly because their friends and colleagues are going to be running the show in these Crown corporations, that it's all going to be about spending money to get re-elected and not about actual economic development. Until we actually see a plan from the minister, a plan from the government that is going to give us some confidence in what they're actually going to do with these hundreds of millions of dollars that now the ministers will have direct control over, we remain very concerned about this piece of legislation and the following pieces of legislation that are very much in line with this one.

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

The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I thank my colleagues for their remarks. As I have said in prior opportunities, the creation of this new agency, Invest Nova Scotia, is about teeing up this province for a multitude of opportunities that are before us right now and more importantly, the opportunities of the future.

Nova Scotia is at a watershed moment. We are growing in both population and economic diversity, and we need to be nimble and ultra-competitive. These new agencies - Invest Nova Scotia and Build Nova Scotia - will help ensure that that is the case.

Mr. Speaker, again today much has been made about the CEOs whose contracts were terminated as part of this process. These are fine, capable people and I would never call them anything other than that. I enjoyed working with them a great deal. But the suggestion has been made that this was a loss to Nova Scotia. It was part of a change.

Having Laurel Broten heading the federal agency tasked with growing investment in our country while continuing to live in Halifax? I don't consider that a loss. Similarly, watching Jennifer Angel go on to new work with Evergreen Canada and living in Nova Scotia - is that a loss? I don't think so. And Malcolm Fraser has referenced going on to create a new venture capital fund. Surely it is a sign of the success of Innovacorp that a province that had very few venture capital funds now has a robust and growing venture capital landscape.

More to the point, Mr. Speaker, we have so many talented, passionate, and effective people within our agencies of economic development. These people who have worked for Innovacorp and NSBI to this point will now work even more closely and more effectively together.

Once again, I will point out that "efficiencies" is not a word that I have used in this debate and there is a reason. Efficiency is often code for reducing people. This is not about reducing people.

[4:15 p.m.]

This is about leveraging good people and opportunities in this province to provide even better support for our businesses as they go from go to growth. And yes, providing accountability to the hundreds of millions of dollars in spending related to economic development, so that if there is an investment that is made that doesn't turn out as one might hope, then yes, as the minister today and any future minister, they will be accountable to Nova Scotians.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker I move to close debate on Bill No. 214.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 214.

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 Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 215

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 215 - an Act to Amend Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2014, the Invest Nova Scotia Board Act - now be read a third time.

I will be brief. Our government is focused on modernizing the way that we approach economic development in Nova Scotia. These amendments allow us to do just that.

At the end of the day, we want to create a more prosperous Nova Scotia for all Nova Scotians. We need to ensure that our investments align with our vision. This new direction for our province will help ensure that we are more accountable to Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, similar to what I said earlier on, this is something that we wholeheartedly don't support. This is a huge step backwards.

Again, here is a board that had expertise in the field. They represented different areas across our province. They represented the interests of communities across our province. I am concerned about what I heard.

The minister talked about the people who were fired, and they got new jobs - almost like the government got them for them. These people were talented. They left. It's true. That's what the minister just said. The Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care may not like it, but she was in Opposition before, too, and she took her jabs at government same as everybody else.

Our concern again is that we had a very credible board, a lot of expertise, and a lot of good people who drove a lot the economic development in the province. They were non-political and were independent of the political realm of government. Now we're going back 25 years. The decisions will be made politically. The decisions will be controlled within the department and other departments.

I would argue, too, that as we go through this transition, I think a lot of folks will have questions, including the folks involved with economic development within the departments. This is a huge concern for everybody. I'll leave my comments there. We don't support this bill.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I just want to rise and speak briefly to what I will call this suite of bills but speaking to this bill. We just had a bill, and we have another one coming - they're all the same. They represent a new approach to economic development, but it's not new. It's an old approach. It's an outdated approach. It's an approach that has been largely discredited, and that's the approach of consolidating power and making sure that you have your hands on every lever and that there is in fact no independent accountability. That's what's on the floor right now.

They're having the opportunity to make the choice to all together get into a time machine and go back in time to the '80s. There was a public outcry about that move. There was a public outcry. The public, in the 1980s, talked about patronage, and it led to changes in government, because people were so incensed about the small circles of influence and favouritism and the complete lack, and I will say lack, in contradistinction to what the minister has said, of accountability. This is a government who in Opposition made their mark as the champions of accountability.

They sued the Province of Nova Scotia about accountability, and yet we are seeing in this session sweeping changes, and the thing that they all have in common is that they reduce transparency, they reduce accountability, and they reduce the ability of the public to have an impact on policy-making. To add a little bit of salt to that wound, we actually have no explanation for why. As my colleague, the MLA for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island,

put it very eloquently, we have no explanation for why. We are not even deemed to be worthy of understanding this new approach to economic development.

In the absence of that type of explanation that is more than just hyperbole and bromides about how amazing it is, we are forced not to support any of these changes, because we are concerned on behalf of our constituents about what this back-to-the-future approach will bring us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I just wanted to again provide a bit of context and history here that my colleagues have spoken about, and how we are going clearly backwards. If we think back to 2013, Nova Scotia was in a downward economic spiral. The Ivany report came out and examined those issues very carefully and challenged Nova Scotians and their government to do things differently. We had a Department of Economic Development with 330 jobs, we had pumped millions and millions over 30 years, and the economy of Nova Scotia didn't improve in that time.

We were going nowhere as a province, and the Ivany report and their commission challenged us to do things differently. It became very clear the government had to get out of the way of economic development, that the political pork-barrelling, the political decisions, handing out millions of dollars to failing corporations, corporations and industries that were sunsetting, we had to stop that. Government doesn't create jobs. It is the private sector. The movement that was made was significant. We eliminated the Department of Economic Development and 330 jobs and created a Department of Business and began to work on policy and creating the conditions for the private sector to create jobs and create economic development and a better future for Nova Scotians.

We brought in Crown corporations that were to be run by business people who had the experience, the knowledge about how business decisions need to be made, as opposed to politicians. The proof is in the pudding. Look at us eight years later, how much has changed. It was done by Nova Scotians, it was done by municipalities, it was done by businesses, and a small Department of Business of 30 people.

Now we're going backwards. We have said for eight years - we are saying now, after eight years of successful economic development, we're going to go back to how we did it for 30 years with no success.

A very, very serious mistake is being made by this government, to go backwards like this. That's why we have, for the last three weeks, tried to implore this government that these decisions to bring millions of dollars of power into ministers' offices is the fundamentally wrong way to go. We have evidence. We have evidence of 38 years - 30 years of how not to do it and eight years of how to do it.

[4:30 p.m.]

We have been imploring the government to think: What you are doing by going backwards to put all of this power in ministers' offices? Do the ministers in these offices think that they know whether a wind turbine company in Trenton is a good, smart idea? Do the ministers believe that they know when to put \$50 million into the Bowater Mersey paper company? That's not where the decisions should be made. The decisions should be made by business people with the expertise, the sharp minds, and the experience. It should not be in the hands of ministers.

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

The honourable Minister of Economic Development.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I had no idea when the clocks turned back by an hour this weekend that we were turning back time quite that much.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have many comments to make here, but I will reiterate: There was reference to the Ivany report of 2013, and the Ivany report was a huge moment in the history and the evolution of this province. I was in my community working in community development and left a job - a really good, secure job - with a take-no-prisoners approach of yes, we've got to try things. We have got to try things.

So we had to do things differently in 2013, but never again? Time marches on, and staying nimble, staying competitive, staying ready and reactive, is what is going to get our province ahead. At the same time, while I am proud of every achievement I see around me in the businesses of Nova Scotia - and as government, yes, we try to create the conditions, but the pride in the work and the success is to the credit of those individual businesses, whether there's a massive expansion or going from seasonal to full-time, hiring a couple of people or making a huge hire. But why should we be satisfied with this moment, when Nova Scotia has the potential to be so much more? That is what these changes are about.

My only other comment would be that we have a nationwide recruitment process now for the CEOs of these new agencies. I would suggest that some of the commentary earlier undermines these people who are not even yet selected. We are looking. These will be super-important hires. I look forward to working with those individuals, particularly the individual hired for Invest Nova Scotia.

With those comments, I move to close debate on Bill No. 215, an Act to Amend Chapter 9 of the Acts of 2014, the Invest Nova Scotia Board Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 215.

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 Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker would you please call Bill No. 216.

Bill No. 216 - Build Nova Scotia Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Public Works.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 216, an Act to Establish Build Nova Scotia, now be read a third time and do pass.

This is an exciting time to be a Nova Scotian. Our population is growing. New projects are being built like never before in communities across the province. Most importantly, the government is transforming health care to make sure Nova Scotians have the care that they deserve.

Yet even with all this progress, opportunity, and successes, there are challenges. Inflation in the cost of materials is on the rise. Labour is difficult to find. Global supply chains are having difficulty meeting demand.

All of this means that now more than ever, the government needs to be at its best. We need to be ready to work with the private and not-for-profit sectors to find solutions on these issues. That means being innovative. The province's five economic development and infrastructure organizations will become two new Crown corporations, Build Nova Scotia and Invest Nova Scotia.

Build Nova Scotia will be agile, and it will be responsive. Its job is to build, enhance, and leverage the opportunities that stand in front of us for the benefit of Nova Scotians.

Health care redevelopment will be at the forefront of Build Nova Scotia's agenda. Investing in health care infrastructure continues to be a government priority. We will continue to work closely with the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority on the delivery of our health care projects. These projects will help to improve access to care and better meet the needs of patients and staff. My colleague the MLA for Argyle, the minister responsible for health care redevelopment projects, will oversee the QEII New Generation health care project and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality Health Care Redevelopment Project.

Build Nova Scotia will also deliver waterfront and industrial park development, land bank asset management, the high-speed Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative, and environmental remediation. The new Crown corporation brings together the experts at Develop Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Lands. Their job is to find solutions that build economically vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive communities right across our province.

Staff and programs within Develop Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Lands remain in place, and their important work continues. By creating Build Nova Scotia, we are reducing duplication, refocusing mandates, and improving accountability.

This will help drive economic growth in communities right across our province. This is an exciting new direction that says to the world Nova Scotia is open for business. We're responsive, responsible, and ready to make the most of the bright future that is in front of us.

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues across the aisle.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Just a couple of comments. The minister talked a lot about a lot of the infrastructure projects that are well under way that were all done under the current system. We don't understand where the problem is.

As well - and this has been a theme of the last three bills that have come through - we would still love to see the report that the government does not want to release on the Crown corporations. For whatever reason, that's not released yet. I would request again, as others have, that that information be provided to everyone to view.

I'll finish with saying again as a caucus we fundamentally disagree with the consolidation. The people who really spearheaded a lot of these projects that the minister referenced, whether it was around the health care redevelopment, around some of the initiatives around internet, they have all been let go.

It's really unfortunate, because it was their work. We were taking the direction from them on these projects, whether it was here in the city or whether it was the Cape Breton health care redevelopment. Those are the people who were driving the bus when it came to our cancer centre, our critical care, our ER, our mother-infant unit, and the Northside in Waterford. All of these major infrastructure projects were being driven by people who are no longer working for government. To me, personally, this is a shame. They were good, talented people who did good work every day, and worked day and night on behalf of Nova Scotians.

This is another bill that the government's putting forward that's a consolidation of power. We don't support it.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise to express my deep concern for Bill No. 216. This is a pattern, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing that the government seems to be acquiring more and more power to be isolated to the minister's office. I'm deeply concerned by this because I remember when school boards were on the line. I know that the Leader of the Liberal Party will remember this - call the minister.

That is the echo that was said every time something happened in the school board. Every time something happened within education, it was "Call the minister," because there was no more school board to call. There were no more elected officials to call, so it was "Call the minister." That still holds true in my office today - I call the minister. It hasn't worked out though, in my opinion. Losing our school boards has not helped us any. In fact, I think it has harmed us quite a bit because it leaves people nowhere to go.

Now we have Bill Nos. 196, 214, 215, and we're going to have Bill Nos. 222, 225, and here we are with Bill No. 216. I have heard professors on various radio shows calling this "pork barrel politics." This bill will dissolve yet another independent board and replace it with an advisory board that is not accountable to anyone, and doesn't report to anyone, except a minister. This amalgamation did away with a top woman public official. Without independence, there'll be less accountability with the CEO, again, only reporting to the minister.

I remember when they were the Official Opposition. I sat here. I also watched online before I came here. They seemed to be against the loss of boards. I don't know what happened, Mr. Speaker. I'm not really sure, but I know I don't want to see a change back to the 1980s. Bad hair, among other things. (Laughter) And I was in overalls.

What I'm saying is that we also had patronage. We also had a problem with people electing their friends - not if they were qualified or not. You know what? That actually undercuts it. If somebody is qualified, yet only may have gotten their position because they are a friend, that really does a disservice to that person. We have a Premier who admitted that he was hiring his friends, so that's what we're going to be seeing.

This government already has a serious transparency issue. With this pattern of consolidating power to the ministers, I fear that we are going back to the 1980s. I actually do fear for the transparency of government at this point. We already have issues where we can't get reports. Bill No. 216 is a part of this disturbing pattern.

The work of maintaining the strategic infrastructure of this province is critical. It deserves to have as much transparency, independence, accountability, and rigor as possible. How does that happen under a minister? This is nothing against any minister. This is nothing against the character of any minister. But what if a character of a minister is willing just to hire their friends - what happens then to these services? What happens then to this

critical infrastructure? What happens then to this new corporation? There's nobody to hold to account, except for an advisory board?

I find that concerning. I find that deeply concerning and yes, it is a time warp, and many political science professors have stated this. So as much as the government wants to congratulate itself on all of these, I don't think there's much to congratulate. I find this deeply concerning and I will not be supporting it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I also want to raise concerns regarding this bill. Our arguments in relation to the Invest Nova Scotia Bill Nos. 214 and 215 apply here. The report and recommendations made by the consultant who did the work on this have not been made public. Why has that not been made public? It's very curious, indeed, when you are considering these major changes.

We have not heard what changes to the approach to building procurement are going to be in our province - nothing at all other than flowers and rainbows and the great future that Nova Scotia is going to have as a result of this. Nothing specific at all has been tabled in this House, or even argued for.

Also, presumably this organization is going to take over big parts of our procurement processes for the single largest capital projects that we're going to have, which are the single greatest expenses that we can have, outside of labour, for the government. Now this is all going to be under ministerial control, so one thing we are going to have to do is watch this - which firms are getting these large contracts. Are they Tory donors? Are they Tory friends? Now we have less protection for the taxpayers when it comes to the signing of these contracts, which are for hundreds of millions of dollars.

Again, no report made public on this, no agenda described, less protection for the taxpayer. We've also seen the government's record when it comes to procurement and capital projects with the key health care project, the Halifax Infirmary. We've seen that project, under the political control of this government, be delayed for who knows how long. We've seen the problems with the new art gallery that was proposed. That's delayed. We have not even seen this government follow through on a single major capital project yet. But now they want to have control over Build Nova Scotia under ministerial authority. Something doesn't add up on this either. I am happy to register my disagreement with this piece of legislation and my concerns about it moving forward.

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

The honourable Minister of Public Works.

[4:45 p.m.]

HON. KIM MASLAND: I thank my members across the aisle for their compliments. (Laughter) Far from compliments here tonight - for their comments.

As I said in second reading, this is about bringing complementary mandates together. It's about building on strengths. It's about working together. I know that sometimes that concept is hard to understand, especially in here, but it is about building on the strengths of two entities, bringing them together.

I've had the opportunity for the past year to work with Nova Scotia Lands. I said this in second reading as well. I am absolutely just amazed by the technical expertise that the folks who work in Nova Scotia Lands have. I am extremely excited to be able to work with the folks in Develop Nova Scotia. They have such visionary and project management expertise and talent.

I will assure the members across the aisle that I don't go backwards, I go forward. I put my name on the ballot for one reason - and that is to try to always make things better for Nova Scotians, and especially for the constituents I represent. I am very excited about the possibilities ahead of us with Build Nova Scotia. I look forward to working with everyone who will be involved.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 216.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 216.

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 SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 225.

Bill No. 225 - 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. 225, an Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, now be read for a third time.

We are in a housing crisis. Thousands of families, children, the elderly, and the vulnerable are urging us to take action now so that they have a safe, affordable place to call home as soon as possible. We are in a growing province. In fact, we haven't seen growth like this in Nova Scotia in a generation, maybe many generations. This is good news for us. People from all over want to come and settle here. Others want to come home. But we need places for them to live and thrive.

We owe it to all these people and to all Nova Scotians in need of housing stock to take bold action to build more housing. We need to continue working together urgently and collaboratively across all levels of government to find ways to speed up development, not slow it down.

As I have said before, these amendments give me authority to intervene on behalf of Nova Scotians on matters of broad public interest that relate to housing and construction, and only in HRM. It is my hope that no minister will have to use this power, but without these amendments, many large housing projects would have seen reduction in construction hours, a slowdown of work, or increased labour costs. That means hundreds, if not thousands, of people waiting for housing would have to wait longer and possibly pay more. That's just not acceptable. If necessary, I am willing to intervene on behalf of Nova Scotians.

As you know, we introduced an amendment in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills that no marginalized community or African Nova Scotian community would be affected. One of the criteria in the bill is that it's in the public interest. Certainly, affecting marginalized communities or African Nova Scotian communities would not be in the public interest. It was never the intent of our bill to address that. I want to speak directly to those communities that we understand the historic nature of the injustices, and we have no intention as a government to repeat them - that it's not in the public interest that we even do that. We want to work with them collaboratively and are looking for ways in my department to do so, frankly.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I wait to hear the comments from my colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today . . . (Applause) (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm just going to ask that there be no clapping, hollering, or anything from the gallery. It's not allowed. I know it's exciting.

The honourable member for Preston.

ANGELA SIMMONDS: I appreciate the support. Mr. Speaker, when we change what it looks like in the Legislature, we're going to have to eventually change what happens

in the gallery. With that, I will continue to speak and thank people in the gallery for their patience. I'm going to take my time and do my best to represent your voices and concerns, which you have shared with me.

I rise to speak to Bill No. 225 and the amendment brought forward. I ask this government and my colleagues to please pause and show some empathy. African Nova Scotians are among the founding settled people of this country and contributed to this province socially, culturally, artistically, professionally, and politically. We have enriched this part of Mi'kma'ki, known as Nova Scotia, since 1604, despite having endured sustained oppression to this day.

Historically, our African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities have been displaced, land has been stolen, and gentrification continues to happen. Today, I rise to speak not only to the amendment, but to the voices of the brothers and sisters who went and brought this amendment forward. It was not government that put this amendment in, it was you, and it was government that designed this bill.

I will say it again - it is because of you that we have an amendment brought forward. I'll just ask that we take a closer look at this fine print - what is now being acknowledged, which didn't happen before the amendment of Bill No. 225 hit the floor. The amendment reads: "Shall conduct consultation with representatives of impacted communities to ensure protection of the communities before making an order under Subsection 1, respecting that bylaw and part of that bylaw."

That inclusion of this amendment further validates and acknowledges implicit bias, structural discrimination, and anti-Black racism that exists within our institutions of power in this province. I have said it in this Legislature before: Regardless of the intention, when you don't understand the impacts of your actions or your words, there will always be unintentional consequences. There is a reason that community folks mistrust, because the same thing continues to happen. Our perspective, our voices are not included until after the fact - when our communities are continuously dispossessed and oppressed, when resources continuously get taken away and barriers are put in place, and then for some reason there's a turnaround and blaming us for showing up, for not trusting, when it all could have been avoided if the necessary work was done beforehand.

This is why dismantling racism and hate was so important, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, and this government knew it was important. When we think about that bill and the amendments that were passed, and the consultation that was done, let that lead. This is why this bill and this amendment should include consultation with intentional and authentic voices, and there should be regulations embedded in them, with safeguards.

Each of our communities are at different stages of development, advocacy, and transformation. There needs to be a clear definition of "consultation." I have that, because

the African Nova Scotian Decade of People of African Descent and the Justice Institute have created a definition. The definition for consultation: The act of the minister undertaking a process of meaningful and timely dialogue by actively listening to marginalized communities to gain valuable expertise from the community about its issue. Decisions made from all consultations should be in the best interests of the community based on the community's expertise, feedback, and recommendations. The failure to conduct such consultations or make decisions in the best interest of the community would not be acknowledged as proper consultation.

The consultation process is defined as: Consultation must include no fewer than one or more than three public meetings, with representatives from impacted communities during which the members of the impacted community may provide their own recommendations and comments.

And the last definition - meaningful: the timely process of seeking, discussing, and considering carefully the views of the impacted community in a manner that is contingent with the impacted community's cultural views and feasibly seeking agreement. Consultation between government and the African Nova Scotian community shall be conducted in a manner that acknowledges them and their voices as expertise. I'll table this.

I would encourage government to take a pause and work with community members and consider these suggested regulations. The minister also confirmed he received a letter from the African Nova Scotian Decade for People of African Descent Coalition which outlined the concerns, and that's where the amendment came from. There were further safeguards in that letter, the second one being an advisory board of African Nova Scotian members from all HRM historic African Nova Scotian communities when any application for deeds or development is proposed in any historic African Nova Scotian community, including but not limited to Beechville, Cherry Brook, East Preston, Lake Loon, Lucasville, North Preston, and Hammonds Plains.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot talk about housing, zoning, or bylaws without considering the impacts on African Nova Scotian communities or think that there will not be unintentional consequences. This is exactly what happened with Africville, with the Land Titles Clarification Act impacting home ownership and property development.

This government's success will depend on building meaningful relationships with individuals, communities, and organizations. We have a complex history fraught with racism due to the loss of and expropriation of land, tax sales. This resulted in generating a legacy of wealth disparity. Wealth disparity between races starts with historical injustices like this. The more vulnerable you are, the more important it is to extend trust carefully.

This government must understand that zoning and bylaws play a critical role in the success and erosion of our communities. Historically, African Nova Scotian communities

have not had zoning or bylaws aligned with any goals or visions of our communities. We have seen this before. We have been here before.

This is far-reaching authority over government. A government that does not look like us or sound like us or have the empathy to walk in our shoes to even understand what happens when there is no one in the room who can consider the impacts. When there's no one who sounds or looks like me or better yet looks like all of you in the gallery.

Mr. Speaker, I can't help but wonder what African Nova Scotians might have achieved in generational wealth over past centuries had these barriers not been in place. Let us not keep the barriers in place and assure African Nova Scotian communities that they will forever thrive and prosper with authentic representation and their legacies continue in this province.

It's also important to note that this government cannot talk about Bill No. 225 without considering enforcement of this legislation. The minister has said when enacted the bill will help control noise. I ask this question to the House: how will the noise bylaws be enforced? By whom? I can tell you by whom: Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP.

Who are already overpoliced in our province? Who are already overpoliced because of the calls placed against them for noise or disturbance? I can tell you: low-income families and housing, Black African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has referred to public housing as ghettos, and I'll table that. The Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives is responsible for the two offices that should have been consulted before drafting Bill No. 225. If they were, Mr. Speaker, that demonstrates even greater concern.

The Minister of Justice, our Attorney General, who oversees policing in this province, did not raise concerns amongst his colleagues about how this bill could further erode the public confidence in policing and law enforcement. This province and our communities should be worried.

But we're debating the merits of the amendment, which was established in the consultation process. All three of these positions demonstrate the lack of knowledge, competency, and leadership required to make certain that all Nova Scotians believe our government is committed to a just, equitable, and fair process.

Bill No. 225 will compromise relationships and further develop mistrust. My concern is that without the proper detail of consultation and advice, this bill will further stigmatize and stereotype low-income, Black, and Indigenous peoples.

[5:00 p.m.]

This is not a bill that was intended only to address noise, because the amendment clearly demonstrated that it's about exercising power and authority.

I see the confusion on the faces across the floor. Sometimes I can be honest, and I feel the resentment of when my voice speaks in here and how it is not welcomed. I remind you that I have said before that this is not your House, and this is not my House. This is the People's House.

I'll leave you with the words of Audre Lorde: "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."

When decisions are made and there is no one in the room who looks and sounds like us, sounds like me, it will have an impact. Most importantly, it will target and profile those who are impacted the most, and it will have real and direct consequences. As long as the decision-makers continue to treat lived experiences of Black and brown people in this province as a mere inconvenience, we will continue to pay the price emotionally, psychologically, financially, and physically.

Unintended consequences are unacceptable. Do your homework, use your resources, educate yourself, and do better. Today is an opportunity for you to pause and listen.

Once again, I will thank everyone upstairs who continues to give me the confidence and the courage to stand in this House when I feel that it was not built for me to be here. Thank you. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I want to say thank you for those wise words. We understand what this looks like when we're here in this House. Sometimes it is a bit difficult, but I've got to give you my strength on that same piece.

I rise to speak briefly to this bill - and it won't be brief. You know that it is not going to be brief. This bill has been concerning from the start. It allows a province to unilaterally steamroll HRM bylaws even though they are often developed in close consultation with the communities impacted.

The government has said that the intention is to only apply the bill to the noise bylaw in order to speed up development. If that's the case, why didn't the government support an amendment to make that clear? I spoke to many amendments in this House on Thursday, and I fought for changes so that this bill could actually have something to stand on.

I am absolutely happy to see this small piece of amendment that has been put forward, but it is not good enough - absolutely not good enough. I want to say that this is why our caucus has opposed this bill at every stage.

I'll submit that all of these bills that have been brought forward - and I don't mean to say this to bring it into the context of this bill - a lot of the things we have seen and the themes that we have seen are because the real impetus behind any of these bills is to consolidate control, which is very, very concerning.

This is also why Black communities have been greatly alarmed by the speedy process of this bill, with no safeguards for communities like some that were mentioned by the member for Preston: Lucasville, Beechville, East Preston, Lake Loon, North Preston, and a number of rural areas that are experiencing great pressure from developers who have been engaged in careful community-based planning.

I am going to go into another little piece here, because I spoke on Thursday about the letters that were brought forward to the ministers and to the Premier. This is exactly what I said:

“Bill 225 as currently presented exposes our community to risk of further development and harm. We have been working with HRM over the past two years to amend our GU-1 zoning to ensure the community is consulted for new development. Bill 225 will give authority to nullify the proposed amendments when they are finalized.

“Systemic racism has caused centuries of inequality. In our Province, the most economically significant being the dispossession of land belonging to African Nova Scotians. Loss of land through expropriation, tax sales, and fractured land title has prohibited residents from generating legacy wealth. Over hundreds of years, the effects have compounded exponentially which has destroyed millions of dollars of Black wealth.

“Our community's heritage is being eroded as lands are developed outside of community control and with immense housing and development pressures in the region.”

I will also touch on another letter, and I can put these forward as well, Mr. Speaker:

“The changes proposed to Bill 225 would allow the provincial government to bypass Halifax Regional Municipality's procedures for obtaining land deeds permits and allow the province to authorize developers' permits for land. This change is deeply

concerning as it could nullify,” once again, “all the work African Nova Scotian communities have done to protect and preserve their historic communities in favour of land developers.

Without safeguards within Bill 225 to protect the historic [African Nova Scotian] communities in HRM the outcome could be disastrous. If this bill passes as currently proposed, it will allow the further gentrification and possible erasure of our historic [African Nova Scotian] communities within HRM” and beyond.

There were a number of proposed safeguards. There were a number of amendments that I put forward that included some of these pieces on Thursday night which were rejected by this government.

I want to touch on a few things that were talked about when it comes to why we’re here in this House. We talk about legislation. There was a piece of legislation that was just recently passed. It’s called An Act to Dismantle Racism and Hate. I’ve been waiting for this moment to really put forward what this really means, and now I can use it.

Let’s see how this plays out in the actions of this government, when they put forward bills that are structurally discriminatory with no consult nor regard to the African Nova Scotian communities. I also have to say that if you look at the makeup of the government side of this House, you would see a white Premier, a white Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and of the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, and a white Cabinet that put forward a piece of legislation that speaks just to this issue: discrimination and anti-Black racism.

My thought is that no one on the government side thought this was a bad idea. They thought it was great. No one. The fact that we continue to have bills like this on the table is quite disturbing when this government was so proud of the Dismantling Racism and Hate Act. I would kindly suggest that we take in this information - because this is your bill - as it is not a good look for this government when you don’t practice what you preach.

An Act to Dismantle Racism and Hate: In the Act,

“it is recognized that marginalized and racialized individuals and communities in Nova Scotia experience harmful and unjustifiable inequities and disparities because of systemic hate, inequity, and racism . . . systemic hate, inequity, and racism is often caused by government and public body policies, practices and procedures that appear neutral but have the effect of disadvantaging marginalized and racialized groups and can be perpetuated by a failure to identify, monitor and correct disparities and inequities”

which is what we have in front of us today in this particular bill.

This government states that this act of

“eliminating systemic hate, inequity and racism and advancing racial equity supports the economic success and well-being of society, and everyone benefits when individuals and communities are no longer marginalized.”

We all need to truly believe that. Based on the amendments that I put forward that were rejected by this government, I’m really not quite sure that’s what everyone in this House believes.

The letters from this community speak to the contrary. “This Act is intended to establish a commitment by the Government to address systemic hate, inequity, and racism to enhance the economic success and well-being of all Nova Scotians.” In this case, are we committed to continuing this harm, or addressing it? I will continue on with my discussion.

In Section No. 3, the “Minister is responsible for the general supervision and management of this Act and the regulations.” As my colleagues said over here, we were wondering why didn’t this piece of legislation go through the minister’s office? Why didn’t it go through and see if there were some inequities that could be addressed?

“The Office is responsible for the implementation of this Act on behalf of and under the supervision of the Minister.” My question today is: If we have an office that specifically addresses these concerns and a minister who is responsible and accountable to Nova Scotians, who is also sitting alongside his colleagues who, with his knowledge and understanding of the Act, should have immediately - if not the minister, his department - given advice to his colleagues about the harm and inequitable actions that this bill would cause.

The objective of the government is “to achieve equity and anti-racism and to eliminate disparities, hate, and inequities” - I said that before - “that negatively impact marginalized and racialized individuals and communities in the Province.” I would say here today in this House that this bill does exactly that and communities have spoken to it.

“To achieve its objective, the Government shall (a) raise awareness of the importance of equity and anti-racism and the elements that contribute to equity and anti-racism.” How is this supposed to happen when we do not even follow our own legislation when it comes to the business of this House? We need to do better.

I say this because we have given amendments. We have done our part to help to ensure that this bill would speak to that. The community has spoken. They have given their input, and we are still not doing the work that needs to be done. We need to do better and,

as well, open our eyes to the harms that this does to African Nova Scotian communities. I'm raising awareness as we speak, so I hope that we are all listening.

We need to "create the conditions necessary for equity and anti-racism." This is crucial to the work that we do here in the House, and we should be the example of how we want all Nova Scotians to be treated. If this is a bill that we are going to bring forward that's going to exclude and continue to marginalize and continue to oppress Black people and communities, is that really what we want to show?

In this Act, the office's responsibility includes "evaluating existing policy to address systemic hate, inequity and racism." Was this the case with this bill? Did the minister confer with his colleagues about this and how this was not a good idea?

Being the Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs and Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives, this is exactly the type of systemic racism and discrimination that the minister needs to recognize and fight for, even speak to - one of the many reasons why the African Nova Scotian community was so up in arms about the minister's role as a white male. How are we as African Nova Scotians supposed to feel like you have our back if you're not able to recognize these types of harms? This is not the first time that this has happened.

This Act is based on principles, and I will say the government - it says here in this Act, "the Government is committed to eliminating systemic hate, inequity and racism." The "achievement of equity and anti-racism is a shared responsibility among governments, the private sector and all Nova Scotians; systemic hate, inequity, and racism require urgent action." If this isn't urgent, I don't know what is. Was there any action on this bill to consult with African Nova Scotian community partners who have made statements and given recommendations for safeguards? Appreciating the impact of intersectionality is crucial in addressing systemic hate, inequity, and racism, and the demonstration of leadership and commitment to equity and anti-racism, which this government hasn't yet shown.

I know I have spoken in great detail, and I did say I was going to keep it brief, but you know, some may actually listen to my words, and I'm hoping that you all have an understanding of my concerns. It is on record, so we can always go back to it if we feel like we might not be doing the right thing.

I want to remind all members that this bill, as well as many others, speaks volumes to the lack of diversity and acknowledgement and understanding of the adversity and barriers that our communities and our African Nova Scotian communities face. We have a piece of legislation - and I say this because I have kind of been doing a little bit of studying, doing a little bit of research, and I'm kind of like, yeah, I get to add that into the Act. This is what we produce. This is the work that we do. We have to stand by the work that we do, and it's really important for us to be that leader when it comes to allowing Nova Scotians to do that same stuff.

[5:15 p.m.]

I want to say that we have a piece of legislation that speaks directly to this behaviour and how it is disrespectful and requires urgent action on this matter. The Progressive Conservative Party needs to read and acknowledge that this bill goes completely against the Act and should be taken off the table completely.

I want to say that we stand here, and we talk about a number of things. Our role is to debate the issues and bring forward some major pieces because this is what we do. We're here to help you. We're not here to create wildness. We're here to help you do the best work that you can do as a government. If you don't see that, there's a problem, because we have a ton of expertise, mainly in our own constituencies. We can tell you about what's going on where we live.

I spoke to DPAD's letter. I spoke to a letter from Pastor Lenny. To their credit, the government did make a change to this bill in response to that letter. Was it enough? No, it wasn't, but I have to commend the minister that there was an amendment put forward. I appreciate that, but we also need to understand that there's more that we can do.

Historic African Nova Scotian communities are very concerned about this piece of work, and we need a government that respects community voices and not steamrolls them. As my colleague said, there are clear definitions of consultation, there are clear definitions of what we could be doing to help embolden the bills that we put forward. We need a government that respects community consultation and the democratic process.

I will say this: there is an opportunity for this government right now as we sit and as we look at this and as we talk and listen. There's an opportunity. The government can rescind this bill. They can take this bill back, take what we've all said, take what the community says, consult, whatever that looks like, and we can pull it, take it back, and maybe bring something else back that may be relevant to the work that we need to be doing in this House. (Applause)

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

LORELEI NICOLL: It's my duty to stand here today and address concerns with the amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter proposed in Bill No. 225. Specifically, what is this problem that they're trying to correct, and what is the broader issue and end game of this legislation?

I thank and acknowledge the comments from my colleagues on this side of the room. Obviously, I share your concerns. Are these legislative bills simply a distraction from this government's own mandate that they were elected to address, which is to fix health care, or to turn attention away from the lack of real action that we've heard by this government in the urgent areas of homelessness and the immediate need for more

affordable housing, in particular, low-market housing?

Since coming to power, this government has fired, disbanded, constrained, or removed many boards and experts, including the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board, the Economic Growth Council, Tourism Nova Scotia Board, NSBI Board, Innovacorp Board, Develop Nova Scotia Board, the Nova Scotia Municipal Finance Corporation and, as we heard today, even the Public Utilities Act and the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board.

If they have intruded on HRM's planning process through the creation of the housing task force - they have, introducing yet another level of bureaucracy and consuming valuable planning resources from HRM - now they want to take over the management of HRM by giving themselves the power to arbitrarily veto any HRM bylaw.

It's one thing if this is just another corporate management style, but removing the government closest to the constituents begs the questions: What was the problem? What is the broader issue? What is this government's end game? We know our democracy is in jeopardy. It's been in decline for some time, with falling voter turnout rates for elections at all orders of government, and social media becoming a soapbox to replace reasoned democratic debate. Democracy is fragile and should not be taken for granted. By the very nature of the erosion of democracy, some governments are using that to consolidate their own power and enable how they govern. This is the pattern I see forming here.

Municipalities have long been described as children of the province and, like some parents, we sure would like to keep our children with us for as long as possible. We all know with maturity there comes a time when a child must leave, and that is where we are currently in this province. A former PC government recognized this in 2008 when they brought the HRM Charter into the Legislature. I will read the press release and table it:

“The challenges and opportunities faced by Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) have led the province today, May 23, to introduce legislation providing HRM with its own charter.

Also being introduced today, under a separate act, are amendments that deal with Halifax By Design.

‘It makes sense for Halifax, as the province’s largest city, its economic engine, and its capital, to have its own charter legislation,’ said Jamie Muir, Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. ‘The charter will allow government to be more flexible and responsive to HRM’s evolving needs, especially around growth, development, and economic opportunities.’

The charter takes municipal powers in general, and HRM in particular, under the current Municipal Government Act and places

them into a separate new act.”

Now they want to take over management. HRM is the child who is succeeding, but the Province is the parent who now wants it to continue to live in its basement. It's the parent who takes control to ensure it's the only mechanism in place to rule the family of Nova Scotia municipalities and keep the successful child even more so under its control. After all, this child's success also has the largest tax base.

What is not being acknowledged is that HRM is the child that has the highest cost of living in this province. We see this in the form of tents in public parks, the needy asking for help on our streets and sidewalks. It's easy to lump the vulnerable into compartments like mental health, for instance, but as a province, vulnerable people live in all municipal units. How is this being addressed? Or are the vulnerable expected to just blend into the landscape and someone else will take care of them?

I ask this government: Why focus on HRM's governance model, specifically the HRM Charter, when so many other areas need your attention now? Now, because guess what? Someone else cannot take care of it. It's the Province's area of jurisdiction - mental health, affordable housing, and public housing, labour shortages, and health care. As the parent, the Province must take care of all its children, all residents of this province.

Please stop using the housing crisis to justify intruding into municipal matters and focus on the true crisis - those who are unhoused. The unhoused, even though they are unhoused, are all Nova Scotians. They need a hand up, not a handout.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing met with council today. I don't know if it was to appear that he is complying with Section 382 of the Halifax Charter, which states, “The Minister shall consult with the Municipality respecting any proposed amendment to this Act.” At this meeting, a councillor advised the minister that the noise bylaw would be amended back to 9:00 o'clock. Had the minister conveyed any concerns to council, it would have been obvious that perhaps we wouldn't be standing here discussing this.

Governing is about setting priorities and being proactive, not reactive. This government is very reactive. Meeting with Halifax Regional Council is a requirement under the charter, but it is intended to provide a heads-up and to consult towards change, not to tick a box off after the fact.

The fulsome approach of what this bill is to accomplish is evident by the wording of this amendment put forth by this government. This bill authorizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to nullify a bylaw of the HRM within six months of its passing - nullify a bylaw. The noise bylaw, perhaps? I don't know.

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing clearly stated during a recent

press briefing, my amendment to specifically address the noise bylaw failed, so therefore one would conclude that this bill is not specific to just one bylaw.

It would appear this government is rescinding the intent of the former PC government to establish the HRM charter, and many a reference going back in time. Rather than being progressive in 2022 to collaborate with HRM to see the province's capital city continue to grow, this government feels it knows better and is now causing concern to all elected municipal officials in Nova Scotia as they all wonder who and what will be next.

The bill states: "Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008 is further amended by adding immediately after Section 204 the following": that the minister "(a) determines that the by-law or part of a by-law would impact housing or development." It also states: "Notwithstanding Section 382 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter and Section 519 of the Municipal Government Act, nothing in this Act or done pursuant to the provisions enacted or amended by this Act triggers any requirement to consult with the Halifax Regional Municipality or to notify the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities."

This bill came out of the blue, pun intended. I have an article, which I will table, where the mayor indicates he had breakfast with the minister a short time ago where the noise bylaw concerns were not discussed nor brought up. I will table that. Then he's called the night before to be advised of the bill to be tabled the next day in the Nova Scotia Legislature.

So I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, what changed? Who gave direction to implement this bill?

The minister also stated in the House that the current changes to the HRM bylaw would negatively impact construction of housing development by two months. I posed this question to the HRM CAO during the Law Amendments Committee. His reply was - and I will table it:

"No question that these bylaw changes will not impact at all the construction of units. The biggest issue is the labour supply. If someone comes to us and says they have limited access and they need to go longer with construction, we will let them go longer. If it's a little bit misleading that there are going to be that many days or months taken out of the construction season, it is, in fact, not true, in my opinion."

Back to this bill at hand. Let me remind you that the amalgamated HRM represents approximately half of Nova Scotia's population. It's also the largest rural municipality in Nova Scotia. It stretches from Hubbards to Ecum Secum and all points in between, including Sable Island. Geographically, it is the same size as Prince Edward Island.

May I also remind you that in addition to managing development in HRM, HRM is responsible for collecting and managing your garbage, compost, and recycled material; fighting your fires; protecting the safety and security of your life and property, including the police officers who stand here outside at Province House; building, plowing, and maintaining your streets and sidewalks; operating your buses and ferries; developing your active transportation opportunities; building businesses and parks; providing parking services to help your local businesses; building and operating your parks, playgrounds, gardens, and recreation programs and facilities; providing animal services; and many more services that directly impact the day-to-day lives of individual residents - and paying for all of these services.

May I finally remind you that every one of these services must be considered when contemplating new housing and development opportunities. As such, any HRM bylaw could potentially impact housing and development, and thus be at risk as a result of this legislation.

HRM's development policies and processes: Working with democratically elected municipal representatives and including robust public engagement to develop its bylaws to protect all residents of HRM. It has a dedicated and professional staff involved in developing, managing, and operating services. Elected municipal officials are there to address concerns on an ongoing basis, which is why bylaws are fluid and can be amended at any time. Bylaws are created by the people and for the people, and municipal government is truly the closest to the people of our province.

Does this government really think it has the skills, knowledge, and expertise to adequately carry out the role of HRM's elected officials and professional staff? Does the government really believe that it has no obligation to consult with the HRM or to notify the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities in nullifying democratically developed bylaws?

This bill was amended to address planning and development in underrepresented communities of HRM. Sadly, this consideration is seen as an oversight, given that this government did not address it from the beginning. Has this government done its due diligence to ensure that no other areas of concern were overlooked, especially given the broad scope of this bill?

I ask that this government doesn't make another misstep, like so many others that they've made in its rush to appear proactive when, in fact, they are simply tearing down our democratic institutions and consolidating power in their own hands - without actually doing anything concrete to address the immediate problems and concerns of ordinary Nova Scotians.

I have been around politics for some time here in Halifax. I know the players, and I know them well. I will continue to observe, but be aware that regardless of the current

erosion of democracy, many Nova Scotians are paying attention, including every elected municipal official across Nova Scotia.

[5:30 p.m.]

I attended the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities dinner, as did the minister. We heard wholeheartedly the concerns from everyone across this province, as a municipal elected official. If one would think that this is not on the minds of people, I will be tabling these two articles. I am just going to quote a few of the letters that were addressed into the local paper:

“Ever since winning his majority, Premier Tim Houston has wanted to show that he is a man of action: someone who gets things accomplished, who cuts through red tape. Someone who doesn’t let little things like democracy and consultation slow him down.”

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. You gave the proper name for the Premier. I would ask that you retract that, please.

LORELEI NICOLL: I am reading verbatim . . .

THE SPEAKER: If you come across it, just say, “The Premier.”

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

LORELEI NICOLL: Thank you for that clarification. Another: “All power to the premier seems to be his motto. What might be next?”

Another letter:

“As many have pointed out, overriding the noise bylaw is not going to solve the housing shortage, which is caused by other issues. It sets a dangerous precedent for the Province to interfere further in municipal affairs.”

“The Province is now micromanaging and second-guessing municipal decisions with inadequate information. The municipal government is tasked with working out a balanced relationship between citizens’ needs and further development. The Province is ill-equipped to adequately do that which is already being addressed at the municipal level.”

Claiming the excuse that they are responding to the need of housing and are doing this on behalf of Nova Scotians is disingenuous.

Nullifying bylaws that were developed with broad citizen input is certainly not representing the interests of Nova Scotians.

The housing task force is composed entirely of upper echelon bureaucrats, but there is no one who represents the interests of the general public, HRM council or its existing regional plan.

I will table those letters.

Just because the Province can, with this bill, doesn't mean it should. It is obvious this bill wasn't properly thought out. As a former colleague of mine was known to say often, be careful of what you wish for - especially in light of HRM council's amendment to the noise bylaw for concrete finishing that they are tabling, and probably have already passed, to change the time from 8 o'clock back to 9 o'clock. The minister, when asked by councillors today, did not have a chance to respond to those. I hope that when he responds today, he will address their concerns and their questions. They are watching.

I reiterate: If this is about the HRM bylaw, hasn't the concern of delay been addressed by council's amendment? Doesn't this council amendment remove the need for this bill? Like my colleagues from Preston asked, and I will ask as well, that this government pause and give careful second thought to what is being carried out in this legislation today.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Boy, do I have a lot to say. I don't want to go over too much of what I said during Committee of the Whole on Bills, when we went through Law Amendments Committee and others, but the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth reminded me - I also had a colleague, a former councillor who would always say to me, don't borrow trouble. That was Councillor Ray Paruch. He would always, constantly say, don't borrow trouble.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this bill is borrowed trouble, and I'm going to go back to what I said during Law Amendments Committee: This is a bad bill. Bill No. 225 is a bad bill. It's a bad premise, and it creates a bad relationship with municipal units. It is just a bad bill.

Yes, one amendment that we did support in our caucus was because it was a necessity to support, or else consultation would not happen. The premise of the bill is a bad bill. The only way forward in this bill is for the minister to rescind the bill, and may it never rear its ugly head again. Bill No. 225 is undemocratic, it's heavy-handed and not needed.

I'll go back to what was said during Law Amendments Committee: Bill No. 225 is a direct intrusion into municipal affairs, and it happened without any consultation with the

HRM. In fact, the only time I know of that consultation did happen was when the minister today went before the HRM Council meeting. All this time, and that was the consultation that occurred.

Bill No. 225 was introduced into this Legislature, again, without consulting the HRM, and this is a direct contravention of Section 382(1) of the HRM Charter, which requires the minister to consult with the municipalities. It's not that hard, Mr. Speaker, to consult with the municipalities. It's a phone call, arrange a meeting. Trust me, the mayors and the councillors are always willing to consult, to not be dictated to. Because I am a former councillor, I find this offensive. I do, because if I was sitting at my desk in a council chamber right now, I'd be angry, which I am on their behalf. I'd be feeling disrespected by this government - well-founded feelings of feeling disrespected.

The HRM councillors who spoke at Law Amendments Committee each basically said the same thing, that they did feel disrespected. The fact that they weren't notified - even though it's our understanding that the minister and Mayor Savage of the HRM speak often. Again, I want to remind this House of the Executive Panel on Housing in the HRM where the municipal units - the HRM did not feel it was necessary and were not involved in that bill. It was indicated at Law Amendments Committee that even though they don't think it's necessary, they did show up because that's their job.

This government's job was to consult with them, and they failed. They failed in that duty. I cannot even get over the fact that in a few minutes or so, this side of the House - the government side - is going to congratulate themselves on passing a bad, undemocratic, and heavy-handed bill.

They can go ahead. They can self-congratulate. That's the only congratulations that they're going to get, because they're not going to get congratulations from the HRM, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that. They're not going to get congratulations from the NSFM. They're not going to get congratulations from every municipal unit there is.

Bill No. 225 can only be described as authoritarian. This bill will override bylaws. Again, I'm going to explain this to my colleagues across the aisle who may not understand how municipal government works. Bylaws often come from issues that residents have. The residents bring it forward to their councillors. The councillors bring it forward to their colleagues around the chamber. They direct and ask the CAO and staff to produce a paper. That staffer does that. From there, they may or may not create a bylaw. The bylaw then goes through stages such as ours.

It's first introduced in that chamber. Then it goes to public hearings, consultations, and what have you. Also, prior to that, while the work was being done to produce the bylaw, consultation was also happening. I should say that. Then there are public hearings, and they can be immense. They can be exhausting, but they are a necessity because they make sure that the communities have their say. Now it's "Call the minister." You want a consultation?

Call the minister.

I can only ask again what many others have. Which bylaw will be next? Which bylaw does this government not like that they'll nullify next? How many times are they going to interfere in municipal government and municipal bylaws?

I can say a lot more, but I'm not going to. What I'm going to say is this: The only way through this bill is to rescind it, take it back, and may it never rear its ugly head again.

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: Thank you to all my colleagues for standing up today and speaking to this important initiative from the government.

I will begin by acknowledging that this all started under the auspices of there being an issue that delays development so significantly related to a noise bylaw, which we know now not to be the case. We know that definitively, by way of not accepting the Liberal amendment to focus it on a noise bylaw and by admitting that it's not just about that by introducing another subsequent amendment, which I'll go into a little bit further. Whether we'll hear those words come from the minister or not, we know that to be the case.

I'm a representative for two historic African Nova Scotian communities and two First Nations Reserves, so I feel pretty strongly compelled to say a few things in response to some of the feedback that I have received from constituents and community members.

I will state that in my comments in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, I started by an attempt at a little bit of diplomacy in saying that I do appreciate the sentiment behind the amendment that was offered. I'm hesitant to stand in my place today and reiterate that, because of how things had to come together. The government introduced an amendment in the final hours of the day. We rushed our way through it. We had to move on. The government said it was so, and that was supposed to be good enough.

I believe that the conversation about marginalized communities is something that deserves more time than the last 10 minutes on the fly at the end of the day. Frankly, if it was a genuine amendment, then we would have had the opportunity at that point in time in our legislative process to ask these questions. I did pose one question to the minister through the Chair, and he looked at me like I had four heads. He didn't even bother to try to offer an answer to my questions.

I'll ask them now and hopefully he'll make a point to address some of them. Though I approach the conversation humbly, I do represent the communities of Upper Hammonds Plains, Lucasville, the Acadia First Nation, and the Sipekne'katik First Nation reserves in my constituency. So the language around that particular amendment used the word "exclusively," and I had a conversation with somebody, a couple of different people who

further acknowledge that the use of that word is tricky and difficult to read.

[5:45 p.m.]

As I started to ask the minister: I said, who gets to decide whether something exclusively impacts the community or not? That's an important question to ask, and I think it's an important question to answer.

Second, through the Speaker, if there are stakeholders who are connected to or have stakes in communities - business-related, development-related, or otherwise - does that omit that situation from being exclusive to one of the communities that we're talking about? That's important to answer.

What happens - and this is very specific to the circumstances in Upper Hammonds Plains - what happens when there's work under way at HRM pertaining to bylaws and laws that are designed to protect the historic integrity of all African Nova Scotian communities? What happens when there's work under way that is not yet complete? Does the work that's under way qualify as being a bylaw that this amendment would serve to appreciate? If it's not already set in stone as a municipal bylaw, do we overlook that?

We've seen a tremendous amount of development that has come into the community of Upper Hammonds Plains. I get calls not infrequently from residents of Lucasville asking questions about what's happening on Lucasville Road with respect to development. Land is changing hands, people want to develop, which leads to my next question - and the minister references this as the newfound sentiment behind this bill. When there is a public good involved, that's when this comes in. He says, hopefully we never have to use this.

If there's a scenario where whomever is responsible for deciding on the exclusivity of this bylaw - which I submit is the minister. If the minister decides that there's a public good involved in an overall development - we know that housing is needed - do we forego any sort of consultation because a minister said it's in the public good, so we don't have to go back to this important amendment?

I have to register these questions because an amendment of this sort in the eleventh hour is not enough to develop the important relationships that we as an entity - and I say this as we as a government, we as a Legislature - need to be intentional about establishing these relationships. Standing on your feet and offering an amendment at the eleventh hour - if it was enough for someone from government to get on their feet and say it is so, then it would probably be so. But that is not the case.

History has disenfranchised our friends and neighbours in the African Nova Scotian community and in the Indigenous communities of Nova Scotia. If it was enough for a minister to come in and say, let it be so, I think we would be in a very different spot. I think

it's fair to acknowledge that we are not there and that the establishment of these very important relationships with these communities takes a lot more than 10 minutes at the end of the day.

I guess I'll just leave the debate with the thought that we have a tremendous responsibility and an opportunity to build relationships with all Nova Scotians and communities throughout this province. Forgoing some stronger consultation would be a tremendous misstep, in my opinion.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent of the House to extend House hours until 7:00 p.m. this evening.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for unanimous consent to extend House hours until 7:00 p.m. Is it agreed? It is agreed.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I wanted to stand and add my voice to this discussion. I think when we moved back with our young family in 2008, it was Nova Scotians as community builders that really drew us back. I come from a community of community builders. Most Nova Scotians experience Halifax Citadel at some point, whether it's for health care, education, coming to government, entertainment, heritage. Thank goodness for the community builders in my riding, because as this neighbourhood continuously evolves and changes, they are there. They are engaged. They are thinking about this neighbourhood. They are building this neighbourhood throughout all they're engaged in - urban planning and decision-making that has been conducted with HRM with public participation.

I think we all have noted that municipal politics and municipal policies really often are the things that are closest to people's everyday lives. They're the things that people live and breathe and feel, and are so important for people to be able to be a part of, thinking about that. I think we want them to be a part of it. We don't want communities built by top-down decree. We want communities built where people are invested, connected, concerned, and contributing to the development of their communities.

I stand briefly to say that this bill is a terrible bill, as my colleague for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier has said. I stand here on behalf of constituents whom I have heard from who rightly wonder exactly how much their rights as residents of HRM are going to be harmed over time.

I don't even quite understand how the government chose to disregard a section of a statute, which is Section 382 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, which I think requires consultation. What kind of government is disregarding pieces of provincial

legislation? I think we need to be very concerned about this bill, but what about other bills? What other pieces will this government disregard in decision-making?

The minister and government had a chance to fix the bill and to make it about noise bylaws. Just as an aside, in Halifax Citadel we have a lot of cranes up, we have a lot of development going on and actually the noise bylaws are a big deal. I hear about it on a weekly basis.

The government had a chance to focus this, to address what they were saying they were wanting to address, and they didn't do that, so it's really clear that that's not what this bill is about. It's really clear that this bill is another example of where this government, through this minister, continues to consolidate power and actually override the municipal voting rights of almost a half a million people.

It's completely baffling as an initiative. It's very concerning. I stand opposed to this bill and I want to reflect the views of my constituents in that regard.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I would like to give another area that has been very important, and I would love for the minister to acknowledge this issue as well in regard to Bill No. 225 and its broad and wide reach and the power that this minister is going to have.

Has he considered or has he consulted with the Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes and the impact that this bill could have on the environment and on the land? The people in my riding, and especially the Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, are really concerned about this government outreach and how it will impact the provincially protected land of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes.

Madam Speaker, this area is a dream and it's something that this group has worked so hard to protect to leave for generations to come, the largest urban wilderness area in Halifax. Hopefully it's on its way to be designated as a national park. I know that three levels of government have worked hard to make sure that we protect this valuable land for the future of our kids, for the future of our generation as well. However, they are all very concerned that this bill would allow the minister to take over or change bylaws, or bylaws' amendments as well, that have been put in place by HRM.

We would like some kind of confirmation from this minister if he has consulted with the group and what his intention is in regard to the lands surrounding Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes.

If this minister was really concerned about the noise bylaws, on November 3rd, in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth brought forward an amendment to specify that this bill is about noise bylaws. It was voted down by

this government - and why? Because the bill wasn't really about the noise bylaw, it was some kind of camouflage to hide behind this one small bylaw that this bill is supposed to be about. We need to go back to that and specify, otherwise this bill can affect so many things. It is very important how it is treating the independent, democratically elected council that has worked very hard with environmental groups to make sure that we're all aligned, and these bylaws are protected.

[6:00 p.m.]

Also, it seems like this government is intentionally going after things, after organizations that are doing so well, that have proven to do things. HRM has managed their finances, have kept their taxes lower. They have invested in infrastructure to help with the growth. Why are we going after this group of people and telling them what to do when they know their job much better than the provincial government in the smaller areas?

My main concern is about Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, and I would really like the minister to address this issue, if he has spoken to any of the members of this group. Does he know about all the pieces of land around Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes and what will happen to them? Will he commit to protecting that land?

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise to speak briefly to this bill. I rise to support my colleagues. I'll start by saying what others have said, which is that it's a bad bill.

I have three children, and at the ages that they're at, I feel like the conversation in my house is always about rules: You know you can't do this at this time, or this is a rule, or why do I have to follow the rule? Because I'm your parent. Who cares? Whatever it is, it's about following the rules.

First of all, the government did not follow the rules. That has been pointed out by my colleagues. This bill is in contravention of the Municipal Government Act. But in this Chamber, we don't just follow the rules. We make the rules. It is our job to make the rules better.

When I was young, the way that I learned about systemic racism was through the story of Africville. The way that I met the member for Preston was through working on land titles - years and years ago, before our political lives started. We know in those cases - which certainly would raise the concern of any community - any community that has experienced the kind of systemic racism regarding land, which has been spoken about in this House today would be rightly and deeply suspicious of any legislation that infringed on what little progress has been made in that area, or threatened to infringe on it. Yet we have a government that seemingly is not able to either articulate or care or pursue this job that we have, which is to make better rules, to know better and to do better.

My colleague the member for Halifax Needham spoke about the legislation that was passed, the anti-racism legislation that was passed in this House, the purpose of which was to avoid situations like this. We know that systemic racism is often invisible to the folks making the rules. It is. That's just how it is.

Our job is to make that visible. One of the jobs of that legislation is to make that visible, to make visible the disproportionate impact of the legislation that moves through this House on different communities.

This is a test case. This is a test case of that, because any government at any time can always stand behind the defence of, well, that's not how it was intended. That's not how we planned it. That's not what we want it to be. We hear that every day. Every time we debate legislation if it's controversial, the government will say, well, we're doing this for this reason. Often on behalf of our constituents we might say, well, we think it might have this other impact or we think there might be this other reason.

In this case, I think the most charitable interpretation, which I have no reason to believe is not the right one - insofar as this bill has the potential to impact historically African Nova Scotian communities, Indigenous communities, and others - is that it was an oversight. But that's not a good enough excuse. If it was an oversight, fix it.

We tried to fix it on Thursday. The government, as has been mentioned, brought forward an amendment that did respond to some of the specific requests from the Decade for People of African Descent, and that letter has been tabled, but it didn't go far enough. I think that we understand that it didn't go far enough. I think the government probably understands that it didn't go far enough, so now I think the government has to answer the question of why they're not taking that feedback.

We have a lot of really pressing issues in this province, and the legislation that is moving through the House today and tomorrow addresses very little of it. I think the government would say it sets the table for them to be able to address it, although we vigorously disagree on the means that they're taking to do that. Nonetheless, the issues are urgent. I think for folks whom I speak to - who have real concerns about their security of tenure, where they live, how they're able to experience that, who have a history of dispossession and marginalization - it is incumbent upon the government to know better and to do better.

I want to close by saying, again, we're making the rules here. This government has an opportunity to make rules that are just and fair, and don't have a disproportionately negative impact and don't even have the potential to. It doesn't matter what the purpose is, it matters what the impact is, and this bill has the clear capacity to have an incredibly negative impact on the lives of many folks.

I would join with my colleagues to ask, once again, that the minister take this bill

back to the department and bring it back in a way that is compliant with provincial legislation, that does not perpetuate systemic racism, and that respects all orders of government.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak and to say a few words on Bill No. 225. I have stood in this House in the second reading of this bill, and I did use my privilege in this House to speak. Also, I have to acknowledge that many members of this House did speak on this bill, and I could not say more than those members have said on this bill.

I would say, first of all, I would like to acknowledge members of African Nova Scotians who showed up today to this House. Also, one of the things that actually caught my attention - there were actually people who showed up just one hour ago, and there were people who were here at two o'clock today. That shows the significance of what we're talking about here today. I really believe we as elected officials - this House is the People's House and when they show up, we need to pay attention. When they speak, we need to acknowledge. I'd like to say to all of you, thank you for coming. This is your House.

Second, you have a voice in this House, in these seats. You have seen when my colleague Madam Speaker took the microphone, I could not say more than that. Because of that reason, your voices are here.

Also, I'm going to remind my colleagues that I saw a lot of seniors who showed up here, and I saw a lot of babies here. Some of them are still here. They're watching us and what's happening here today. This community has endured enough. Enough is enough. I will urge my colleagues to reconsider this.

I have great respect for my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I attended today his presentation at City Hall. I attended for good reason. To give you the background, I have worked in this municipality, and I was lucky enough to be a member of diversity and inclusion champions who encouraged this city to change their way of decision-making and to consult communities and to make input.

It was a long journey, but I think before I joined this House and I left the municipality, I felt that we'd made progress. The city has adopted a lot of policies and procedures that are included, irrespective of what community, specifically Indigenous and African Nova Scotian issues that will affect their daily life to be at the table.

Unfortunately, this is a part of the history of this province, especially when it comes to issues of African Nova Scotians. Every time that you feel we made a step forward, we take two steps backward. By the way, this doesn't happen in a vacuum. It happens intentionally. When you hear "systemic racism," you're wondering to somebody over there

that you can recognize his face. That's not it.

[6:15 p.m.]

I urge the Premier and the minister to listen to the community. And by the way, this community has a past. The ages and the times that you use - vague language, that you manipulate words, and nobody knows what you're talking about, and the testimony - it was tabled right here, Madam Speaker, actually tabled - what is the definition of community consultation?

If you really believe and you are sincere, you will want to include your decision with the community. I urge you to adopt that definition. That definition was not designed by lawyers, by staff, or by bureaucrats. It was designed and defined by the community.

I have to be fair, also. The minister and the Premier - it's not about you. I have great respect for both of you. Who will come after you? Who will be the next minister? Who will be the next Premier? If you are sincere and you know you have the intention to protect the communities, you never know who's going to show up here after you. You never know, those individuals, how much harm they can cause the communities. I urge you to be mindful. It's not about you. It's not about your decision and your vision. It's the impact your decisions could have for 40 years to come, the next generation to come.

I think enough has been said, but as I do this very often - and sometimes people think I'm naïve - which I really believe, rightly so, because everybody who sits on the other side of this House was elected by communities. They are community-oriented. They care about their communities. They care about their province. We may see things differently, but because of that reason, I'm still optimistic. I still believe things can be done better, differently. I'm going to end with those few words.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I wanted to get up and say a few words on this bill to support my colleagues from this side of the House who I think have made some very compelling and strong arguments in terms of the ill-conceived bill that we're considering. I'm also here to support our municipal councillors. I want to speak to support our municipal councillors across the province, and even more importantly than that, our communities across this province.

I come at this issue from spending seven years at the municipal level of government. Most of those years I chaired the planning committee in two different communities. Land-use planning is perhaps the most challenging part of the job of being a municipal councillor: working with citizens, with various communities; working through alternative visions; balancing the short-term and the long-term needs; and balancing the voices that are quiet with the voices that are loud, and those that are the loudest. It is not an easy job, and we at

the provincial level have delegated the responsibility for land-use planning to our municipal councillors.

We must show them the greatest respect for the work that they do at that level. They are the elected officials who know their communities, who live in their communities day-to-day, and interact with citizens on their issues, whether that be noise or traffic or how high buildings should be. It is not easy, as I've said, to work through those conversations with communities.

I would submit that it's the municipal councillors who are best-positioned to do that work, and we have asked them to do that work through the HRM Charter and through the Municipal Government Act. It is very clear. Land-use planning is not the responsibility of the provincial government. It is the responsibility of municipal councillors.

The MGA and the HRM Charter do anticipate that there could be issues of provincial interest. Embedded in the HRM Charter and the MGA is a tool called Statements of Provincial Interest. There is one on housing, a tool which the provincial government and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can use to ensure that municipalities hear some of the provincial priorities. Did this minister and this government use that tool? No. In fact, they have gone completely in the opposite direction from where we have interacted with municipalities for decades.

What we have here is a law proposed by this government that completely ignored good public process and, in fact, was a violation of provincial law in terms of consultation. What kind of government makes laws by breaking their own laws that already exist?

Why would this government show such disrespect to the HRM councillors and to those communities that HRM has been working with over the issue of noise? They worked on this bylaw for months. They had hearings. They had conversations. They heard both sides of the argument, from the developers to the communities. If the government was so concerned about that conversation, why did the government not appear before HRM council to put their views into the mix?

What we have learned through this process is that when you don't govern properly, use the process, and follow your own laws, there can be unintended consequences, serious unintended consequences. We have talked about that with respect to the folks in the gallery and the issues of racism. This law hijacked a process. It ignored communities.

The minister gets on his feet and proudly talks about inclusionary zoning and how the government had brought in that tool for municipalities. I agree that you should be proud of that. Municipalities have asked for it. It's a tool that municipalities can use if they want. That bylaw for inclusionary zoning left the power and responsibility with the municipality. It didn't heavy-handedly say the province is telling you that you have to do something. It was empowering legislation.

This current piece of legislation is not empowering. In fact, as Mayor Savage has said, it is a blatant attack on municipal jurisdiction and a significant threat to municipal government. Why can't the government stay in its own lane in terms of passing empowering legislation and using the Statements of Provincial Interest instead of a heavy-handed, unthought-through piece of legislation at the last minute?

It was a surprise to HRM Council, a surprise to the mayor, who meets weekly with the minister. It raises a lot of questions. How did this come out of thin air? Mayor Savage has talked about his relationship in his weekly meetings with the minister. Then, the night before this legislation is tabled, the minister calls the mayor. What is going on?

I think what we really should be paying attention to here is power. Do the members in this gallery have the power, through the municipal bylaws, through their relationships with their councillors - do they have the power to influence these laws? Does the family who is living next to construction for three or four or five years have the power to have their concerns heard by their councillor and the ability to influence the laws of the land? Or has the power shifted to someone well-connected to walk into a minister's or a premier's office and change laws in 24 hours?

That's what is of paramount concern: how this government has taken this law and put it on this table with the unintended consequence that has been an attack on communities and on municipal councillors. Let's let municipalities do their job.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: I wasn't going to stand. I'd like to thank all community members and all members who spoke before me regarding this bill. Fact: The bill was drafted. Fact: The bill was done without consultation. Fact: The bill says that it's about bylaws, a noise bylaw. Fact: We have a number of community members who have come to this House in opposition to this.

Here we are once again having to remind folks that there are communities and people who will be impacted by decisions that you make. I'm not going to stand for long. I'm going to ask that - no, I'm going to make a statement. I hope a lesson was learned today. As I've said in this House in the past - I'll say it once again - we don't need protectors, we need allies.

Having you think about what you have done and taking some real serious consideration in the fact that decisions are being made without those who are going to be affected is paternalistic. Don't do it again. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I will be very brief. I could not possibly match the

eloquence of my colleagues who have gone before me, but I do want to say that I don't think this is just about a noise bylaw. I have a lot of faith in people, but I don't think this is just about a noise bylaw.

[6:30 p.m.]

I think that as lawmakers, we make mistakes when we don't stop and ask ourselves who is not in the room as we're making a decision. We know who was not in the room as this decision was made - HRM wasn't in the room, and a lot of citizens of HRM were not in the room.

I have to be honest. I was surprised when I heard that HRM was enacting this bylaw. I thought, well they must need more housing. Then I found out that the reason that they were doing this was because in the past, the building was taking place in uninhabited areas, so it didn't matter if building went later.

Citizens were complaining, so our councillors were reacting to what they were hearing in their communities. I recognize that the government doesn't have a lot of members from HRM, but nonetheless, people who live in HRM are citizens, too. They deserve to have their concerns heard.

I will just make that point. I will also say that in my area there is a historic area which is one of the oldest communities in the province. It's not an African Nova Scotian community, it's just an old area. There has been discussion about having a heritage conservation area designation for areas outside the downtown. Is that the next step? Is that what will be disallowed? Will the community of Fort Sackville suddenly become all high-rises? I don't know. That is the possibility that results from this particular bill.

I promised that I wouldn't speak for long, but I wanted to raise that issue because to me, it's important that people stop and think about the people that this will impact. Maybe the governing members don't represent them. I get that, but I do think that they are Nova Scotians. There are people who live here who are, in many cases, property owners, but not all - they are people who have rights as well.

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: Madam Speaker, I do want to say a few words and answer some of the questions. I didn't realize that we were going to go until 7:00 p.m. so I wasn't writing down questions. I thought I would remember them, but now there's too many to answer specifically, but I will try to answer some of them.

Today in Question Period, we were answering questions about homelessness and

affordability and those things weigh heavy on me personally. One of the reasons to bring in this bill was that exactly. I realize that I'm advocating for a constituency that will be moving into homes that will be finished in a year or two years, so they're not speaking for those homes. They don't know who they are.

I'm advocating for them in that I think it's the role of government to look at what we do that impacts the cost of housing. As you all know, in the past year we've invested close to \$100 million in various forms in housing. There's a lot of government money going into that. Yet, as government, we have to look at what we are doing to make homes more affordable in terms of how we act, our bylaws, and our regulations.

The reason to address this noise bylaw was that we're hearing every day from doctors and nurses and people who want to move into the community and work here that they can't find a place to live. We're hearing from employers that they need to hire people, but they have no place to live. We're hearing from you that there's a crisis of homelessness. In fact, when the housing crisis abates, I'll have no problem at all with a noise bylaw. I was asked in the hallway when that would be. I said when there is nobody living in a tent.

We are deeply concerned about all those things. This bylaw is inflationary to the cost of housing, undoubtedly, in a time when there are many other things that are inflationary to the cost of housing that we really can't control. A noise bylaw, we can control. If we look across the country, there are other jurisdictions - at least three - with very broad powers, and in fact, the broad powers on our level of government over any municipal bylaw were once there.

In fact, as the former Ministers of Municipal Affairs on the other side will know, there are a lot of things that I, as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, sign off on now - in any case, on municipal bylaws. In fact, the previous government mandated that every municipality in the province have land-use bylaws, which I certainly agree with, and which some municipalities are still protesting. There are many different ways that we, at this level of government, interact with our municipal partners.

I do want to point out the limitations on the bill. First of all, the bylaw nullification has to be about housing or development. Secondly, it has to be in the public interest. The public interest - I just want to say that there's no way in my mind that it would ever be in the public interest that we impact a marginalized community.

I just want to say that the members for Preston and Halifax Needham - their voices are valuable in this House. We want to hear them, just like we want to hear every member's voice. Absolutely, it matters, and the communities you come from. I just want to stress that. I can't imagine how it would be in the public interest in any way, shape, or form to damage or injure, or further marginalize these historically marginalized communities. We recognize that. We want to lift them up, help them and honour them.

That is one of the things that's important to me. That's probably one of the reasons to bring in the amendment - you might say for added certainty. That's the way I think of it. We would not want to exclusively impact a marginalized community.

In terms of the word "exclusively," if this bill is ever used in the future, that conversation would probably happen. The definition of that probably will be figured out at the moment - exactly who the communities are and what that means precisely. Likely, it will mean different things at different times.

The other thing about this bill is that it would have to be within six months of the enactment of the bylaw. This bill doesn't look backward very far. It looks forward.

As I've said, there are a number of ways that I, as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, sign off on municipal things. The previous Ministers of Municipal Affairs would know that very well too. Again, just to circle back, I did have an opportunity to say quite a bit about the bill before the Halifax City Council. I do want to say to you that what I said to them - that when I was invited to go speak to the Halifax City Council, I said yes immediately. But I didn't realize how rare that was. Certainly, it was an honour for me to go and speak to the council. I appreciate that very much and want to say that publicly.

I know that my remarks are widely available on YouTube, and I haven't reiterated those remarks. What I'm saying is different. Anyway, to any of the listening public, I encourage you to look it up on YouTube.

All that to say - to just circle back to the beginning of my comments - we are in a housing crisis. As government, we cannot be adding to the cost of housing, adding to the cost of construction. We are funding affordable housing. At our level and the HRM level, we have to look at what we're doing to impact that housing cost. Those costs are real, and the impacts are real.

I'm not minimizing the inconvenience factor of noise. Let me say that. But as I said today to HRM council, to me, the inconvenience of noise and the complications in your life of not having an affordable place to live are not exactly comparable. This is what has compelled me to act on this bill.

I certainly respect, and I've listened to all of your comments. I know I probably didn't answer all of your questions. I apologize for that.

With those words, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 225.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 225.

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 Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 219.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for Part 1 of the Gaming Control Act.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Madam Speaker, I move third reading of Bill No. 219, an Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Gaming Control Act.

This legislation will enable previously announced changes to the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation to proceed, including the integration of both operations and staff into the Department of Finance and Treasury Board. This legislation is about avoiding duplication. It's about being accountable for what actions are taken when it comes to gaming.

As a government, we take our responsibility on gaming seriously. I want to reiterate that this government will always be deliberate with our decisions around gaming and will rely on expert advice from our colleagues at the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, because that is where that expertise lies. With that, I look forward to hearing from my honourable colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: Madam Speaker, I just want to say for the record that we are against this bill. It's another example of consolidation of power.

In my opinion and in the opinion of our caucus, it puts the minister in an awkward position of being responsible for revenue and also responsible for the harm that gaming can cause. I'm not sure that anybody would really need to be in that position.

The board is in place to protect the minister from that, so we will be against this bill. With those few words, I will take my place.

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

[6:45 p.m.]

LISA LACHANCE: I am just rising to share some of our ongoing concerns about this file. I do understand that these changes are in line with what we've seen happening in other Maritime provinces with their gaming functions. So I hold that - I understand this is what's happening.

At the same time, I also hold that this is actually what's happening across the board in this government where, again, boards are being removed, power is being consolidated. So again I'm expressing concern for that approach.

I think what I also really wanted to say is that with this bill with these changes, I think we're still really unsatisfied in our caucus in terms of what's happening with addressing the harm caused by gaming, or the potential harm caused by gaming.

We've had no update to the Responsible Gaming Strategy, despite the significant expansion of access to gambling with the online casino. A year ago, when we asked the Minister for Addictions and Mental Health why his government hadn't updated the Responsible Gaming Strategy, he said that as far as comprehensive gaming strategy, that's something you'll hear about in the near future, but I don't have the specifics today. I'll table that.

We already see that it seems like the government is considering not renewing the contract for telehealth gaming supports again. I would love to be enlightened and to have information shared.

At the same time, the Atlantic Lottery Corporation has had a record-breaking year. I don't think this is an industry that's in recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. In fact, it's well-recovered. Profits were up by 18 per cent and from a smaller number of players than predicted.

The minister has also talked about the fact - what should we do? We can't control people's online access to gambling. That is true. What is in the government's control though, is addressing the potential harms. As I mentioned, that includes the Responsible Gaming Strategy.

Also, I was really disappointed through the Health Committee and in earlier debate on this bill that we learned that funding into Gambling Awareness Nova Scotia had been dissolved into general mental health funding streams. I quote:

"The dissolved funding from Gambling Awareness Nova Scotia was allocated to various services, supports, and provided with the NSHA, IWK Health, government partners, and community non-profit organizations, including community grants, research,

tobacco cessation programs, and community engagement. The approximately \$500,000 in annual funding is now part of the overall budget.”

At the time in the Health Committee, there was a discussion about the fact that, well, that’s really important, right? We don’t want to just treat people in isolation, or issues in isolation, and that’s true. Absolutely, we need to be looking at the whole person. We need to meet them where they’re at, address the social determinants of health. However, at the same time, what’s not effective in mental health policies and services is to ignore specific needs of different populations and different issues. Do we want a system that supports everyone? Absolutely, but we also want a system that is able to respond to specific needs, and at this point, we don’t know how that’s happening for folks with problem gambling in the province.

I think the minister also said - and it was in the document I tabled - that at the end of the day, yes, we do agree with the Opposition, government has to be there to help people who suffer from problem gambling.

So my question to the government remains: Why haven’t you instituted the supports? Where is the responsible gambling strategy, and how can we ensure that the harms from gaming don’t outweigh the potential revenues?

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

The honourable Minister responsible for Part 1 of the Gaming Control Act.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 219.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 219.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Bill No. 227.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I move that Bill No. 227 now be read a third time.

This bill has two main functions, as we discussed earlier at prior stages of the bill: one being to increase the tax credit for capital investments in the province to 25 per cent from 15 per cent, and the second measure in this bill is to harmonize the province's fertility and surrogacy supports with new federal rebates. I now move third reading of this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

FRED TILLEY: We are in support of this bill. The only thing I would like to add with regard to the alignment with the federal grouping is that it's a tax credit, and many people are left out of this bill because they don't have the upfront cash. But we are in favour of the spirit of this bill. With that, I will take my seat.

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

LISA LACHANCE: We do remain concerned about this bill and about this process. I think it's highly unusual that the second half of the FMA (2022) is being tabled at this time, and we continue to wonder why. Whether or not we agree with the tax credit, and I'll talk about that in a minute, we haven't had a satisfactory reason about why this wasn't (a) thought of before, or (b) can't wait until the proper FMA in the Spring. I think I said that we never see a second half of an FMA divorced from a change in government. It's unusual. We're concerned.

We're also concerned about outcomes. The tax credit - I know the minister had commented in earlier discussions that we have to think about significant capital investments, absolutely. We have seen in the past that they benefit everyday Nova Scotians.

I have to apologize. I'm not quite sure of my documents to table, but I will table them at a later time.

This idea that it will benefit every Nova Scotians - actually we have been looking at some of the evidence around corporate tax cuts and how they benefited. In a review of corporate tax cuts in Canada over the previous 50 years, economist Jim Stanford said: "As a means of stimulating growth, employment, and even private business spending, the historical evidence suggests the business tax cuts are both economically ineffective and distributionally regressive."

Economist Dr. Armine Yalnizyan has pointed out that there are better ways, that corporate tax cuts don't always result in greater business investments. They particularly

cost money when government is running a deficit, which is the state that we're in at this point.

We have great concerns about the potential outcomes. Again, this isn't connected to an economic development plan. We actually don't know how this all fits in. What would be really great would be a plan from the government that talks about how these pieces all fit together and actually articulates a reason why we need to consider this second half of the FMA (2022) at this time.

During earlier discussions, the minister for this bill also referenced - and I think it must have been in response to me - the member's preference for everyday Nova Scotians, and we are certainly doing that in other ways. Yes, you're right, actually, we are very concerned about the lives of everyday Nova Scotians. We are very concerned about how people are faring in a cost of living crisis and a health crisis, and we're very concerned that this is the move that's being made.

The only inflationary action that we're seeing this session is for corporate tax cuts that also, we think, have middling outcomes for people from similar investments. We think this is continuing. Time and time again, for this government, the priority is friends over regular people. We haven't seen this government respond to the cost of living crisis during this session. You have one more day. You can surprise us.

We also see this expanded corporate tax cut, but this government continues to refuse to waive people's Pharmacare fees, cover the cost of a high-dose flu vaccine for seniors or shingles vaccine for seniors. We have talked a lot about where else the \$22 million can go to make a difference now in the lives of Nova Scotians.

Of course, we support the other aspect of the bill, aligning the language around fertility to ensure congruence with the federal government, but we don't agree with the approach of this bill. We don't agree with opening the FMA (2022) in such an unusual fashion without any justification and, as far as we're concerned, burying a major retroactive cost in this bill, and we will not be supporting this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 227.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate on Bill No. 227.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Madam Speaker, that concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Wednesday, November 9th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

Tomorrow is Opposition Day, but after Opposition Members' Business, Government Business will include third reading of government bills, third reading of Private and Local Bill No. 205, third reading of Bill No. 230, and Private and Local Bill No. 239.

I'll now turn it over to my colleague across the aisle to announce Opposition Business for tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Thank you, Madam Speaker - congratulations to you. I actually at this point have not confirmed the bills yet for tomorrow, but I will happily send that along to the other House Leaders once it is confirmed.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on November 9th between the hours of 1:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:00 p.m.

[The House adjourned at 6:57 p.m.]

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS

Given on November 8, 2022

(Pursuant to Rule 30)

QUESTION NO. 4

By: Susan Leblanc

To: Hon. Michelle Thompson (Minister of Health and Wellness)

1. EMCI has hired contract workers starting in March 2020 to support increased call volume from the pandemic. Casual contracts have been extended in four month periods, with pay that is significantly lower than permanent telehealth associates, who also have vacation, sick days and benefits. Call volumes continue to be high as impacts of the pandemic endure.

When will contract telehealth workers be hired on a permanent basis?

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 511**

By: Hon. Colton LeBlanc (Argyle)

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

Whereas paramedics play a crucial role in providing better health care to Nova Scotians and their families in their time of greatest need; and

Whereas Jeanette Diggdon was one of the first Advanced Life Support paramedics in Yarmouth County and during her career, received the EMS Exemplary Service Medal and EHS Long Service Award; and

Whereas on October 31st, 2022, after 32 years of dedicated service in helping countless Nova Scotians with care and compassion, Jeanette logged off her final shift;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeanette Diggdon on her retirement and thank her for her many years of dedicated service to the Province of Nova Scotia.

RESOLUTION NO. 512

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Mr. Tim Parker of Scotsburn, Pictou County, participated in the 2022 Canadian Livestock Auctioneering Championships that took place in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan in May; and

Whereas Mr. Parker represented Atlantic Stockyards of Murray Siding of Colchester County at the championship, which was hosted by the Livestock Markets Association of Canada; and

Whereas there were 37 competitors, who were judged on clarity, rhythm, speed, crowd interaction, and their ability to pick up bids in the stands;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mr. Parker on competing in the Canadian Livestock Auctioneering Championship and join me in encouraging him to continue his passion for auctioneering.

RESOLUTION NO. 513

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Ms. Emma Taylor, formerly of Scotsburn, is a member of the Canadian Senior Women's 15s Rugby Team competing in the World Cup in New Zealand during the months of October and November of 2022; and

Whereas Rugby 15s is the traditional form of the game, featuring fifteen players per side with eight replacements, playing two strenuous 40-minute halves; and

Whereas Ms. Taylor is an exceptional athlete, who has excelled playing rugby at the university level, twice selected as a first team All-Canadian, named St. Francis Xavier University 2014-15 female athlete of the year, winning her fifth consecutive Atlantic Conference Banner, her third national title, and made the Canadian National Team;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Taylor for her amazing rugby career and wish her and the Canadian Team the best of luck at the World Cup.

RESOLUTION NO. 514

By: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Pictou West)

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

Whereas Ms. Kate Bethell competed in the 2022 Canada Summer Games that took place in Ontario, as a member of the Nova Scotia Women's Rugby 7s team; and

Whereas 7s is a fast paced, stripped-down version of rugby with just seven members per team, playing on a full-size pitch with five replacements for two seven-minute halves: and

Whereas the Nova Scotia team had an impressive undefeated record entering the medal round and finishing fourth overall;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ms. Bethell for her part in representing Nova Scotia and wish her well in her final year as a Nighthawk at Northumberland Regional High School.

RESOLUTION NO. 515

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Cyril White has been a member of the Kentville Rotary Club for over 47 years; and

Whereas Cyril is a beloved well-known philanthropist whose contributions have supported Kentville and surrounding areas;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cyril White on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 516

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Rev. Daniel Cormier is the Senior Pastor of New Minas Baptist Church, and has guided the church through COVID-19, including donating the church buildings as a COVID-19 vaccination clinic, assisting the province of Nova Scotia vaccination program vaccinating over 40,000 people; and

Whereas Daniel is passionate about being the shepherd of a large flock and has been instrumental in developing the popular Live Nativity project hosted on the church site over last several years with the exception of a break for COVID-19;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Rev. Daniel Cormier on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 517

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas David Watson has been the Halls Harbour Fire Chief for several years including guiding the organization through COVID-19; and

Whereas David is the Trades Manager at the Physical Plant at Acadia University and worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate David Watson on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 518

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Ernie Hovell has been a member of the Port Williams and District Lions Club for over 45 years and currently serves as treasurer; and

Whereas Ernie has been on the village commission since 2021 during the pandemic and continues to serve the citizens admirably;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ernie Hovell on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 519

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Janet Steele has been a fitness instructor for hundreds of people throughout the Annapolis Valley improving their health and wellness; and

Whereas Janet believes it is never too late to start a fitness routine and that everyone can improve their fitness level regardless of age or body type;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Janet Steele on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 520

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Jeff Skaling has been the Canning Fire Chief for several years including guiding the organization through COVID-19; and

Whereas Jeff has been a small business owner and is selfless in service of others;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeff Skaling on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 521

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Joe Benjamin has been a member of the Meadowview Development Association for several years, including guiding the organization through COVID-19 and currently serves as president; and

Whereas Joe, also known as the “Mayor of Meadowview,” is always willing to help his neighbours and was instrumental in having the walking bridge restored this year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Joe Benjamin on being a recipient of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 522

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Lisa Rose is the co-founder of Annapolis Valley Frugal Moms, created over a discussion about toilet paper and how to stretch her limited food budget; and

Whereas Lisa’s leadership in Frugal Moms has helped to provide basic needs, including distribution of thousands of pounds of food to families in the Annapolis Valley;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Lisa Rose on being a recipient of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Medal for her service.

RESOLUTION NO. 523

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Logan Morse has been the President of the Annapolis Valley Apple Festival for several years including guiding the organization through COVID-19; and

Whereas Logan has been on the Valley Regional Hospital Foundation for several years and currently serves as its vice-president;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Logan Morse on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 524

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Madonna Spinazola has been a member of the Halls Harbour Community Development Association for many years including guiding the organization through COVID-19; and

Whereas Madonna has been a long-standing entrepreneur and has organized the annual Kidtrepreneur Business Fair in the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Madonna Spinazola on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 525

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Philip Porter has been the Port Williams Fire Chief for several years including guiding the organization through COVID-19; and

Whereas Philip has previously been recognized for his dedication to his community by having received the Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal and continues to serve the citizens of Port Williams and area with health and safety always being top of mind;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Philip Porter on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 526

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Ruth Blenkhorn has been a member of Women's Institutes for over 30 years, holding positions at the local, district, provincial, national (a Past President of Federated Women's Institutes of Canada), and international levels; and

Whereas Ruth was the 2021 recipient of the prestigious Adelaide Hunter Hoodless Canadian Woman of the Year Award for her vision and leadership to WI;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ruth Blenkhorn on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for her service.

RESOLUTION NO. 527

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Scott Hamilton has been the Kentville Fire Chief for several years including guiding the organization through COVID-19; and

Whereas Scott was a long-time paramedic and has the concerns of the health and safety as a top priority in everything he does in Kentville and area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Scott Hamilton on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 528

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Provincial Volunteer awards ceremony was held November 7, 2022; and

Whereas Betty Jean Tupper of Port Williams was recognized by the Village for her contributions to a lifetime of encouragement and support to the youth in our community and the Annapolis Valley; and

Whereas Betty Jean's involvement with the Apple Blossom Leadership Candidate Selection Committee and Girl Guides Canada has contributed to building self-confidence and life skills in young people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Betty Jean Tupper on her Provincial Volunteer of the Year Award.

RESOLUTION NO. 529

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Charlene MacLellan was a long-serving President of the Kingsport Community Association; and

Whereas Charlene invested years volunteering to create improvements and bring enduring infrastructure projects to the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Charlene MacLellan on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 530

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Dukes of Kent were recently awarded the distinction of being the Small Chorus Champions at the district competition in Saint John, New Brunswick; and

Whereas the chorus has a long and rich history of entertaining local residents and organizations since 1965, having received 13 awards; and

Whereas The Dukes continue to entertain appreciative audiences throughout Atlantic Canada and beyond;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate The Dukes of Kent on their award-winning history and may it continue long in the future.

RESOLUTION NO. 531

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Valley's Best awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas Farmhouse Inn B&B in Canning took the top prize as Best Accommodation; and

Whereas Farmhouse Inn is perfectly located for exploring the Bay of Fundy's world-famous tides or the bounty and beauty of the Annapolis Valley;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Farmhouse Inn B&B and staff for their award-winning services and commitment to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 532

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Valley's Best Awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas Huntley's Diving took the top prize as Best Business Not in Any Other Category; and

Whereas Huntley's Diving has been providing underwater specialized services for almost 30 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Mike Huntley and staff for their award-winning services and commitment to our community and the depths beyond.

RESOLUTION NO. 533

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Valley's Best Awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas Jason's Independent in Kentville took the top prize as Best Grocer; and

Whereas Jason and staff have gone above and beyond for Kentville and area until suffering a tragic fire on July 1st;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jason Blanchard and staff for their award-winning service and commitment to the community.

RESOLUTION NO. 534

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal program is an opportunity to celebrate outstanding Nova Scotians who, like Her Majesty, have dedicated themselves to service, community, and country, particularly during the pandemic; and

Whereas Jerry Huntley has been a member of the Scots Bay Community Hall Association for many years including guiding the organization through COVID-19; and

Whereas Jerry keeps the community informed of what's happening by sending community updates by email to residents;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jerry Huntley on being a recipient of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal for his service.

RESOLUTION NO. 535

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Valley's Best Awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas Your Last ReSort took the top prize as Best Professional Service; and

Whereas Your Last ReSort is a professional home organizing, decluttering, and staging group that assists when things "get a little out of control;"

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the folks at Your Last ReSort for their award-winning services and commitment to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 536

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Valley's Best Awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas LIV Fashion Boutique in Kentville took the top prize as Best Boutique; and

Whereas LIV offers trendy clothing for everyday living featuring independent designers for sizes 0 to 3XL;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Liz Huntley and staff for their award-winning service and commitment to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 537

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas the Valley's Best Awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas Open Arms Resource Centre took the top prize as Best Non-Profit; and

Whereas Open Arms is a Christian ministry offering help and hope by meeting the basic needs of our neighbours;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the volunteers and staff of Open Arms for their award-winning services and commitment to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 538

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Valley's Best Awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas Two Planks and A Passion took the top prize as Best Entertainment; and

Whereas Two Planks and A Passion has been providing professional theatre in rural Kings County for 30 years;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ken Schwartz and Chris O'Neill and staff for their award-winning productions and commitment to our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 539

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas The Valley's Best Awards were held on October 20, 2022, and are considered the Annapolis Valley's People's Choice Awards; and

Whereas Windrose Web Design took the top prize as Best Marketing Business; and

Whereas Windrose in 2021 won Best Boutique Graphic and Web Design Company in Atlantic Canada at the Canadian Business Awards;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Raina Noel for her award-winning services and commitment to our community.