



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain

Published by Order of the Legislature by Hansard Reporting Services and printed by the King's Printer.

Available on INTERNET at <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/proceedings/hansard/>

First Session

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Gov't. (N.S.) - Broad Street School Boundaries: Stonington Park Inclusion - Requested, B. Clark	4708
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
<i>Surplus Crown Property Disposal Report for the Period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022,</i> Hon. K. Masland	4708
<i>Moving Toward Equity: Employment Equity and Diversity in the Nova Scotia Public Service, 2020-21,</i> Hon. C. LeBlanc	4708
STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS:	
Rem. Day: Honouring Mil. Serv. - Recog., Hon. J. Lohr	4708
Hon. T. Ince	4709
C. Chender	4710
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	

Res. 540, Congratulatory Motions: Pursuant to Rule 32(3) - Approval, Hon. K. Masland	4710
Vote - Affirmative.....	4710
Res. 541, Recips.: Lt. Gov. Awd. of Excell. for l'Acadie & Francophonie - Congrats., Hon. C. LeBlanc	4710
Vote - Affirmative.....	4712
Res. 542, Acadian Seaplants Ltd.: Pioneering Aquaculture Work - Recog., Hon. S. Craig.....	4712
Vote - Affirmative.....	4712
Res. 543, MacIsaac, Norman: Northeastern Christmas Tree Assoc. Contrib. - Recog., Hon. G. Morrow	4713
Vote - Affirmative.....	4713
Res. 544, Winter Driving Prep.: Importance - Recog., Hon. K. Masland.....	4713
Vote - Affirmative.....	4714
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 255, An Act to Amend Chapter 333 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Partition Act, E. Smith-McCrossin.....	4714
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Rem. Day: Honouring Mil. Serv. - Recog., The Premier.....	4715
Comeau, Arcade: Death of - Tribute, R. LeBlanc	4716
Dal. CUPE Strike: Tentative Agreement - Congrats., L. Lachance.....	4716
Kristallnacht: 84 th Anniv. - Recog., Hon. S. Craig.....	4717
Barteaux, Scott: EMS Exempl. Serv. Medal Recip. - Recog., C. Kerr.....	4717
Affordable Housing: Need for Action - Recog., K. Coombes.....	4718
Leg. Staff: Diligent Work - Thanks, L. Harrison	4718
N.S. Intl. Student Pgm.: Prov. Great Expers. - Recog., R. DiCostanzo.....	4719
Dal. CUPE Strike: Tentative Agreement - Congrats., G. Burrill.....	4720
NGRHS Sr. Girls Soccer Team: Qual. Win - Congrats., Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	4720
Kutcher, Dan: Summerside Mayor Election - Congrats., Hon. P. Arab	4721
Grandfather, Stanley S. Hansen Sr.: Mil. Serv. - Recog., S. Hansen	4721
Stewart, Rhyah: Hockey Achievements - Congrats.,	

Hon. M. Thompson	4722
Daughter, Freya Rose - Birthday Wishes, Hon. I. Rankin	4722
Rem. Day: Honouring Mil. Serv. - Recog., S. Leblanc	4723
DeWolfe, Grace: Rich. Co. Vol. Rep. of Yr. - Congrats., T. Boudreau	4723
Voluns.: Serv. to RCL Branch 4 - Recog., Hon. K. Irving	4724
Recips.: Queen's Plat. Jub. Awd. - Recog., L. Lachance	4724
In the Works - A Soc. Ent. Net.: Pgm. Launch - Congrats., E. Smith-McCrossin	4725
Jamieson, Michael: Death of - Tribute, M. Sheehy-Richard	4725
Leb. Her. Mo.: Contribs. of Leb. Com. - Recog., Hon. P. Arab	4726
Const. Assts.: Importance of Work - Recog., K. Coombes	4726
Attendees: People Helping People Mtg. - Thanks, C. Palmer	4727
Armstrong, Cdr. Heather Joan (Ret'd): Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. B. Jessome	4727
Zilkowsky, Mel: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon. B. Adams	4728
LeBlanc, N./Miles, G.: 30 Under 30 Awd. Winners - Congrats., L. Nicoll	4728
For the Moment: Polaris Her. Prize Win - Congrats., S. Leblanc	4729
4-H Leaders: Royal Winter Fair Partic. - Congrats., E. Smith-McCrossin	4730
E. Hants Com. Learning Assoc.: Com. Garden - Thanks, J.A. MacDonald	4730
Quilty, John: Mil. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. T. Ince	4731
Hum, Aisha: Const. Asst. Work - Thanks, S. Hansen	4731
Wheeler, M. Cpl. Rick: Death of - Tribute, Hon. B. Wong	4732
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 877, Prem.: Health Care System - Improve, Hon. Z. Churchill	4732
No. 878, Prem.: Health & Housing Crises - Fix, C. Chender	4734
No. 879, Prem.: Carbon Pricing - Plan, Hon. Z. Churchill	4736

No. 880, FTB: Fuel Cost Help - Explain, Hon. D. Mombourquette	4737
No. 881, FTB: Small Business Fuel Costs - Support, F. Tilley	4739
No. 882, DHW: Paramedic Burnout - Address, S. Leblanc	4740
No. 883, FTB - N.S. Truckers: Diesel Costs - Address, B. Clark	4741
No. 884, DHW: Valley Health Care Issues - Respond, Hon. K. Irving	4742
No. 885, EECD: Early Childhood Operators - Assist, Hon. P. Arab	4743
No. 886, SNSIS: Drumlin Hills Seniors - Assist, G. Burrill	4745
No. 887, DHW: Nurses Not Being Credentialed - Explain, Hon. B. Jessome	4745
No. 888, DHW: IUD Access - Fund, Hon. K. Regan	4747
No. 889, FTB: Motive Fuel Tax Action - Commit, E. Smith-McCrossin	4748
No. 890, SLTC: Srs. Care Grant Cut-Off - Extend, R. DiCostanzo	4749
No. 891, EMO: Reliable Access to 911 - Update, C. Kerr	4750
No.892, EECD: New School for Northside-Westmount - Update, F. Tilley	4751
OPPOSITION MEMBERS BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING:	
No. 232, Employment Support and Income Assistance Act (amended), Hon. P. Arab	4752
K. Coombes	4754
D. Barkhouse	4757
Hon. B. Jessome	4761
E. Smith-McCrossin	4763
N. Young	4766
No. 97, Social Safety Net Security Act, B. Clark	4767
S. Leblanc	4770
Hon. B. Adams	4774
R. DiCostanzo	4778
E. Smith-McCrossin	4780
ADJOURNMENT:	
MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5):	
Gov't. (N.S.): Fuel Price Hikes Inaction Impact - Recog., F. Tilley	4782
C. Chender	4785

J.A. MacDonald	4788
Hon. K. Regan.....	4790
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 227, Financial Measures (Fall 2022) Act,	
G. Burrill	4791
Hon. Z. Churchill	4794
Hon. A. MacMaster.....	4794
Vote - Affirmative.....	4796
No. 228, Public Utilities Act (amended),	
Hon. T. Rushton.....	4796
C. Kerr.....	4797
S. Leblanc	4797
Hon. T. Rushton.....	4797
Vote - Affirmative.....	4797
No. 224, Perennia Food and Agriculture Corporation Act,	
Hon. G. Morrow.....	4798
Hon. K. Irving.....	4799
L. Lachance.....	4805
Hon. Z. Churchill	4808
Hon. G. Morrow.....	4809
Vote - Affirmative.....	4810
No. 223, Municipal Finance Corporation Dissolution Act,	
Hon. J. Lohr	4811
L. Nicoll	4811
K. Coombes.....	4812
Hon. J. Lohr	4813
Vote - Affirmative.....	4814
No. 222, Housing Supply and Services Act,	
Hon. J. Lohr	4814
L. Nicoll	4814
K. Coombes.....	4815
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	4816
S. Hansen	4821
G. Burrill.....	4831
Hon. J. Lohr	4834
Vote - Affirmative.....	4836
PRIVATE MEMBERS PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 230, Provincial Lichen Act,	
Hon. J. Balser	4836
S. Leblanc	4837
Hon. J. Balser.....	4837
Vote - Affirmative.....	4838
PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 205, St. Francis Xavier University Act (amended),	
Hon. M. Thompson.....	4838

Vote - Affirmative.....	4839
No. 239, Amherst Curling Club, an Act to Incorporate the (amended), E. Smith-McCrossin.....	4839
Vote - Affirmative.....	4839
PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 208, Environment Act (amended), Hon. T. Halman.....	4840
Hon. I. Rankin.....	4840
S. Leblanc	4842
Hon. Z. Churchill	4846
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	4848
C. Chender	4850
Hon. T. Halman.....	4851
Vote - Affirmative.....	4855
No. 203, Labour Standards Code (amended), Hon. J. Balsler.....	4856
Vote - Affirmative.....	4856
ARRIVAL OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR.....	4856
BILLS GIVEN ROYAL ASSENT:	
Nos. 196, 198, 200, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210,	4857
211, 212, 214, 215, 216, 219, 222, 223, 224, 225.....	4857
227, 228, 230, 239.....	4858
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again at the call of the Speaker	4859
NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS:	
No. 5, DCS: Action to Improve Well-Being of Nova Scotians - Requested, S. Leblanc.....	4860
No. 6, DPW: Lancaster Interchange Safety Improvements Funding - Requested, S. Leblanc.....	4860
NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):	
Res. 545, RCL Br. 61: Rem. Day Svcs. - Thanks, Hon. Z. Churchill	4861
Res. 546, Soc. Of St. Vincent de Paul: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. B. Druhan	4861
Res. 547, Lakes, Ryleigh: Bringing Speaker Chris Koch to School - Recog., Hon. J. Lohr	4862
Res. 548, Doherty, Matthew: Tucson Scottish Highland Games Perf. - Congrats., Hon. M. Thompson.....	4862
Res. 549, Amit, Dr. Minoli/Murphy, Dr. Michele: Retirement - Best Wishes, Hon. M. Thompson	4863
Res. 550, Sack. Bus. Assoc.: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. S. Craig.....	4863
Res. 551, Akpan, I./Yuke, L.: Nat'l Soccer Tourn. Perf. - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	4864
Res. 552, MacGregor Family: Selling Corn - Best Wishes, Hon. T. Houston.....	4864
Res. 553, Sumac Farms: Reining Comp. Succ. - Congrats.,	

Hon. T. Houston.....	4865
Res. 554, Participants: Terry Fox Run in Bridgeville - Thanks, Hon. T. Houston.....	4865
Res. 555, Dudka, Tom: Growing Pumpkins - Recog., Hon. T. Houston.....	4866
Res. 556, Town of Westville: Pride Flag Raising - Thanks, Hon. T. Houston.....	4866
Res. 557, Bond, Lt. (Navy) Jason: COVID Efforts - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	4867
Res. 558, Dent-Flyn, Rachel: Peer Supp. Grp. Creation - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	4867
Res. 559, Baker, Scott: Firefighter Serv. - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	4868
Res. 560, Beatty, Sgt. Jessica: Mil. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	4868
Res. 561, Sagar, Rev. Margaret: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. I. Rankin.....	4869
Res. 562, Wentzell, Cathie: Com. Serv. - Thanks, Hon. K. Masland.....	4869
Res. 563, Funky Witches of the Mist: Com. Serv. - Recog., Hon. K. Masland.....	4870
Res. 564, Huskins, Josey/Brown, Calla: Badminton Ch'ships Win - Recog., Hon. K. Masland.....	4870
Res. 565, Snarby, Kristopher: EXIT Realty Awd. Recip. - Congrats. Hon. K. Masland.....	4871
Res. 566, White Point Beach Resort: New Main Lodge Opening - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	4871
Res. 567, Oxford U-15A Wildcats Baseball Team: Ch'ship Win - Congrats., Hon. T. Rushton.....	4872
Res. 568, Lavallée, R./Townsend, D. - The Canteen: Best of Hfx. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4873
Res. 569, A'Court, Charlie: Best of Hfx. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4873
Res. 570, Cheapy Tire: Best of Hfx. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4874
Res. 571, Giffen, Riley - Coldstream Clear Distillery: Best of Hfx. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4874
Res. 572, Beals, Darrell: Named to Dart. Whalers Roster - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4874
Res. 573, Feed Nova Scotia: Best of Hfx. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4875
Res. 574, Osmond, Kean: Named to Dart. Whalers Roster - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4875
Res. 575, Beals, Shiquell: Named to Dart. Whalers Roster - Congrats., S. Leblanc.....	4876
Res. 576, Nova Scotia SPCA: Best of Hfx. Awd. Recip. - Congrats.,	

S. Leblanc	4876
Res. 577, Local Hockey Players: Named to Dart. Whalers Roster - Congrats., S. Leblanc	4876
Res. 578, Woody the Talking Christmas Tree: Best of Hfx. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc	4877
Res. 579, Oxford Wildcats U-14 Girls Team: Ch'ship Win - Congrats., Hon. T. Rushton.....	4877
Res. 580, Blanchard, Shelley: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. B. Druhan.....	4878



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2022

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Keith Bain

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Before we begin the daily routine, the topic for tonight's late debate is submitted by the honourable member for Northside-Westmount:

Whereas the price of fuel has risen by 41 per cent in the past year and many people rely on fuel for their cars to get them to work and heat their homes; and

Whereas our primary industries, like agriculture and fishing, rely on diesel to run their businesses, and jobs in our primary industries have dropped by 20 per cent; and

Whereas the government could have provided for Nova Scotians for over a year and at all opportunities has chosen not to;

Therefore be it resolved that the cost of fuel is causing severe economic challenges for Nova Scotians as a result of the government's inaction.

That will be debated at the moment of interruption.

We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to present a petition. The operative clause reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned residents of Stonington Park, request that our community be included in the boundary for the new Broad Street Pre-Primary to Grade 8 school.”

I have affixed my signature to the petition as well.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Section 12 of the Surplus Crown Property Disposal Act, I beg leave to table the report *Surplus Crown Property Disposal Report For the Period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

The honourable Minister of the Public Service Commission.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table a report, *Moving Toward Equity: Employment Equity and Diversity in the Nova Scotia Public Service, 2020-21*, et en français, *Objectif : l'équité : Équité en matière d'emploi et diversité dans la fonction publique de la Nouvelle-Écosse, 2020-21*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for Military Relations.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, this week is a time of pride for Canadians. On Friday, November 11th, Canadians will officially honour those in uniform who fought on distant battlefields, on the sea and in the skies, for freedom. Freedom from tyranny and

war, and freedom for countries to choose their own destinies. Many paid the ultimate price of their lives so that we may have these freedoms today.

Each year, Remembrance Day stirs many emotions for me personally. As the son of Dutch immigrants, I grew up hearing family stories from both my mother and father of the impact World War II had on them and their homeland, the Netherlands. The enduring gratitude of the Dutch people for their liberation by Canadian forces cannot be overstated.

My mother, in particular, lived through some of the most intense fighting of the war. Canadian forces fought tenaciously for three months to liberate the island she called home. In November 1944, Walcheren was liberated, freeing the Allied armies to use the inland Port of Antwerp.

A couple of years ago I did a video with my mother that recounted parts of her story. This past Summer, I had a cousin from Holland visit and tell me this is the only family account of those events. My mother had five older brothers and an older sister, now all deceased. All that any of them would ever say of those days was “It was a hard time.” A hard time indeed. Again, a reminder that freedom isn’t free.

This Remembrance Day, I ask all members to remember the great sacrifices of war and also share my gratitude for the liberation of Holland by Canadian forces. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: Thank you to the Minister responsible for Military Relations for bringing this forward, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise in my place today in response. As we are on this week of remembrance, it is important that we honour the people who served and continue to serve our country.

Mr. Speaker, we also pay tribute to those who have lost their lives and to those who have been physically or mentally injured by their service in fighting for peace. We thank their families and the many loved ones for their sacrifice. I also would like to recognize the No. 2 Construction Battalion, in which I had a family member serving.

Remembrance Day will take place this Friday. We pay our respects to the individuals who served our nation. We are forever grateful to them. We continue to thank and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for this country.

Let us all commemorate our fallen heroes who have given their lives for our beloved country and our continued freedom. Lest we forget. We will remember them. (Applause)

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to mark the solemn occasion of Remembrance Day. Each year we take this day to mark the sorrow of war and the sacrifice of communities, friends, and families. We resolve to not forget the lessons that history has taught us.

In my own family, World War II plays a pivotal role. My grandfather and his brothers, recent immigrants, eagerly signed up to fight in the Allied Forces. They never regretted their service, but they returned changed.

My other three grandparents were among the escaped and liberated, fleeing Nazi-occupied Hungary, Poland, and France. Their history is one of persecution and fear, of increasingly dangerous travel through Europe over land borders, of daring escapes and sad goodbyes, and ultimately, of freedom and long life. They never forgot the horror of war or the forces that mobilized to ultimately put an end to it.

Mr. Speaker, Remembrance Day is a day for us to remember all of our histories and all those who served on our behalf and to reflect and resolve to honour and care for veterans and their families. Lest we forget. (Applause)

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

RESOLUTION NO. 540

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I hereby request that the following motion be adopted without notice, pursuant to Rule No. 32(5) of the *Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*:

Be it resolved that all the congratulatory motions deposited with the Clerk pursuant to Rule No. 32(3) of the *Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*, from July 26, 2022, to the end of the House today that have not been otherwise considered by the House of Assembly, be approved.

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

RESOLUTION NO. 541

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

Attendu que le Prix d'excellence du lieutenant-gouverneur pour l'Acadie et la francophonie de la Nouvelle-Écosse a été créé en août 2020 par le lieutenant-gouverneur, Arthur LeBlanc; et

Attendu que ce prix reconnaît des personnes dont les contributions sociales, économiques, ou culturelles ont fait une différence dans la communauté acadienne et francophone et dans l'ensemble de la Nouvelle-Écosse; et

Attendu que le prix est discerné dans trois catégories : un ou une francophone, un ou une francophile, et un ou une jeune francophone ou francophile de moins de 25 ans;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les députés de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi pour féliciter les récipiendaires des Prix d'excellence du lieutenant-gouverneur pour l'Acadie et la francophonie de la Nouvelle-Écosse 2022 : Claude Renaud, Hughie Batherson, et Daphnée de Lamirande.

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

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

Whereas the Lieutenant Governor's Award of Excellence for l'Acadie and Francophonie of Nova Scotia was created in August 2020 by Lieutenant Governor Arthur LeBlanc; and

Whereas this award recognizes individuals whose social, economic, or cultural contributions have made a difference in the Acadian and Francophone community and in Nova Scotia as a whole; and

Whereas the award is presented in three categories annually, Francophone, Francophile, and Young Francophone or Francophile under the age of 25;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the recipients of the 2022 Lieutenant Governor's Award of Excellence for l'Acadie and Francophonie of Nova Scotia: Claude Renaud, Hughie Batherson, and Daphnée de Lamirande.

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.

[1:15 p.m.]

The honourable Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 542

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

Whereas Acadian Seaplants Ltd. has been a pioneer and leader in marine plant aquaculture for over 40 years; and

Whereas the company grows and harvests Irish moss, a type of seaweed, from its cultivation site near Pubnico, which they turn into a high-value product used in the agriculture sector to help grow crops and strengthen them against the impacts of climate change; and

Whereas Acadian Seaplants sells its products to 80 countries around the world, contributing jobs and revenue to our rural economy, and helping build Nova Scotia's export brand in the process;

Therefore be it resolved that I ask all members of this House recognize Acadian Seaplants for its pioneering work in marine plant aquaculture, and wish them continued success in the future.

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 Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 543

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

Whereas the balsam fir Christmas tree industry is one of great importance and significance to Nova Scotians and to our provincial economy; and

Whereas Norman MacIsaac has been a driving force in the Northeastern Christmas Tree Association and the Christmas tree industry for over 30 years, and will be retiring as association manager this year; and

Whereas Mr. MacIsaac's contribution to the association spans more than half of its history, as it has been in operation since 1973, and currently represents more than 230 grower members across northeastern Nova Scotia who grow and market their Nova Scotia Christmas trees around the world;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House recognize the important work performed by Norman MacIsaac in his role as manager of the Northeastern Christmas Tree Association to help increase the quality and international marketing of Nova Scotia Christmas trees, and wish him well in his retirement.

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 Public Works.

RESOLUTION NO. 544

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

Whereas even though Nova Scotians have enjoyed unreasonably warm weather this Fall, we all know that inevitably temperatures will drop, and Winter is coming; and

Whereas the province's Winter maintenance equipment and expert staff are ready to roll as the Department of Public Works continues to make sure that our roads are as safe as possible for all users; and

Whereas the province has more than 400 pieces of snow- and ice-clearing equipment, and during storms they run 24/7 until the roads are safe for travel;

Therefore be it resolved that now is the time for Nova Scotians to prepare for safe Winter driving too. This includes installing Winter tires, checking road conditions before you head out, driving to conditions, slowing down, and leaving extra space between your vehicle and the one in front of you.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 255 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 333 of the Revised Statutes of 1989, the Partition Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

SPEAKER: Ordered that this bill be read a second time on a future day.

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, permission to make an introduction, please.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is my dad. He has come to join us today and see the proceedings. Welcome. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Members of this House may know my dad as the commissioner at the Johnson Building. They may have seen him there, but before that, he had an incredible career in the Armed Forces. He left home as a teenager, hitchhiked to the recruiting office, as the story goes. He's the oldest of eight and had an incredible service to our country, where he toured the world and waved the Canadian flag. I know it brought great peace to a number of people.

He came from rural Ontario to Halifax as a young sailor and met my mom. Theirs is a true love story - almost 60 years together now. I'm awful proud of my dad and his service to our country. He's a man of very calm demeanour and few words, just like his son. (Laughter) Love you, Dad. Thank you for joining us today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: We would like to welcome you to the Legislature today. I was going to use a word that was going to be unparliamentary, so I'm not going to do that now. Please, I'm sure you're proud of your son and everybody in the Legislature here today.

The honourable Premier.

REM. DAY: HONOURING MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, as we approach Remembrance Day, Nova Scotians will take a moment to reflect on what this day means to each of us. For some, it is learning "In Flanders Fields" and understanding the sacrifice of war. For others, it is hearing stories passed down through generations of a relative who gave their life in World War I or one of the subsequent conflicts.

For many in our province, however, it is much more personal. Nova Scotians have a remarkable history of service to our country. Families understand first-hand the commitment of being a Canadian Armed Forces family. My father joined the Navy in 1961. That meant we grew up knowing what service to country means and the importance of Remembrance Day. Many Nova Scotians know that when we recite the words:

"We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields."

We know those words are personal to many Nova Scotians. We understand that freedom comes at a cost. For each Nova Scotian who has a family member in the Forces, that cost is different. Whether it is time away from a loved one or the loss of a family member, we honour their sacrifice. That is why so many in our province take time this

week to reflect on the heroism, and why we attend a Remembrance Day service this Friday. It is about showing our respect for those who serve.

I ask all members of this Legislative Assembly to join me in remembering all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, and to thank the many Nova Scotian families who have served - and those who continue to serve - with the Canadian Armed Forces.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

COMEAU, ARCADE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

RONNIE LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, on September 19th, the community of Clare and the entire forestry sector of Nova Scotia lost one of its champions, Arcade à François à Pat Comeau. A graduate from the Maritime Ranger School, Arcade started working for Lands and Forests. In 1978, he co-founded La Forêt Acadienne, a forest management co-operative that ended up being his lifelong career. If you had any questions regarding forestry, Arcade was the person to call. Arcade's knowledge, his ideas, and most of all his good judgement were respected from one end of our province to another. Always ready to help, Arcade's stories began and ended with his love for his community and the people within the numerous organizations in which he volunteered.

I ask that all members join me in extending our sincere condolences to Arcade Comeau's family, friends, and his forestry community.

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

DAL. CUPE STRIKE: TENTATIVE AGREEMENT - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the efforts of CUPE Local 3912 once again. After three weeks of job action, the union has reached a tentative agreement with Dalhousie administration. The decision to strike is not an easy one, and the union's relentless advocacy has finally begun to pay off. This agreement is nearly two years in the making, after the union was repeatedly unable to achieve its members' goals. It is a huge victory for all instructors and other vital staff struggling to make ends meet during a period of once-in-a-lifetime inflation.

While this is an important step in the right direction, it is by no means the end. Staff at other campuses in Canada make nearly twice as much as many of the CUPE 3912 members. The road to wage parity for the level of work they undertake day after day to make sure Nova Scotian students receive a quality education is a long and complicated one, but the tentative agreement is a step in the right direction.

I ask my fellow members to join me in congratulating the members of CUPE Local 3912 for this payoff after the release of advocacy in a tumultuous environment.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

KRISTALLNACHT: 84TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, today and tomorrow mark the 84th anniversary of the infamous Nazi pogrom Kristallnacht. Also known as the Night of the Broken Glass, its namesake refers to the violence perpetrated against the Jewish community by the SS, the SA, the Gestapo, and the Hitler Youth.

Shards of shattered windows from vandalized Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues littered the streets of Nazi Germany and the annexed Austria - 7,500 Jewish-owned commercial establishments were destroyed and looted. Their cemeteries were desecrated, and 267 synagogues burned throughout the night.

The atrocities of the Nazis did not end or begin with vandalism. Many Jews were detained, with up to 30,000 innocent victims being transferred to concentration camps. As well, at least 91 others tragically lost their lives to Kristallnacht.

I ask that all members of this House join me in the remembrance of the Jewish victims of Kristallnacht and in condemning all violent acts of hate perpetrated against the innocent.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

BARTEAUX, SCOTT: EMS EXEMPL. SERV. MEDAL RECIP. - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, since 1994, the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal has recognized emergency medical professionals who have performed their duties in an exceptional manner, characterized by good conduct and efficiency.

Last month, 11 Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medals were presented, one of which was posthumously awarded to Scott Barteaux of Nictaux.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the tremendous contribution that Scott made to his community through his years of outstanding service in the field of emergency medical services. I also thank all paramedics for the important work they do, and the sacrifices they make to help their fellow Nova Scotians.

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING: NEED FOR ACTION - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Last night, the Ally Centre of Cape Breton requested donations of tents, camping supplies, warm clothes, and blankets because there are more folks than ever sleeping outside in the CBRM.

More than ever before in my riding of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier, we are hearing from people who are homeless or on the verge of becoming homeless. When I say “on the verge,” I mean within weeks and days away.

We need more affordable housing to be built, and we need empty units flipped quickly, Mr. Speaker. This is unacceptable and beyond the crisis point.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

LEG. STAFF: DILIGENT WORK - THANKS

LARRY HARRISON: I rise today to say thank you to the staff who have worked so diligently during this session of the Legislature. It does take a real team to keep this Legislature running smoothly, including the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Clerks, the Pages, and the staff of Legislative Television. They have all done a wonderful job in the past several weeks.

I must also thank all the people who work behind the scenes, those we sometimes don't even see - unless they are sitting in the gallery, of course. Each caucus has staff who are always available to help when we need assistance, to listen when we need advice, and to chat when we need support. They are invaluable.

We, the MLAs, are only an integral yet very small part of what makes this Legislature work. I ask each of you to join me as we thank the other members of the Legislature teams for all of their assistance during this session.

To all of my colleagues on both sides of the House, be well until we meet again.
(Standing ovation)

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

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring attention to the five young women we have up in the gallery from the Nova Scotia International Student Program. They all attend Halifax West High School in my constituency. Joining us today - I will call their names and I would like them to stand up: Aurora Ferrante is in Grade 12 from Italy. Emma Corni is also in Grade 12 from Italy. I'd like to say benvenute in Legislatura.

[1:30 p.m.]

We have Chiara Bourneau from France and I would like to say bienvenue à la Législature. Bet Collell is in Grade 11 from Spain, bienvenida a la Legislatura. Last but not least, Sarah Sweers in Grade 11 from Germany - I'll attempt this again - willkommen im Gesetz-Haus. (Standing ovation)

I'm not finished. Mr. Speaker, their parents are watching the proceedings of the House live and I thank them for sending their beautiful girls to our beautiful province. I met three of the girls in my yoga class at the Canada Games Centre and that's how I found out about those wonderful girls. I invited them to the House to visit while the House is in session in hopes that they get interested in politics in their own countries.

I would like to ask the House to join me in welcoming these international students to our Legislature. I still have a Member Statement on them.

THE SPEAKER: On behalf of the Legislature, I would like to welcome all of you here. I hope you enjoy and love Nova Scotia as much as we do.

The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

N.S. INTL. STUDENT PGM.: PROV. GREAT EXPERS. - RECOG.

RAFAHDICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge all international students studying in our high schools in Nova Scotia. I also would like to thank the host parents who participate in the Nova Scotia International Student Program, to which the students are matched.

I am happy that this program has returned to Nova Scotia after a two-year break during COVID-19. The Nova Scotia International Student Program offers high school education to students from around the world. It is committed to providing excellent education and home stay environments to all international students like the young women with us today.

Students are given the opportunity to choose from a variety of subjects focusing on arts, sciences, languages, and computers. I would like to share some of the thoughts that Sarah from Germany shared with me. She said: The best part of being here is living in a completely different way than in our countries. She also said: We are not really homesick, because it is so nice here and everyone is so nice to us.

We should be proud that our province is providing such great experiences for these students that this experience will stay with them for life. I ask that the House join me in acknowledging the Nova Scotia International Student Program and all the host families who make it happen.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, welcome.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

DAL. CUPE STRIKE: TENTATIVE AGREEMENT - CONGRATS.

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, congratulations are due all around today in the labour movement in Nova Scotia:

To the 1,500 members of CUPE Local 3912, representing the part-time teachers, teaching assistants, markers, and demonstrators at Dalhousie University who went on strike October 19th and who yesterday achieved a tentative agreement.

To NSGEU Local 73, representing over 600 educational assistants, student support workers, library support workers, early childhood educators, administrative staff, clerks, and IT workers in the Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education who went on strike October 19th and who voted yesterday to accept a new tentative agreement.

To NSGEU Local 70, representing 130 of the same educational workers in the South Shore Regional Centre for Education who went on strike October 25th and who vote today on a new tentative agreement.

Across Nova Scotia, these educators have struck for fairness whether it be wage parity with other Canadian universities, or wage parity with Halifax for educators in all parts of this province. These Nova Scotian educators' unions are to be extended every commendation for what they have stood together to achieve.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

NGRHS SR. GIRLS SOCCER TEAM: QUAL. WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to extend my congratulations to to New Germany Rural High School's senior girls soccer team on their commanding 4-0 victory in a provincial qualifier match at home last Saturday.

I met a number of the players earlier this Fall when they were hosting a fundraising barbecue and I was thrilled to be able to attend this game in person and cheer these strong and skilled young women.

I used to play soccer on that field many years ago, when my hometown Lunenburg Mariners would take on the New Germany Saints. However, the skills I witnessed Saturday far exceeded even our most powerful players.

I wish the team good luck as they compete for the provincial title this weekend.

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

KUTCHER, DAN: SUMMERSIDE MAYOR ELECTION - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Close to 25 years ago, I met a group of young, energetic, politically involved and aware students. We became fast friends. Over the years, our paths have moved from the streets of Wolfville to the buildings on Bay Street to provincial parliaments and our nation's capital, always managing to reach out in good times and bad.

Today, on one of the good times, I would like to do just that for our friend Dan Kutcher. On Monday, Dan was elected mayor of beautiful Summerside, P.E.I. He celebrated his victory with family and friends by his side and begins a journey which I am certain he will excel at.

Never one to shy away from hard work or let fear of the unknown stop him, Dan is truly someone who has the skills needed to help, lead, and grow, something his community has seen first-hand since moving there. I'm so proud of him and remember clearly, about 20 years ago as we drank coffee in downtown Toronto, with him informing me that being mayor was how you could really facilitate meaningful change in people's lives.

I ask the members to join me in wishing His Worship, as he begins this work for the people of Summerside, his wife, Dr. April MacPhee, and their two kids, Ayrton and Emilia, the very best as they enter into public office life.

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

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'm delighted today. I have another wonderful young woman, Tania Meloni, the president of my association, the Clayton Park West Liberal Association. I met Tania when she was around 10 years old. Tania's sister and I were in university together. When I noticed another Italian girl who has an interest in politics, I right away asked her to come and sit on my board, and she has become my president and has helped me attract more wonderful, strong women to our board.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, we welcome all guests to the Legislature and hope you enjoy the proceedings.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

GRANDFATHER, STANLEY S. HANSEN, SR.: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to remember a dedicated serviceman, who is no longer here but is going to be remembered today: my grandfather, Stanley S. Hansen, Sr. I want to recognize his time in the service as corporal U.S. Army in World War II.

Granddad was an amazing husband, loving father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and now a great-great-grandfather. Granddad was always the most proud of his grands. He would often be remembered for his long walks throughout Harlem, New York, and he would walk everywhere. Even at the age of 80, he would walk everywhere.

He knew the city like the back of his hand. Whenever we would stop, he would always introduce his grandchildren. He was so awfully proud of us. A humble man, a smart man, and a man dedicated to making sure that each and every one knew that hard work truly does pay off. I'm thankful for his sacrifice for his family and grateful that he came back from his time in service, back to his family, as we know that not everyone does.

I'm blessed to have spent so much time with him here on this Earth. I want to recognize him today as a humble man and a great person in life. Rest in power, Granddad.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

STEWART, RHYAH: HOCKEY ACHIEVEMENTS - CONGRATS.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I rise today to congratulate Antigonish's Rhyah Stewart. She is making history this hockey season as the first female to play with the Cape Breton West Islanders.

Rhyah, a goaltender, comes from a strong hockey family and started playing the sport at 4 years of age in the minor hockey program. This Summer, Rhyah was one of only three Nova Scotians to receive an invitation to the Team Canada U18 Summer selection camp. At 15, she is one of the youngest players on the roster.

I ask all members to congratulate Rhyah on this achievement and wish her and her teammates a successful season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DAUGHTER, FREYA ROSE: BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Three days from now, it will be the birthday of my daughter. Mary gave birth to Freya Rose Rankin on November 12th last year and it has simply been the best year of my life.

She is standing on her own now and about to start walking. Her infectious smile is already lighting up rooms. She loves people and animals and exploring literally everything she sees. I went from the songs in my head by artists like Jay-Z to mostly songs by the Wiggles. Freya's favourite song is called "I am a Fine Musician." She loves music and reading books with her dad. We get to spend early mornings together, just the two of us, and I cherish those moments.

To my baby girl, Dad loves you forever. Happy Birthday, my little Froo.
(Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

REM. DAY: HONOURING MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, in 2004 I had the opportunity to live and study in France and during this time my Mum came to visit me. Together we took a train to a medieval town called Bourges and from there taxied to a Commonwealth cemetery outside of town. In that very organized and well-cared-for cemetery there were rows and rows of graves of soldiers from across the Commonwealth who were killed in World War II and who had never made it home.

Included in the graves was one that was my mother's uncle, my grandfather's brother, Joseph Roach, who was a member of the RCAF and was shot down over France. As we stood at his stone to pay tribute to him, it was not lost on us that my Mum and I were the first members of his family to ever visit his grave. It was at once a sad moment but also a great honour to be present there.

As we mark this Week of Remembrance, may we remember those who have fought in wars and conflicts and those families who waited at home and received the terrible news that their loved ones were lost.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

DEWOLFE, GRACE: RICH. CO. VOL. REP. OF YR. - CONGRATS.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize an exceptional volunteer from Richmond County. Grace DeWolfe is a Grade 12 student at Richmond Academy, the daughter of Shawn and Kelly, and older sister to Logan.

Grace has volunteered at the St. Peter's Visitor Information Centre and with the local tae kwon do program. She also volunteers during her lunch break at school to help with the Unified Sport program.

Grace helps with community fundraisers and has a strong belief in helping others. She is a great role model for others, young and old, who have the desire to volunteer in our local communities.

Please join me in congratulating Grace on being chosen as Richmond County's 2022 Volunteer of the Year. Congratulations, Grace..

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

VOLUNS: SERV. TO RCL BRANCH 4 - RECOG.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, as Remembrance Day approaches, our Legions are front and centre as they work to pass the torch of remembrance from generation to generation. The pandemic has presented many unprecedented challenges to our community service organizations. In the face of this adversity, there are remarkable stories of perseverance and commitment by volunteers to keep these organizations going.

Dr. C. B. Lumsden Royal Canadian Legion Branch 74 in Wolfville is one of these. Several years ago, membership was declining and difficult discussions were being had to possibly close the branch. Through the support and hard work of their volunteers, they have had a remarkable rebirth, more than doubling membership, strengthening the executive, hosting many community events, and now embarking on a much-needed renovation to their 1912 building.

I invite all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in acknowledging the extraordinary contributions of Don Miles, Paul Murphy, Terry Butler, Michael Bawtree and the Legion volunteer community for their steadfast commitment to ensuring that Dr. C. B. Lumsden Royal Canadian Legion Branch 74 continues for many years to come.

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

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

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, we have heard from different members this session about the folks in their constituencies whose work and initiative has earned them Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medals. Halifax Citadel-Sable Island is no exception. These constituents have all showed a selfless devotion to service, whether it is military, community, or volunteerism.

I am delighted to recognize James Forgie, Carol and Brian Cooper, Elliot Thompson, Catherine Mah, Clayton Murphy, Timothy Matthews, Jane Mitsiopoulos, Glenn Davidson, Mary Mohammed, Patrick Dornan, Caitlin Lees, Paul Vienneau, Andrew Jantzen, and Kevin Kindred.

I ask that my colleagues in the House join me in recognizing these constituents' hard work and leadership that led them to be awarded this very special medal.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

IN THE WORKS - A SOC. ENT. NET.: PGM. LAUNCH - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important program that is taking flight in Cumberland County. In the Works - A Social Enterprise Network is a unique program that is designed to support young people who are overcoming struggles with mental health and addictions.

Earlier this Spring, the In the Works program began its first phase of the program which has paired young people with lived experience and a local contractor, Nick Trenholm of TN. Trenholm Construction to work together to renovate the future home of In the Works on Prince Arthur Street in Amherst. In this phase of the program, participants are supported by an on-site mentor with job coaching, training, and ongoing assessments of their progress.

As the program expands, In the Works will fill a gap in the existing support system by delivering a youth-focused, recovery-oriented psychosocial rehabilitation program by offering peer support, service navigation, in addition to providing supported work and volunteer experiences.

I would ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the In the Works team, its community partners, the Community Credit Union of Cumberland County, the Department of Community Services, and many others on launching this innovative program and wish them continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

JAMIESON, MICHAEL: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to acknowledge a life lost this past year. Michael Jamieson was not born here, but he was a lifelong resident, and he was dedicated and passionate about our community.

The Hants County Exhibition, the Christmas Angels Telethon, our Remembrance Day ceremony, and the world-renowned Mermaid Theatre performances are all important parts of our hometown and wouldn't be what they are today if it hadn't been for him. He was the sound guy, for lack of a better term, and he was the one who made the magic happen, always making sure the events went off without a hitch.

Michael was a recipient of the 2020-21 David Coombes Hants County Exhibition Champion Award for his dedication to the event from the early 1980s and onward.

It is safe to say the upcoming Christmas Angels Telethon, Mermaid Theatre performances, and Remembrance Day ceremonies won't be the same without him. Michael

set the foundation for success in whatever role he played. He really was our community's go-to guy, and he will be deeply missed by us all.

[1:45 p.m.]

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

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, since the late 1800s, Lebanese immigrants have been here in Nova Scotia. This group fleeing oppressive rule of the Ottoman Empire would be the first of three large diasporas bringing Lebanese people to our province. The second was in the 1950s, shortly after Lebanon's independence, which is celebrated on November 22nd each year. The third was during Lebanon's civil war from 1975 to 1990.

Our people are resilient and entrepreneurial, and in spite of the many challenges and biases our early community members faced - and in some instances still do - our culture and presence are woven into the fabric of this province - from tarabish in Cape Breton, which started in the coal mines and was born of our traditional card game tarneeb, to the Halifax skyline, where Lebanese developers have created and grown, to the food that is devoured and cherished across the province.

November is Lebanese Heritage Month in Nova Scotia. It is a time to share these facets of Lebanese culture, to learn of the many stories of our community, and to celebrate an identity that continues to strengthen even as generations pass.

On this last day of our Fall session, I would like to wish all a very happy Lebanese Heritage Month.

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

CONST. ASSTS.: IMPORTANCE OF WORK - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in gratitude. I cannot begin to express my gratitude and appreciation to my amazing CA, Dylan, and my staff, Anne and Donna. They do such strong casework, and the advocacy that they do on behalf of our constituents is phenomenal. I cannot begin to tell you how much they go the extra mile, turning over every rock just to help somebody. With Dylan at the helm, my office is in good hands. I know that for sure.

I also want to thank my NDP caucus and staff for the support they provided me throughout the Summer and Fall sessions as I adjusted to being a mother of two.

And to my family, thank you all for the immense help each of you have provided to Matt and me to ensure that our girls were taken care of while Mommy was away.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

ATTENDEES: PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE MTG. - THANKS

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Speaker, recently I hosted a meeting in Kings West for volunteer and not-for-profit organizations that support the most vulnerable people in our communities. We called this meeting the People Helping People summit.

As we all know, as the cost of living increases across the globe, people are struggling to make ends meet. It becomes even more difficult as we approach the holiday season.

The intention of this meeting was to get all of the helpers together in one room, to learn what each organization does and how they support our most vulnerable, and create opportunities to work together. We were even able to create a database to share the local resources with the public.

This was a very successful event that has encouraged further community engagement and a pooling of resources. I would like to take a minute to name a few of the organizations that attended and thank all of our local organizations for their dedication and support: the Kingston, Berwick, and Coldbrook Lions Clubs; Berwick Food Bank; Upper Room Food Bank; Bridgetown Salvation Army; Stockings Were Hung; Berwick and Kingston libraries; Western Kings Community Health Board; Annapolis Valley Frugal Moms; Advocates for Angels in Motion; Kingston Pastoral Charge; Berwick Baptist Church; St. Anthony's Catholic Church; Campaign for Kids; Valley Connect Outreach Association; and the Berwick Shriners and Masons.

We all have these organizations in our communities filled with caring, kind, and compassionate individuals who go above and beyond to help their neighbours. I would ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking all those volunteers and organizations who work to make our communities a better place to live.

THE SPEAKER: It's a good thing this is the last day, because the number of members' statements is getting fewer each day.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

ARMSTRONG, CDR. HEATHER JOAN (RET'D): AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, Canadians have many reasons to show gratitude to our veterans for their service and sacrifices that have helped us enjoy the lives

we are able to live today. Many Canadians are dedicated to commemorating veterans and their service. This support is particularly evident during Veterans' Week, when countless people volunteer their time and efforts to honour Canada's veterans.

Once such person is Commander (Ret'd) Heather Joan Armstrong from Hammonds Plains, who received the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation in Nova Scotia. This honour was presented by the honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, alongside MP Darrell Samson, Parliamentary Secretary.

This award was created in 2001 and the Minister of Veterans Affairs Commendation has been awarded to deserving Canadians who have improved the care and well-being of our veterans or honoured the sacrifices they have made.

We recognize all people in Nova Scotia who make a point to do this, but in particular today I'd ask the House to join me in congratulating Commander (Ret'd) Heather Joan Armstrong for not only her services to our country, but for continuing her service by honouring our veterans. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

ZILKOWSKY, MEL: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the significant efforts of Eastern Passage resident Mel Zilkowsky in supporting business owners, veterans, and our entire community.

Mel is the owner of Down East Tours and Ziltech Home Improvement Services. He is the chair of the Eastern Passage and Area Business Association and has spearheaded, with other partners, the Veterans Banner Project honouring local veterans. Mel and the Eastern Passage and Area Business Association now also host our Christmas tree lighting and many other community groups and projects.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Mel Zilkowsky of Eastern Passage for his exceptional service and dedication to our community.

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

LEBLANC, N./MILES, G.: 30 UNDER 30 AWD. WINNERS - CONGRATS.

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Nick LeBlanc and Greg Miles, two local Cole Harbour visual consultant entrepreneurs.

Nick had a strong love for all things computer and tech-related and he strived to implement his love for computer-generated art into something tangible. Greg first got started with architectural visualization while working for a local construction company. What started as a small hobby turned out to be a true passion for both young entrepreneurs.

With their combined love of software, and the inspiring community behind them, they developed Luminous Labs, creating 3D animations, pre-construction virtual tours, architectural renderings, and utilizing drone photography.

Located in Dartmouth, Nick and Greg have grown Luminous Labs as a 3D production studio that offers photo-realistic quality renderings for realtors, developers, and to sell their spaces by building a brand experience that consumers won't forget.

Congratulations to Nick and Greg on their recent 30 Under 30 award. Please join me in wishing these two entrepreneurs much continued success in their venture.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

FOUR THE MOMENT: POLARIS HER. PRIZE WIN - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, a cappella quartet Four the Moment got its start performing at an anti-KKK rally in Halifax in 1981.

Over the years, the internationally celebrated group has included founding members Delvina Bernard, Kim Bernard, Jackie Barkley, and Deanna Sparks, as well as Andrea Currie, Debby Jones, and Anne-Marie Woods. Delvina and Kim have been the two consistent members.

I rise today because Four the Moment's 1987 album *We're Still Standing* was recently awarded the prestigious Slight Family Polaris Heritage Prize, a national hall of fame-minded prize celebrating classic Canadian albums. The four women who sang on the album were Delvina, Kim, Andrea, and Debby.

Four the Moment was also honoured this past weekend at the Nova Scotia Music Week awards. Count me in as one of the many who are still inspired and motivated by Four the Moment's music to this day.

I ask the house to join me in celebrating Four the Moment's Polaris win and thank them for bringing us 40-plus years of feminist and Afrocentric music and fighting spirit.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

4-H LEADERS: ROYAL WINTER FAIR PARTIC. - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, today I want to stand and say thank you to Lacey Fisher and all of the other 4-H leaders who recently were at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

They served our communities. They showed extremely well and I want to say a huge congratulations to each and every 4-H member who travelled there to compete. We are so proud of them. 4-H is an incredible program for our youth throughout all of Nova Scotia. It has a long, long history in Cumberland County.

Today I just want to stand and say thank you each and every 4-H leader and chaperone who went with all of the 4-H members to Toronto to the Royal Winter Fair and say congratulations to each and every 4-H member who competed and came home their awards.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

E. HANTS COM. LEARNING ASSOC.: COM. GARDEN - THANKS

JOHN A. MACDONALD: The East Hants Community Learning Association had another successful year of growing in their community garden to help feed the members of East Hants.

The East Hants Community Learning Association has been able to provide seeds, space, and gardeners to produce food for the community. The garden is available to everyone. Last year the garden was able to fill 2,678 plates for families within East Hants.

The time and effort that the organizers and supporters have put into the garden to ensure quality food is available is an extraordinary act of generosity.

I would like to sincerely thank the East Hants Community Learning Association for their aid in helping bring food security to East Hants with their community garden.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: I beg leave to make an introduction, if I may.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TONY INCE: Up in the Gallery I have with me today - I call her my office manager instead of assistant, and her name is Jennifer. I thank Jennifer for her assistance and all the work that she does - and for the heat that she takes for me.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, we welcome all guests to the Legislature. I hope you enjoy your stay.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

QUILTY, JOHN: MIL. SERV. - THANKS

HON. TONY INCE: I would like to take this time to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude and appreciation for the Canadian and allied veterans and their families as we approach Remembrance Day. I would like to especially thank Mr. John Quilty, who is the president of the Centennial Branch 160 Royal Canadian Legion. John served 41 years in the Air Force and was stationed at Shearwater before he retired.

He is an active member of the Legion and coordinates the poppy campaign. In fact, he was out this morning decorating the graves of veterans in advance of Remembrance Day on Friday.

Thank you, John, for your service and your dedication, and to all those currently serving at home and overseas, and to their families. Lest we forget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HUM, AISHA: CONST. ASST. WORK - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: I stand today to recognize my constituency assistant Aisha Hum. Aisha is a blessing in my office, and as everyone in here can probably attest to, I truly appreciate the hard work and energy Aisha brings daily. Always thinking about the clients we serve, meeting people where they are, connecting with seniors and community members to check in and follow up with them, Aisha is truly an amazing asset to my MLA office.

Aisha is consistent in thinking of my time and energy in the work when she schedules things, and I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful to have such an organized and resilient person at the helm of this ship. Aisha has built good working relationships within departments and is good at getting answers for clients. If the members across or beside me haven't heard from our office in Halifax Needham, don't worry - Aisha will get to you as the clients' needs grow over the next few months.

I would like all members of this House to help me thank Aisha Hum for all the work that she does in my office each and every day.

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

WHEELER, M. CPL. RICK: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRIAN WONG: I rise in my place today to pay respect to a fallen soldier: Master Corporal Rick Wheeler, my best friend, who died tragically in a military training exercise in CFB Suffield, Alberta, April 7, 1992.

Although tragic, his death was investigated. It took 12 years to do a report, but his death resulted in a 471-page report with recommendations to keep soldiers safe in military training exercises going forward. There's a monument in CFB Suffield on the training grounds in his memory.

My 18-year-old son Jacob, whom I am extremely proud of, is a member of the 36th Combat Engineer Regiment in Shearwater. He'll be parading for the first time at the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Preston on Friday.

I ask all Nova Scotians to pause and remember all those who have sacrificed their lives for us on Remembrance Day and wish safety for all those who serve. (Applause)

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

[2:00 p.m.]

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: HEALTH CARE SYSTEM - IMPROVE

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, this Premier was elected on a promise to fix health care. He said there was a crisis in our health care system when only 70,000 Nova Scotians did not have a family doctor. Over the last 15 months, that number has shot up to 120,000, up 50,000 since last year - up 60 per cent overall.

We're hearing the Central Zone is in disarray. Yesterday, the Nova Scotia Health Authority released a memo that the QEII Health Sciences Centre is experiencing serious overcapacity, over 103 per cent. Yet the Premier actually stopped the family practice incentives for doctors here in Halifax. The surgical backlog is now worse than it was prior to the pandemic. I'll table that. Virtual care appointments are often at capacity or closed. We also have staffing shortages across the board.

My question to the Premier is: When are we going to actually start seeing our health care system improve?

THE PREMIER: There are definitely challenges in our health care system, and every Nova Scotian knows that. Nobody knows it more than the incredible people we have working in health care on the front lines providing incredible care every day.

This is a government that's committed. We were elected on a promise to fix health care. We are committed to doing that. We were also very clear that it would take time and money. It's taking time. It's taking money - a \$600 million deficit just this year. We are committed to fixing health care and working with those health care professionals. There are green sprouts popping up across this province as we listen to health care professionals. We'll continue to do that.

ZACH CHURCHILL: It also takes making the right decisions and managing for outcomes instead of for optics. That's what it's going to take to improve our health care system.

We have actually seen the Premier fire experts to replace them with partisans to run the health authority. We have seen the government not listen to Public Health or leading health experts like Dr. Lynk who have given this government advice on how to protect our hospitals. We are hearing from health care professionals who are telling us the situation is getting worse. I'll table that.

How bad does this situation need to get until the Premier starts governing for outcomes instead of optics in our health care system?

THE PREMIER: I want to assure the member and every Nova Scotian that we are governing for the long term, and people will see that. The foundations of the health care system - pretty broken after eight years of Liberals looking the other way from the health care system. We have taken hold of that. We are getting things done. We are building the foundation from which we can advance the delivery of health care in this province.

I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the state of health care in this province right now is very tenuous. It would be much, much worse if the Liberals were still in power looking the other way.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I have heard lawyers in Yarmouth say that when you have the facts in the courtroom, you pound the facts; when you don't, you pound the table. I think it's very clear what the Premier pounds in this House.

Here are the facts. It was reported this week that a Nova Scotia couple was left in shock after it took more than two hours for an ambulance to arrive after a painful injury. Cancer patients are now facing rescheduling appointments with the shortage in medical

isotopes. The QEII redevelopment project is being delayed for an undisclosed amount of time. We have no answers from the Premier or the partisan CEO of the health authority. Emergency room shutdowns across the province, such as in Annapolis and Cape Breton, are affecting the entire health care system and emergency delivery.

My question to the Premier is: When is he going to take responsibility for his decisions, instead of blaming everybody else for the problems in our health care system?

THE PREMIER: Every single day I stand here accountable, and I go out there to be accountable to Nova Scotians.

I will tell you that the health leadership team is doing incredible work. To hear the member stand in this Chamber day after day and smear highly qualified Nova Scotians who are doing their best to support the health care system is, quite frankly, disgusting. We have incredible leadership in the health care system in this province.

Let's lay out some facts. Right now, we have reduced the transfers that are happening . . . (Interruption).

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

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Right now, in this province we hired non-paramedic-trained people to do the patient transfers for non-urgent care. The need for using paramedics to transfer patients is down by 75 per cent. That's a fact.

Here's another fact. We changed the medical licence for paramedics to get them to work quickly. That's a fact. Do you know what is also a fact? That government could have done every single one of them and they didn't bother.

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

PREM.: HEALTH & HOUSING CRISES - FIX

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, on what looks to be the last day of this sitting, it's worth recounting what has taken place over the last few weeks. In the course of this short legislative sitting, 6,440 people have added their names to the family doctor registry - and well over half of those are in the Central Zone.

The IWK and the QEII have both issued alerts about the state of the ERs. Accounts of the Cobequid and the Kentville ERs this week are no better - and those are the ones that we are lucky enough to have open. Still, the government has introduced no health care

legislation, and we are no closer to getting people the care they need. In the Premier's words, some might call that disgusting.

I ask the Premier again: Why has this government allowed another sitting to come and go without any real progress in fixing the health care crisis?

THE PREMIER: The fact of the matter is that the management of the health care system doesn't happen through bills and legislation: It happens every single day by the health leadership team. It happens every single day by people working on the front lines of the health care system. We are getting things done in health care.

Also, as an added bonus for Nova Scotians during this short session, we protected Nova Scotians from a power rate increase. We got a telecommunications bill through to make sure that the telecommunications companies are held accountable to Nova Scotians.

We passed legislation, with no support from the Opposition - nothing but grumbling - to get housing built in this province. We're getting stuff done.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Let's talk about protecting Nova Scotians. Since this House has sat, temperatures have dropped, and people are now facing oil tank bills that could be \$2,000 for a single fill. The Heating Assistance Rebate is a fraction of this cost, and only for the people whose incomes are low enough to be eligible. This government has said time and time again that they are looking at support to help people with costs this Winter, but there is still no word on when they will act. My question to the Premier is: Why hasn't the Premier helped regular people to heat their homes this session?

THE PREMIER: On one hand, we have an Opposition who says we are not doing anything. On another hand we have the same Opposition members, on the same day - sometimes in the same question - saying we are going too fast. The reality is that we are getting things done for Nova Scotians. Yes, there's more work to be done. We are reviewing the programs. We will continue to look for ways to support Nova Scotians. We'll list off a bunch, but we know there's more to be done. There's a lot of work to be done to support Nova Scotians. We're getting it done for Nova Scotians every day.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Since this House first sat on October 13th, less than a month ago, there have been dozens more people added to the list of people experiencing homelessness across this province. Despite this crisis, the Premier has not acted decisively to provide actual affordable housing, has not raised the minimum wage, has not indexed support to inflation. He has not committed to helping people to not have to choose between medication and food by pausing Pharmacare premiums and deductibles. People are falling behind. Why has the Premier allowed another sitting to come and go without providing real support to Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: Look, Nova Scotians are struggling, for sure. We know that and we feel that very deeply and very personally. It's happening in Nova Scotia. It's happening across the country. It's really happening across the world, the inflationary issues we have.

We are doing things to support Nova Scotians. The members might not want to acknowledge that, but we are doing things. We will also take extraordinary steps to get things like housing built. When people try to get in the way and slow it down, we'll push them out of the way, and we'll get housing built, because we're interested in making sure that we do everything we can to support Nova Scotians. We will not be distracted. We will do everything we can to support Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: CARBON PRICING - PLAN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: In the midst of a cost of living crisis that's affecting Nova Scotians from across every part of this province, this government has still governed for optics and not outcomes when it comes to the carbon tax.

This government would have known that the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledged that the carbon pricing system imposed minimum requirements on provinces and territories that failed to meet the Act's pricing and emission benchmarks - either because they failed to enact carbon pricing laws at all, or the regime falls behind federal benchmarks for carbon pricing.

Other jurisdictions have implemented their own regimes. Nova Scotia did that before as well with the cap and trade system that kept the carbon tax away from Nova Scotia.

My question to the Premier is: Did he know the Supreme Court's decision before he put forward a plan that didn't have any carbon pricing in it at all to the federal government?

THE PREMIER: The reality is yes - we know that court decision. We know that court decision gives the federal government the ability to push a carbon tax on Nova Scotians. We accept that. They have the ability to do that.

Where we differ from the Opposition, both parties, is that we don't think a Liberal carbon tax is necessary in this province. The cap and trade system - the members will know - just couldn't survive. It just couldn't. It was always time-limited. It was always meant to push it down the road. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? We're picking it up. We're dealing with it and we're asking them to support Nova Scotians and put politics aside.

ZACH CHURCHILL: They're not dealing with it. As a result, Nova Scotians are going to see the highest increase in gas prices at the pumps in the whole country under this Premier's leadership. On top of that, we're actually seeing our renewable projects potentially jeopardized because of this government.

The Atlantic Loop project has hit a gigantic roadblock. I'll table that. The government is not actually negotiating what they say they are. I'll table that as well. We're actually in a position where the hydrogen project isn't quite what the government has said, as well. I'll table that.

The fact is, now Nova Scotians are going to be paying more for green initiatives and doing less. How does that make sense to the Premier?

THE PREMIER: If the member's Liberal cousins in Ottawa push a Liberal carbon tax down here, he can look in the mirror and thank himself, because he has an opportunity right now to stand up for Nova Scotians.

Put the partisan politics aside. Put Nova Scotians to the front. That's what we're doing. We put forward a plan. It's better than a carbon tax. It will protect this planet. A carbon tax is not necessary. If the Liberals look the other way and let it come, they can thank themselves. We'll make sure Nova Scotians know.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

FTB: FUEL COST HELP - EXPLAIN

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: That's interesting, Mr. Speaker. During the Premier's debate when he ran the election, he called himself "like Justin Trudeau." This party stood up for Nova Scotians and negotiated a deal that kept the carbon tax away.

High fuel prices hit our rural communities the hardest of all. It's impossible to navigate our rural communities without gas to drive. This Summer, the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's sent a letter to the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture pleading with them to do something about the high gas prices that are hurting their community.

Warden Greg Weir said, "We are a very rural area. We have people on fixed incomes. Gas prices are higher and going higher, and we thought we would be saving this Summer for next Winter. We're putting it into our cars and into our groceries. It's starting to hurt constituents." I'll table that.

When can the Premier and the minister tell the people of St. Mary's how they are going to help people in their community with the price of fuel?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, it's always important to think about what you can control. The price of fuel is a worldwide phenomenon. We saw the prices really start to spike when Russia invaded Ukraine. This is a problem that everybody around the world is dealing with. What we can control in this country is not putting forth a carbon tax to further hurt people at the gas pump. It fascinates me . . . (Interruption)

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

ALLAN MACMASTER: It fascinates me at this point in time, when everybody's dealing with this inflation, the cost of fuel, and the impact that has on food prices, why on Earth the federal government wants to continue with a carbon tax.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: We can continue to talk about the carbon tax, but I'll say this: Quebec put their second cheque out today for people who make under \$100,000 to help them with inflation. This government has yet to do that - to help working-class Nova Scotians deal with the costs that are skyrocketing. If the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board wants to help, let's get a cheque out to people to help them.

The price of diesel in New Brunswick recently shot up to over \$3 per litre in its biggest one-day price increase in the history of regulated diesel prices. People are worried Nova Scotia could be next. Fishers use diesel to fuel their boats. Farmers use diesel to fuel their tractors. A spike of this magnitude could be fatal to their businesses. We're talking about tens of thousands of dollars in added fuel costs . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question, please.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Does this government plan on introducing any emergency fuel cost relief for these cornerstone rural industries?

ALLAN MACMASTER: I fundamentally disagree. The Liberal Finance Minister in Ottawa has referred to such measures as pouring gas on a fire. The central bank is trying to kill inflation. Sending out cheques to everyone - what good is a \$600 cheque to somebody who's making \$100,000 a year, who has no dependents . . . (Interruption).

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

ALLAN MACMASTER: What good is that? We need to focus on targeted supports to people who are feeling it the most. I cannot state again how much more I disagree with this idea of blanket cheques to everyone.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

[2:15 p.m.]

FTB: SMALL BUSINESS FUEL COSTS - SUPPORT

FRED TILLEY: I'll just respond to that for a second. There was a \$20 million fuel tax surplus that this government - and they're going to have another one - so cut the fuel tax. That's not going to cost anybody money.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'm going to ask the member to get to his question.

FRED TILLEY: Small businesses are still bogged down under the weight of pandemic debt and inflation. The cost of fuel is continuing to weigh them down. The CFIB notes that fuel and energy costs are the top cost constraints for 67 per cent of small businesses, and yet this government has not provided any support for the soaring costs. I'll table that.

When businesses cannot afford these costs, they either cut wages, lay people off, or increase prices. All of these are terrible outcomes for Nova Scotians. To the Minister of Economic Development: When will the government support businesses with soaring fuel costs?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I want to correct the member. We're actually not allowed to eliminate the fuel excise tax. We've been told that by the federal government. They've told us the carbon tax is coming and you're not allowed to eliminate the fuel excise tax. They don't want us trying to interfere in what they're trying to do, which is increase the price of fuel so people stop buying it.

The only problem with that is people need to buy fuel to drive to work. People need to buy groceries; they get delivered in trucks that use fuel. They want more tax on the fuel. We don't understand this. Again, I would say to the members: Why not stand up and protect Nova Scotians from the carbon tax?

FRED TILLEY: Is the minister suggesting other provinces are breaking the law? Other provinces have cut fuel taxes in their provinces. I suggest that we continue the same.

With small business operators looking for support, all they see coming is more costs due to the Conservative carbon tax. The cap and trade system protected small businesses from this carbon tax, and now they'll face even more costs they cannot afford due to this government's mismanagement. Over 80 per cent of Nova Scotia's small businesses believe that government must ensure that the Progressive Conservative carbon tax revenues collected from small businesses must be returned to them in the form of a rebate. I'll table that.

Can the Minister of Economic Development let Nova Scotia's small businesses know what rebate they will receive from this government's new carbon tax?

ALLAN MACMASTER: The member is wrong again. Provincial governments in some cases did remove fuel excise taxes, but they've been told they're not allowed to do that anymore from the federal government. I'm putting that fact on the floor.

Small businesses - there's no question the carbon tax is going to hurt them too. At the end of the day, this is not a comfortable time with inflation, but businesses have to pass those costs on.

I would come back to my first point that we need to give targeted supports to people. Some people can handle a little bit of this. They're making bigger salaries. They don't have all the dependents to look after at home, but there are others who can't. That's why targeted supports are most important.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: PARAMEDIC BURNOUT - ADDRESS

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Premier. Last week in response to a question about why people are still waiting hours for an ambulance, the Premier said, "It's very easy to get impatient." Indeed, people are impatient, and they have good reason to be. Another paramedic reached out to us the other day to say that she has worked as an ambulance paramedic for 13 years but just quit because the stress of her job is not improving. We know there's lots of work under way. My question for the Premier is: When is it going to get better for paramedics in Nova Scotia?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We are working very hard with the paramedic union, with the College of Paramedics. We are in contact with them on a regular basis. We're working with them to better understand how we can support them, making sure that things like end-of-shift overruns are reduced to the best of our ability. We continue to work with them. We know they are under an incredible amount of stress, and we know that the system is under stress and we won't stop. We do need to look at the number of people who are trained. We need to look at how we can bring paramedics in from other jurisdictions in order to support our paramedics. We'll continue to work with them to find solutions that work for Nova Scotians and for the paramedic workforce.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year our offices received thousands of emails in the campaign about this. They said that it's easy to see why paramedics are fleeing this province, or the profession entirely, at such an alarming rate. They are tired, they are hungry, and they can't take any more. There are some of the most highly skilled and trained paramedics in North America and yet they're some of the lowest-paid. We cannot keep hemorrhaging this critical work force.

So the lowest-paid; very little has changed since then. As one paramedic put it to us, everybody has an exit strategy. Last week the Premier said that “Compensation is part of the equation . . . We’re focused on every single part of the equation.” We haven’t heard that today.

My question for the Premier: When will this government pay paramedics fairly so they can stay in the province and in their trucks helping people?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I know it’s very important to the Opposition members to ensure that we respect the collective bargaining position. We will be doing that in order to address wages. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, we are working with the things that we can help the paramedics with immediately. We have a spare unit, as an example, so that those who are on the regular trucks have an opportunity to work in a different environment. We are looking at how we can support them in expanding education in a ladder in order for them to go from PCP - primary care paramedicine - to advanced care paramedicine. We are very focused on the paramedic workforce, and we will continue to work with them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

FTB - N.S. TRUCKERS: DIESEL COSTS - ADDRESS

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, the high price we are seeing for diesel fuel is having a huge impact on our trucking industry. Some truckers are actually carrying out contracts at a loss, due to the cost, which is currently at \$2.28 per litre. For over half of this year, the price has been over \$2.00 a litre, the highest it has ever been. My question to the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is: What can the government offer to our province’s truckers, who continue to deal with skyrocketing diesel prices?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the challenge here - and I’m sympathetic to the truckers - is they need to do whatever they can to protect themselves. I would hope that they have contracts that are fair and that the people who are employing them are ensuring that they are not getting hurt by rising prices of fuel, that those costs are passed on, that they don’t have to shoulder those costs individually, as truckers. That would be very important to me.

In terms of the government trying to create rebates to truckers, for instance, it just mutes the impact of the inflation which we’re seeing, which, at first blush, sounds like a great thing, but it could actually make things worse because what the central bank is trying to do is trying to fight it.

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, dating back to the Summer session, I have been confused by the approach of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to this issue. He is the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, responsible for a \$13 billion budget. If we listen to him on a daily basis, you would think he is a child in charge of a lemonade stand

who has run out of water, lemons, and sugar. There are things this government can do to help Nova Scotians. When will the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board take advantage of the power he has, and actually do something to help people?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, \$13.2 billion might sound like a lot but it is kind of like a lemonade stand if you look around the world and try to deal with a problem that is on a global basis. I'll accept the comment as a friendly joke. Yes, \$13.2 billion is a lot of money, but these are worldwide problems, and we don't have a treasury that can fix this problem.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

DHW: VALLEY HEALTH CARE ISSUES - RESPOND

HON. KEITH IRVING: This was posted 18 hours ago by Sarah Robicheau on Facebook:

“The waiting room at Kentville emergency department is beyond packed. This is outrageous. Middleton is closed. There is a man bleeding through his bandage, an elderly man who had a stroke is waiting while his wife is crying beside him. People are distressed and arguing who is next. The elderly lady said she would leave but her husband may have a brain bleed. Ambulances are backed up. The gentlemen beside me was hit by a car and his leg is bad. One lady just left because she has been waiting 10 hrs. What are people to do? This is awful. People are sitting on the floor. People are opening up to their medical issues in hopes of being more urgent than the next person.”

To the Premier: Has he fixed health care or ruined it?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to work across all sectors to try to support our health care workers and Nova Scotians in this province. We know that health care is under significant strain. Health and human resources are the biggest issues that we are facing in this province. The time is now, and the time was eight years ago. We cannot make a doctor today. We have to recruit doctors. We need to bring them in from other jurisdictions. We are looking at incentives. We are looking at ways in which to increase training. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you 50,000 people work in health care . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. A lot of banter going back and forth here.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We don't like to talk about blame, but there are 15,000 health care workers in this province. We know what it was like the day they took office, and we know what it was like the day they left.

KEITH IRVING: I know the minister is trying, but it's not working. The state of emergency departments across this province is disastrous, and it is unfair to the hard-working, burnt-out staff. With emergency department closures in the Valley, it has made the current state of the Kentville emergency department unsustainable. People are trying to access emergency services by sitting on the floor. It's so over capacity they don't even have a chair.

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable to Nova Scotians. They deserve better. The Minister of Health and Wellness is one-third through her mandate. When will the people of the Annapolis Valley be able to access timely emergency services?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I do want to assure Nova Scotians that we are working very hard on health care. I appreciate that there is an incredible amount of strain. One of the things that is not helpful is constant fearmongering and frightening people away from going to emergency rooms . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Order. The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness has the floor.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: What I want Nova Scotians to know is that we have very capable health care workers in this province. We work on a triage system so that the sickest people are seen first. We have very skilled folks. There are people who wait long periods of time. We have to address primary health care. I don't want anyone to be discouraged from going to an emergency room in this province if they need emergency care.

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

EECD: EARLY CHILDHOOD OPERATORS - ASSIST

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development said that all promised funds were flowing to early childhood operators. We now know that that statement is incorrect, and if the documents I tabled yesterday didn't show that clearly enough, I will table a document directly from the department which states as much and was sent yesterday afternoon to operators.

Operators continue to reach out to me, saying they're not receiving help from the department despite what is being said on the floor of the Legislature and to the media. My question to the minister is: Why is she creating more chaos with our licensed child care operators?

[2:30 p.m.]

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I have answered this question multiple times; I will answer it again in the 45 seconds that we have. Operators continue to receive funding to provide operations through the course of this transformation.

I would encourage the member opposite to reach out to me or the department. We would be happy to sit down with her and explain in more detail how this is working, because this is a complex transformation. It's really difficult to explain it in 45 seconds. Unfortunately, the member hasn't done that. She has just asked the question in Question Period. If the member is really interested . . . (Interruption).

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

BECKY DRUHAN: If the member opposite is really interested in understanding this complex transformation, I encourage her to reach out. We'll be happy to . . .

PATRICIA ARAB: It doesn't surprise me that the minister is yet again espousing things that are not accurate. I guess when I spoke to her directly after Question Period on Friday, that wasn't coming and speaking to her directly, that was just waiting for hits during Question Period. That's okay. I don't have any documentation to table that, other than the members who saw us speaking and heard what we were speaking of.

Under this minister and Premier, we've already lost close to 500 daycare spaces, with more operators telling me that they will have to do so before the end of the month. The operators feel coerced into signing an agreement that has no information in it and feel that they are being gaslit by this minister, just as recently as the call she made to them last night. Can the minister tell the House what contingency plan she has for parents and children without daycare, and those who are soon to follow?

BECKY DRUHAN: I would just like to say that we had excellent feedback following the sector calls we had last night. Our department has been continuing to support this sector with sharing of information and lots of calls. Last night, I spoke directly to hundreds of operators in the sector, both our for-profit and our not-for-profit, and we've had a lot of feedback. I'd just like to read an excerpt of one of them:

“Historic change has definitely brought with it historic levels of stress - navigating our future within the CWELCCA with funding changes and uncertainty. Grateful for the changes in engagement and communication that have been made within the Department under Minister Druhan. Sector calls and engagement are greatly appreciated and helpful throughout this process.”

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Although you are quoting, you cannot use proper names, even if it's your own. I'd ask the minister to please table that.

The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

SNSIS: DRUMLIN HILLS SENIORS - ASSIST

GARY BURRILL: My question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. Last week, responding to a question about the residents of the enhanced living units at Drumlin Hills seniors' home in Bridgewater - who are losing their assisted living facilities after a change in the ownership of the building - the minister encouraged the residents to make application to have their situations reviewed at Residential Tenancies. Quite a number of them have done this but are faced with the difficulty that the hearing has been set for them on December 1st. The fear is that the infrastructure of assisted living - the dining room, the kitchen, and so on - may well be removed by the landlord before the hearing can be held. They wrote the minister yesterday, asking if the minister would undertake to ensure that the hearing take place before that. Will the minister do that?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I appreciate the member following up on this topic. There was an organization that did reach out to me and other ministers regarding this particular issue. I do want to point out that this is not an assisted living facility. It is considered a rental property. That's where it fits in within the Residential Tenancies program. As with any application before the board, either party can apply through the residential tenancy officer, and that's noted on the notice of hearing for an early or later adjournment. That's an option that's available to the parties involved in this matter.

GARY BURRILL: My second question is to the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care. This same group of residents and clergy in Bridgewater, in their letter to the government yesterday, asked the minister to direct the release of funds to the Town of Bridgewater in consideration of expenses they may have about the services and meals to the people of Drumlin Hills. They also asked her to deploy departmental staff to make assessment of the situation of those vulnerable senior residents there as they face this group renovation. Will she do that?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: We did that as soon as we heard about the issue months ago.

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

DHW: NURSES NOT BEING CREDENTIALLED - EXPLAIN

HON. BEN JESSOME: To our Minister of Health and Wellness, I was contacted recently by a Nova Scotian who was working as a registered nurse in Nova Scotia in 2005.

That was 17 years ago. She spent some time in her career both improving her education and moving with her young family to other provinces due to her husband's employment.

Unfortunately, upon returning to Nova Scotia, she found out that despite her many years of service in Nova Scotia, she was not allowed to work in her area, because she had spent five years not practicing due to moving and being on maternity leave. She was given the opportunity to take an intense exam and a retraining process at her own expense - which would not take into account her specialization - or she could take a year and a half training program.

Can the Minister of Health and Wellness explain why talented and experienced nurses living here in Nova Scotia are not being credentialled?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: The issue that the member is talking about is actually because of the Nova Scotia College of Nursing. As registered nurses or as licensed practical nurses, there is a requirement through the College that each person works a basic number of hours in a five-year term. That's to allow for leaves, maternity leaves, any type of study leave, et cetera. There are criteria about how you maintain your hours. They don't all have to be clinical hours and that is the issue. If your hours lapse in this five-year period, based on the criteria of the College of Nursing, then there is a requirement that you either challenge an exam or you do a re-entry program.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that explanation from the minister. I hear where she's coming from, but the health care system is in a crisis. Furthermore, our mental health care system needs the help, and her specialty is in mental health. Right now, we have an experienced, proven RN who can't rejoin the front line.

Our health care workers are being overworked. It's not just her. We're hearing from all over the province about situations where experienced health care workers of all sorts have moved to Nova Scotia and cannot get to work.

This government has made a point to deal with the colleges. We saw some similar action taken in August with respect to Ukrainians coming into Nova Scotia. I wonder if the minister will take similar strides to bring Nova Scotians who have worked in our system into the system.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: This is a difficult situation for a number of health care providers, and I appreciate that. I don't know about the specifics of this case. It would be something that I would have to look into with the College. There are some things at the College that if your licence has lapsed and you have not worked in the past five years, there may be implications to your licence. That's not something that I can change, but I am willing to hear more about it and better understand, and talk to the College. However, the primary focus of the College is to protect the public and to make sure that people meet a

basic entry requirement. There's certainly more that we can do to support this person, but I can't make a commitment today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

DHW: IUD ACCESS - FUND

HON. KELLY REGAN: A fundraising campaign by the QEII caught my eye recently. In a post, the hospital foundation makes a plea for donor assistance to fund contraceptive devices, specifically IUDs, because not all people who need them after abortions have the money or the insurance to access them.

This caught my eye because this issue was first raised well over a year ago by the member for Dartmouth South. She raised it with me as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. At the time I went to the Minister of Health and Wellness and asked that doctors and nurses no longer have to fundraise to provide IUDs.

The minister of the day covered that cost, so I was surprised to see this latest fundraising campaign. Can the Minister of Health and Wellness confirm for us today: Has the Department of Health and Wellness withdrawn that IUD funding from the QEII Women's Choice Clinic?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: To my knowledge, there's been no reduction in funding. No.

KELLY REGAN: People who have undergone abortions need to be able to access contraception. They need to control their fertility so they can make their own choices about their lives. Often the most appropriate contraceptive is an IUD, because a jealous partner or controlling parent cannot interfere with its efficacy. There are no pills to take each day, no pills to forget or to have taken away by parents or boyfriends.

As Dr. Lianne Yoshida of the Women's Choice Clinic explains, the lack of public funding for contraceptives makes them out of reach for many women. Will the minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act today commit to ensuring that people who have undergone terminations receive free IUDs if they do not have insurance to cover their entire cost?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to look at the program to understand what is publicly funded through the Pharmacare program. My understanding is that IUDs that do have medication associated with them - there are some that do have hormonal medication attached to the implant - are covered by Pharmacare. I am not clear exactly on what is covered through the Department of Community Services. Certainly, we are reviewing what is covered under the formulary. We do hope to improve how we support Nova Scotians with that program.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

FTB: MOTIVE FUEL TAX ACTION - COMMIT

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: It is absolutely within this government's purview to lower taxes on gas and fuel. There is a provincial motive fuel tax, 10 cents a litre, that is absolutely within this government's control to lower, reduce, or remove. Absolutely, the provincial government can't touch the federal excise tax, and you can't touch the HST, but this government can reduce or remove the provincial motive fuel tax. We know that many people are going to struggle this Winter with increasing costs. Will this government commit to reducing or removing the provincial motive fuel tax on gas?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I did mention that answer earlier today. We are actually not allowed to do that. (Interruption) Well, you can say what you want, and you can wish what you want, but it's a fact. We have been told by the federal government that you cannot touch that, because that would be offsetting the carbon tax, and they do not want us to do that because they are trying to raise the price of fuel so people stop buying it. As we know, and as I've said earlier, people still have to buy it. Most people cannot afford an electric vehicle right now - if you are lucky enough to find one for sale. The Opposition can say what they want. People can look it up - it is not possible for us to lower the excise tax.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to table the federal legislation that prevents the provincial government from reducing or removing the provincial motive fuel tax. What isn't federal policy is that the minister cannot reduce the HST portion of the provincial - that is law - but it is absolutely within this provincial government's purview and ability to reduce or remove the provincial motive fuel tax on gas and diesel. This government is refusing - and it will provide relief.

Our truckers have asked for it. Our residents have asked for it. Other provinces have done it. Will the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board research and look at this law closer and, if he's wrong, make a commitment to reduce or remove the provincial motive fuel tax?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, respectfully to the member, I have no problem providing that information to her so that members of the House are aware of that fact.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

SLTC: SRS. CARE GRANT CUT-OFF - EXTEND

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, my office is receiving many calls from seniors who are looking for the government to help them with the rising cost of living. Their pensions are not covering their monthly expenses and they are really worried about being able to afford to heat their homes this Winter.

These are seniors who make just above the threshold of the Seniors Care Grant and for the home heating grant - they do not qualify for either. My question to the Minister of Seniors is: What plans does the department have for those seniors who are just above the income cut-off?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: What we have talked about on the government side is targeted solutions for the people most in need. The Seniors Care Grant, when we brought it out, was the first of its kind. We brought it in for \$500. Then when the fuel prices started to go up, we raised it \$250. Then when Hurricane Fiona came, we immediately raised it to \$1,000 total.

Those funds are for those most in need. That is where our targets are, and to sustain that over time. That is the starting point for this government. It is the first seniors grant of its kind and there is much more to do.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: The actual threshold is the issue here, and she needs to accept that. The threshold for the Seniors Care Grant is \$37,500 for a two-person home. She knows how little that is. That is barely enough for two people to live on but will become impossible with the rising cost of heating their home this Winter. We want seniors to stay longer in their homes, and she is trying to push that for us. What is the minister's plan to help them to afford to stay in their home?

BARBARA ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that health professionals know is that you need to understand the problem before you focus on the solution. One of the other things that we're doing and just announced is a Home Lift program for caregivers and their family members. We're putting lifts into people's homes and we're sending physiotherapists and occupational therapists in to help train the family members. This allows somebody in the home to better care for their loved one.

When we're looking at targeted solutions for seniors, we are targeting those most in need right now. The previous government targeted 0 per cent of Nova Scotians. The previous government may not understand that they had no Seniors Care Grant. We have a Seniors Care Grant, and that's a starting point.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

[2:45 p.m.]

EMO: RELIABLE ACCESS TO 911 - UPDATE

CARMAN KERR: When this government closed down the emergency centre in Annapolis Royal and severely reduced emergency hours at Soldiers Memorial Hospital in Middleton, our county was left with six hours of emergency care per day. This government and the Nova Scotia Health Authority tell us that whenever there's a medical emergency, call 911.

Unfortunately, many communities in my constituency don't have cell service, therefore can't call 911. I've heard from residents who have had multiple attempts to 911 not go through or the calls go across the Bay of Fundy into New Brunswick before disconnecting. A delay in getting through to 911, combined with limited hospital-based emergency, is a deadly combination. My question to the Minister of Economic Development: What is this government doing to ensure all communities in my constituency have reliable access to 911?

HON. JOHN LOHR: There are a lot of things in the 911 issues to unpack. Part of the answer is that we are going to next-generation 911. That's a national program to change the carrier that provides 911 services, which is Bell Aliant. In Nova Scotia, if you have your cell service through Rogers or any other cell service provider, it's seamless when you make that call. It will go right in to Bell, unlike other provinces.

That's part of the answer. We're working on that next-generation 911. As you know, during Fiona, we had the issues with service across eastern Nova Scotia and we've put a bill before the House to address some of those issues . . . (Interruption)

CARMAN KERR: The lack of emergency cell service is a huge problem in many parts of rural Nova Scotia. All Nova Scotians should be able to call for help when they need it. The health and safety concerns around lack of cell service aren't hypothetical. We have heard first-hand from constituents who weren't able to connect with 911 in a timely manner in emergency situations such as heart attacks, motor vehicle accidents, and again this week, a home invasion.

To the Minister of Health and Wellness, rather than the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: I don't see that access to 911 is in the mandate letter, but I'd like to know if she and her department consider access to 911 a priority.

JOHN LOHR: Just for the member's information, as Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management, part of that is 911 services, the next-generation 911, all that we are doing.

Some of what the member is talking about is gaps in cell service. That is a reality across Nova Scotia. Cellphone companies have got issues with - we need them to step up and put towers in more areas. Obviously, they look at the number of customers and the demand, so this is something that has been the subject of a study. There is a cellphone gap study out there.

What other people don't realize is in some cases they think: I have a landline, good, I'm safe. The reality is that landlines in some cases have been tied into the cellphone service . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

EECD: NEW SCHOOL FOR NORTHSIDE-WESTMOUNT - UPDATE

FRED TILLEY: My question is for the Minister for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We know that new school projects happen in phases. My question is whether or not the site selection process has been completed for the new school in Northside-Westmount.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Yes, new schools are very exciting for communities and we're building modern schools to meet community, student, and family needs. We know that a school for your area was included in the five-year capital plan, and that continues to be on that plan. As updates are available with respect to what the development of that looks like, the community will be advised by the region. So the community can stay tuned for any additional updates.

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 232.

Bill No. 232 - Employment Support and Income Assistance Act (amended).

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

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: I appreciate the time to speak for a few minutes on Bill No. 232, the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act. This is basically a bill that will tie income assistance rates to CPI, which is inflation, every year. We've had a number of sessions now where the cost of living has been . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. There's a lot of noise in the House. The member for Fairview-Clayton Park has the floor. If you want to carry on your conversation, please do so in the hall.

The honourable member for Fairview-Clayton Park.

PATRICIA ARAB: We've had many conversations over the course of the past year, especially about the cost of living crisis that we're existing in. A pandemic certainly didn't help matters for any of us, but particularly for those who are on income assistance. There are struggles every day, hard decisions that are made. We have talked about a few of them. There have been some other Opposition bills that have come forward that really try to highlight the challenges that people are facing - decisions about how they're going to heat their house or if they're going to be able to buy groceries or if they have to buy medication for their children. These are questions that, quite frankly, none of us should ever have to ask, particularly those who are the most vulnerable in our communities.

We have no control over inflation. I listen when the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board gets up and speaks and talks about what's happening around the world and all the different factors that play into the rates that exist around us. Contrary to, possibly, some government members' opinions, I'm actually quite smart, and I can follow along with things quite easily. Inflation is something that I do understand. I understand and I take the government at their word when they say that they are trying, and talk about the assistance that they have given to certain . . .

Again, an introduction of a bill like this is not by any means to negate that, to call criticism to that. It is a means to enhance the supports that are there. It is a suggestion of how we can come together and how we can support our most vulnerable.

This bill specifically targets those numbers of individuals who are on income assistance. We already know the struggles they face. Prior to the boundary redistribution, the area of Bayers Westwood, which is the largest public housing development in Nova Scotia, were my constituents. It was a part of my constituency. I still have close ties to a number of people from that community, so even though I'm no longer their MLA technically, it's conversations that I still have with them on a regular basis. I'm still very close and sit on the board with the family resource centre that services that area. I hear the challenges, and circumstances that were dire at best have rapidly declined in the last year and a half.

This isn't a bill to point fingers at anybody. This isn't a bill to dredge up the past and say it should have been done, or you should have done this, or we should have done this. The fact of the matter is that we had a pandemic that nobody saw coming, and that accelerated the livelihood that so many Nova Scotians were facing.

This bill takes the struggles of those who are on a fixed income and alleviates them to a certain degree, because it enhances the fact that when inflation goes up, their payments will go up as well. They will be directly tied to inflation so that they're not going to have to do the calculations. This isn't the land of milk and honey. This isn't going to be something that's going to cost the government extra millions of dollars or billions of dollars. I know that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board in our previous Question Period negated the budget. I guess on a large scale, even on a national scale, it's not a huge budget, but the bit of the budget that would be attached to this particular bill is miniscule, less than a lemonade stand. And it would mean so much to our Nova Scotians who are living and rely on income assistance.

Again I've heard the government stand up on numerous occasions and praise or give accolades to the programs they have put in place and the supports they are doing. It's really important, and especially for our new members, to understand - and I can't say this enough - when the Opposition gets up to introduce a bill or to speak to a bill, it is by no means a criticism of what government is doing. We are here to try and help. We are here to say look, we have constituents we are speaking to as well and these are some ideas that we have. You can take it as we've presented it to you, or you can take it and make it as your own. It doesn't matter to us, honestly.

I would love it if this bill was taken seriously by the government, and we passed it as is. But I would be just as happy if the government chose to introduce something similar to it that protects our most vulnerable. I would be okay with that. I would support that bill, because it doesn't matter who takes the credit for it.

We are at a point where people are in dire need of help. I can't say that enough times. This isn't even talking about the middle class, the middle class that continuously gets eked out and eked out. There is nobody asking for blanket cheques, nobody is asking for a magic wand, but we have our most vulnerable in this province who are drowning even more dramatically than they ever have, because of what's happening in the world around them and they are powerless to break the surface of the water.

It would be our hope that acceptance of this bill or an introduction of a government bill that had a similar intent could be one small piece that would be a lifeline to those who are struggling, those on income assistance in the midst of the greatest challenge I've ever seen in my lifetime.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will sit down.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I am glad to rise to speak to this bill. Our caucus has been asking for raises to and the indexing of income assistance rates for a long time now. Prior to when I got here and when I became the critic for the Department of Community Services, we still continued to advocate for this and to fight for this.

Although I don't want to point fingers at my Liberal colleagues, I will, although with the deepest amount of respect because I find it interesting that this has been brought forward by the Liberals, who governed for many years - since 2013 - and with rates, Mr. Speaker, that kept people in deep structural poverty.

People on income assistance are condemned to a life of poverty because the assistance rates are far too low. This is the case under this government, and it was the case under the previous government as well. I will give them this - I am happy that they have seen the error of their ways and they might have a few regrets. Maybe if they had had another year of so, they would have provided indexing.

I just want to remind everybody in this room that individuals on income assistance and disability supports are people. These are real people with real lives. They are not numbers, they are not stats, they are not an inconvenience, (Interruption) and they are nothing to be huffing and puffing about. They are people who are struggling to survive, and they deserve our respect and they deserve dignity. I hear government say, they've done this, and they've done that, or what have you - as if that's enough when constituents are coming to us saying, I can't feed my children, I can't take a job for fear of losing more of my income assistance.

In Nova Scotia, 100 per cent of families that rely on government support as their only source of income live in poverty because the amount of support falls far below the poverty line. With rising inflation and no increase to income assistance, people who depend on income assistance actually had a five per cent cut in their purchasing power at the time of the government's first budget that was delivered. This gap has been growing ever since, so not only has this government not raised income assistance rates, they've effectively cut them off.

Nova Scotia has some of the lowest welfare incomes in Canada for single people and single-parent families with one child. No one should be forced to live in poverty and be unable to meet their basic needs. Nova Scotia has some of the highest rates, again, of child poverty. In Cape Breton we have the highest rates within this province. In some areas of Cape Breton, it's one in two and in some areas it's one in three. I think that's getting higher and that is unacceptable and it's a disgrace.

That was true under the previous government, and it remains true under this government. For years we have heard from the Liberals - for whom I have the utmost

respect, but this is a fact - claim to be transforming income assistance for the past eight years. In reality, Mr. Speaker, there has been very little change for people living on Income Assistance.

[3:00 p.m.]

I'm glad they've seen the error of their ways, but again, the rates have stayed the same. The only time we've ever seen the percentages change was when there was money flowing through from the federal government that upped the Nova Scotia Child Benefit that we saw any change, but that's not a real number. That's a COVID-19 number.

The NDP caucus successfully supported the calls to the Liberal government to end the clawback of the child support payments from ESIA recipients and the clawback of the CPP benefits, including CPP survivor benefits. The NDP caucus also supported calls to the Liberal government to end the requirement for older individuals to apply early for reduced CPP benefits which are then deducted 100 per cent from their ESIA entitlements. If it weren't for this work, people would be living even deeper in poverty with even greater hurdles to meeting their basic needs.

Those are things that I will say that the previous government did hear us, and did react. Those who are fortunate enough to have long-term employment are eligible for EI if they are laid off and receive benefits that they have paid into. This money is also clawed back at 100 per cent from their ESIA. The NDP caucus has tabled a bill to end this practice, but neither the previous government nor the Progressive Conservatives have acted, Mr. Speaker.

This government has argued that it is providing targeted support. What possible targeted support could there be than raising the income assistance rates? I ask you. Please, somebody answer me. Why have they not done this already, Mr. Speaker, in the wake of a cost of living crisis where people who rely on ESIA are going hungry? We've all heard it in our constituencies. I can't tell you the stories that I have heard of parents who are just trying to take care of their children, or single individuals who are just trying to make it day by day. Instead, what we've seen is a \$35 million corporate tax cut from the government for big companies with no details about why this is coming now.

I've been around government quite a bit. I can tell you something I have learned. Corporate tax cuts don't do anything. What they do is allow big box stores to put in automated checkouts. Who lost their job there, Mr. Speaker, with that tax cut? How many people lost their jobs in that tax cut and had to go on income assistance? That's what corporate tax cuts do. That's what they've always done. The last time there was a corporate tax cut, I believe a bunch of stores put in automated checkouts. Again, we still don't know the details of what that \$35 million tax cut from this government is going to do.

We were very glad to hear the Premier say yesterday that finally, after weeks and weeks of asking, he'd be looking at how to expand access to income-based programs. I would urge him to be as broad and swift as possible in this review. People are struggling across the province right now. I will also point out that there are a number of other things that this government can do to address poverty rates.

Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have actually raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, despite how many have been begging for it in this province, let alone a minimum wage that is closer to a living wage. Neither the Liberals nor the Progressive Conservatives have instituted a system of permanent rent control. In order to ensure all Nova Scotians have a good quality of life, we need to increase wages and social assistance benefits, but we also need to invest in universal programs and services that will lower the bills that we need to pay.

Here are some examples: Raise the minimum wage - \$15 an hour doesn't cut it now, it's not going to cut it in 2024. Then begin mapping out how to get the minimum wage to a level of a living wage. The Premier has refused to do this and says it is in deference to the work of an independent committee. We are here in this sitting, of course, with the Premier intervening to abolish dozens of independent boards, so it's interesting when the Premier values independence and when he doesn't. I think it's only when it's good for the gander.

Permanent rent control is another. We consider it a win for people under the pressure from the public and our caucus. Two governments have now instituted an extended rent cap, when they've repeatedly said they don't believe in rent control or that it doesn't work. The long-term solution that people need is permanent rent control they can count on, a form of rent control which would be in place between tenants, so that landlords are not incentivized to evict people so that they can raise the rents.

Another is 10 permanent paid sick days. Thousands of people, including grocery store workers, cleaners, and some frontline healthcare workers don't have permanent paid sick days and can't afford to take them. COVID-19 continues to spread in the workplace, Mr. Speaker, and Public Health continues to ask people to stay home when they're sick, but this government has shuttered the temporary paid sick days program, leaving workers completely unsupported.

Thousands of workers in Nova Scotia do not have access to paid sick days, and these workers are more likely to be lower-wage, and many of them are women. Lower-wage workers, one-fourth of the workforce in Nova Scotia, can seldom afford to take unpaid time off work when they are sick. People with 10 or more paid sick days a year are far more likely to use preventive health services, reducing long-term public health costs.

People need permanent sick days more than ever to weather the crisis of a global pandemic and inflation. There are many more that our caucus has spoken about in this

Chamber, such as addressing predatory payday loans, addressing energy poverty, energy costs and an actual economic growth plan.

I will close with thanking the member for Bedford South for bringing this forward, with the great wish that his party had taken action during their time in government. Again, I am happy to see them bringing it forward today.

I urge the government to take this bill seriously. I urge them - you can take it back; you can call it the whatever-you-want-to-call-it bill. Put your name on it, stamp it all over, as long as it helps people. What does it matter who brought it forward? What does it matter whose name is on it, as long as people are getting the help and their basic needs met, Mr. Speaker. With that, I'll take my seat.

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

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to stand here today and talk a little bit about what this government is actually doing and the fact that vulnerable Nova Scotians are in need of many different types of supports.

Poverty cannot be solved by one department alone. It takes a collective approach that includes all levels of government, community parties and citizens. That is why we are working very closely across the provincial government to provide a holistic approach to improving affordability.

This includes reduced child care costs, increasing the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, new rent supplements, the purchase of buildings for supportive housing development, increase of the minimum wage. Further investments are expected through the work under way to identify how to collectively reduce childhood poverty within our province.

I'm just going to go through a list of some of the things we've accomplished over the year because it seems like from time to time, we hear a lot of scoffing that we're not doing anything. This government's budget contains a number of measures which we believe will improve the lives of those living on low incomes, to help them find success: an upcoming five-year target to significantly reduce childhood poverty; a Nova Scotia Child Benefit increase of \$12.5 million, increasing to \$16.6 million; a one-time funding announcement for income assistance clients and their family members to help manage rising fuel costs, a total investment of \$5.3 million; investments in initiatives to prevent homelessness and support income assistance clients to maintain safe housing that best meets their needs; investments in culturally responsive youth preventive programming to help break the cycle of poverty; recognizing systematic and racist barriers to independence.

We are concerned about the rise in prices, including energy and fuel, and the impact of inflation. Current global events - including Russia's invasion of Ukraine - have introduced significant volatility and are driving up basic living expenses for many families,

individuals and seniors. While this is a worldwide issue, we understand the pressure this is putting on Nova Scotian families who work hard and are trying to make ends meet.

[3:15 p.m.]

The province has no control over global factors that are influencing the prices of energy and fuel, but we want to find ways to support our people. All Canadians are feeling the impact. We need to think broadly about working together to find workable solutions, so our government is talking with counterparts across the country.

We recognize the impact this is having, and this is why we've provided \$13 million, on March 24th, to support vulnerable Nova Scotians. We continue to keep a close eye on the situations. Decisions on what other supports we can offer are always ongoing.

To the end, the government has introduced several targeted measures that can help. Recent supports of Nova Scotians and the cost of living pressures include:

The Seniors Care Grant, introduced last Fall to help older Nova Scotians around the home, has been expanded to include more services and provide a one-time \$250 emergency heating grant to eligible seniors. This means that they could be eligible for up to \$750 this fiscal year.

Reducing fees for child care and continued enrolment in the pre-Primary program. Introducing a new Fertility and Surrogacy Rebate, up to \$8,000 annually. Introducing a new Children's Sports and Arts Refundable Tax Credit. Funding higher daily rates for foster families. Significant investments to support more people with disabilities to live independently in community and helping families support their children with disabilities at home. The province will now pay for a cystic fibrosis drug for children aged 6 to 11. Without this program in place, this could cost patients as much as \$300,000 per year.

The new Satellite Internet Service Rebate program will cover the cost of installing satellite internet equipment for eligible households or businesses up to a maximum of \$1,000.

Minimum wage increases are ongoing: April 1, 2022, \$13.35; October 1st, \$13.60; April 1, 2023, \$14.30; October 1, 2023, \$14.65; April 1, 2024, \$15.00. The government increased the pay of continuing care assistants and early childhood educators. Free tuition for people who want to become a continuing care assistant. Introducing new tax refunds to return provincial taxes to young skilled trades workers, the More Opportunity for Skilled Trades program, and we expect to expand the trades groups eligible.

The province is introducing a new leading program to help non-profit organizations keep and increase affordable housing units. The province has improved the Down Payment Assistance Program so that more Nova Scotians have an opportunity to buy their first

home. The government is investing \$2.5 million to create a community housing growth fund to strengthen the sector and grow the number of non-profit housing units. In 2021-22, the province invested more than \$35 million to create over 1,100 new affordable housing units across the province, including 425 rent supplements. Budget 2022 contained \$15 million more for affordable housing programs and funding for 550 new rent supplements. The province now offers 5,500 supplements every month to help Nova Scotians with the cost of rent.

I want to talk a little bit about energy-related costs as well. The government spends more than \$30 million in our core energy efficiency programs every year to help retrofit homes and businesses and move more people off oil. The government stopped Nova Scotia Power from raising net metering charges for solar customers. Amendments to the Public Utilities Act will help protect ratepayers from power rate increases related to Nova Scotia Power's general rate application now before the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. We have worked hard to try to prevent a federal carbon tax on Nova Scotians, introducing our own, better plan for reducing the province's carbon emissions.

I'm still not done. I still have 10 more pages of things that this government has done to help people with the cost of living.

The many different types of supports that our vulnerable Nova Scotians need include direct financial support. Years ago, when the Income Assistance program was developed, there could have been a mechanism built in to index for inflation. But the program . . . (Interruption) Excuse me, I have the floor. But the program is so far advanced, we're at a stage now where we need to look at other options to help vulnerable Nova Scotians.

Government recently announced measures including a one-time payment of \$150 to all current income assistance recipients including the Disability Support Program participants receiving income support. For example, a single parent on income assistance with three children received \$600; a one-time payment of \$150 to all currently eligible recipients of the Heating Assistance Rebate Program; \$1 million to Feed Nova Scotia to distribute among the 140 food banks province-wide; and \$200,000 to local food banks across the province which are not part of the Feed Nova Scotia network. The budget also contained a number of other measures that I mentioned earlier . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order please.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I just want to make a point of order that the member, though listing all kinds of interesting facts, is not speaking to the bill. I'm wondering how we address that - do I ask you to ask the member? How does that work?

THE SPEAKER: I have the floor at this point. Just give me a couple of minutes to confer and I'll come back with a next step.

Order. At this point, I will just ask the member to remain on topic when speaking to the bill.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Bill No. 232 - Employment Support and Income Assistance Act. Everything that I am naming on this paper is income support, so I'm going to continue on because it's all financials that this government has put towards . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. I'll just ask you not to wave the document around like a prop.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I'm a hand talker. I'm going to continue on with the financial supports that this government has supplied over the last year and three months.

There was \$200,000 to local food banks across the province which are not part of the Feed Nova Scotia network, which I'm sure helps a lot of people on low income and a lot of people in middle income. I'll just put that in there.

There is no question that having a place to live provides stability, security, and a sense of belonging. As members of this House are aware, the reasons for homelessness vary and are complicated. They may include certain physical and mental health challenges relating to addictions, lack of affordable housing, and community and family breakdown.

We know that homelessness ultimately results in an increased use of the health care system, increased substance overdose, an increased danger of abuse and violence, and an increased chance of entering or re-entering the criminal justice system. Financial bearings do play a role in some cases.

We also know that our work to address homelessness will not only have a positive effect on the everyday lives of vulnerable Nova Scotians but also has the potential to reduce pressures on the health care system, emergency rooms, hospital beds, and on the justice system.

I just would like to state before I go on that all these things are intertwined. When you have a lack of money - or finances, I should say - they're all intertwined. We've all seen this. We've all been - I'm on my sixth year working with the taxpayers. Some of you are old hats as well, and some are here. So we know this. We also know that our work to address homelessness - sorry, I read that.

It is worth noting, Mx. Speaker, that homelessness and a lack of affordable housing is a problem too significant and too complex for one level of government, one private sector

organization, or one non-profit group to fix on its own. Rather, it will take a focused and sustained commitment to make real change - change that seeks to address the root causes of homelessness and calls upon us all to take up this challenge.

Over the past several years, the Department of Community Services has, in general, been moving away from the crisis-driven system to one that is preventive and responsive. This challenge is reflected in our work to help those experiencing homelessness. Many of these Nova Scotians have challenges that make it difficult to live and maintain housing without additional supports. The solutions are often not as simple as finding an available apartment. There are many who need more than a home for stability. This could mean treatment for addiction, harm-reduction services, mental health care, or primary health care, for example.

It is the goal and part of the Department of Community Services' mandate to provide more permanent supportive housing across the province. Here's something else we did. We are seeing progress in this. Through a \$3.5 million investment, the Province worked with the Halifax Regional Municipality and the federal government to acquire The Overlook in Dartmouth. Renovations are well under way to transform the property into a permanent home for 65 people who are chronically unhoused. In addition, the Department of Community Services is providing \$1.5 million annually to our partners at the North End Community Health Centre to deliver wraparound supports to those living at The Overlook.

The department also supported a project led by HRM to support 65 modular units in place in Halifax and Dartmouth by funding the service provider . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allowed for this speaker has elapsed.

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

HON. BEN JESSOME: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to today's first order of Opposition business to increase income assistance rates to reflect the increases that we see in CPI or inflation. This initiative has everything to do with assisting our most vulnerable Nova Scotians in a way that can be expected, that's predictable, and that's sustainable.

We're dealing with times coming off the pandemic where the cost of living is very arguably more challenging than ever for a lot of families and individuals throughout the province. This seems like a reasonable step to address affordability, to an extent, for those who are receiving income assistance.

We know that there are many who have to make decisions in their day to day with their families around whether they're going to buy groceries, or put fuel in their car, or get their medicine. These challenges are very real for a lot of Nova Scotians. Having an expectation, a reliable scenario where the rates they are receiving around income assistance

would increase on an annual basis tied to inflation would at least provide the reassurance that their purchasing power would not diminish year over year, that the costs they see would be - if nothing else, just as able to purchase things they are not having to do with the rate of inflation.

[3:30 p.m.]

We heard a couple of history lessons today. I say “history lessons” because we hear the NDP talk about, well, we introduced this, and the government of the day, the Liberals, didn’t. We hear, I’ll say, a history lesson in the form of a collaborative effort around a list that the Progressive Conservative member addressed in her remarks. I think it’s fair and accurate to say that governments of all stripes had a hand in that list of supports that are available to Nova Scotians, whether it be rent supplements - I would add that continually we saw the Progressive Conservative members, while in Opposition, demean the use of rent supplements that they now hold so dearly.

I’ll leave it at that on this piece. I just think it’s fair and accurate to say that each stripe of government had some degree of impact on the supports that are available for Nova Scotians. When we get to the point that we’re at today - and this is just my experience - we spent our time in office trying to get the fiscal house in order. We made historic investments in our education system. We made historic investments reflecting in increases to income assistance rates. We, again, tried to get the fiscal house in order so that we had a greater capacity to institute changes like that that can be done in a more sustained method.

I can appreciate that if the government, the Progressive Conservatives, are hesitant to do something that is as definite as fixing income assistance rates to the point of inflation because of a concern around what’s fair, equitable and sustainable a year into government, perhaps that’s justifiable. I would say that in the last eight years, we spent considerable time laying a solid foundation around our economy and our fiscal standpoint so that this initiative does have some sort of credibility with respect to the option of moving forward on it.

To date, we’ve heard responses from the government in regard to our questions, citing things like the Seniors Care Grant; one-time investments of sorts; increases to the child care benefit; and a one-time funding for clients of income assistance to help them deal with fuel costs. Those things are certainly meaningful on the fly, but this bill has everything to do with a predictable, ongoing, considerable investment that folks on income assistance can expect, rather than a situation where someone’s showing up looking for a day’s work, doesn’t get the call and has to go home empty-handed.

We’ve seen other provinces chip in to help their citizens out with support to deal with the cost of inflation. The member for Sydney-Membertou referenced Quebec as a jurisdiction that has already sent out a cheque to help address that.

That one-time stuff is not enough. Income assistance, for a lot of people, is their only form of income. To continue a piecemeal approach - the government will reference it as targeted funding. I think we need to dig a little deeper to find more sustainable, predictable, financial reassurance for our most vulnerable if we are to serve the public good in the way that I believe we can. We have worked so hard to put ourselves in a strong financial situation over the last several years.

Other than that, I just hope that if today is not the day, then the government will acknowledge the point of view that we believe we're at a point in our history whereby these sorts of initiatives that target the most vulnerable are, in fact, ways to move forward.

I will say that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board will regularly reference some sort of sentiment that we're talking about giving out a blanket number of cheques, referencing people who make \$100,000 a year. That's not at all the situation that we're talking about. We're talking about addressing a systemic, ongoing increase in income assistance within that cohort of people who rely on that form of income so dearly.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mx Speaker. That's enough for me for today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin on an introduction.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I would direct the members' attention to the West Gallery to a gentleman who needs no introduction, and yet I'm going to give him one. I just want to say welcome to Liam Daly, who is a long-time Liberal supporter. He went to school with one of my daughters and did some early door-knocking with me along the way. We're delighted to have him back here for a visit. I don't know for how long, but we're delighted to have him back here from Ottawa for a visit.

I would like to ask the members to give him the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for joining us in the Legislature today.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like to stand in support of Bill No. 232. For me, it's just common sense. We know we're going through an affordability crisis here in the province of Nova Scotia. We've seen an extraordinary increase in the cost of living with rates of inflation that I certainly haven't seen in my adult lifetime - anywhere between a 7 per cent and 9 per cent increase in the rate of inflation here in the province of Nova Scotia.

This morning, I had the pleasure of attending, with about 92 other people across Atlantic Canada, an information session on basic guaranteed income. It was so interesting

to listen to experts from across the country talk about the importance of people having enough money for basic needs, such as shelter and food.

When we look at this bill, all this bill is asking government to do is to increase income assistance support by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) - the rate of inflation. I think that should be just a given. It should almost be in law that this happens every year. There should automatically be an increase in income assistance based on the CPI, based on inflation. Otherwise, we as a government representing the people of Nova Scotia are actually purposely making a choice to keep people in poverty. We're actually making a choice to keep people depressed.

In Cumberland North, when people come to me, come to my staff, and they're in a very difficult financial situation, it's almost always from circumstances beyond their control. For example, cancer diagnosis, death of a spouse. The tragedy that we all see in all of our offices - young fathers leaving behind children, families of three and four.

Most people who come to my office come out of desperation. There's a lot of shame attributed to income assistance and there shouldn't be. Anyone who comes to me who is struggling financially, I tell them, this is here for you. We have emergency assistance and income assistance to support people like yourself who are going through these very challenging times.

I encourage them to contact - and sometimes I'll pick up the phone and help them make that very difficult call looking for help from income assistance. I think we need to do everything we can to empower people, to build people up, to give them the help that they need when they come to our offices.

I want to share an experience that's related. I hope that it's okay. It's related to this bill and income assistance. I recently had a young person - I say young, probably my age so maybe not so young. This person was homeless, living on the street, obviously not wanting to. They said, I need help, I need a place, it's cold tonight, I need a place to put a roof over my head. I said, listen, I'm sure that we can at least get you into a hotel room tonight, so let's call. She said, well, I've already made a call and they weren't able to help me. I said, I'm going to help you make a call. I haven't actually addressed this with the department yet, but I'm planning to.

My staff called the local Department of Community Services. The manager said, sorry, unfortunately there is a central phone number now that someone has to call - here's the central phone number for intake. I dialed the phone number for this person because they were nervous. They didn't want income assistance, but they also didn't want to spend the night out in the cold. We called this number and we got to one of these menus that I really find frustrating every time I get one. It takes a lot of patience. You know, press 1 for so-and-so, press 2 - and it went through a menu of about five things. I always think, if I

have no patience for this, I can only imagine for somebody who's under a lot of stress, including someone who literally has no home and is living on the street.

[3:45 p.m.]

Anyway, we patiently went through. We picked what we thought was the right number, and we spoke to a human being. The person said, I can't help you, but I'm going to forward you to someone who can. We got another ring, and we got a person in the Truro office - we got their voice mail. Guess what? It's Thursday afternoon of a long weekend. It's about 3:00 p.m., and we get this person's voice mail. I said, this is no good - this is not helping this person. So I called the central number again, and got the same person.

Keep in mind, Mx. Speaker, this is the third phone call we've made to try to get help for this person. We got the same person, so I explained to the person that we weren't able to actually talk to someone, and that we only got their voice mail. She said that they must be on vacation. I asked, so what next - what can we do? She said, well, that's a good question. I said, you're the intake person - you're the person who's supposed to be able to help us. She said, I work from home - I can't do anything.

Keep in mind, Mx. Speaker, this is the central provincial phone number for someone needing help, and all I could think about was to think if I wasn't actually helping this person who's living unsheltered? So, I said that this is not acceptable. She said: Well, call your local Community Services office. And I said: Oh my goodness, that's actually where we started. That's actually where we started, and they gave me this number that I'm calling you now for the third time. The person said: Well, I'm sorry, I work from home. There's nothing I can do. All I can say is call your local office again.

We called our local office again. I explained everything to the local person, and they said to send the person over and we'll do what we can. That's exactly what we did, and the person was helped by our local person. That was about an hour's worth of work and phone calls that didn't need to happen, and it sent this poor person who's already struggling, and stressed, and living homeless, on a wild goose chase. I'm so thankful that this person came to my office and asked for help and got some help, but it took way too long and way too much bureaucracy to make that happen.

I'm sharing this story because the people whom I've met in my job as MLA for Cumberland North, when they ask us for help, most of them, it's a last resort. They would prefer not to have to ask for help, but when they do, we want to make sure that we're actually giving them enough help that will be beneficial. People who are living in poverty - we're actually making a choice to purposely keep people in poverty when we're giving them such a small amount in the first place, and then also making a choice to not give them an increase based on CPI and inflation.

This is a very common sense bill. I'm really glad to see it and I stand in full support of Bill No. 232.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

NOLAN YOUNG: I think this is important. I'd also like to add that we want to make sure that rural Nova Scotia sees significant investments in their initiatives and support services. We have provided eight communities across the province with \$20,000 to fund housing support services and hotel rooms, and hotel rooms are at capacity.

Viola's Place Society in New Glasgow received an additional \$430,000 to expand services and shelter beds and will have an ongoing - an annual funding for shelter services, housing supports, diversion supports, and trustee services, and the Open Arms shelter in Kentville will now receive an annual funding of \$640,000 to stabilize and expand their services.

So when we're talking about Bill No. 232, the Employment Support and Income Assistance, an Act to Amend, I think it's also important to mention that we have provided \$350,000 to the North End Community Health Centre to provide supportive housing for men from the African Nova Scotian community. Additionally, we have invested \$1.8 million in the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre to open Diamond Bailey House. The project will have 42 transitional and emergency beds for the Mi'kmaw community. Also, services available in-house will include elder support, cultural mentors, land-based learning, and life skills development.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I would ask the member to speak directly to the bill. We only have a few seconds left, but the intention of the bill is not related to specific housing programs.

NOLAN YOUNG: I think when you're looking at amending the Act, having to take a holistic approach and look at all the additional services that are out there that would contribute to income assistance. So I will keep my topics on point.

I know one of the additional things was supporting our youth. We have known that young people experiencing homelessness lack many of the social supports necessary for the transition from childhood into . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allocated for consideration of Bill No. 232 has elapsed.

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Just for process, do I have to adjourn that, or did we just run out of time? Ran out of time, okay, perfect.

Mx. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 97.

Bill No. 97 - Social Safety Net Security Act.

The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: It is great to be able to speak here to Bill No. 97, an Act to Strengthen Nova Scotia's Social Safety Net. I think this is a good follow-up to the bill we just discussed, because I do think there are a lot of similarities and synergies between the argument for the previous bill and the argument for this bill as well.

As we know, this is the last day of the session so we know that these bills will sit here for some time. I think - I hope - that what we can do as Opposition members as we debate and discuss these bills is to give ideas and ammunition to government and they can use them as they see fit.

It was encouraging to start to hear over the last couple of days some acknowledgement from government, from the Premier and other ministers, that there is a need to look at the income thresholds on a lot of these government programs.

That's essentially what Bill No. 97 before the House here does - it increases income thresholds for a broad range of programs across many departments: the Minister of Health and Wellness under the Caregiver Benefit program; in Municipal Affairs and Housing, under Homeowner Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs and Family Modest Housing Program; in Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, which is a great program, of course, and again in Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services, asking the department to work with the Salvation Army under the Home Energy Assistance Top-up Fund; and, through the Department of Community Services to amend the Employment Support and Income Assistance Act to increase those thresholds by 30 per cent. The last one would be to amend the Income Tax Act with respect to the Nova Scotia Child Benefit program.

I think this bill is broad, as it should be. We hear a lot from government members about the need for targeted supports, but that's a matter of semantics, I guess. What we need to do here is just figure out what makes the most sense for people. There are dozens and dozens of programs in government that are worthwhile programs that often go unnoticed or underappreciated across many departments.

I think this bill does a very good job of highlighting some programs that would particularly help people to heat their homes, to fix their homes, to do some work to increase the level of income assistance to a point where it's at least survivable. We're not at that point right now.

As the member for Cumberland North mentioned earlier, I had a constituent of mine come into my office just this week and he has fallen on very hard times and has an application in for income assistance. Unfortunately, it's taking him quite some time to get a response on that. As the member said, unfortunately there is a lot of shame associated with that, and fear and anxiety. He talked about not being able to sleep at night, not being able to send his son \$5.00, and not being able to go work for Uber, which was something that a friend of his had recommended. He didn't have the money to fill the tank in his car so he couldn't drive for Uber.

There are people all across our province, in every corner of our province - big cities, small towns, everything in between - who are really struggling with the cost of living. It is a desperate time. Sometimes there are visible signs of that. We see tents in parks, we see people on street corners, and that's very visible. There's also - and I would argue that the vast majority of it is silent, invisible, quiet desperation that people have.

I saw that when this gentleman came into my office the other day and it really broke my heart because he, as everyone does, he has a great deal of pride. He feels ashamed - he shouldn't, but he feels ashamed that he has reached this situation.

I think this bill and what we've talked about throughout this session as Opposition members would do something to help people. No one is sitting here and arguing that this bill or any one change will solve everything. We do understand, and I do respect and appreciate the argument that obviously the Province can't do everything, but there are many, many things that the Province can do and should do.

As I said, it appears - and we'll see if the government actually follows through on the common refrain to look into something - we'll see if that actually results in some action and some increases. This government has done it, to their credit, on some programs. It's not as if they don't recognize the need for increasing thresholds for a lot of these programs.

For example, as I think the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care mentioned, there were increases to the Seniors Care Grant as a result of situations that seniors are dealing with, whether it was a hurricane, a natural disaster, or again, cost of living.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to his credit, increased - I would say substantially - the threshold for the Down Payment Assistance Program, which I know - there are people in my circle I know who have taken advantage of that since those changes were made. Those were meaningful changes - well-intentioned, well-thought-out - and it gives me some hope, perhaps, that the government will take a more holistic approach to this issue and recognize that when inflation is running at 7, 8, and 9 per cent and wages are flat or growing by half a per cent or 1 per cent, people are falling behind very, very quickly.

As I said, inflation is running at 7, 8, 9 per cent but, of course, that covers everything. There are certain commodities, certain things that are going up much faster

than that. We all know the issues around fuel. We know that the price of gas is very stubbornly high. It was trending down for a while there. It was down, I think, to about \$1.60 or so. Now we're back up into the \$1.80 range for gas; diesel, well over \$2.

As we've heard over and over again, Nova Scotia has, I believe, the highest proportion of homes in the country that are heated by oil. That will be a tremendous burden and challenge for folks very soon, if not already. I've seen the fuel trucks out on the streets in my neighbourhood in the last few days, so I know people are getting their tanks filled up. It's probably a substantial sticker shock for a lot of people when they see that bill come through. For a lot of people, they might not be able to make it, to pay that bill.

That's something that really concerns us here on the Opposition side and is the reason why we put forward this bill. The concept of a safety net is a wonderful thing, and it's one of the great things that we have in this country that's been developed over the last 70 or 80 years, is the idea of a social net, the idea that we should take care of one another and help those who are less fortunate. We all recognize that in many cases, it's not anyone's individual failings, by any means, that lead them to struggle. It's systemic issues that unfortunately put them in that situation.

So we have a safety net. We all love the concept of a safety net. It's one of the great things about Canada and about Nova Scotia, but if the safety net is six inches above the ground, that's not very helpful. You're still hitting the ground when you hit that net. We have to move that net up to a situation where people can actually afford to live, to get by, so that they can then start to plan and move toward a brighter future for themselves and for their families, rather than worrying day and night about making ends meet for very basic things, which we all, I think, would agree no one should have to worry about.

Just a couple of quick numbers here before I wrap up my comments. Some of these thresholds are incredibly low. I think this was mentioned in Question Period, but some of these programs - and we're talking about \$29,000 for a single person; for a couple, in some of these programs, \$40,000. For anyone under that threshold, of course, they are helped. But we know that there are a significant number of people in Nova Scotia who exist in that gap there - working-class Nova Scotians who exist between the ceiling of that threshold and an income level where they could comfortably survive and get through this inflationary period.

Those are the people whom we really, I think, miss sometimes. We all need to do everything we can to help those at the lowest income levels, and I know the minister and others have talked about that, and that's very important. But helping those working-class Nova Scotians by bumping up these income thresholds in a substantial way - similar to what was done with the Seniors Care Grant, similar to what was done with the Down Payment Assistance Program - would really, really make a big difference.

[4:00 p.m.]

I'll conclude my comments by saying the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board talked today about his \$13.2 billion budget and made it sound like it was not a lot of money. But it's \$13.2 billion. I don't care where you are, where you live, what your situation is, that is a lot of money, and I think we should be using those funds - being creative, being responsive.

One of the things that we most often hear in our offices, and we hear when we go to doors, and we talk to voters is: Why does everything take so long? By the time government actually figures out something's a problem, studies it, decides what they want to do, and then goes about fixing it, the problem has either gotten so much worse that the solution no longer helps, or it has resolved itself, and we're back where we started.

I worry that we might be moving into that situation right now with the overall cost of living crisis - that we are not moving nearly quickly enough, or nearly substantially enough, to make a material difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of Nova Scotians who are struggling today and will continue to struggle until this government takes significant action which is outlined in the bill before us today.

With those comments, Madam Speaker, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Madam Speaker, welcome to the Chair. It's exciting that you're sitting there.

I wanted to take some time and speak to this bill and thank the members of the Official Opposition for bringing it forward. I just want to start with a couple of comments about this general situation. It occurs to me, when we talk about the high cost of living, we talk about the desperate situation that more and more Nova Scotians are finding themselves in, we hear from the government side that either we are looking at things or that it's a worldwide problem. Sure, it's a worldwide problem. We all know that.

But guess what? COVID-19 is also a worldwide problem, and when COVID-19 came to North America and COVID-19 came to Nova Scotia, the government of the day - and again, I'll reiterate, take it with a grain of salt, folks. The government mobilized. Public Health mobilized. The Department of Health and Wellness mobilized. Whatever you think about the response back in the early months of 2020, we were dealing with it. We dealt with it because there was no choice, and we didn't know what was coming. It was an emergency. It was a Public Health emergency.

Now that we're on - I won't say the other side of it because we all know that COVID-19 is alive and well and living in Nova Scotia, but we have figured it out a little

bit. I have to say, it's awful good that we did what we did when we did it because we wouldn't be in the situation we are now, sitting together in a room, maskless and highly vaccinated. So when we hear things like, it's a global problem. Yes. It is a global problem. We can still act, and we can still do things to address the cost of living crisis.

I also want to say really quickly that we often hear when we're debating such bills litanies of things we have done or litanies of things we haven't done, or you haven't done or whatever - long lists of ideas. That is also all well and good, Madam Speaker, but it does not improve debate on these situations. It doesn't improve the situation. In fact, the debate of the situation is, he said, she said, they said; your fault, our fault, no one's fault, everyone's fault. It's boring and it doesn't get us anywhere.

Let's debate ideas about these issues. Let's talk about why the litany of things that we've done or didn't do is a problem or helpful for a situation. Why are all the things the governing party has been doing, what they've been listing to address the cost of living crisis, why is that not enough? Why are they band-aid solutions? What is it about the situation or the people that it is most affecting that prevent us from acting immediately and effectively?

Just a couple of thoughts to begin. As I said before, I am glad to stand and speak to this bill. We know the current cost of living crisis has been challenging for all Nova Scotians, but particularly for those most vulnerable. We all have people who are our province's most vulnerable in our constituencies. We all represent very vulnerable people, so this issue is for all of us to be talking about and caring about.

We have spoken at length, Madam Speaker, during this sitting about the inflation increases we've seen this year. This bill the Liberals have put forward does work toward addressing some of the problems, but I would say that it is a bit reactionary. I am disappointed in this bill that the increases are just one-time increases.

We have a big problem ahead of us that we are living in right now - not future, but present - and we need more than band-aid solutions. We need more than one-time payments - we need systemic changes. We have advocated for this government to index many of these social programs to inflation, especially income assistance. This would make sure that we don't get here again the next time inflation goes up.

We need to make sure that the people on income assistance are protected year after year and there are increases to their payments built in so that we don't have to get to these places like, oh, they haven't increased income assistance in 18 years. It is unsustainable and unmanageable.

An improvement that this bill could make would be to include language that would index all of the programs to inflation. I am glad to see in Bill No. 232, the one we just debated, that the Official Opposition has put forward a plan to index income assistance,

but that is just one of the many support programs. It would be great that this bill included indexing for all of the programs it lists.

Many of the programs, even with the top-ups proposed in the bill, are designed to keep people in poverty and don't come close to helping people enough. For example, even with a 30 per cent threshold increase, a family would still have to earn under \$33,800 to receive the full Nova Scotia Child Benefit, and we know that is not very much money, Madam Speaker.

We think these measures could go much further by including poverty eliminating targets. Not poverty-reducing targets, Madam Speaker, but poverty-eliminating targets and some kind of ongoing mechanism to evaluate and adjust the programs regularly.

We think the measures are a good step forward and address some of the issues that we've been talking about for quite some time. Bills like this, while promising, shouldn't be considered in exclusion of more systemic measures that would tackle the root causes of poverty.

These programs, while important, would be less important if the government could take a wider approach. For example, raising the current minimum wage to a living wage, implementing permanent rent control as opposed to a temporary rent cap, and addressing energy poverty by retrofitting people's homes. The list goes on and on. Doing those kinds of things will address systemic issues, will be much longer-term solutions and will ultimately be better for everybody.

We also need to do things like tackling payday loans - get them out of here. Payday loans are terrible, predatory systems that prey on people who simply don't have enough to get to the next payday. While they might be useful in the moment, they are extremely dangerous and harmful. There are lots of other ways we could do those kinds of loans.

We need to provide free birth control - full stop. Free birth control. We don't need to talk about if it's an IUD or it's a contraceptive pill or whatever. They should all just be free so that everybody can just have what they need, what they like to use, for free.

We need to cover the high-dose flu vaccine, Madam Speaker, like most other provinces in Canada. We need to cover the shingles vaccine. We need to pause - now I'm going to go against what I just said, but we need to pause Pharmacare fees and more.

I will speak briefly about one such area that the government should address systemically which has received some attention this sitting - energy poverty. The government's action this sitting on power rates, which we just passed last night, does not solve the permanent problem of high rates, beyond capping them for the duration of the general rate application. Okay, 1.8 for two more years. We have tried multiple times to

amend the Public Utilities Act so that the NSUARB could instruct Nova Scotia Power to create a universal service program.

A universal service program would ensure that no one has their power disconnected because they can't afford to pay. This government has refused to make this small amendment, which would enable a longer-term solution. I will quickly say there is nothing - well, not many things - worse than when a mother of kids comes into your office in a panic because their power's been cut off. So many things go into play when that happens. The parents face possibly losing their children, which is a devastating thought. They can't give their kids healthy and warm food. They can't bathe them properly. It's a nightmare. Think about when the power went off after Hurricane Fiona, how awful that was for people - and especially the people who had it off for more than a day or two days. Think about that. When you're already super-vulnerable, the kind of pressure that puts on a family.

We also have said that the reduction of energy poverty should be a performance target that's tied to Nova Scotia Power's ability to make profit. How does it make sense that a publicly regulated utility is allowed to rake in profits by impoverishing a number of Nova Scotians? Also, we need to improve our energy efficiency. The Affordable Energy Coalition has called for the expansion of the HomeWarming program so it reaches more modest-income level homes, because we know that energy poverty is not confined to low-income households. In expanding the HomeWarming program, there's got to be increased ambition to save people more energy - not 30 per cent, but 50 per cent, and there needs to be an emphasis on fuel switching.

I will give you a quick example of a guy whom we've been helping in my office, a very vulnerable senior living in his own home, and he has taken advantage of all the programs. The HomeWarming program, the whatever the thing is from Housing Nova Scotia where you get repairs done in your house, and guess what, Madam Speaker? He needs a new oil tank. He hasn't been using his water, because he doesn't have any oil in his tank, because they won't fill the tank because it's broken.

He needs an expansion of that program of \$1,300, and it has taken me, to date, about four months to get any kind of response from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing on that. I still haven't got the actual response. Last we heard, the minister's assistant thought it had been taken care of. Well, it hasn't been taken care of, and this poor man cannot get the money to fix his oil tank. All he needs to stay in his home for several more years is \$1,300. It's a shame.

I'm running out of time, Madam Speaker. I will also note that we have yet to see a poverty reduction/elimination strategy from this government. We have seen P.E.I. take action on this, and it's time that Nova Scotia does. That is why our caucus has introduced a Poverty Elimination Act, which would require the government to do a number of things: move immediately to a \$15 minimum wage; direct the Minimum Wage Review Committee to bring forward recommendations for implementing a living wage; within one year,

increase ESIA levels for all household types to at least the average for Canadian provinces, and then index the rates to inflation; by March 31, 2024, reduce the Nova Scotia poverty rate by 50 per cent from 2019 levels, food insecurity by 50 per cent, food insecurity among children by 0 per cent.

[4:15 p.m.]

We cannot do these things if we don't have a plan. That reminds me of another bill we're going to debate tonight. None of these things can be achieved if we don't get them on paper and commit to them, so we need this government to do that. By March 31, 2030, we would reduce the Nova Scotia poverty rate by 100 per cent from 2019 levels, food insecurity among all persons reduced to 0 per cent; establish a council including those with lived experience with poverty to advise the minister and require an annual reporting on progress.

We're glad to see this bill come forward. We are supportive of the bill, obviously. But we continue to wait for meaningful systemic action to address poverty and its root causes in Nova Scotia.

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

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment as deputy speaker in the House.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 97, the Social Safety Net Security bill. I am reminded of what my father used to tell me when I was growing up. He used to run the Health Services Insurance Commission for Nova Scotia. He negotiated doctors' wages and the dentists', and travelled around auditing health care facilities. We'd talk about the issues of the government of the day and what they were spending money on. I'd say, well, why don't you just spend it on this, and why don't you just spend it on that? He would say to me, well, we can't. We have a limited budget. If you spend more money than you take in, you go into debt or you raise taxes or there is someone you are impacting.

I appreciate that the sentiment of this bill is to alleviate suffering and poverty. That is why we're all here. But the reality is that governments have a limited capacity. To quote the member for Dartmouth North, it all should be free - in speaking about contraceptives - or we should stop payments on drugs or certain services. It all can't be free. Those have to be choices that are made. (Interruption) I would appreciate having the ability to speak without being interrupted, as I did for the previous member. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak about this bill today. As the previous member spoke on this bill, they said that we can do, and should do, creative and responsive actions. Within the first couple of months of us being a new government, we established a

new Department of Seniors and Long-term Care and established the first Seniors Care Grant in Nova Scotia within two months. That's responsive, and that was immediate.

Previous members speaking also acknowledged that our government has taken some action on some programs. These were targeted - \$600 million above and beyond what the previous government had done. That's \$600 million targeting specific vulnerable groups.

One of the members mentioned why do we pick certain lines for one person - they mentioned \$27,000. Well, the poverty line for one person is \$26,620. They mentioned \$37,000 for the Seniors Care Grant, which my department is responsible for. The poverty line for two persons is \$33,140. Madam Speaker, I will table that.

What this government is doing is targeting the most vulnerable Nova Scotians as a starting point. The previous government had eight years. We've been here for a quarter of our term so far, and that's what we're doing. It's a starting point. There's a rationale for why we picked that. I just referenced the poverty line as a starting point.

We know that many Nova Scotians are struggling right now. We know that they're feeling the impact of the rising costs. Government recognizes this, and we share these concerns. We are taking action by making targeted, sustainable investments to attack the root causes of the challenges that Nova Scotians are facing - the ones that are within our government's control.

But make no mistake, the federal government has a role to play. One of the examples is that right now, our health transfer payments are too low for the Province of Nova Scotia. It's 24 per cent, and yet we have the second highest level of seniors in the country. We have the highest rate of chronic illnesses - and yet my granddaughter out in Edmonton gets the same health transfer payment as my mother did at 92, and that is wrong.

In addition to what the intent of this bill is, all members of this Legislature need to unite together to call on our federal partners to do their part in making sure that we have the care that we need in Nova Scotia.

One of the things that we did was create the Seniors Care Grant. That was responsive. Then when the fuel prices started to go up, we targeted the same group, and we increased by \$250 for the fuel.

When Hurricane Fiona hit, we didn't wait around to see how many seniors were going to be impacted. We gave them an extra \$250 for the loss of food or other things that were incurred by the hurricane.

Many Nova Scotians are benefiting from this grant that was never in existence prior to our government. More than 27,500 older Nova Scotians have been approved to receive the Seniors Care Grant in the last three months totalling \$13.8 million.

Almost 20,000 seniors have been approved to receive the home heating grant, totalling \$4.9 million. The most vulnerable seniors are the ones we are talking about. More than 27,500 grants for Hurricane Fiona repairs and cleanup have been approved, totalling nearly \$7 million.

Nova Scotia has an aging population. That's why this government is the first in the country to have an entire department responsible for seniors and those in continuing care. We are proud to promote programs specifically targeting this age group, whether they're Frailty Level 1 or Frailty Level 9. We are making strategic investments in this area. We are committed to doing all that we can for this age group, as well as our youngest Nova Scotians.

However, there are other groups that were not included in this safety net. I want to mention one of them. We have engaged Caregivers Nova Scotia, which our government funds, to develop Nova Scotia's first caregiver strategy. There was a national report that was released yesterday talking about how one in four Nova Scotians is a caregiver right now. Some of them have to leave work. Some of them are losing income, or it's costing them too much to provide home care for their family members.

We are going to engage Caregivers Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging to create Nova Scotia's first caregiver strategy recommendations to our government. That is a safety net that did not previously exist. Government is providing \$550,000 to Caregivers Nova Scotia for this work, in addition to the \$487,000 in funding each year to provide free programs and services to caregivers.

Madam Speaker, that gets at the root causes. That gets at what Nova Scotians are telling us they want. Then this government makes the tough decisions as to which of the recommendations are sustainable, target the most people, and are enduring long into the future when I'm 80, and at the highest number of seniors in the province of Nova Scotia.

We have 20 publicly funded home care agencies in the province of Nova Scotia. When we took over, there were over 1,400 people on the wait-list for home care. Under the previous government, there were 500,000 fewer home care visits than previous years. Our government worked to expand access to home care, as well as to direct benefits. As a result of those targeted investments to the most vulnerable, the wait-list to receive home care in Nova Scotia from a publicly funded agency has been cut by 50 per cent in less than a year.

For anyone to suggest that this government doesn't have a plan or they're not seeing improvement; they're not wanting to look at the results that don't support their theory.

We are also working to include the home caregiver benefits using an income threshold outlined by the home care income tables. The government has expanded options for this type of home care to allow people to hire family members as well as local neighbours in the community.

We are also investing in providing the right tools for our continuing care work staff to ensure that they are safer than in the past. Previous injury rates in long-term care are the highest of any sector in the country at 17 per cent. Under the previous government's investments, it resulted in no reduction in the injury rate in home care or long-term care. Until the WCB report is released, I can't specify the exact amount, but it is the biggest reduction in injury rate that I know of in this sector in the history of Canada.

I'm extremely proud that on this side of the House, those investments have reduced the injury rate. Because when the Opposition talk about middle class and not doing anything for the middle class, our health care workers were getting injured and off work under the previous government. Now, by the investment in the 4.1 hours of care per senior per day - and I'll wait for the Opposition to stop interrupting . . .

THE SPEAKER: It was a little loud - if we could respect the person who has the floor.

BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We implemented a number of strategies to reduce the injury rate in home care and long-term care. Before we even announced the home lift strategy, the injury rate in home care had dropped dramatically. It's going to drop even further, once this program rolls out across the province.

By increasing the staffing ratio in long-term care to 4.1 hours of care, which the previous government absolutely refused to do, we are reducing the strain on all of the staff in long-term care because they now have that second person needed to do that two-person transfer, and there is somebody to answer the call button when they press it.

We're not there with every facility across the province but we will be the first province in Canada to have that ratio. Once everyone is up to that level, the morale and the respect that the staff deserve in long-term care will go up. That's a sustainable, targeted investment.

The \$650,000 invested in the Home Lift program is part of an overall \$3 million investment to fund workplace safety. When staff are safe and are able to stay at work, that reduces the need for the safety net. A good job is one way of helping people navigate the increases in the cost of fuel, houses, and all the other things that have been challenging over the last couple of years.

The government has invested \$8.6 million in new models of home care delivery, day programs, supportive equipment and more. In addition to giving directly to Nova Scotians, we are giving to the organizations that provide those safety nets as well. These organizations, like the Canadian Red Cross, Independent Living Nova Scotia, the VON, and Caregivers Nova Scotia are just some of the ones that we have given money to to help support Nova Scotians.

Talking about lower to middle income Nova Scotians, we have targeted investments in our CCAs and ECEs with an increase that the previous government did not do. We have made significant investments in hiring and training 2,000 CCAs for free. The previous government did not do that.

Our government was elected to fix health care. It is going to take time. We talk about it all the time. Our ministers collaborate every week. All the things we are doing are designed to improve the workplace. We also need to recruit. We have the MOST program for young people to help them want to stay in Nova Scotia. That plan was a targeted, sustainable plan for the next 20 years, not just the election cycle.

Finally, when we talked about housing, I was a little surprised that no one mentioned long-term care housing. We need 3,000 to 4,000 new long-term care beds. We need the federal government to step up with better health transfer payments to help us build those beds. But we are not waiting for the federal government. We already announced, a year before the last election, what our government would be committed to doing. We are well on our way to fulfilling that obligation and then some.

The previous government took the plan that we announced a year before the election and then announced their own, taking the playbook straight from our campaign platform. Our government is going to ensure that those beds get built, that seniors get the care they need. There is much more work to do for all Nova Scotians, and everything this government has done in the last 15 months, the previous government had every opportunity to do, chose not to do it, and this government is going to do it. We're going to make sure that every Nova Scotian has a sustainable safety net, not just something for one election cycle.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I hope the minister is here. I listen to her a lot, but I would like to give some personal experience because I have elderly parents both in Oakville that we are looking after, and my in-laws, who are here. What she just explained is really not what we have experienced at all - at all. We have had home care for my in-laws that was absolutely a nightmare of constantly changing, not the same person who goes in. We have an elderly person with dementia, and my sister-in-law had to go in and train every time. It was such a big trouble for the family and draining on both the family members and the person who's being cared for that we cancelled it.

[4:30 p.m.]

I remember I had a meeting with the department here, and I suggested what is happening in Oakville in Halton Region, where the same caregiver goes in every day - and we have had them for five years - the same. My parents enjoy a service that is 10 times better than the services that we're receiving here for home care in Nova Scotia. This is a big issue for a lot of the people, especially if they have dementia or they are elderly where every day is a different caregiver that is going to the homes.

This is wrong, and we need to do something about it, Minister. This is a huge thing that you didn't talk about. Most people, you probably got rid of them because people cancel. You said the list is half, because people cancel the service. There is a lot of that that is happening. We know that a lot of people are unhappy with the services they're receiving at home. That is one.

We also have a system for long-term care that is punitive right now. If you refuse something that is not culturally or morally suitable for the patient at all, you are punished severely. You are off the list for at least three months and may be adjusted. It's not the minister's fault. This system has been there for six years. I was shocked that it happened to us because I wasn't aware of it. Sometimes it comes home to us, and it happens to us. That's when we realize that our policies need to be changed. Our policies are punitive and very difficult for the families who love their seniors and need to look after them. Since then, I have heard that it has happened to so many other constituents.

I would love for the minister to address this issue of punitive - if you do not receive or accept the offer that is given to you for long-term care. Honestly, we have gone through hell for the last week trying to make decisions, trying to make them understand that this person is from a different culture and sharing a bathroom with four people - she's 92 - and two men without a lock on the bathroom door - can you imagine your mother at 92 and a man walking into her bathroom during the day? These are the services that we offer.

Unfortunately, it is not appropriate, and the minister was not aware that this has not changed. I was told, no, don't worry about this. This has changed. This policy is no longer in place. But it hasn't changed, and a lot of people are having this nightmare of what to do when you have 24 hours to make a decision whether you put your loved one in long-term care because they're on a very urgent list and that urgent list means you take what you're given. Don't say anything. You're so lucky to have it, whether you have a lock on the bathroom and are sharing with four people or not. That is the choice you have.

That was very hurtful, very hard on the family. Our services are not up to par. I would love for the minister to do something about it. I beg her. I experienced it for the first time, but I know this is a system. For the last six years, nothing has changed.

With that, I would like to take my seat. I heard a lot that is not what we have experienced at all. Somebody else would like to speak.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'd like to stand in support of Bill No. 97. I'll speak to three specific parts of the bill based on what I'm seeing in Cumberland North.

The first point I'd like to stand in support of is raising the threshold on increased payments for the Caregiver Benefit program. Since I was elected in 2017, I've consistently seen people who want to stop working to be able to take care of their loved ones, and oftentimes it's their elderly parent. Unfortunately, there is not enough money in the caregiver support program to allow them to stop working and provide that care. I think an increase in the Caregiver Benefit program would help people take care of their loved ones at home and would also directly impact the cost to the health care system.

If we look at government departments, and rather than looking at individual budgets for departments - and this government may be doing this, I'm not sure - looking at the overall provincial budget and saying, if we reduce costs, if we increase the Caregiver Benefit allowance, it would potentially decrease health care system expenses by X amount. Then money could be transferred or changed from one department to another, knowing that it's going to have an overall greater benefit.

I'd also like to speak to the part of Bill No. 97 that says increase the total assessed value of the qualifier for the Heating Assistance Rebate Program. I know this has been discussed already in Question Period and at other times discussing other bills, but I do want to show support for this idea. I recently read in a media article that the Premier is considering doing this and I really hope that the government will do so. Right now, when we look at what the rebate will fund, it's about an eighth of a tank of oil. I have constituents daily contacting me, starting about two weeks ago, saying, Elizabeth, the government has to do something. I cannot afford to put oil in my tank this Winter. I've just filled it up with half a tank and it cost me way too much money.

I think if the government could take a look at this idea, increasing the total assessed value of the qualifier for HARP, the Heating Assistance Rebate Program, given the price of oil right now - I think it's over \$2 per litre right now. When this rebate was put in place, I'm assuming the price of oil was much less. We could look at two things. One is increasing the threshold, the total assessed value of the qualifier, but also increasing the actual rebate amount based on the current price of oil. It would help a lot of people.

The third point I wanted to support in Bill No. 97 is increasing the Homeowner Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs. Consistently in Cumberland North, I'm hearing from constituents who don't qualify. One of the challenges - and I'm assuming

other MLAs are seeing the same thing - is a lot of times when people are applying for these programs, they're always looking at previous years' income.

I recently had a perfect example of this. I don't have permission to share names or anything, so I'll be careful to be broad and vague in my description, but somebody is having an acute diagnosis where they are no longer able to work. Unfortunately, the diagnosis is terminal. They're not looking at being able to earn any income before their life is going to be done. Their spouse is working but working less because of their illness and they need help - they need a new roof. They need it before Winter. They don't qualify for the help from the Homeowner Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs because it's all based on last year's income. Last year's income was good, but it was before this person received this terminal diagnosis. They need help now.

I'm sure other MLAs have seen very similar situations where the qualifiers for some of these programs are actually prohibiting people from getting the help they really need. I think the intent of the programs is good, so by changing some of these qualifiers it would really help a lot of people.

Just a couple of other comments in general with this bill. When we make decisions, such as keeping the Caregiver Benefit allowance low, it sometimes has other indirect consequences. We know that when we are making decisions that sort of keep people in poverty, not intentionally, that that has direct impacts on personal health.

We know when we looked at indicators of health, finances is number one. Finances is the number one indicator of health. When someone is under significant financial stress, we see increased rates of suicide. We see increased risks of depression. We see several other health risks increase as well. Anything we can do to help build people up out of poverty will have direct and indirect impacts on personal health, which will have positive effects on people not having to access our health care system as much.

I think if we looked at increasing the amounts of the rebates, increasing the threshold to some of these programs that we have, we would actually save money in our health care system.

The last comment I would make is, if I were to advise my colleagues on this side on the bill, there's one thing that I would ask them to consider adding, that is to increase the basic personal allowance on provincial income tax. When we look at when people start paying income tax, it's below \$12,000. We're taxing people who make less than \$12,000 in this province. So increase that basic personal allowance.

I know our Minister of Finance and Treasury Board often says we need the money; the Province needs the money. I believe that if we had fewer people in poverty and people had more of their own hard-earned money that fewer people would need some of these programs. We would have fewer demands on our health care system.

Also, indexing the income tax brackets: Right now, in Nova Scotia we do not index our tax brackets. Most other provinces every year index their tax brackets, based on inflation, based on the CPI.

Madam Speaker, I would call those two comments as possible ways to improve this bill, both for the purpose of allowing people to keep more of their hard-earned money, which I believe, as a registered nurse, would actually help decrease the strains on our health care system.

THE SPEAKER: The Official Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Madam Speaker, we adjourn debate on Bill No. 97. That concludes Opposition business for today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Could I ask for unanimous consent to move to the moment of interruption?

THE SPEAKER: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We have reached the moment of interruption. The topic for late debate was submitted by the honourable member for Northside-Westmount:

“Therefore be it resolved that the cost of fuel is causing severe economic challenges for Nova Scotians as a result of the government’s inaction.”

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

GOV'T (N.S.): FUEL PRICE HIKES INACTION IMPACT - RECOG.

FRED TILLEY: I'm very pleased to stand and talk on this very important topic that's facing Nova Scotians today and has been facing Nova Scotians for the last number of months, Madam Speaker, and that is the rising cost of fuel. We all know that Nova Scotians are struggling. Nova Scotians are struggling to put fuel in their cars. Now they're struggling to put fuel in their oil tanks. Many industries are struggling to break even because the cost of fuel is driving their overall costs through the roof.

What I wanted to iterate this evening is the fact that this current government really has done nothing to help Nova Scotians with regard to the rising cost of fuel, as well as many other cost pressures that are happening right now with regard to food prices, diesel, and home heating oil.

Mr. Speaker, I will table a document, a couple of documents here. Here's a document from October 19th showing gas rising by 5 cents per litre as the cost of fuel continued to climb. An article from November 5th indicates that diesel in all three Maritime provinces is topping \$3 a litre. When prices go like this, it causes so much trouble for average, everyday Nova Scotians. We know that there are many Nova Scotians who are struggling financially on a day-to-day basis.

But when gas prices soar, when diesel prices soar, it has a very detrimental effect on the spending power of working Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians who were previously working to meet their needs are now not able to do so because of the soaring price of fuel. As we indicated, fuel has increased by more than 41 per cent, and this is affecting many business organizations within our communities, with the examples that were put in our late debate topic of agriculture, fishing, and trucking - many owner-operators.

I'm hearing from some of my constituents who are owner-operators in the trucking industry who don't know how they're going to make ends meet. What's going to happen? Are they going to have to park their truck? They're not going to be able to deliver the food that we need. They're not going to be able to deliver the medicines that we need. Nova Scotia could grind to a halt.

Today during Question Period, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board indicated that they're not allowed to cut gas taxes. I would disagree. The member for Cumberland North in her question talked about the motive fuel tax, which is a provincial tax with no jurisdiction from the federal government. Perhaps the federal government may have said that they don't want us to reduce taxes, but that doesn't mean that you can't.

We need to reduce the cost of fuel. Some of the ways that we can do that, Mr. Speaker, are to reduce that motive fuel tax. As a matter of fact, I personally put a bill on the floor in the Summer which would reduce the motive fuel tax by 50 per cent until December 2023. That would have meant for Nova Scotians an immediate 7.75 cent drop per litre on gasoline and a 7.7 cent drop per litre on diesel fuel. Boy, would that help right now; that would help Nova Scotians drastically.

Again, I just want to stay on this topic for a second. Mr. Speaker, we talk about not being allowed to do that. We know that the Premier attended the Conservative AGM in Ontario and gave a speech there. There are videos where he indicated that he would stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Doug Ford any day.

I have an article here that says, “Ontario government to introduce legislation to cut gas, fuel taxes” by 5.7 cents a litre - and another fuel tax reduction of 5.3 cents a litre for a total of 11 cents a litre for six months beginning in July. I would urge our Premier who looks up to Premier Ford to maybe take a page out of their book and cut the gas taxes for Nova Scotians. Nova Scotians would certainly appreciate that at this time. I’ll table that document.

In addition to Ontario cutting gas taxes, Mr. Speaker, there is an article from CTV News that says “Alberta to stop collecting provincial gas tax, offer electricity rebate to offset high energy prices.” What a wonderful gesture by the Alberta government - another Conservative government - to help people in their time of need. I will table that document and - to save the Page an extra trip - I’ll also table this document: “N.L. officially cuts gas tax, dropping prices across province.”

So there are plenty of examples, Mr. Speaker, of provinces helping their residents in a time of high inflation, high gas prices, and high diesel prices, helping them directly at the pump. That’s not going to increase inflation. That’s going to put more money in the pockets of Nova Scotians so that they can keep this economy running.

We provided the road map for that. We provided the bill and all that had to happen was it passing and Nova Scotians would be saving at the pump. When it’s the opposite side’s turn, we’re going to hear about the Liberal carbon tax. We’re going to hear about how the Liberal carbon tax is going to increase costs for Nova Scotians.

That should not be the case. There’s precedent set. The previous government negotiated cap and trade and reduced the effect of carbon tax. This government, if they did the homework and if they did the work instead of the blame game, we could still have that same luxury. Yes, prices are going to go up, but it’s due to the inaction of the current government.

What else could this government do to help Nova Scotians right now, Mr. Speaker? We’ve seen examples, again, from other Atlantic Provinces. Newfoundland and Labrador: \$500 to everyone making under \$100,000. We’ve heard the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board talk about the fact that a person earning \$100,000 wouldn’t need \$500.

That is a generalization. There are many people with salaries up to and including \$100,000 who are struggling day to day for various reasons. Five hundred dollars in their pocket right now when it costs about \$2,000 to fill an oil tank - I think that’s a significant help for Nova Scotians, Mr. Speaker.

The idea that handing out a \$500 cheque is going to increase inflation is hogwash, if that’s parliamentary. I don’t think it’s probably even in the book. (Interruption) I hear the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board say to ask my federal cousin. I don’t have any federal cousins, Mr. Speaker, but I would throw that back to the minister and say that they

should have done the work. They should have gone and done a negotiation and put a plan together that met the requirements, which every other province has done. Had they done that, we wouldn't be in the predicament that we're in right now and that we're going to be in for the next number of months. I would argue with him that it is time to do that work.

Now P.E.I. provided some relief to their citizens, as well. They also provided Sobeys gift cards to seniors. What a wonderful gesture that was at the time when grocery bills are going through the roof, when they can actually go into a store and pick up the much-needed food that they need. What did we do in Nova Scotia? We got \$100 because of Hurricane Fiona - \$100, not even filling one shelf.

Mr. Speaker, in my last 30 seconds - that was the quickest 10 minutes I've ever experienced - I want to bring that back because I'm super-passionate about this topic because Nova Scotians deserve help. Nova Scotians need help and this government needs to help Nova Scotians now - not tomorrow, not next month, not in six months but now. Nova Scotians need you, they need that help, so please help Nova Scotians.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and say a few words on this debate topic brought forward by my colleague the honourable member for Northside-Westmount. I think in the motion itself is the crux of the issue: prices are skyrocketing, and they are skyrocketing for fuel in particular. We know that now, and this may change tomorrow, it will cost about \$2,000 to fill a fuel tank.

I think we've talked about that a lot in this Chamber today. That's a massive amount of money. Older homes like mine that are still saddled with heating oil as a source of heat, go through more than a tank, especially if you have five kids who meddle with programmable thermostats.

It's really challenging for Nova Scotians and I think, as it says in this motion, it's really challenging for people across this province, and it's really challenging for different reasons. I think, as this points out, there are many businesses across this province that do rely on fuel, that do rely on those costs. What we've heard in this sitting around how to help them really is crickets.

The government does collect a lot of tax on fuel. Some of that is in excise tax and some of that is in HST, but as many members have pointed out today, some of that is a motive fuel tax and that is a provincial tax. That provincial tax has been a windfall to this government. As those prices rise, the more painful it is for people across this province - families and seniors and people running businesses - the more enriched our government becomes. As with any form of taxation, we certainly hope that revenue is used in all the right ways.

[5:00 p.m.]

Unfortunately, as we've pointed out many times during this session, we have not seen a notable improvement in any of the challenges that our constituents are bringing forward. We have not seen an improvement to health care. We have not seen an improvement to people's quality of life. We have not seen the improvements that we've been fighting for. We know that the government is collecting more money in tax. We know that people are paying more money for fuel and we don't have anything to show for it.

All that people are feeling who approach us about this issue is pain. So the question is, how can we address this? As members may be tired of hearing, we have lots of ideas. We think that some of the revenue from this tax could be spent on specific items, so an emergency rebate. As the member for Northside-Westmount pointed out, this has been done in many provinces - our neighbouring provinces, in fact.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board likes to talk about people who make \$100,000, and how it doesn't matter, and targeted relief. The reality is that the only action this government has taken this session on costs for Nova Scotians is this intervention in the NSUARB. Is that targeted? No, it's not targeted. That applies to everyone.

What have we been pushing for? Low income rebates for heating, making sure that we index the programs - and we talked about that today - that are available to Nova Scotians. All of that is targeted.

The one significant action we have seen from this government is not targeted at all. It's hard to take them at their word that they are paying attention to this pain that Nova Scotians are feeling.

An emergency tax rebate. We could ban power disconnections year-round. We could ensure that people retain power to their home. We can expand the HomeWarming program. We know that there are federal funds somewhere in the ether that have not yet been administered by the provincial government. It's November. People are filling their fuel tanks. Where is this relief for Nova Scotians? We could call for an emergency committee on energy affordability, an action that looks at all fuel types. There are a lot of things this government can do, yet we don't see any of it.

What we do see is this government saying, it's out of our hands. Inflation has nothing to do with us. It's a geopolitical problem. It has to do with the World Bank and the federal Finance Minister, and I'm just running a lemonade stand.

The interesting thing I have to say about that approach is that at the same time, when we push for relief, when we ask for help for Nova Scotians who are begging for it, we hear, that will impact inflation. So how does that work? That's a logical inconsistency, to say we have nothing to do with inflation, it has nothing to do with us, we can't possibly

impact it - and yet, if we help Nova Scotians a little bit, it might impact inflation. We can't make it better, but maybe theoretically, we could make it worse.

It doesn't make sense to me, and I think we're past the point of looking at solutions. Winter is here, and people need help.

There is one thing that is sure to raise the cost of fuel in this province, and that is the carbon tax. Today in Question Period, the minister told us for the first time - I think this was the first time that anyone in this House had ever heard this assertion, and anyone in the media based on the scrums - that he does not have it in his purview to do anything about a purely provincial tax, the motive fuel tax. Why? Because the federal government has told us a carbon tax is coming. Let me say that again: because the federal government has told us that a carbon tax is coming. That's the first time we have heard that. We know that the federal government has told the Progressive Conservatives that a carbon tax is coming.

What will this Progressive Conservative carbon tax do? It will raise the price of fuel. What can the government do about it? Well, they could try to negotiate. They could try to come up with a made-in-Nova Scotia solution. They could try to talk about where the revenue from that tax goes, and how it will be spent, and whether it will be spent to ameliorate the pain that Nova Scotians are feeling, particularly at the pumps and when they're heating their houses.

Let's be clear: This government has had over a year to present an alternative plan to the federal government, and they have not. They have not done this. Experts like Dr. Larry Hughes point out that the cost of this will be extremely expensive for Nova Scotians. Other experts are also pushing for this government to negotiate with their federal counterparts to avoid a carbon tax. The only thing this government has done is somehow inexplicably said on the one hand, they'll push everyone out of their way who stands in the way of their agenda, but that we're having a carbon tax because the Opposition - in a majority government - isn't somehow blocking it. It defies logic. It makes no sense.

This government has had ample time and resources that could have been directed toward developing a carbon-pricing system that equitably addressed the needs of Nova Scotians, and worked toward a reduction in emissions.

All we've seen is the output-based pricing system. This is a half measure, and this is also a tell, along with what the Minister responsible for Gaming - pardon the pun - said today in the House, that they have a deal. They have a deal with Ottawa. Their deal is, we're going to put together an output-based pricing system, you're going to impose a carbon tax, we're going to get mad about it, and off we go.

Why not come clean? Why not tell Nova Scotians that you have negotiated the federal carbon tax on their behalf? Probably because they're not going to like it.

The other thing I'll say about the output-based pricing system is that it targets two emitters, one of whom, Nova Scotia Power, will pass every penny back to consumers. You and I will pay for the pricing under that output-based pricing system. Not Nova Scotia Power - you and I, and all of our constituents. All Nova Scotians.

And while we're waiting for a climate plan from this government, which we were going to have last Spring, we still have no idea how this government plans to meet our climate targets and help people afford to live. The legislation is fine, but Nova Scotia Power stood in the Red Room and said they weren't going to abide by it. Guess what we can do about that? Nothing. So with no economic development plan either, we are flying blind.

Nova Scotians know that it is fully possible to tackle the climate crisis, make life affordable for regular people, and create sustainable jobs. We can do this, but we need a government with vision and imagination to help us make it happen. We need them to be honest with us, honest with Nova Scotians, and do the hard work that they were elected to do.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: You get in the Chair, and you forget me.

Mr. Speaker, when I think about this issue, I consider three fundamental things: what we can't control, what we can control, and what we don't need.

I'm going to start with the things that we can't control. The price of fuel is based on world demand, which is about eight billion people. With a population of over one million and growing, Nova Scotia is 0.125 per cent. I'm not sure what the members opposite believe we can do to fix the fluctuations that happen based on instability in Russia and Ukraine. The price of oil and gas is set in the global marketplace.

Let's talk about this. Here are some factors that affect the price of gas and oil. Demand: As with any commodity, demand is a huge factor in pricing. Supply: That's the countries that are drilling for the oil. Speculation: The trading of oil futures and what they think the price is going to be, in effect, and the demand for oil.

As the price of fuel has increased, I have not really seen proof of major changes in people's driving habits. Efforts to contain inflation pressures are led by the Bank of Canada on behalf of all Canadians. These efforts are starting to deliver a slower pace of inflation, but we know that this process is not happening fast enough.

Our priority is the most vulnerable Nova Scotians, who have little means to absorb shocks to their energy bills. So what can we do with the cost of fossil fuels? We need to move away.

What can we control? Government's been concerned about the impact of the rising prices on Nova Scotians. Here are the following things we've done so far: \$13.2 million to vulnerable Nova Scotians to help address the impact from rising fuel prices, which include and are not limited to the \$150 one-time payment to all income assistance recipients; the \$150 one-time payment to all eligible recipients of the Heating Assistance Rebate Program; \$1 million to Feed Nova Scotia to help distribute amongst food banks province-wide; and \$200,000 to local food banks that are not part of the Feed Nova Scotia network.

Child care fees have been reduced by 25 per cent, with an average reduction of 50 per cent by the end of 2022. This is towards achieving an average of \$10 per day child care by April 31, 2026.

Effective July 1st, the Nova Scotia child tax benefit has increased. Depending on household incomes and the number in the family, they'll receive about \$1,275 per child annually - at least \$350 more than the previous year.

Let's talk Seniors Care Grants. Five hundred dollars in funding for eligible Nova Scotians 65 and older who need help around their homes, covering expenses like snow removal, lawn care, and it's even increased for this year, with an additional \$250.

The Property Tax Rebate for Seniors offers low-income seniors a 50 per cent rebate on their municipal property taxes, with a maximum of \$800. This is also why we protected the solar industry. This is why this government has a target to offer leases for five gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030 to support building the green hydrogen industry.

This government announced we will be developing a green hydrogen action plan to be released in 2023. All of these help us on the transition to clean energy and help Nova Scotia get to net zero by 2050.

The things we don't need: a federal Liberal carbon tax, which will add more to Nova Scotians now that we have already done the hard work. We're on track to meet and exceed our ambitious greenhouse gas and renewable targets. This federal Liberal carbon tax will make virtually everything more expensive. I expect most, if not all, members know that pretty well all of your products - as the member opposite has said - come by truck. Trucks burn a lot of diesel, so they pass the cost on to the consumers. That's why a lot of trucking companies are migrating to electric vehicles or hybrids.

The conversation is about us being able to modify the taxes. The federal government has made it clear they don't want any province distorting the price signal of carbon tax, which means they - the federal Liberals - want to increase the price of fuel to attempt to get people to try to stop using it. I've already pointed out that I have never seen where the prices increase, and distance has decreased. People are still driving because they have to get to work.

I urge the member for Northside-Westmount and his colleagues to tell their federal cousins to not impose a punitive carbon tax on Nova Scotians and to accept our plan, which is better than a carbon tax.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: My honourable colleague certainly has much more experience than I do with this particular subject, but I do feel that in the remaining time, I ought to make a few points.

I really did like what the member for Dartmouth South had to say. This is a majority government. They can do a lot of things. There are a lot of things under their control. One of them is their decision whether to scrap the cap and trade program that we negotiated - which recognized Nova Scotia's hard work over many governments, quite frankly - to ensure that we were being energy-efficient and moving toward climate goals. To suddenly suggest . . . (Interruption) The minister keeps saying, oh, it's expiring. Well, you know what? Go up there. Do the hard work. That's what we did.

It was not easy coming to that agreement, but we did it. We didn't just roll over and play dead. We went up there and we did the hard work. Go do it. You can do this. I have faith in you. I'm not going to say that a whole lot, but I really do think you could do it, because we did it. That's how we know it can be done. It doesn't mean that you take the first offer the feds give to you. I'm sure they thought some of my colleagues who were involved in that particular file were a giant pain in the derriere, but they did the hard work. They went up there and they did it.

To suggest that it is the fault of the Opposition, who are not in government, that this government is bringing in a carbon tax, the PC carbon tax, the Conservative carbon tax - make no mistake, when Nova Scotians look at that bill, they know who brought it in. It wasn't this caucus, and it wasn't that caucus. It was that caucus, and we're going to make darn sure that Nova Scotians know who brought it in. When they go to the pumps and they see, be darn sure that we're telling them.

I enjoyed listening to the litany of programs that my honourable colleague listed off. A lot of them were brought in by previous governments, or they were augmented by this government and they already existed. Make no mistake, many governments have initiated programs to help Nova Scotians.

What the Opposition has been asking for is not just for those who need the most help to get help this time. A lot of people with modest incomes - not classified as having low incomes, but modest incomes - are feeling the pain now from inflation. If you don't drive an electric car - and most of us don't because they're hard to get hold of - those who go to the pump and have to fill up are feeling the pain, particularly those who live in rural

areas who have to drive long distances. I know my honourable colleagues across the floor are feeling the pain every time they fill up.

[5:15 p.m.]

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board keeps saying that they can't give \$500 cheques to people who make \$100,000. That's what he's decided is the cut-off point. Other provinces may have said - Quebec for example, made it \$100,000. We all know that that would not be the cut-off point for this government to do this. Why is that? Because MLAs make less than that and there would be no way that we would be granting ourselves \$500 cheques.

After 10,000 red herrings and a bunch of non sequiturs and a lot of fallacies, I just have to say that the government's argument on this is bunk and they should acknowledge it.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allotted for late debate has expired.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mx. Speaker, would you please call Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mx. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 227.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: Mx. Speaker, I would like to add a few comments to the criticisms of this bill that our party's spokesperson for finance made here as we were closing debate yesterday.

Specifically, I'd like to speak to the part of this Act that has an effect on the Capital Investment Tax Credit, extending it from 2024 to 2029 and expanding it from 15 per cent to 25 per cent of aggregate capital cost. I think it's fair to say that the minister's responses to the criticisms of this bill that have been offered by our finance spokesperson, as this bill has moved through the various stages of debate, have not been adequate.

Essentially, when asked about the \$35 million a year in corporate tax revenue that it is estimated is going to be foregone by the government through this measure, the minister has responded, oh, don't think about this in a negative way, it's money just going to corporations. Think about it instead in a positive way. Think about all the jobs that will come and the money that will be spent and the revenue that will come to government thereby, et cetera.

It's not very encouraging to hear this kind of reasoning from our province's Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, because it's reasoning that draws from a shallow well, namely the well of neoliberal development economics, which is now discredited and largely internationally abandoned.

The idea that the road for jurisdictions like Nova Scotia to economic growth lies in cutting the corporate share of total taxation is now widely understood to not only increase economic inequalities but also to constrict consumers' spending power in a way that contributes significantly to economic contraction by depriving the government itself of the revenue it needs in order to exercise its responsibility to fuel expansion, particularly in times when we are trying to avoid potential recessionary waves.

Like all budget measures, these changes in the Capital Investment Tax Credit are to be evaluated and measured in terms of their opportunity cost. That is, these measures reflect a decision to forego up to \$35 million a year in provincial revenue, in terms of corporate taxation. Hence these measures reflect an investment to not invest to the same level, in some other areas because that revenue will have been foregone.

There isn't any sense in pretending otherwise. What is foregone in one area is revenue that, by definition, cannot be invested in another area. The supply of revenue is finite. Therefore, a measure of this sort is absolutely about - as budgets are and FMAs - it's absolutely about choices.

We may think, for example, about the choice, as it has been talked about throughout this afternoon, the choice that this bill implies in the area of income assistance. So income assistance in Nova Scotia is frozen in the present fiscal year. This is in a situation where our income assistance level for a family of one parent and one child is the lowest in the country.

With these present changes in the Capital Investment Tax Credit the government is, in fact, expressing a decision. The government is, in fact, expressing its choice that it has considered the matter, that it has put forward a bill that expresses its decision to not spend this \$35 million in addressing the deficiencies of income assistance but rather to direct the same amount of money to a reduction in corporate taxation.

As my leader was speaking about earlier today, we can think about the high-dose flu vaccine. In response to questions about why Nova Scotia doesn't follow the example

of most Canadian provinces and make that high-dose vaccine available to all seniors in the province, without charge, the minister, speaking to the media, I thought quite factually - I'll table this - situated this policy in the context of the government's financial and fiscal restraints and limitations.

The changes in the Capital Investment Tax Credit contained in this legislation reflect this government's choice, its decision not to direct \$35 million to expanding public access to vaccinations but rather to direct that same amount to the reduction of taxation for corporations.

There are many more instances that we could point to. People often ask when the subject of homelessness is being raised, they say: Can the government actually not figure out how to put roofs over the heads of no more than around 1,000 people in the whole province? Is this actually something that is beyond the capacity of the government in Nova Scotia to figure out and put into effect?

The government's hands are tied on this issue to the tune of \$35 million by this exact bill, in terms of what they're going to be able to invest in homelessness in Nova Scotia because the money is being diverted to another corporate reduction purpose.

We can think about, as the member for Dartmouth North has spoken here many times, the subject of Seniors' Pharmacare Program. She has proposed that in light of the present cost of living pressures, that it would be a very good time for the government to pause the premiums on Seniors' Pharmacare for a finite period, perhaps a year. The government has refused to consider this. Let us imagine what \$35 million in foregone corporate tax revenue could do to take pressure off the price of medications for the senior citizens of Nova Scotia.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in their important, most recent report card on child poverty in Nova Scotia, talked about the concept of what they call legislating poverty. That's not my phrase; it's theirs. I'll table it.

This is what I'm discussing. This is exactly what they're talking about - legislating by decision the choice to follow a path by which we will have a very significant number of our people in the province living with inadequate incomes.

A law like this Financial Measures (Fall 2022) Act, in the part that it designates that has to do with the Capital Investment Tax Credit, actually legislates - puts into law - the choice, the decision, that the government will not invest \$35 million this year or in any other year until 2029 in, say, improving income assistance, or making a high-dose flu vaccine available without charge, or making direct payments to households in consideration of inflation, or in ending homelessness, or in providing relief on drug costs for seniors in Nova Scotia, because the government has decided to direct these same revenues instead to another place, towards corporate tax reduction.

This is a decision, this is a choice that, in this bill, is before us for evaluation. We are considering whether or not this is a prudent, wise, careful, worthy choice. That's the decision that is before us in the vote that we are going to make on this Financial Measures (Fall 2022) Act.

Members of the government often point out the distinction between different kinds of conservatism. I think that this is a legitimate thing for them to do. There are different kinds of conservatism, just as there are different kinds of liberalism, and there are different kinds of social democracy. There is intelligent liberalism, and there is stupid liberalism. There is intelligent socialism, and there is stupid socialism. There is intelligent conservatism, and there is stupid conservatism - and this Financial Measures (Fall 2022) Act is a clear example of the latter.

This Capital Investment Tax Credit expansion belongs in the general fiscal family of the taxation measures that mark and marked the economic policy of Poilievre, of O'Toole, of Scheer, and of Harper. These broad corporate tax reductions appear uninformed by the intelligent conservatism which understands that if you want demand to be enhanced, you have to enhance demand, not just vaguely hope that somehow tax cuts to investors will somehow sift their way down into people's pockets.

We are of the view that Nova Scotia can do much better.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: There's one thing I want to point out - there is a backdate I think to the previous October on the financial increase to this bill. It would be nice if the government provided some clarity to the House on why this was backdated, if there was a promise that's already made, if there was a deal that has already been struck that the government hasn't told us about.

Right now, we haven't been given any rationale for why there's backdating on this, and that would make one wonder what the reason for that is. If there is a current deal or a promise that happened before this legislation has actually passed, certainly I think the House and Nova Scotians should know what that is.

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I now do move to close debate on third reading. I will offer a few points.

On the most recent one, for the member who just raised the timeline and the date, there is nothing I can say about that. It's a fair question, but I think when we're coming up

with putting these measures before the Legislature, there are reasons why we're doing that. We have set a date. We're trying to be transparent about it. I can't really go into further detail on that.

[5:30 p.m.]

I might expound, although I'm not aware because I have not been approached as a minister myself, but there could be organizations the government is dealing with that may be looking at making a capital investment in the province and may be questioning it or asking what's available, so I will let the member take from that. That is as much as I can give the member on that matter.

I want to address some of the points raised by the member for Halifax Chebucto. I think about a past government that he was a member of, when Darrell Dexter was Premier and the NDP government was in. It wasn't the same kind of an issue, but it had to do with Port Hawkesbury Paper. I know the investment that was made at Port Hawkesbury Paper has turned out to be very good for the province and certainly very good for the people who work at the mill at Point Tupper.

I know we get into political philosophies, but at the end of the day - I know that at the time, I was in Opposition and I said, good on the NDP and good on Premier Dexter at the time for arranging that deal. History will show that it was a good deal for the province. It has since been paid off. I want to see that too.

I don't want anybody out there to think that this government wants to, in this case, extend a capital investment tax credit that doesn't pay for itself back for Nova Scotians. We would never want to do that. I know there can be risks, but we would certainly aim to minimize that.

I think about, what if that mill was an issue today? They've got a world-class paper machine there, but what if they had an old machine and what if the owner was thinking, well, maybe we'll just move this enterprise somewhere where there's cheap labour. A tax credit like this might help to create an even playing field so that Nova Scotia remains competitive in terms of a big decision like that.

So instead of moving an operation like that out of the country, where we would see a loss of employment in the area, it might help to make the case to the company in question to say - because they might be in a global, competitive environment where they're selling paper around the world so they can locate anywhere. They might say, well, this might turn the tide, so, okay, fine, we're going to stay here - or we're going to move here if it was a new enterprise. That's what we're trying to do.

We're trying to attract good-paying jobs, and I think about the mill. I was actually thinking about it when this came forward, because I thought about how we have to protect

- if companies were to take advantage of this capital investment tax credit, which they're not going to get any money back unless they actually make the investment in the province. What if they made an investment in a brand new paper machine and suddenly, a year or two later after getting the credit, decided to lift it off its moorings - which they could do in Point Tupper - and put it on a barge and ship it somewhere else in the world. I wouldn't want to see Nova Scotians, having contributed to that capital investment, then see it float away to some other jurisdiction.

What we're trying to do is attract business to the province. With that, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 227.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 227.

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: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 228.

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

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 228, amendments to the Public Utilities Act, Efficiency Nova Scotia, be now read a third time and do pass.

Efficiency Nova Scotia is one of our valued partners in the fight against climate change. Their goals are closely aligned with ours and Bill No. 228 puts them in a better position to achieve these goals.

Ultimately, these amendments make it possible for Efficiency Nova Scotia to do more for more people. I want to emphasize that they allow Efficiency Nova Scotia to deliver more programs to low-income households. This bill helps Nova Scotia get off oil faster, reduce our greenhouse emissions, and move towards climate change in a more readily pace.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, Efficiency Nova Scotia is our provincial demand-side management organization. They do great work. They help thousands of Nova Scotians save on energy consumption to leave more money in their pockets, and help our province reach our climate and environmental goals.

This bill will make Efficiency Nova Scotia a permanent organization, as mentioned, making it more independent from Nova Scotia Power. According to the minister and his staff, these changes will reduce regulatory burden and save time, money, and resources.

This transformation will be implemented by, I believe, January 2023. There will be a near doubling of investment from \$35 million to \$60 million a year. We're certainly in favour of these positive benefits.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, the NDP caucus is supporting this bill.

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: Mr. Speaker, I thank the members opposite for the comments. I just want to take one last opportunity to give a shout-out to Efficiency Nova Scotia and the great work that they do for all Nova Scotians. I believe it's certainly appreciated by everyone in this House. I think that the comments have echoed that.

With that, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 228.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 228.

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. 224.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 224, the Perennia Food and Agriculture Corporation Act, now be read a third time and do pass.

Perennia is an important part of our agricultural sector in Nova Scotia and has been for nearly 10 years. Perennia's extension specialists are experts on everything from apiculture to viticulture and everything in between. We need these experts in these areas. Our honey producers and blueberry growers rely on apiculturists - bee keeping experts. That's expertise we have at Perennia. Our award-winning winemakers rely on viticulturists - wine growing experts. We have that expertise at Perennia.

Agri-food and seafood companies need access to quality and food safety experts who know all the ins and outs of export regulation, product recalls, even training for staff. That's the expertise we have at Perennia.

We have food scientists who work with Nova Scotia companies to create new products and to make the ones we have now even better. We have academic researchers working on how to turn underutilized resources, including things that we've traditionally sent to a landfill, into high-value products.

We have incubation space that businesses can use while they're trying to get new ideas off the ground. These are important services - services the agriculture and seafood industries rely on, and they can access it all with one phone call to Perennia.

Over the last 14 months, I've heard from many farm operators about how much they value the services, programs, support, and advice that they get from Perennia. This is a hands-on team. They are quite literally in the field. They're out there talking to producers, farmers, and business owners. They're seeing the challenges and opportunities for themselves up close and personal. They have their finger on the pulse of the industry, and they aren't going anywhere.

This is why I don't share the concerns of my colleagues across the floor who suggested that the shifting governance at Perennia - the move to an advisory board - would create some kind of disconnect with the industry. Perennia's experts know how to respond to the industry's needs. More than that, they know how to help industry respond to the demands of the future.

As I said last week, I have spoken to the members of the board, and I appreciate the guidance they have provided to Perennia, to me, and to this government. The connections Perennia has to industry through its board have been a complement to the connection Perennia has through its on-the-ground, in-the-field, hands-on work with producers every day. We don't want to lose that. Keeping an industry-led advisory board under this new legislation means we're not going to lose that.

I have also heard concerns about Perennia's future role as it relates to the seafood sector. The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture talked about the importance of Perennia's contributions in the growth and development of this \$2.5-billion industry. The Centre for Marine Applied Research, a division of Perennia, continues to be an important partner to government and industry on both fisheries and aquaculture. This government is not going to stand in the way of that - quite the opposite. We are strengthening Perennia's mandate to support and grow this sector. In fact, when this bill becomes law, Perennia's work in the seafood sector will, for the first time, be enshrined in legislation.

Some members also expressed concern about Perennia's ability to respond to the needs of industry quickly in a new structure where they report to a deputy and a minister. I would like to take this opportunity again to talk about the department's response to Hurricane Fiona. Hurricane Fiona had the biggest financial impact on the agriculture sector of any hurricane in recent history. When I walked around those farms in the days after the hurricane, it was clear right away that the sector needed our help.

Mr. Speaker, we did respond. We responded with almost \$20 million in targeted funding to support the recovery of the agriculture sector, funding to meet their unique needs - cash in hand, generators, insurance - and we did it quickly. We were out on farms within hours of that storm, pulling together partners within days, and had funding on the table within weeks.

The role of a deputy and this minister is not to be a barrier for anyone. It's to help break down barriers, to pull every available lever, and to clear a path from industry to the government resources they need. That's the philosophy. We do not intend to change that with Perennia or any of our work in the sector.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I'm happy to speak to Bill No. 224, an Act Respecting Perennia Food and Agriculture Corporation. I agree wholeheartedly with the minister's comments about the value of Perennia, the work that they do, and how important they have been to industry. But he failed to mention one thing - Perennia has been industry-led and extremely successful. The minister acknowledged that in second reading. I can quote him on that: "Perennia is working very well."

This is perhaps the solutionists in government trying to create a solution to a problem that doesn't exist. My comments will try to outline that - why this is bad legislation and, even more importantly, why the agricultural industry is very concerned.

Let's walk through this. What is the problem that is trying to be solved? As the minister said, it's working extremely well. Let's look at his comments in second reading

that I will take from Hansard, and see if he can perhaps fill in some of the gaps in his comments.

[5:45 p.m.]

“As a Crown corporation, Perennia will provide the same services to the agriculture, seafood, and food and beverage industries in a way that aligns with our government mandate, and with more transparent reporting requirements.” The question is, how? What is that mandate? What specifically in the government’s mandate is motivating them to take over Perennia?

What are these reporting requirements that are going to be more transparent? They submit annual reports, they submit financial statements, and I would actually question how a reporting relationship between a DM and a minister is more transparent than a board reporting to the minister.

Again from the minister: “With this change, we are helping to improve government effectiveness and accountability to Nova Scotians. This change will also help to increase Nova Scotians' awareness of the services Perennia provides.” How? In fact, the only problem that has been outlined, and I’m not even sure it’s a problem, is that people don’t know what Perennia does. I would submit that everybody in the agriculture and fishing industries and food services knows what Perennia does.

Do we need a minister to go on a communications strategy? Is that why the minister needs control over this organization? The minister wants them to communicate, tell the board. They’re accountable to the minister. You don’t need to change the governance structure to go on a communications project.

The minister said, “We are governing with a long-term view with long-term goals. This legislation is part of that forward-looking focus.” I don’t know what that means. It’s word salad. We’re governing with a long-term view with long-term goals.

The Minister of Fisheries in Hansard in second reading, “The structure will help Perennia work more closely with government.” Failed to tell us how. “This will enable us to work more closely with them.” Remember that, because I’m going to come to the comments from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture about their concerns. “We’re looking at a government now that’s looking at more accountability and the line of sight, if you will, to those who are being held accountable.”

This is the same government that is keeping secret the reason they are doing this. How do we believe that the government is going to be more transparent when they can’t even tell us, show us and be accountable and transparent on why they’re doing this? The report is secret.

Again, the minister: “Perennia is working very well.” We really don’t know why this is being done. We looked for reasons at the bill briefing. I asked a very senior official with the department during the bill briefing: Were there any concerns expressed about the governance of Perennia? We got a very clear answer: “No.” There were no concerns about the governance of Perennia, yet this legislation is making a major shift.

We asked in the bill briefing about consultation. The response was there was a survey conducted. I had to scratch my brain to think about what that was. I went online and I found yes, in February, the government did a two-week survey for 20 organizations. One press release.

I would love to see the *What We Heard* report, but they will not release that. Did anybody respond? Perhaps there were a few Nova Scotians who missed the press release. Wouldn’t surprise me.

Unfortunately, the agricultural industry didn’t know anything about this, so let’s see what the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture has to say. I have a letter here addressed to the Minister of Justice as the head of the Law Amendments Committee from the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. This letter states in its third paragraph:

“Since this bill has been introduced, the NSFA has been hearing from several industry partners about their concerns regarding the proposed legislation. The lack of consultation with the industry in this significant shift in organizational structure leaves us concerned about the future engagements and priorities of the organization.”

We have a whole industry represented by the Federation of Agriculture - I believe it’s some 2,000 farmers - who were not consulted on a major shift to one of the key services for that industry. It’s actually shocking that the Federation of Agriculture was not spoken to about this, extremely disappointing.

So, what does this bill do? The bill looks very much like several other bills before this House, Bills No. 215, 216, maybe 214, and there’s a whole series of clauses that are repeated in many of these bills. I want to highlight a few of these clauses that really tell us what this bill is all about.

Clause 9 says: “The objects of the Corporation are to align with and further the strategic economic policy objectives and priorities of the Government,” not the industry.

Clause 10(c): “The Corporation may . . . where directed by the Minister, provide such programs and services as the Minister considers appropriate.” And in 10(e), “with the approval of the Minister, enter into agreements.”

Clause 11 sums it up quite nicely: “The management and control of the affairs of the Corporation are vested in the Minister.”

Clause 12: “The Governor in Council shall appoint a Chief Executive Officer . . .” - not the corporation, and that Chief Executive Officer doesn’t report to the board. Under 12(2), “The Chief Executive Officer reports to the Deputy Minister.”

Clause 18: “Subject to the approval of the Deputy Minister, the Advisory Board may . . . avail itself of the services of the employees . . .” The advisory board reports to the minister, but the minister’s not bound by any recommendation or resolution from the board.

Another heavy-handed clause, 26(1): “The Minister may issue such policy directions to the Advisory Board as are consistent with this Act if, in the opinion of the Minister, it is in the public interest to do so.” And 26(2): “the Advisory Board shall comply with a direction issued under subsection (1).”

So, what’s the board to do? The minister directs the programs and services. The objectives are aligned with the priorities of government. They can only enter into agreements if approved by the minister. The CEO reports to the deputy minister, so clearly hiring, firing, performance evaluations, directing all the work of the organization has absolutely nothing to do with the board. The board doesn’t even have access to the minister. The board has to go through the CEO. The minister is not bound by any recommendations by the board. The minister may only issue policy directions which the board must comply with.

As I stated, the clause that’s actually kind of the most outrageous is the board only has access to staff resources with the approval of the deputy minister. So what can the board do? I don’t think they can do very much. I wouldn’t want to be on that board. My hands would be completely tied.

In essence, the board has been replaced by the deputy minister and a CEO that the deputy minister hires.

I spoke in second reading and perhaps in Committee of the Whole House on the importance of good governance. As my colleague from Halifax Citadel-Sable Island did a bit of research on this as well, in terms of what is good board governance - this has been tabled, but I am happy to table it again. *Best Practice Principles of Corporate Governance for Crown Corporations*, put out in 2019 by the Ivey School of Business, addresses these issues with respect to proper board governance.

Under the section talking about how the board should be involved in the selection and the appointment of the chief executive officer - and I’ll read this:

“The ‘Board Form’ of governance generally assumes that the CEO is hired by and reports directly to the Board, who also possess the ability to terminate the CEO, if required. In the public sector, the Board’s ability to hire and fire the CEO is not always as clear-cut, as the CEOs of public sector organizations are sometimes appointed by government through Order-in-Council. If the government hires the CEO rather than the Board, the CEO’s accountability relationship to the Board can become more complex and diffused. In such instances, it can be perceived that the CEO is more responsive to government and less responsive to the Board’s input and influence.”

This is critical. This is taking an industry-led organization that we all agree is extremely important to the industry and has been working well and sidelining the board that has done exemplary work for 10 years in managing the organization and providing those services to industry.

I also referred to the Treasury Board of Canada’s review in 2005 of their Crown corporations, *Meeting the Expectations of Canadians: Review of the Governance Framework for Canada’s Crown Corporations*. In Chapter 4 of that document, Strengthening Governance - Clarifying Accountabilities and Assigning Roles and Responsibilities, the question has arisen: Who precisely is accountable to government for the corporation?

This document goes on to say that in the federal government with respect to Crown corporations, we are going to make this crystal clear, so there are not those perceptions or realities in which a CEO is responding not to a board but to a political master.

“. . . the government has determined that the accountability structure under the legislation should more clearly be articulated. In particular, the following relationships should be set out explicitly.

1. The responsible Minister is accountable to Parliament for the Crown corporation . . . the Minister is answerable in Parliament for all activities of the corporation, including those pertaining to day-to-day operations.
2. The Board of Directors is accountable to the responsible Minister for the stewardship of the corporation.
3. The CEO is accountable to the Board of Directors for the management and performance of the corporation.”

They clearly outline that the government will clarify the accountability structure for Crown corporations, including in the FAA, in order to describe the relationships between Parliament, the responsible minister, board of directors, and CEO. It is very clear, as I've raised in previous conversations on this bill, that it's extremely problematic to have the CEO reporting directly to the minister.

How does industry feel about this? I'm going to refer back now to the letter from the Federation of Agriculture. A number of concerns: "With a shift to an advisory board, the industry" - I'm again quoting from Tim Marsh's letter -

"the industry will no longer be leading the priorities of the organization. It is essential that the industry lead the strategic direction and mandate of Perennia. Industry organizations and farmers need to be assured that the work of agriculture extension is led by the subject experts themselves, those with the direct experience and expertise that decisions pertaining to the sector impacts."

They're concerned with the recruitment and retention of qualified specialists key to the success of the extension and applied research mandates of the organization.

"It is unclear whether strategic recruitment and retention strategies will be in alignment with the proposed hierarchical structure. Successful extension and applied research require strong strategic partnerships with industry stakeholders, it is essential that Perennia grow these strategic partnerships to ensure the continued development of the industry.

With the broad mandate of the advisory board, it's important that these do not duplicate the efforts of competing advisory boards.

Perhaps most importantly, the message we want to make clear is the essential need for the Government of Nova Scotia, and the Department of Agriculture specifically, to engage meaningfully, consistently, and authentically with industry and the farm families through the NSFA and commodity organizations. An advisory board cannot replace this necessary action.

Further, we must assert that this legislation cannot impact Perennia's ability to maintain and grow its partnerships and relationships with stakeholders. That impact, intentional or not, would effectively fracture the strong relationship that industry has built with our partners."

These are strong words for an extremely important industry to rural Nova Scotia. This legislation is doing a lot of damage between the Department of Agriculture and our farming and fishing communities.

In summary, the government - the minister - has provided no reasons for this change. We are only left with an assumption that there is a power grab. That we have an \$11 million organization that is industry-led in which a government contributes \$2.6 million in core funding and the government now wants to put their hands on that money and shove the industry-led board members aside.

The governance structure outlined in this bill is contrary to good governance models determined by academics and the government of Canada's Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

Most importantly, this change is not supported by the agricultural industry. There are deep concerns that these changes will slow decisions and slow the responsiveness to agriculture. It is important that this organization remain industry-led, and you have heard that from industry.

In short, this bill is a step backwards. It is bad legislation, and we will not be supporting this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The member has made various quotes. I would ask that he table all those quotes for the benefit of the House.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I'd first like to thank the minister for opening up this third reading debate by outlining what a fantastic organization Perennia is.

Perennia has grown over the past 10 years in its current form by being a close partner with industry, by being a good corporate citizen in its reporting, accountability, and transparency, and we have an amazing organization here in Nova Scotia. And yet, it is really unclear why this is happening and why it's being moved to a Crown corporation under the direction of a minister.

I think in second reading, I invited folks to look under your chairs because as far as I can tell, everyone's getting a corporation. If you didn't get a corporation, just check because there's been a dozen or so of them. I checked under my chair and there wasn't one, but I think it might be reserved for that side of the House.

It is astounding, actually, that we have made this decision. Like my honourable colleague for Kings South, I also actually started my remarks with a question. I had written,

how did we get here? How does this even make sense, basically. Let's walk through sort of how we got here.

The minister's mandate letter talks about the same blurb that was in most ministers' letters, I think: "Within the first six months, and as part of your Department's mandate, you will work with me and other Departments in reviewing the role and effectiveness of Agencies, Offices and Crown Corporations with a goal of ensuring the most efficient and accountable methodology for the undertaking of their respective tasks." I'll table that letter.

I'd really like to emphasize the word "methodology," because I think if we haven't heard anything, we have not heard any methodology through this decision-making. The report that we have access to, again the two-pager, with regards to Perennia, what that said was: "Currently a corporation established via the Companies Act, Perennia will be established as a new Crown corporation with its own legislation similar to other Crown corporations. Legislation is expected in Fall 2022."

I think there are two things to unpack from that report. I'll use that word loosely. First of all, what was promised and mentioned here is "legislation similar to other Crown corporations."

In fact, what has been presented bears no resemblance to the establishment of a true Crown corporation. I talked about this in second reading. I talked about this in third reading for a previous bill. My colleague for Kings South also just walked us through the available literature that exists and that's been recently developed about what Crown corporations look like and what they're supposed to do. They are supposed to have boards. The minister is not normally - is involved, definitely, in assuring their accountability and transparency but is not the core decision-maker in the organization.

Even more interesting in this case is that this was actually a private company. Again, we've talked and asked for information about what is our government's economic development plan. What are we intending to bring together across immigration, across economic development, across agriculture, across other sectors? Why, on one hand, we just really want to support the well-being of large corporations in this province, and we just passed an Act supporting that, and on the other hand we're taking away a company. We're actually just making it almost like a division of a department.

We have not been privy to the methodology that has been used to determine what is that efficiency and accountability mandate of each organization. I think that is really a shame and really a democratic deficit in this session.

Following the Law Amendments Committee and the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, I too shared the greater part of the letter from Tim Marsh on behalf of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. I do actually want to revisit a couple of quotes from that, because I share my disbelief and deep concern that the minister will bring forward a

bill directly affecting the 2,000 members of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture without engaging the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.

Here are two of the quotes I'd like to share and then I'll re-table it now: "The lack of consultation with the industry in this significant shift in organizational structure leaves us concerned about future engagements and priorities of the organization." They said as well:

"We believe agriculture extension and the applied research mandates of Perennia are essential to the long-term success of the industry, but without clear engagement and leadership from the industry on these mandates, we are concerned about the potential disconnect that may occur in the future. If the decision to shift the structure of an organization that is vital to the industry is made unilaterally, it weakens our sector's confidence that the work will continue in our collective best interest."

That is the politest way of saying, how could you not come to us as the major industry and sector organization? How could you not engage us in this, and what are we left to think about your respect for us and how you are going to engage with us in the future?

Why is this particularly important to think about the impacts in agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture? These are sectors that we know are on the front lines of climate change. This vulnerability was only reinforced through our most recent experience with Hurricane Fiona. The damage, short- and long-term, and the recovery costs are only the start of the effects of climate change on these industries.

At the same time, as we've discussed, these industries are facing incredible costs of production and cost of living increases, so their inputs from the start to the finish - and the Premier has been offering up some gardening lessons over the last couple of sessions - from seed to fertilizer to harvest to market, all those costs are increasing. At the same time, there is a labour shortage, and a housing shortage for labour who want to move and contribute to these sectors but can't come to those parts of Nova Scotia. Also, they are facing a lot of uncertainty about carbon costs at this point, about what will the costs be for this government to have fallen short of the work they knew they needed to do to address carbon pricing in the province. There are so many concerns.

We also have an aging population of farmers, and we also have a decreasing number of farms. These are such important parts of our province. We all share that commitment. I think we all share that commitment to those sectors. I know that we do, but we need to be respectful of our engagement with them and we need to be considering looking forward for them.

[6:15 p.m.]

We talked a lot about agricultural extension, and I thought I would just spend a minute talking about what that actually is. I think it's important to realize that, basically, it's one of the oldest applied scientific approaches that there is. In fact, the modern agricultural extension can be actually traced back 4,000 years to Mesopotamia, and really took off following the Irish potato famine in the mid-1800s. If we think about that, there again was a climate disaster, a social disaster. The need was to have a rapid response from the agricultural sector to be able to support the population. That's what agricultural extension does.

Agricultural extension is regarded as a really important tool for supporting new farmers. As we see the number of farms actually decrease in the province, and we want to support new Canadians, women, and young farmers, it's essential that we have agricultural extension that is well-regarded by the industry.

What I think we're expressing here is that it's not clear that there was anything broken or wrong in the way that Perennia was providing those services. In fact, it was highly regarded by the industry. The risk here is - what happens now? I think it's really important to think about what the goal is, and how this meets our other goals. Where does this leave us?

In the industries that are on the front line of economic and environmental change, with well-established science on how to evolve and respond, we have had a well-regarded organization that has been supporting these sectors. Why are we implementing this change now? Agricultural extension is essential for the future of agriculture in this province. It's also essential for food security, which we don't have a provincial strategy for - but this is certainly an important piece.

It's hard to see the reason for this change. No one has given us any clear rationale on the change. Having no consultations with a key body representing 2,000 farms across the province who are now rightly concerned, where does this leave the government's relationship with these Nova Scotians?

We remain deeply concerned about the approach of this bill and the dozens of others that represent an unjustified move to consolidate power into the Executive Council Office and the Premier's Office. We will not be supporting this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the two previous speakers, including the member for Kings South, for providing very articulate arguments against this bill. I quickly want to get on the record. We do not believe this is a good bill. This is not a bill that was done in consultation with the agriculture sector, which is so

critical to our economy, our way of life, our food supply. We believe there's no rationale for this. This is a solution in search of a problem.

Perennia is a research and development innovation organization. This is precisely the sort of thing that you don't want partisan or political interference with. You want science and the needs of the sector to direct the work of this organization, much the same as with venture capital. The experts do know better than elected officials on this particular situation.

The question remains, why is this happening? We are very worried about this massive consolidation of power, bringing it under partisan control. We have heard words like, this is modernizing or this is moving us forward. But we really do worry that we're moving back to 1980s Progressive Conservative politics, where patronage and slush funds are the name of the game, and the political strategy to get re-elected. That is something that we have to watch for and that this party will certainly be on the lookout for. I know many others will as well.

We do not support this bill. We do not believe this is good for the agriculture sector. We're worried about the implications and the control that this will give a partisan group of people over that sector. We have already heard that there are calls happening out of the Premier's Office to agriculture people telling them to be quiet about this and not voice their concerns about it. This is a very real concern, particularly when we're talking about science, innovation, research, and development. This doesn't make any sense. It's not needed. It could cause more problems than it's intended to fix.

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

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HON. GREG MORROW: Members of this House may not agree on everything or anything at times. But everyone who stood in this Chamber and spoke to this bill agreed on one critical point, that Perennia is important to our province and to our agriculture and seafood sectors. I would argue that's not just a critical point; it's the critical point here. Perennia's work is important, too important not to be protected by and enshrined in legislation.

Yesterday, during debate on Bill No. 215, the member for Kings South gave us a glowing review of how the previous government fixed all the agencies, boards, and commissions over their eight years in power, and how it was terrible all those years before that.

What changed in those eight years was that they moved those agencies to Crown corporations led by businesses, by business experts, and by industry experts. That is what we're doing with Perennia. We're changing it to a Crown corporation. We're not

consolidating boards. We're taking this one board and changing it to a Crown corporation. The member just spent 23 and a half minutes arguing against that. We're changing it from where it was a company under the Companies Act to a Crown corporation.

The question yesterday was, do you want to make those decisions as minister? I can tell you right here in this House, absolutely not. That's why we have an industry-led board of experts in their fields. I am happy to take their advice and their recommendations on what they bring forward. The answer is no.

The question was just brought up. The Chair doesn't have access to the minister under this new arrangement. I could show you my phone, but it would be a prop. The Chair of Perennia is in my phone. He can contact me any time he wants, and he has. The Chair will always have this minister's number and be able to get in touch with me if there's an issue. They can reach out directly. That will not change.

Questions about the relationship with industry and what that's going to do with this legislation moving forward - I spent the last 14 months repairing the government's relationship with industry because they haven't been heard over the last number of years.

Change is hard. But this government is not afraid of change. We're also not afraid of taking something that's working well and making it work even better. We're not afraid of accountability. We're not afraid to stand here in this House and be accountable to you, out there to members of the media, to all Nova Scotians.

Perennia has always been funded by the taxpayers of this province, and Nova Scotians deserve to know exactly how their hard-earned money is being spent, on what, and why. Nova Scotians have high expectations, and as a Crown corporation, Perennia will need to continue to meet those expectations. It's my job to make sure that they do. It's also my job as minister responsible to answer to you, to the members of this House, the media, and the taxpayers of this province if they don't.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading of Bill No. 224.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 224.

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. 223.

Bill No. 223 - Municipal Finance Corporation Dissolution Act.

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 223, an Act to Dissolve the Municipal Finance Corporation, be now read a third time and do pass.

I appreciated hearing from the members opposite about this bill during second reading debate. The Municipal Finance Corporation does important work on behalf of the Province and municipalities. Through this legislation, this work will continue as part of the Department of Finance and Treasury Board.

This change comes about as a result of the review of Crown corporations and agencies, which has had the goal of reducing duplication and improving efficiency and accountability.

The Municipal Finance Corporation Dissolution Act will repeal the Municipal Finance Corporation Act and dissolve the corporation, transferring its assets, liabilities, and employees to the province.

As a result, we are amending the Finance Act to provide the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board with the authority to make loans to municipalities and municipal enterprises, leveraging the work that is already happening at that department. Consequential amendments are also being made to the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter. Most importantly, we expect this to be a smooth continuation of operations for our client municipalities. Work toward this transition has been seamless to date.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks. I look forward to hearing comments from colleagues opposite.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Thank you to the minister for explaining that at least the staffing are still going to remain, because I want to acknowledge the great work that they've done over 35-plus years. This was what my concern was, but he will reiterate it hopefully - that nothing is going to change with the people who have been doing this for that length of time.

We've heard the term "consolidation of power" many times this week in this House, and there is a pattern forming. Further to discussions today, it would appear that the government is looking to ride the coattails of everything that's been successful and

changing the way they do things. The word “dissolve” the Municipal Finance Corporation - that needs to be further explored and understood in this House. It’ll open up municipal finance loans, perhaps, to political interference from the Province.

Will the Province be approving loans based on political expedience? Will annual reports continue to be public? How will this new way of doing business for municipal units in Nova Scotia be transparent and accountable to taxpayers? Will the minister be forgiving loans from municipal units of their choosing? Will municipal units still be able to borrow, as was done in the past, under this independent board? If the Municipal Finance Corporation was working well, and it isn’t broke, why are we feeling the need to fix it? Why is this government doing this? Like I said before, the first step in a hostile takeover is to take control of the funds. Is that why we’re doing this?

I know the pattern that’s been forming, and I want to share the quote from the Premier that said it’s the reason that it’s better to have elected officials accountable for decisions, rather than appointed board members, and I’ll table that. That’s not the case, I guess, when you’re an elected official with Halifax Regional Council. I’m hoping that they will explain in more detail why you felt the Municipal Finance Corporation needed to be dissolved going forward. I can’t imagine what the people, the elected members on that board - and will there continue to be elected members on that board? They’ve done great work for many decades, and I just want to acknowledge that hard work. I hope that they will be able to continue to do that hard work. Those are my words.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I want to echo some of the words of my colleagues with regard to other bills that we have seen, and that is: Why are we here? Why these bills? How did we get here? I heard the minister acknowledge the great work of the Municipal Finance Corporation. They do great work. They’re doing great work. Has there been a problem lately? The minister didn’t acknowledge that there have been problems. Even if there have been problems, throwing the baby out with the bathwater is not the way to solve them.

Again, I ask, why this bill? Why are we here? Why are we dissolving the Municipal Finance Corporation? I have heard this bill a few times, and I still don’t have a clear answer, except for consolidating power. Because here we are, yet another bill, Bill No. 223, that dissolves an independent board and CEO, while assigning all responsibilities to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board’s approval remaining.

Municipal lending, Mr. Speaker, as my colleague for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth has said, is a critical role. It must be transparent and it must be efficient. I do hope that is continuing to be the case here. My concern again is that this is part of a pattern of consolidating power to the ministers - Bill Nos. 214, 215, 196, 222 coming up, 216, and 223.

[6:30 p.m.]

Again, my issue is that we're here on third reading and I still don't know why this bill was needed. That should concern everybody, because I truly believe that when you're making good legislation and when you're being a good legislator, you have a reason for the bills and a clear understanding of the path. Even if we don't agree with that path, we have a clear understanding as to why it's coming or why this bill has been put forward.

I'm standing here and still, after all these bills that we have gone through, I don't know the answer as to why. Again, I will say that the minister said that the board was doing excellent work. The corporation was doing excellent work the way it was, so why?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will leave you with that hanging question. Thank you.

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: I will try to explain it again briefly. The reality is that every Minister of Municipal Affairs has signed off on every borrowing request for the last 40 years, as some of my colleagues across the floor would know from having been in that position. The minister has had the power to sign off or not sign off forever. as long this has existed. So nothing is really changing there.

The borrowing requests that come forward from the municipalities are vetted through our municipal advisors and come to the minister and then get passed on to the Municipal Finance Corporation. The Municipal Finance Corporation is the shop, so to speak, that moves the money around.

If I was talking about a woodworking shop or a welding shop, I could describe exactly what they do, but I don't totally understand how people move money around. That's also the much larger shop found in the Department of Finance and Treasury Board.

This is putting those people there. As far as our municipal partners are concerned, the temporary borrowing requests or the borrowing requests will still come through Municipal Affairs and through our advisors to me and will be sent to Finance and Treasury Board. The reason to do it is to just have the people who are doing this actual work with more of the people who are doing this actual work, if that makes any sense.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to close third reading.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 223.

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. 222.

Bill No. 222 - Housing Supply and Services Act

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: I move that Bill No. 222 be now read a third time and do pass.

As I've said many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a housing crisis. Over the past year, we've been working on a number of fronts with all levels of government, business, and community partners on solutions.

The proposed legislation will replace the Housing Act and, at a later date, the Housing Nova Scotia Act. It's designed to modernize government structure for provincial housing programs and will increase accountability by creating a new Crown corporation responsible for public housing in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, as a Crown corporation, the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency will have a dedicated focus on public housing and provide consistency in policies and procedures across the system. Our residents deserve that.

A new advisory board will be established, and the department will provide strategic oversight to the new Crown corporation to ensure that new policies and actions align with government priorities. The department will maintain responsibility for all other non-public housing related programs, agreements, and initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I look forward to hearing my colleagues' comments in third reading.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Mr. Speaker, I don't have much to add to this, but if the minister responds, I would like to understand something. He said this is to consolidate the Housing Act and the Housing Nova Scotia Act, but we know that the crisis is more prevalent with the homeless situation currently. I know that that falls under Community Services. So why, while we're doing this, bringing the Housing Act and the Housing Nova Scotia Act together, wouldn't you incorporate the piece with homelessness, as far as if

you're looking at modernizing things and the Province having the housing under their jurisdiction?

It was interesting earlier - I heard the Premier speak during Question Period, and he said when it comes to housing, people get in the way. That's not the way to respond to housing. We're here to serve all people, including those who get in the way. Sadly, it would appear that when it comes to homelessness, they are regarded as getting in the way.

I want to ask the minister if, in this consolidation and modernization, if the homeless were even considered at this time.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill No. 222. I want to express my deep concerns with the bill. Make no mistake, there are many parts of this bill that are deeply concerning. But my colleague is going to speak to that. I'm going to focus my remarks on Part II, Sections 48, 49, and 50.

In general, the bill is very broad and provides broad powers to the minister - what else is new? - with respect to where employees end up. Although there is a reference to successor rights provisions in the Trade Union Act, sections of this bill limit the union's ability to make representations at the Labour Board. Because these powers are simply given to the minister with respect to the configuration of the bargaining unit, according to the unions - specifically CUPE - this bill does not seem to acknowledge that there are two unions involved: NSGEU and CUPE.

It appears that employees are shifted from the civil service and therefore covered by Section 31, successor language of the Trade Union Act. The legislation appears to contemplate that after December 1st, the agency can make an application to the Labour Board to deal with any lingering issues. Of course. But Section 49(1) will give the minister the power to determine if an employee will or will not be a civil servant or agency employee by a letter. There is no transparency as to how this will occur.

These sections nullify any entitlement workers may have under these respective collective agreements with regards to them being laid off or terminated. This is deeply concerning, to have the minister have all the power and be able to circumvent the collective agreements.

Mr. Speaker, these concerns were brought to us, and they were brought to Law Amendments Committee by CUPE. As of right now, we still don't have answers to this, but in the bill it was laid out perfectly clear in those sections Nos. 48, 49, and 50. As the critic for Labour, Skills and Immigration, this is deeply concerning to me, that we have two unions - CUPE and the NSGEU - and CUPE was not engaged in this process.

With that, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Housing is a significant issue in Cumberland North. It is probably right on par with health care, with the number of complaints and concerns that come into my MLA office. Housing is directly linked to health care and there's evidence-based research to prove that. I will table a bill that just reinforces this.

This research paper that I'm going to table is actually a compilation of studies that were carried out that looked at, identified, and measured additional exported costs to services such as health, education, and policing, where there were poor housing conditions. It showed a sevenfold health improvement in areas where there was an investment in housing. I will table that document.

Of course, the direct relationship between health and improved housing is predictable. It's common sense, but it's always nice when you have data and research to support that. I commend the government for this bill. I commend them for making an effort to make changes to the Province in their approach to housing.

Ideally, the minister and his staff in the department will combat the problem with the lack of housing, in particular affordable housing, the lack of affordable housing. This is such an important topic in my area, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure others here in this Chamber have similar issues with the number of people living unsheltered, but it is a huge issue, the lack of housing, in Cumberland County.

We should never, ever accept someone not having a place to live or living unsheltered. Growing up in Cumberland County, I never saw anyone living unsheltered. I think we took care of each other. I remember the first time going to the big city of Toronto and people just being on the streets. I remember being shocked that people actually allow other humans to live in those conditions, but we're not used to seeing this here.

We're not used to seeing people lying on a sidewalk, living in a tent, sleeping in front of Dollarama, and that's exactly what's happening right now in the town of Amherst and in the county of Cumberland.

I know that homelessness and lack of housing has a long history, but it has not had a long history of being seen, or visible at least, in my area.

I was thankful yesterday to see the NDP propose the idea of an emergency debate on homelessness. While I respect the Speaker's ruling, always, I was disappointed with the ruling because I think it's something we should have talked about more in this Fall session because of the crisis that we are in in the province.

[6:45 p.m.]

Housing, or lack thereof, has led to the situation where people who in the past could find something to live in, even if it were modest, now cannot find anything to rent. Bill No. 222 is the legislative beginning of change in housing here, but we need to see immediate, urgent work on the ground, literally. Upon the study of Bill No. 222, I am concerned that the minister hasn't taken the advice of the Housing Commission - and that has been discussed in other readings of the bill - and it does remove redundancy. However, it does remove the redundancy and confusion of the two Acts.

I will read a quote from the *Halifax Examiner* that was published immediately after Bill No. 222 was tabled: "The PC government's proposed reorganization of provincial housing organizations flies in the face of the primary recommendation from the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission." That being from the report *Charting a new course for affordable housing in Nova Scotia*.

As the *Halifax Examiner* reported at the time, the commission recommended the creation of a new arm's-length provincial housing entity. It's the commission's very first recommendation and referenced in several others. Housing Nova Scotia - the provincial agency responsible for delivering public housing, rent supplements, and funding for new affordable housing - is not currently independent from government.

There was broad consensus from stakeholders that a new government structure with an inclusive, independent board of directors is a necessary condition for a provincial housing organization to focus on action and delivery, and set it up for greater success to advance the other recommendations, the commission wrote. I will table that document.

Bill No. 222, however, is consistent with other government actions, and that is to centralize power. My concern as MLA for an area that has traditionally and consistently been left out, ignored, separated from the rest of the province . . . (Interruption) I know a lot of areas in Nova Scotia feel that way, but I'm going to tell you, you talk to anyone in Cumberland County, and there has been a culture of feeling left out by this province for many years.

My colleague is making comments that her area feels the same, but I can tell you, we're the only area that was physically separated by a toll for 26 years. Our people literally had to pay to get access to health care in the city - had to pay to get access to any other part of the province. It is true, and I am thankful for this government. One of the first actions was to remove that toll for Nova Scotians. Our area is thankful that finally happened, but the long-standing feeling of being consistently left out and ignored continues. I think that a lot of that happened because of the centralization of power, and that's a concern with this bill, that that may continue further.

During the last campaign in August, the Leader - now Premier - said that local decision-making was going to be reinstated for health care, but there has been no sign of this.

An example of the continued ineffectiveness of the centralization of power is that it still takes on average 92 days to hire a nurse, despite the urgent need. I know we're talking about housing, but I want to make the comparison that centralization of power has not always produced the results that we want. We see that has happened in health care.

Centralization of power is a philosophy and does not empower the general population. Centralization of power does not allow government departments to be nimble and flexible to meet local community needs. Centralization of power can potentially leave people behind.

Personally, I believe a stronger governance model in housing is one that is based in communities where the power is local. This will bring a collective strength to our province, to our region in Cumberland. Housing is local. Housing is physical. More housing is needed in just about every area of the province, I know. My fear with the centralization of power that this bill reflects will result in further weakening of rural communities in Nova Scotia - and rural communities like Cumberland County will be left behind.

Again, I will compare with health. From my understanding of this bill, Bill No. 222, we're going to see four zones set up in the province for housing. We have seen that in health since 2014. Again, it has not produced the results that Nova Scotians need, and Nova Scotians deserve. There is not enough local decision-making. There's simply not enough local input and not enough respect of local knowledge and of the local people.

This bill also makes no reference to homelessness. This is a concern, as there are many people living unsheltered, like I mentioned in my opening comments - living unsheltered in our area and I believe throughout all of Nova Scotia. Lack of affordable housing causing people to live unsheltered is an emergency in this province. Literally tonight and many nights when I am lying home in my own bed, I worry about the people who don't have a bed to be in at the same time.

Like in health care, there is a need to prioritize people with acute disease entities and chronic disease, such as on the Need a Family Practice Registry. Similarly, there is a need to identify those living unsheltered and homeless in our communities to ensure there is an urgent solution in place - literally within the next month.

With regard to Bill No. 222, I do agree that there is a need for a change in the governance model. Consistently, since being elected in 2017, housing needs were not met in my area. For those needing public housing, when my staff or I contacted the local Cobequid Housing Authority offices, we constantly received messages like "There's a two-year wait" or "Nothing can be done."

When seniors contacted me to share their concerns about four years ago due to the lack of maintenance in their public housing building, they were actually chastised, and they were scared to further reach out to me as their MLA, although I will say that I was so encouraged recently after Hurricane Fiona to be visited by two men who live in public housing in Amherst in seniors' housing. They gave me a letter, and I am to believe the minister received a copy of it, signed by all the tenants except for one, highlighting the deficiencies that they'd experienced during and after Hurricane Fiona. I loved that. I love seeing people empowered to communicate their concerns so that we can make things better for them.

The culture of trying to silence people with concerns may work if government is trying to hide problems in the short term, but it doesn't produce positive results in the long run. I've seen a similar culture in health care, and, I might add, it's a very unhealthy workplace culture. When people are silenced and told they cannot contact their elected representative for fear of repercussions, this flies in the face of democratic representation. It flies in the face of democracy, and it's not healthy. We've seen this for years in health care, and we all know that it didn't work. It does not produce a stronger government or communities and people. I am hopeful that this culture will change under this government and under this minister.

Both the Premier and the minister are from rural Nova Scotia. I am confident that they also experienced this unhealthy approach to democracy over the last few years. It doesn't foster the needed communication to actually make the improvements that are needed.

The current governance model that Bill No. 222 strives to change currently has five boards, and the primary function is to decide who gets placed in housing, who gets evicted, which isn't good use of board function. These actions should be staff's or operational staff's responsibilities.

I believe that this bill and the governance structure could be strengthened by further adding a housing coordinator. I've communicated that to the minister and his department previously.

I believe that we could benefit by having a housing coordinator, and certainly in Cumberland County, but I believe having housing coordinators in each county, having 18 housing coordinators would benefit housing and provide that local voice. The housing coordinator could work in structures already in place through provincial rents. I know that's through a different department, but there are already rents set up through the province, or they could work with municipal governments. Or the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing could have individual housing offices in each county connected to the central office.

As I mentioned earlier, lack of housing has been a major issue in my area, especially for the last two years. I've engaged with developers, contractors, landlords, municipal governments, the Town of Amherst and the County of Cumberland, as well as residents to seek more housing to be built and constructed in our area. I've held public meetings and private meetings.

We have several contractors. One of the main messages that I received from them is that there's too much bureaucracy to access funds to increase housing. They highlighted too many municipal bylaws, too many delays, and not all rules or laws make sense, and are often prohibitive to getting work done.

Thankfully, our local mayors of the Town of Amherst and the County of Cumberland did attend a meeting that I held with developers. We've seen some changes since that meeting from the Town of Amherst. For example, developers have been told up until now that they have to build roads and that they have to put up the money for the infrastructure of building the roads to new subdivisions. The banks won't actually finance them that money until the housing is being built.

Thankfully, we've recently seen the Town of Amherst make changes to those bylaws. Most funding in our area is only accessible - also Housing Nova Scotia's funding - by non-profits. In fairness, and with respect to non-profits at least in our area, many non-profits have boards of directors with worthy and ambitious goals but don't always have the time nor the financial or human resources around them to build affordable housing. We have seen that as a barrier in our area. That seems to be where the money is most accessible, but we just don't have the volunteer base with the expertise.

I don't believe that affordable housing should be placed on the backs of volunteers. Make funding more accessible for developers that can turn things around quickly and get the results done. That is what we need to get more housing built and built quickly.

To respond to the need, there are non-profits that are trying to increase affordable housing. In the Town of Amherst, we have the Cumberland YMCA that worked with the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia to build four affordable housing units. We also have a non-profit named Cornerstone, or Cumberland Housing and Homelessness Support Association. They have also joined forces with stakeholders and local residents in the area to get a Winter emergency temporary shelter set up as soon as possible in the Town of Amherst. We're just waiting on the Department of Community Services to give us approval or not on that.

Literally every day, people are waiting with bated breath to see if that funding is going to come through. We have the building, we have the staff, people are dropping off bedding and supplies just about every day, but we are just waiting on that funding piece.

I do have a document I want to table that is a study that's already been done by the team at the Cumberland YMCA. They are actually staff of the Department of Community Services and Affordable Housing Nova Scotia. They have done studies on the housing needs in Cumberland County. I would encourage the people in the minister's office to take a look at this study, because it highlights the needs specifically for Cumberland County and housing.

I should emphasize the need specifically for affordable housing. We need housing for everyone. We've had nurses who have wanted to come to our Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre. Right now, we're 24 nurses short, understaffed at the regional hospital - 22 RNs and two LPNs. We've had to turn some away because they cannot find a place to live, so lack of housing. Lack of affordable housing is definitely an issue.

I want to just mention that from Statistics Canada it showed that Cumberland County has the greatest number of people living below the after-tax low-income measure in the province. We do have the lowest documented after-tax low-income measure in the province of Nova Scotia. I am emphasizing that, Minister - emphasizing the need for improved, affordable housing in our area.

I want to thank the minister and his department for Bill No. 222. I hope that the information I shared today from our area of the province in Cumberland County will be considered. I believe no one should live unsheltered. I believe our society, our world, is only as strong as the weakest and the poorest of all of us. We must choose to act, and act now.

I want the minister to know that he has very willing partners in Cumberland County who want to work with his department. In the past year when we've reached out, because I've had developers, local people from the non-profits, or residents who want to meet with someone from the department, the staff in the minister's department have been really incredible to work with. I'm appreciative of that and look forward to more working together.

THE SPEAKER: I'm not sure if the member tabled everything that she said before. If not, that can be done now, please.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide some closing comments on Bill No. 222 - the Housing Supply and Services Act. This is a significant bill. It's significant because it sets out this government's approach to housing and, in doing so, its approach to the housing crisis.

There's a whole lot hanging on this. I want to say that a lot of things have been said about consolidating so that the ministers have complete control over what happens, and

they are responsible. I will say that the minister could do this without massive consolidation of power. They can modernize it. They can change policy. They can create new management at an arm's length so that it's not impossible to do the work and still get the information.

[7:00 p.m.]

I just want to make that clear, because from what we're hearing with the number of bills that my colleague for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier had spoken to, as well as a number of members across this aisle, we're seeing some concerning things happening with these bills when we talk about a massive consolidation of power.

There are folks all across this province from Yarmouth to Digby to Bridgewater, through the Valley and all across Halifax to Pictou and New Glasgow, Port Hawkesbury and Sydney and all in between who are crunched, stretched, and squeezed by the government's inaction on this file.

There are folks living in their cars, couch-surfing, staying with friends, moving back in with their parents as grown-ups, living in tents, and sleeping in stairwells and lobbies. There are countless people living in inadequate housing - apartments with mould, drafty doors and leaky windows - apartments with not enough room for the people living there.

Lately in Halifax, it feels like every park, ditch, and area of shrubbery has a tent hidden somewhere. There are people who have no idea where they will live when their fixed-term lease is up. There are people waiting to get booted once the weather turns nice so their apartment can be listed on Airbnb.

What's laid out in this bill is very crucial, and I say that because this government will or will not take in the face of an explosion of homelessness and a dramatic increase in average rental costs. All of which did not begin on their watch, but has most certainly drastically accelerated under their watch.

I will say that it did not begin on your watch. We can go back in history. We can talk about all the many, many things that have happened behind this point. I will say this: This is a government sitting today. This is a government that was sitting when they were elected last year. So this is the government that is responsible for what is happening from the time you were elected moving on, no matter what you inherited. This is your government.

I also want to point out that this minister and a number of other people who are sitting across the aisle watched and heard solutions when in Opposition. Now as ministers, they don't look like the passionate opposition in the debates that they had when they were

sitting in Opposition. It doesn't seem like they're here holding themselves accountable for what they were pushing forward.

I want to say that, because I've read Hansard and I've actually watched Legislative Television. I've done my research and there are a lot of things that are being said here that aren't being said now that they're in government. So let me point that out to you.

We have heard from countless Nova Scotians about what this crisis means for them. We have heard from experts at the Law Amendments Committee who told us about the many opportunities to improve this bill, which our caucus attempted to do during the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, which this government ignored and rejected - similar to the number of other amendments that were rejected on a number of bills that were put forward in this sitting.

Because this is such a critical bill and a crucial moment, it is important to set the record straight on a number of myths that we have heard the government repeat since it was elected last year. This is reflected in this overall approach to the housing crisis, including in this bill. Many of these are dangerous myths that do not serve the interests of thousands of Nova Scotians in need of safe, secure, adequate, affordable, accessible housing - housing that is their right, per our country's international obligations.

One myth is it's simply a supply issue. Well, we have heard this government repeat this trickle-down housing myth again and again - the idea that it's simply a housing supply issue, and that if we build more housing stock, affordable housing will magically appear. Certainly, there is a massive shortage of housing across the province of thousands of units, and we need to build a lot of housing to address this issue, but it matters greatly what kind of housing is built and how we protect existing affordable housing and the people who live there.

On one occasion last year, the Premier said, "We want more housing supply. First and foremost, we are focusing on increasing the housing supply because the solution to a housing crisis is more supply . . . the real answer is more housing supply and that's the focus, Mr. Speaker." I'll table that.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing tabled a report just the other day that repeats this fantasy. It says, "Helping Nova Scotians move from renting to owning their first home also assists when making affordable housing available." I'll table that.

First of all, it is incredibly common for landlords to raise the rent by hundreds of dollars between tenants, including when someone leaves on account of purchasing their first home. Second, this government is leaving the fixed-term lease loophole open, which means that more and more people are either being forced out of their homes or forced to sign new leases for drastically increased rents. These are some of the reasons why we have seen a ballooning of the average rental cost in Nova Scotia to more than even in Ontario.

I'll also remind the government of the thousands of Nova Scotians who will never be able to own their own home. We have to create a housing system that works for them too, and that is going to mean a system of rent control and massive investments in non-market housing.

Another myth is that the market will solve the problem. Well, we've heard from this government that the market will solve the problem. The reality is that we need much more than non-market housing. The government has, through tools like the Housing Task Force, doubled down on the approach of building more for-profit housing, and they've given a \$22 million forgivable loan to Clayton Developments to build attainable housing. That hurts my heart to say, because you know how I feel about affordable.

The minister has said the 373 units will hold a designation for 20 years. Rent will be between 60 and 80 per cent of the average market rents for the area, but this does not even necessarily mean that they will be affordable for low- or even middle-income people.

This approach of steamrolling municipal processes to grease the wheels for private developers has been called into question by many, and many of us in here have also called that into question. The government refers to this approach as "cutting the red tape," but this red tape is things like community consultation, environmental approvals, planning checks and balances to ensure that there are adequate services in the area, such as transit, schools, and green space.

The government is also doubling down on its rent supplement approach. These are really helpful, of course, for people who are receiving them. But I will say, I'm not a fan of them, because we don't have a whole lot of housing supply. We have to question whether funnelling public money to private landlords without a permanent asset at the end of the day is a wise use of public funds.

I'm going to give you a little history lesson, because you may not know. My question first is: Is the consolidation in this bill the first step on a path to selling off public housing? The government has not provided clear indication that this is not on the table. So let me give you a little breakdown. People who have lived in public housing for many years have always heard the rumblings of the housing stock or the public housing being sold off. As we know, if you're very familiar with public housing, a lot of it is in a prime location or prime property area that has been talked about for many years.

I can speak about Halifax Needham, because I know for a fact that the areas in which public housing is now housed are in a prime location, which is also at risk of continuing to be gentrified. I want to put that out there because I need you to understand that I'm going to talk about a public housing unit right now.

Before Mulgrave Park was built, the land was occupied by a military barracks in the Second World War and later by emergency shelters for people displaced by slum

clearance in the city. Emergency shelters were common throughout the 1950s, since a housing shortage had led to overcrowding and slum conditions.

In 1949, the public housing authority operated over 1,400 low-rent units across the city. Throughout the 1950s, the City of Halifax sold many of these properties, started to regulate minimum housing standards, and began to work to displace whole neighbourhoods for new infrastructure projects. These combined forces reduced the low-rent high housing stock to less than half, despite the 10 per cent increase in population over that decade.

I'm really feeling a cycle right now. It feels like this is now and not in 1950.

People have outlined the short-sightedness of the city's wrecking ball approach to development and the cycle of displacement. By 1959, Halifax was already in need of shelter for 1,330 families, not including the 1,800 people about to be displaced by the clearance of the Jacob Street area, which if you know your history, is right there where the Trade Centre is. That was also considered slum. Halifax was in a huge housing crisis in the 1950s. The redevelopment of the Jacob Street area and the construction of Mulgrave Park were intended to finish at the same time.

We hear this. We're talking about timelines, right? We're going to build some supply. It's going to take a little bit of time. Well, while people are waiting for supply to be built, let's just hear what happens when they're waiting.

At the same time to ensure families were not left without shelter - in reality, the projects operated on very different timelines. While in 1958, architects were brainstorming plans for Mulgrave Park, the City of Halifax had already begun to expropriate and board up housing on the Jacob Street area. It is unclear when demolitions began, but by 1962, the whole neighbourhood sat bare. Over the course of those years, thousands of people were left without homes despite what they were promised.

Part of Mulgrave Park opened up in 1961, but the development wasn't fully finished until 1963, five years after demolitions began. Residents from other demolished neighbourhoods, including Maitland Street, which is in my riding as well, and Spring Garden Road, which is my colleague's riding, were offered housing at Mulgrave Park.

The Mulgrave Park development only put a small dent in the amount of low-rent housing units needed for the thousands displaced by slum clearance. I say this because public housing was built in 1961. We are in 2022. Nothing has been built since then. I can say that about Halifax Needham.

I can say that if at that time they were having issues, and there's clearly a similarity to what's happening, we really need to wake up and understand that what we're doing is probably repeating a cycle that shouldn't be repeated.

There's also nothing in this bill to explicitly dispel the looming rumours that the government is intending to sell off public housing. This may seem like an enticing idea after decades of investment in the housing stock and mounting deferred maintenance.

Public housing is doomed to be a flawed system when the assets aren't invested in or kept up for decades. B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario have all divested from public housing, a move that has been slammed by provincial Auditors Generals and experts, who find that the move does not produce new affordable housing.

We have seen here in Nova Scotia how years of deferred maintenance has degraded the quality of our public housing stock and minimized its value for future generations. The private sector has a big role to play in solving the housing crisis but know that we need a strong and vibrant non-market housing sector to help equalize and stabilize the cost and quality of housing available. Unfortunately, it appears that this government is going to let private interests run rickshaw over the housing market.

The myth that I say homelessness is a choice or personal failure - first, I just want to talk about some of the comments we heard from the government side in this sitting on the issue of homelessness. As my colleague mentioned, homelessness plays a huge role when we talk about housing.

On October 14th, the Minister of Community Services said: "I want to reassure everyone, when we speak about that point-in-time count - as the member indicated, there were 500-some on the list. Those individuals aren't homeless. Those individuals are in shelters. They're being cared for . . . They are being cared for if they want to be. My point is that we will continue to find them permanent housing, but they are being looked after right now if they want to be."

Now, the minister has since apologized and clarified those comments, and I want to recognize that she has done so. However, when she clarified her comments, she did not acknowledge the fact that it is near-impossible to find someone a shelter bed right now, and that more and more organizations are resorting to giving out tents to people to live in this Winter. Literally, a couple of weeks. Supportive housing programs are full. If you call them - and as an MLA, we get calls every single day about this - if you call them, there is no answer. If you go to their office, there is no answer. I told you about my CA a little while ago. Aisha does go to people's doors, checks in, does all that good stuff, so I know for a fact it is not happening.

She also did not acknowledge or retract the sentiment that people are being cared for if they want to be. The idea that people in the street are there because they want to be flies in the face of everything we know about homelessness and about the state of our housing situation right now. The suggestion that homelessness is some kind of choice or as a result of personal failings is really alarming. For example, we heard about a gentleman in his 60s who has recently started sleeping in his truck after losing his housing. This is

one of countless stories that I know all of us have, but government repeats the refrain that there are many reasons why people become homeless.

[7:15 p.m.]

I want to be very clear that the main reason people are homeless is because they don't have a home, and the reason they don't have a home is in large part because of this government's presiding over an accelerated housing crisis over the last 14 months. For the government to assert that homelessness is anything but this while not addressing head-on the epidemic of renovictions, implementing a permanent system of rent control, and ensuring wide access to adequate and affordable housing is a sloughing of responsibility, not to mention that the list of reasons that the government references for why people are finding themselves homeless - income, addictions, mental health struggles, residential tenancies issues - is squarely within the responsibility of this government.

I will quote the experts at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on this aspect of the bill: "A third root of our housing and homelessness crisis is the gaps in our social safety net" - which we spoke about earlier -

"that have left many Nova Scotians living in deep poverty, whether because the income supports provided to them by the government are intentionally below the poverty line, or because labour laws including the regulated minimum wage leave people without sufficient income. On the other side of the equation, people are struggling because the cost of other essentials needed to live and work, including, food, utilities, childcare, health care, and postsecondary education, are taking up more of household budgets"

with little government action to address those costs, and I just tabled that.

Let's be clear - high rents and low incomes are the perfect storm for the current homelessness crisis, and both are well within the control of the government. This myth is one of the reasons why it's so critical that this government recognize housing as a human right. We've talked about the social safety nets. We've talked about how this government could put forward some solutions to make sure that people don't experience this. And we've heard from this government the many supports and programs and targeted supports that they put forward. Not going to dismiss that, absolutely great job. Thanks so much for that. Nova Scotians are really happy, but not all Nova Scotians can qualify for any of those things. Not all Nova Scotians fit under that bracket. That's why we get calls as MLAs, because we are their last resort to getting answers from this government.

Another myth: Rent control doesn't work. Well, people always mistake rent control for rent cap, and that's untrue as well. Another myth: that permanent rent control doesn't

work. We've seen this myth, for example, in the following statement from the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services:

“Let me be clear, Mx. Speaker, that the rent cap we are introducing is not rent control. Rent control and rent cap are being tossed around in the media and by Opposition parties. Again, we are not in favour of rent control. Rent control is not the answer. The interim rent cap is a bridge to get us to a place with more availability, which will lead to more affordability.”

Opponents of rent control, such as the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services, often purport that rent control stymies growth in housing sectors, but this is not a fact borne out of evidence. We see how rent control works in Toronto, in Vancouver - large cities. We also see that it has not reduced housing construction in those cities. We know that. Growth is not stymied in these cities. In fact, they remain vibrant places for the very reason that all different kinds of people can afford to remain there. We should want this for Nova Scotia too.

Some form of rent control exists in Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and British Columbia. It's time for Nova Scotia to have a rent control regime as well. Opponents will say that rent control means landlords won't be able to afford to make improvements to their units and the quality of housing stock will deteriorate. In fact, most versions of rent control, such as the framework that has been introduced by our caucus, allows for an annual allowable rent increase, usually tied to the CPI. Rents do still rise under rent control, just at a steadier and more predictable rate.

It also allows for rent increases above the annual limit in the case of necessary renovations or major repairs. It also allows for above-limit increases in the case of exceptional increases on property taxes, utilities, or other expenses. This is not the case under the current government's rent cap, which is set to expire next year.

I want to say this, and I want to bring this up because we've talked at length a number of times on a number of bills in this House: I know that this is the third reading, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention how sometimes we can turn back the hands of time and actually pull things back to take a good look at it, think about it, do some consultation, just really slow the roll, right?

I want to bring up an article here that in the Spring - we were all here in the Spring sitting - I want to talk about the non-resident property tax and how, when we sat in Law Amendments Committee, we heard from lots of people who came forward, from rural areas in particular. They talked about how it wasn't a good idea, how it was a bad bill, how it's affecting the area where they live and where they sometimes reside.

I want to mention this because it triggered something for me. I'm going to read from this. It says on May 5th, the Nova Scotia Premier "announced Thursday the government will not proceed with a planned property tax increase for non-resident property owners." We had already put a bill forward and then we realized, or this government realized, that it wasn't a good idea.

The Nova Scotia government has scrapped a plan - scrapped, that's a good word - a plan to increase taxes for non-resident property owners. I'm going to quote from the Premier here: "My intention all along, and the intentions of our government all along, were to improve home affordability. That was never meant to be at odds with our core value, the core value of our government, the core value of our province, which is being more welcoming. So today I will put my personal pride to the side" and I'll continue on later.

This was in the Spring budget. "The news of the new taxes was met with criticism from seasonal residents and municipalities. On Tuesday [the Premier] announced changes that would see the property tax amount vary depending on the value of the property. But on Thursday he announced the non-resident property tax will be completely removed."

How wonderful. I thought that was absolutely wonderful because there was a lot of debate in Law Amendments Committee about how this was a bad idea, not a good look for this province.

I want to say the Premier said that the "tweaks" he announced Tuesday were to make the policy more fair, but as time went on, he understood that there was a broader risk. I wonder what that could have been? "I believe the risk of reputational damage to Nova Scotia is becoming more and more real, and it's something I'm not willing to accept. So we'll find another way to address the housing issue."

I'm just going to read a reaction from one of the investors here. An investor said that the tax had him considering pulling up stakes, moving back, where he has owned property for about 30 years. He said he was going to get up and take all of his money investment out of Nova Scotia. Then after he heard the decision on the Thursday, "It's wonderful in a democracy that our elected officials are responsive to citizens when they are in a position to express their discomfort with a policy change. So I'm delighted that the premier and his government listened to us."

I'm going to leave this in the hands so that this can be tabled, but I wanted to bring that back because there are a lot of things to be said about that. This ties right in with housing.

Seasonal residents have articulated in many articles that that tax would not address those concerns, and that the tax resulted in many business decisions being made that negatively impact the economy in the immediate and long term.

A company that was planning to build a \$20 million manufacturing plant in Lunenburg has shelved its plans. Another developer who had already invested millions in the redevelopment of Cape Smokey states that the new tax regime has put in jeopardy hundreds of millions of dollars in a housing development in rural Cape Breton that would be marketed to international investors.

I could go on and on, but I think you get the gist. When we talk about what's important and people speaking and doing the right thing, I struggle with that. We were just in this House yesterday and there were people from community in here. There were people saying: This is not a really good idea. We don't support this. There are a number of pieces that are on the table today or have been on the table since we've been sitting, that were not good ideas. People have spoken. So I was just trying to piece those things together.

The thing that struck me the most was the fact that we can remove things when it comes down to million-dollar investments and when it comes down to developments that are being built and created in spaces of rural areas that could possibly help their economy. Absolutely. I agree with that.

But when it comes to African Nova Scotian communities and people coming in here and talking about how this isn't a good idea because it takes away general wealth and legacy, this particular bill still stays on the table. So I'm really thrown for a loop with that.

I want to say this is concerning. It seems like there's not a fairness when it comes to these decisions, when it comes to the bills that are being put forward. I want to say that so many people in this province need us to get this bill right. They need us. They depend on us, and many parts of this bill do not even include people's voices - first voice, local voices. As we know, the absorbing or the consolidation of this into a Crown corporation loses those voices by removing those boards.

I want to say that we had people here yesterday for a bill that was passed - clearly, because this government has a majority - but I would argue that speaking Nova Scotians' truth here on this floor is far from grumblings, as the Premier spoke to earlier today, but purely lived realities.

I'm sorry if some of the things that we say in here may seem a bit - may touch a nerve, but unfortunately, these are people's issues. These are Nova Scotians' problems. These are Nova Scotians' struggles that we stand here and talk about. If you don't like hearing them, maybe you're not in the right position.

There was also a comment talking about people getting in the way of building housing. It was mentioned earlier today by my colleague for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. That also struck a piece to me, because I'm saying, people getting in the way of building housing? What people? What people? I mean, on this end, it could be homeless people. On

this end, it could be low-income people. On my end, I feel like that's a direct relation to the African Nova Scotian communities that we heard here yesterday.

[7:30 p.m.]

I also want to remind everyone that when we sit in here, we talk about a number of things, but we also have to remember whom we serve. It's hard to believe this government's actions, which don't follow process, lack transparency, consultation, and communication. As my colleague has said, new political governance, which is a massive consolidation of power - hands on the lever, we heard that a lot today - complete control and influence and favouritism. These sweeping changes with no explanation of why reduce transparency and public input.

I'm sorry if - no, I'm not sorry, excuse me if we don't vote on your behalf, because we don't agree. There are a lot of things that are missing that we are trying to tell you over here to figure this out. This is not a bill for just one person. This is a bill for the province of Nova Scotia.

There are so many people who need us to build a fair housing system that protects tenants, builds accessible and affordable adequate housing, that protects and invests in our public housing stock, that has no room for forced evictions, that recognizes a right to housing, involves experts and people with lived experiences of homelessness in the work that builds a vibrant, non-market housing sector with culturally appropriate housing, close to services and amenities. This bill ain't it.

I'm only going to say this last bit, just because I think it's really important for this government to know, because some of you are actually new. When you consolidate and you put things together and you remove boards, it's probably not a good idea because now luckily you - I mean luckily the members - are going to receive a flood of phone calls. It's going to be the same thing that I said when I was on the school board, and I went to see a lot of members about disbanding and dissolving boards.

Now the voices that you will be hearing are of the people whom it is going to be affecting the most. It is no longer going to be us having to funnel that information to try to figure it out. No, that's going to go directly to the minister who is in charge.

I want to say, and I mean really, you could just put their phone number up and everybody would know. I will say this: I want to caution this government that what you reap is what you sow. What you get is what you are going to get.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I'd like to add a few comments to the introductory comments that have been given for our party by the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

I'll also say a few things in support of the position that has been outlined by our party's spokesperson on housing, the member for Halifax Needham.

I'd like to begin by placing before the House the situations of three people of whom I am aware: A senior man with a physical disability who is living in his car who has applied for priority access with Metro Regional Housing and has had the application for emergency housing declined; a senior couple who today are housed in a hotel. The husband at this moment, however, has been in the hospital and he can't be released to home because the hotel home where they are will not receive a person in his recuperating condition; a senior man who lives in a shelter and has a medical condition that it is difficult for him to properly attend to in a shelter and, as a result, he quite frequently ends up at the emergency room because he has contracted infections.

I think in these moments with this legislation before us, the government should deeply consider the situations of these people, and the many people whose situations are parallel to theirs. It is reflected in the shaking statistics that our party brought forward from the beginning of this session about the fact that in the HRM, of those who say this is the first time they've ever been homeless in their lives, 26 per cent are over the age of 60. In that last count of the homeless in the city, where something in the area of 500 or 600 people were counted, 87 of them were senior citizens.

For all these people, there is one thing that is profoundly helpful - one thing that is deeply constructive and necessary - and that is rent geared to income, specifically the ability to have your rent geared to 30 per cent of what you're bringing in. This is the definition of affordable housing, and it's also the system that we have in Nova Scotia for our public housing, our seniors' housing in the province.

Rent geared to income - this is really the holy grail of financial viability. It's the holy grail of life viability for so many people, particularly seniors in Nova Scotia. It's especially for those seniors who are over the age of seniors' housing eligibility and therefore eligible for seniors' housing, but still not yet to the age where they might qualify for Canada Pension and the supplement, for whom rent geared to income is a positive godsend.

How many people over the years - certainly I have been in contact with - have lived hanging on by their fingernails, waiting until they could get that call that they were going to be able to get into a seniors' apartment, where they would have 70 per cent of their income left over for other things? We have all surely known people who, when they got that call, and rent geared to income became a part of their life for the first time in many years, were able to get glasses with the right prescription. Once they got rent geared to income, you noticed shortly after that they had dentures. Once they got that rent geared to income, maybe they got a hearing aid.

Therefore, it's a deeply troubling thing for people in these kinds of situations of whom I've spoken - the thousands of people in parallel situations in the province. When we talk to them about seniors' public rent geared to income housing, we tell them that the trouble is the wait list is pretty near three years. They say, three years? Why is that? Well, that's because there are thousands of people ahead of you in the line. Oh my heavens. Where does that hope stand for me - thousands of people on the list, three years?

A couple of things before us are very hurtful. It is hurtful that in the government's present housing program, there's no place for adding the rent-geared-to-income public seniors' housing as we have it. It is saving the lives of so many people in the province. That could eliminate this great barrier to what's needed for people, those 3,000 and that wait-list. That's hurtful.

It's very hurtful that the government, when it has looked all across this landscape of housing-related suffering, has decided that the thing in their view that's called for from them - the improvement in their view that's required from them, the commanding urgency of the situation that requires making legislation and bringing it before the Legislature in the Province of Nova Scotia - is to reorganize the internal bureaucratic structure of public housing and seniors' housing in the province.

So many things are urgently needed by the people who are on this waiting list. So many things are needed by the thousands of people for whom this wonderful principle - rent geared to income - is intended. We have brought forward some of these things as this piece of legislation has been debated. We have debated, for example, that there ought to be a preamble here speaking about the importance of housing as a human right - suggesting that government should be legislatively required to invest systematically in bringing more rent geared to income to the people of the province.

These interventions we've made have not been successful in this legislation, because they have been voted down. There are other things relatedly that are required that we have spoken about in other parts of the discussion on this and related issues in this legislative session. There are things - as our housing spokesperson has said - like a system of permanent rent control, the reinstatement of the ban on renovations, tightening up the loopholes around fixed-term leases so that landlords are no longer able to use them to undermine the rent cap.

Nowhere has anyone in acute housing need in the province - and there are so many thousands of them - said: Here's the thing that's called for - if only my government would centralize the administration of housing authorities in my province.

There is such a thing in life as people who are not very effective because they direct their attention and their efforts to those things that are easy. Then they overfocus and they overfunction on them. The government is overfunctioning on the very easy here - administrative reorganizing - as though they feel compelled to do something on public

seniors' housing but don't have what is required to deal with the real demands and challenges of the situation. What a great distance one would have to be from the daily pain of the housing emergency to think that this bill, in the world of public seniors' housing, is the thing that from the Government of Nova Scotia is needed.

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: I do want to make a few comments before I start to address some of the concerns that have been mentioned. I'll try to focus just on the concerns related to this bill. I want to acknowledge that this is a profound bill from my department. I have one individual in the department who has been there a long time who is just grinning that we are starting to delve into and work at public housing, and deal with some of the issues the Auditor General has identified, but staff in the department have known - have been there for a long, long time.

My staff have been energized by this. This bill profoundly affects our staff - the staff of the five housing authorities - the reorganization. I hope the 18,000 people in public housing will receive, because of it, more consistent, more uniform service. I want to say thank you to all the people in the department who worked so hard on putting this together. There was a lot of legal advice. This took a long time to put together. It has been worked on for quite a while.

I want to let you know that the Auditor General's Report - which I would encourage you to read, and I will table it after I'm done talking about it - was a guide for us. There are a number of things in the Auditor General's Report that you need to know about public housing. As I unpack some of them, some of the concerns that you've raised will be addressed. The Auditor General had 25 key findings and observations. The first category of seven of them was governance and oversight severely lacking in the delivery of public housing.

This Auditor General's Report is really an indictment of the management of public housing for a long time. Point 1.19: Governance structure a known issue that needs to be addressed. It was known. Our department knew it. We knew it in the department, but the reality was that there wasn't the appetite to address it. The fact is that we're in a housing crisis. We recognize that. That provides the impetus to do it. Prior to being in a housing crisis, I think the model for previous governments was: no bad news, no bad news stories, so don't address it. That's my observation, and I think that's what was happening.

Another point, Point 1.31: Department management failing to hold regional housing authorities accountable. Point 1.33: Public housing policies are not regularly reviewed and updated and contain gaps.

[7:45 p.m.]

Point 138: Regional Housing Authority Boards have a limited role in providing oversight, and the reality is the boards of our five regional housing authorities were mainly there to sign off on people coming and going. One of the consequences of that was if the board met one Tuesday night a month, let's say, if there was a recommendation for a family to move into a unit that happened to come in on Wednesday while it waited a whole month for the board to meet again. In reality, the boards almost always - in reality, there's much more that I could say, but I have a little note, "Please wrap it up." (Laughter) I'll give the broad categories.

I do want to address homelessness. I'm sorry, I've just got to say a few more things. People have mentioned homelessness. One of my great surprises when I became minister and really started delving into this was homelessness was not a criterion to get into public housing. That might sound bizarre to hear, but that's the truth. Homelessness was not one of the criteria to get into public housing. That has changed, okay? When we look at the criteria of prioritizing the list, one of the issues we had was vacant units regularly exceeded the 60-day limit. They were months and months; it was four or five months. We are working on that really hard. We're working on that really hard to get that down below the 60-day limit.

Another issue was continued eligibility of tenants not adequately managed to maximize potential use of housing units. That shows up in at least three different ways. One way was that we had people - single people living in four/five bedroom units. That issue alone can take 1,500 people off this list if we deal with it.

The reason it was not being dealt with was because the five housing authorities did not all follow the policy. They implemented the policies as they saw fit. Those five housing authorities were acting virtually independently, and that is one of the reasons why I was not satisfied as minister just to go put that off in somebody else's hands. I will answer to the questions about public housing in the Legislature here, and future ministers will. We want - I want - a chain of accountability of our democratic process.

Which housing authority CEO ever answered a question? Do you even know who they are? They ran these things quite independently in terms of how they implemented these policies. This is a reason why we're doing it this way.

Another issue was that status - and this is a little bit mind-boggling to me, but this is what it is - status of tenant home ownership after entering public housing not accessed. In other words, there's a small number of people in public housing who still own a house. Income verification not completed to recalculate rent for lease renewals. There's another issue of public housing. It might - it's RGI, but sometimes the actual verifications weren't done. We know that sometimes the income goes up in a very small number of cases. That's

not being done. Things like that need to be addressed. Also, tenant engagement initiatives not effective.

I do want to respect my House Leader, I do. (Laughter) There's much more that I could say about this, but I move we close debate on Bill No. 222.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 222.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 230.

Bill No. 230 - Provincial Lichen Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 230, the Provincial Lichen Act, now be read a third time and do pass.

I hope this is the moment that everyone in the House has been waiting for because I know there are many lichen enthusiasts across the province who were also waiting for this particular moment. They have been patient. They have asked me to come forward and bring this bill forward.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to recognize two of those enthusiasts who are, of course, members of my riding of Digby-Annapolis. I have to recognize and thank Jonathan Riley, the Trails and Open Spaces Coordinator for the Municipality of Digby; and of course Harold Clapp. They were the two who brought this forward, and I said that I would do my part to make sure that this got passed.

We also know that Nova Scotia voted for the Blue Felt Lichen to be the provincial species for Nova Scotia. It was part of a national campaign so that each province and territory would identify a species for their province or territory.

We know that Nova Scotia is a leader, and we are a leader in many different ways. Now, by identifying and declaring the Blue Felt Lichen as the provincial species, we'll be a leader once again. We'll be the first jurisdiction in Canada to designate an official lichen. We may be the second jurisdiction in the world, after California. I know that many other jurisdictions will follow our lead.

Mr. Speaker, once the Blue Felt Lichen is declared, it will join a list of other official symbols for Nova Scotia. The floral emblem, the mayflower, was designated in 1901; the Nova Scotia Tartan, designated in 1963; the tree, the red spruce, designated in 1988; the bird is the osprey, designated in 1994; the dog, the Nova Scotia Duck Toller, designated in 1995; the fruit, the blueberry, designated in 1996; the mineral, stilbite, designated in 1999; the gemstone is agate, designated in 1999; the fossil, the Hylonomus lyelli, designated in 2002; the fish, the brook trout, designated in 2006; the horse is the Sable Island horse, designated in 2008, and the soil is the Queens Soil Series designated in 2008.

Now I am very proud that the Blue Felt Lichen will join this very impressive list. With those few words I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be a Debbie Downer. I am excited about this designation of the Blue Felt Lichen, but I seriously want to reiterate some of my comments from second reading which is that the Blue Felt Lichen, if you do your research on it, folks, is vulnerable to climate change in particular.

If we're going to take the time and spend time being excited about a lichen, which I am - I'm likin' the lichen - we need to actually take a lot more time to protect the lichen. We need to have real action on climate change, so I look forward to a climate change plan any day now.

THE SPEAKER: If I recognize the member, it is to close debate on the bill.

The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

HON. JILL BALSER: I thank the member opposite for her remarks and comments. We hear them loud and clear. We care about the Blue Felt Lichen too, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that everyone in this House is now going to have a deeper appreciation for all lichen species.

To close, I would like to quote Jonathan Riley once again: “The Blue Felt’s dependence on humid air from the ocean and its rich blue colour make it a great symbol for the maritime province, Canada’s Ocean Playground.”

I move to close debate on Bill No. 230, the Provincial Lichen Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 230.

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 the order of business, Private and Local Bills for Third Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 205.

Bill No. 205 - St. Francis Xavier University Act (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I now move third reading of Bill No. 205, An Act to Amend Chapter 29 of the Acts of 2014, the St. Francis Xavier University Act.

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

The honourable member for Antigonish. (Interruption)

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Yes, a whole speech. As an alumna, Mr. Speaker - no, but honestly - I now move to close debate on Bill No. 205.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 205.

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, I ask for unanimous consent to waive Committee of the Whole House on Bills for Bill No. 239 and for it to proceed directly to third reading.

THE SPEAKER: There is a request for unanimous consent.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 239.

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I now move third reading of Bill No. 239.

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

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I just want to thank everyone. This amendment to the bill will allow the club to receive charitable status and will help ensure the club continues to be open for years to come.

I now move to close debate on Bill No. 239.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 239.

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 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. 208.

Bill No. 208 - Environment Act (amended).

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

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 208 be read a third time and do pass.

Bill No. 208, amendments to the Environment Act, will protect the environment. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will hold large emitters accountable. It will protect ratepayers. I look forward to the comments from colleagues.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: When Bill No. 208 passes, home heating and gas will go up in this province come January. Make no mistake. I want to be clear about this. Our provincial government, with this bill passing, will trigger Part 1 of the federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. There are two parts to the Act. Part 1 imposes a fuel charge on fuel producers and distributors. Part 2 introduces what this bill does: an output-based pricing system, OBPS, for large industrial emitters.

I'm quoting from the Supreme Court of Canada decision that was made last year, which the Leader of the Official Opposition referenced in Question Period and the Premier admitted as being a law in the country now. I will table it. But it goes on to talk about how at least one part of the Act - which is the imposing of the fuel charge, the gas tax - applies in New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, P.E.I., Nunavut, and Yukon. Guess which provinces it does not apply to? Nova Scotia and Quebec, because we had a system. We still have a system today - a cap and trade system - until this bill gets engrossed.

Now the status quo that we have here with cap and trade is compliant with the Pan-Canadian Framework that I tabled in second reading. This government has not stood up for Nova Scotians, despite the rhetoric that we hear from the Premier and the minister.

[8:00 p.m.]

The law that they're passing tonight will raise gas prices, diesel prices, and natural gas and propane in this province. That's indisputable. I made that assertion in second reading and challenged the minister to prove me wrong. I haven't heard anything in debate to do so.

The government says that Ottawa has a decision to make. But there's legislation, there's law in the country, that spells it out. There's no decision to make. In fact, the federal government would be against the law if they did not impose what is in their legislation. Their only option would be to rescind the Act and rescind the whole carbon-pricing plan - rescind the whole Pan-Canadian Framework - which is how the country meets its climate change goals from Paris.

I've tried to table that agreement. I've tried to spell that out. I've tried to explain the three options: the broad-based carbon tax, which B.C. has - so let's discount that option. We can all agree that nobody wants that full carbon tax. The other options are cap and trade and then what this government is proposing, which is the hybrid system of performance-based standards plus the fuel charge - the gas tax. The PC gas tax that's coming to Nova Scotia.

So let's look at those two options, just so that we're clear tonight. Right now, the provincial Liberal position - which is compliant, otherwise we'd have the backstop now in the carbon tax - is commensurate with \$50 per tonne carbon pricing, 1 cent per litre.

I want to table our plan - happens to be made out of copper. It says, "One cent 1978 Canada" on this document. The penny. It's hard to come by these days. I'll table that document. That's juxtaposed with the government plan, where they have to comply with \$65 a tonne, and that's the federal carbon requirement. The new plan - and I'll table 10 documents here - pennies, which is what every Nova Scotian will have applied to them at the pump and on their home heating. I'll table those 10 pennies so that the members can look at that.

Whether it's seniors, people in rural communities, farmers, and fishers who depend on purchasing motor fuel, diesel, propane - every single Nova Scotian whom the provincial Liberal government has saved 10 cents a litre for the last five years will now start paying 10 cents a litre because of this government and their refusal to act in the best interests of Nova Scotians.

The saddest part about this is our leveraging position is now vaporized. We should have started the negotiating with where we are today - the 1 cent per litre at the pump.

How can the government explain to Nova Scotians - and I look forward to this in January - that everywhere else in the country, their costs at the pump are in fact at 6-point-

something cents a litre, and in Nova Scotia it's 1 cent a litre. How can they explain to Nova Scotians that they're going to start paying 10 cents a litre like the rest of the country - a 10 cent increase? How does that compute? How is that fair? Where was our strong negotiating position? Part of it was because our power rates were the highest in the country. Last time I looked, they're still quite high. They're not lower. We still have that strong negotiating position that this government refuses to act on.

This bill does less for the environment and will cost Nova Scotians more. They're eliminating the Green Fund, the kind of funding that just in Committee of the Whole House on Bills the Minister of Community Services bragged about the \$100 million that has been spent on climate change initiatives - all that directly from the Green Fund, which was part of the cap and trade legislation that that party voted against. If that party was in government during the time of the agreement, we would be just like every other province with 6 cents or 7 cents a litre right now at the pump. It's pretty clear. They made the same arguments then.

They admitted today - the Premier admitted today - that they're fighting a losing battle. Actually, the battle has already been lost, and I will table that now, with the Supreme Court of Canada upholding the constitutionality of the federal carbon pricing program. That's what makes this bad.

I think the member for Halifax Atlantic had it right when he talked about the propensity of it growing to maybe 2 cents or 3 cents if we negotiated. They didn't want to wear any of that. Instead, they're putting politics first so that they can blame the 10-cents-a-litre increase that's coming on a different level of government. That's not acting in the public interest. That's not what a government does. That might be what an Opposition party does, but this party's in government now. You're elected to govern. You don't govern to get elected. I think that's what this government is doing.

They have a duplicitous position here. To the public, they're saying they're against carbon tax, but by passing this legislation, they're choosing a hybrid system which increases gas, diesel, propane, and natural gas. They haven't said what rebates Nova Scotians are going to get or if there is a rebate. They haven't said if they're even asking for an exemption, which Newfoundland had for their home heating. Why can't they explain that in any reading of this legislation?

I'll just end with a quote from someone I think the Premier admires. Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister, said in 1984 to John Turner: "You had an option, sir."

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to begin with a quote. "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, that I am meek and gentle with these butchers!" William Shakespeare.

It is a beautiful quote about war, actually, but it speaks, I think, volumes to where we are with what's going on with protecting the environment in this province. Things are bad, Mr. Speaker. Again, that can be Nelly Naysaying or Debbie Downer or whatever, but it's true.

We need to act very quickly if we are going to avoid the worst consequences of the warming of the planet. Part of acting is making sure that when we're putting policies in place, they make sense, and they help the environment but also make sure that life is still livable for the people of the province. I have said lots of stuff on climate policy lately and about how we're waiting for our climate plan. We're still waiting.

I want to speak specifically to this bill tonight. As I have spoken about it in second reading and Committee of the Whole House on Bills, I have said it's half a hybrid plan. It's not a plan. It's not really anything that this government is presenting us with and it's really disappointing.

I'll reiterate that when the minister called a press conference in August to announce his amazing plan that was going to go forward to the federal government, which the federal government asked for because there's a legislative need to price carbon, the plan was: Well, we've got great targets and we've got all this great stuff happening and we're going to reduce carbon emissions by 17 per cent, where the carbon tax will only reduce it by 2 per cent - blah blah blah blah. But it's not a plan, Mr. Speaker. Of course - surprise, surprise - the federal government rejected it.

Then there's another press conference. The minister comes back and says, okay, now we have this other plan, since the other plan was rejected. The other plan is the Output-Based Pricing System for large emitters and nothing for anything else besides a federally imposed carbon tax. There's no made-in-Nova Scotia solution. There's no plan that comes from Nova Scotia.

Then the minister and the government are befuddled as to why this carbon tax is coming to Nova Scotia. The rhetoric is that it's a Liberal carbon tax. That's true because the Liberals are in government at the federal level. We know what the government is trying to do when they call it a "Liberal carbon tax." The fact is that it is a made-in-Nova-Scotia PC carbon tax because this PC government did nothing, offered no alternative.

The federal government's carbon reduction requirements allowed provincial governments ample time to put together a plan that aligned both with the requirements and the circumstances of their province. We've seen other provinces adapt to this. They have plans that put programming in place to help people reduce their bills.

Instead, this government stalled and avoided their obligation. In a shallow attempt to save face, the government did not put forward a plan to implement the carbon reduction

requirements. Ironically, experts have shown that this move will be more expensive to Nova Scotians. All the while, again the rhetoric is: Blame the others.

Earlier in the opening comments, the minister talked about how this bill will protect ratepayers. Honest to God, I am trying to figure out how that is possible. We put forward an amendment in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills to try to protect Nova Scotians from some of the increases in costs which would have prevented Nova Scotia Power, one of the large emitters that this bill actually does apply to, from passing along costs and penalties associated with the bill to the customers.

It would have seen Nova Scotia Power actually take responsibility for its environmental impact and obligations under the law, but this government voted down that amendment. So I'm stymied. I can't figure out how this bill is protecting ratepayers. Despite the Progressive Conservatives claiming their concerns are in energy affordability, and using these empty concerns to avoid co-operating with other levels of government on carbon pricing, they voted the amendment down.

The bill has no language that protects everyday Nova Scotians. While this is a big concern of ours, what is more jarring is what the bill does not contain.

As I stated during second reading, it is clear from this government that they want Nova Scotians to think that it is an either-or situation. They can either afford their bills or they can tackle the climate crisis.

We have put forward many ways that this government could address carbon emissions, things that could have been proposed in the plan to the federal government to help keep pricing of carbon manageable for households. We have asked this government for a comprehensive heat pump program. We haven't seen any action on that.

As I said, the bill is a half measure and one that is the product of a government that has stalled and dragged its heels. The government's tantrum about the carbon tax lies in a falsity that we cannot have both affordability and action on climate change, and we know that this is false. We've seen other provinces do it, but doing it requires co-operation with federal counterparts. This government needs to go to the table with the federal government and make a deal. We don't know for sure, but it seems to me that this government is refusing to do that.

This is some of the reason why our caucus has been talking for years about the need for massive investments in energy efficiency, in programs that lower people's bills and tackle climate change. In order to meet our climate goals and help people afford to heat their homes, we need to retrofit every single home in the province, but we have no plans from the government to do this. We also need a performance-based regulation system for Nova Scotia Power that ties its profits to environmental performance and reliability. It is simply disingenuous for this government to act shocked and surprised that the federal

government do what they've said they're going to do for years and ask for a plan to price carbon and tackle the climate crisis.

[8:15 p.m.]

Because this government has refused to engage in this co-operative process and did not submit an adequate carbon-pricing system, Nova Scotians will instead be subject to the federal system, one which does not account for the unique needs and realities of our province. Because of our high reliance on carbon-heavy sources of electricity and heating, the rebates for residents in other provinces which have been subject to the federal carbon pricing will not be sufficient here.

Dalhousie professor Larry Hughes has argued that there are other ways the government could propose to regulate our province's carbon usage. As our main emission sources are heating and transportation, Hughes suggested more comprehensive energy-efficiency programs and home retrofitting to reduce carbon consumption, but all of this requires that this government has done their homework.

On top of refusing to come up with a plan, the government also has the position that they should be allowed to keep the revenues from the carbon tax. Now this is something that the minister said in that second press conference - oh yes, we'll get those revenues. Since that conversation, as far as I can tell, we have not heard anything about that. Is the government getting the revenue from the carbon tax, or is it not? If it is, what is it planning to do with it? Will it come back to Nova Scotians in the form of rebates? Will it go directly into the efficiency fund, or whatever the new Green Fund is called? What is going to happen with that money? Or, in fact, are we just not hearing about it because it is not going to be managed by the provincial government and will, in fact, be managed by the federal government?

It would be really good to know if, when our prices for oil and gas go up in January, we're actually going to see rebates on those. What is happening?

In any case, the idea that the provinces have control over the rebates is not the arrangement in most other provinces. It doesn't seem that this government is operating from a point of view that is informed by the reality of the situation at hand. This government knew this was coming all along. Instead, we're seeing them pick a fight with the federal government in a blatant act of politicking rather than genuine concern for Nova Scotians. If this government truly had concern about the welfare of Nova Scotians and had done its homework, it would be clear that their chosen approach to bury their heads in the sand is a more costly approach.

I can hear chattering over there, Mr. Speaker. If this is not burying heads in the sand, then please use the minister's comments at the end when he closes this bill to explain

to Nova Scotians how it is going to protect us and everyone - the Province - from this price on carbon.

Our caucus fully supports measures taken to reduce carbon emissions. However, we know this could be done in a way that does not cause undue hardship on Nova Scotians. The priority here has not been the average Nova Scotia household. This government is rushing through this bill and warns that if we don't have our regulations in place to hold large emitters accountable by January 1st, the federal backstop on large emitters could be imposed. Where is that sense of urgency when it comes to protecting the rest of us?

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

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I want to thank the members on this side of the House for their articulate arguments against this bill, particularly the member for Timberlea-Prospect, whose past involvement was key in negotiating the alternative to the carbon tax, which was the cap and trade system, as well as the member for Sydney-Membertou. Both members were key to ensuring that to this date, Nova Scotia did its part to tackle climate change by pricing carbon, but not transferring that cost on to consumers in the form of increased taxation on gas, propane, natural gas, and fuel.

I must be very clear about what this piece of legislation does. It kills the cap and trade system that we've had in Nova Scotia that has ensured consumers have been protected, and it does so knowing that there is not an alternative and that a gas tax will be triggered here in the province in the new year. I've heard the Premier say as recently as today in Question Period that the cap and trade system couldn't continue. We know it couldn't continue. There was a timeline on it. That's not true. Cap and trade is continuing in other jurisdictions, including in Quebec here in our country and in California.

What did need to happen was a new negotiation and expansion of the trade market for cap and trade, which could have been done with the other Atlantic provinces, which have voiced opposition to an increased taxation on gas. There seemed to be a political willingness there to work together on this that was not capitalized on by this government. We could have reached out to Quebec and talked to Quebec about entering into their cap and trade system - and California. We are part of the Western Climate Initiative, after all, which is the cap and trade initiative in the western part of the world. We share the same carbon tracking system as all these other jurisdictions. We don't believe that this work has happened.

We believe the government was caught flat-footed on this, and instead of engaging in meaningful negotiation and work to ensure our current system that's an alternative that

I believe is superior, because it incentivizes innovation in the renewable energy space, collects funding, all the money that we collected for the Green Fund that is then distributed to Nova Scotians to use on energy efficiency programs, millions of dollars for solar homes, for affordable multi-family housing programs, providing incentives for energy efficiency upgrades and affordable housing projects, millions for small business and not-for-profit energy solutions, again, incentives for energy-efficient upgrades for many of our small businesses, millions for the Clean Leadership Summer Internship Program, allowing youth interns to work on climate change projects across the province.

All of these incentives now may be on the chopping block, or the government is going to have to find upwards of \$100 million in the treasury to keep them going at a time when they're already driving the deficit up in this province, when they're searching for money to invest in health care, when they are signing big - which is a good thing - big salary and wage increases in the collective bargaining processes that they're having. These things are going to accumulate, and we wonder if this government is actually still going to find \$100 million to continue on with these programs. We don't know whether that's going to happen or not.

We do believe that the government is governing for optics on this and not outcomes. This is really demonstrated in the repeated message from whichever minister or the Premier when they're speaking, that the Opposition parties didn't stand with us and fight Ottawa. In fact, the provincial Liberal Party actually voted for the resolution on this matter that was presented by the government. It passed in this House. What good did it do? It didn't do anything. We did stand with the government on this issue, but you have to have Executive Council and a Premier who are willing to actually go the extra step, do the hard work, the negotiation, not just with the federal government but with other Atlantic provinces, other participant jurisdictions in the cap and trade system and fight for an alternative - and that didn't happen.

Instead we're here playing the blame game. I'll admit, the government has a very easy message - blame the federal government, blame any Liberal they can point at, but as a former Leader of the Opposition once said, who is now Premier, you can't govern in sound bites. We hope that this government and the Premier take their own advice, particularly on something as important as this, which is going to impact the price of many things in Nova Scotia at a time when the cost of living crisis is impacting families and our economy across the board. It is also contributing to a potential recessionary environment, and this government doesn't have a plan to deal with any of those things either.

We will not be supporting this bill. It's going to lead to the highest increase in gas in the whole country, at a time when people in this province really can't afford to take that on. The government can blame everybody else, but they have the power. They had the ability to negotiate an alternative deal. They had a chance to fight for the current one that's in place, which has protected Nova Scotians from this and found money to reinvest in them, and they chose not to.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I am going to speak to this bill for just a couple of minutes. The main reason this bill is controversial is for the simple reason that it potentially will increase fuel costs as of January 1, 2023. That is not okay for the people I represent in Cumberland North. Cumberland cannot afford an increase in the price of fuel and diesel - simple - cannot afford it, cannot take that risk.

I did a little bit of research because this is a topic that I don't have a ton of background in. "Carbon pricing is about recognizing the cost of pollution and accounting for those costs in daily decisions." That is the definition of the federal government, but being from Cumberland County, people don't have a daily decision to make. There's no options or decisions. Electric cars are still too costly for most people in our area. There's no public transportation. Lobster boats still require fuel. Tractors still require diesel. Forestry equipment still requires diesel. Most people still cannot afford the capital costs to change their heating system in their home.

I have discussed this with the minister, but one of the changes in the bill regarding Efficiency Nova Scotia I have already had people contacting me about. The bill is removing the financing program for heat pumps. We are already seeing the effect where people who want to make change right now to put heat pumps in their homes don't have access to that financing program. We need to incent people to get off the fossil fuels, but they have to be able to afford it.

Since 2019, every jurisdiction in Canada, including Nova Scotia, has had a price on carbon pollution from the federal government. Any province or territory can design its own pricing system tailored to its local needs or can choose the federal pricing system. We have heard the member for Timberlea-Prospect speak very well on this topic.

The federal government sets minimum standards, benchmarks. I won't go into all the details but in their words, it "ensures consistency and fairness for all Canadians." I'm not sure about that, but that is what the federal government states. I will table that bill that I am quoting from.

The federal government also has this in law, so it's not something that's negotiable. The Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act is in law. Adopted on June 21, 2018, the federal pricing system has two parts: the regulatory charge on fossil fuels, like gas and natural gas, known as the fuel charge; and a performance-based system for industries, known as the output-based pricing system.

As the member for Timberlea-Prospect already mentioned, there is a mixture of responses from across the country, and Quebec, like Nova Scotia chose and worked with the federal government on a cap and trade carbon tax.

[8:30 p.m.]

My question is to the minister: What is Quebec planning for January 1st? Are they moving away from cap and trade? If yes, what are they planning? Can we follow their lead? Is there an opportunity to work with them?

We have seen the carbon tax being used as a political football for years now, mostly between the federal parties. I think the bottom line is most people would agree across the country, but definitely here and definitely in my area, that taxpayers don't want more taxes. People certainly are struggling right now, due to the rising costs of inflation and the rising costs of living. We are heading into a predicted recession. Now is not the time to add more taxes to the people of Nova Scotia and Cumberland North.

I agree with the government when the government says Nova Scotia does not need a carbon tax. I agree 100 per cent with that statement. However, based on the federal law, I don't see any way around it. I did my research to make sure that is the case, but everything I'm reading, I don't see a way around it. As long as this federal Liberal party is in power, there is going to be a price on carbon.

Putting the blame on this side of the House with the provincial Liberal Party, I don't think is really helpful. I guess what I would suggest is ask them to help and have a collaborative approach. Have a made-in-Nova Scotia plan with all three parties plus an Independent and then bring that to the federal government and see if they would sit down and discuss that. I think the people of Nova Scotia want to see collaborative approaches on many things, and this would be a great topic to do it on.

In my opinion, the whole approach to carbon reduction is wrong. I believe that if you want to create change, first provide options for people to choose. In Cumberland North, Cumberland County, and a lot of rural Nova Scotia, people simply don't have a choice to make, because they need to drive to work. They need to drive their tractors. They need to use their boats for fishing. Cleaner options are just not available.

I don't think the argument and battle of carbon pricing between political parties is helpful. I think people are tired of it. I think it turns the general population off. It's reflective of a much bigger global problem. People want to see us treating it with the respect it deserves, and people want to see us working together on this.

As I close my comments, I would just ask the minister - maybe the Premier - to jump on a plane Monday morning and go talk to our federal counterparts. Close the door, sit down with them, and say we're not leaving the room until there's a deal made. We simply cannot afford an increase in fuel prices come January 1st.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, I have been following as closely as I can the conversation about carbon pricing. Because there has been so much rhetoric and so little clarity, I began this session by saying I didn't think the government had done their homework, that when they introduced this bill, they did half their homework and they turned it in late. Listening over the last few weeks, I want to posit a different theory.

I think that, in fact, the government has a deal with the federal government. We heard the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board say today in Question Period, we can't remove the fuel tax, the federal government told us a carbon tax was coming and that we couldn't remove the motive fuel tax. If the federal government told them a carbon tax was coming, that's certainly the first we have heard in this House.

I think that what's happening in this bill - and I'll remind members that this bill purports to institute an Output-Based Pricing System that is compliant with federal requirements, but we actually have no assurance of that. There has been no public statement that this bill does that. There has been no clarity that there is a deal. This bill actually comes into force on January 1, 2023. It has effect. They're not hedging their bets.

There are whole sections of this bill that they're holding to come into force on such a day as the Governor in Council orders and declares by proclamation. That's Section 8(1). Those are the parts that would repeal the carbon tax, because it will take some time and nobody knows when that date is, but they know when the date that this will come in is.

I think that's because they have a deal with the federal Liberals. I think what they said to the federal Liberals is, okay, we'll do an output-based pricing system, you'll impose a carbon tax, we'll say we oppose it, and we're off to the races. That is the Conservative way. That is the pattern we have seen across the country. I think it's very worrisome that they've told us today that the Conservative carbon tax is coming.

The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board told us that, and yet we don't know who will have control over the proceeds of that tax. We don't know if Nova Scotians will get rebates in the way that other Canadians get rebates. We don't know where the proceeds would go if we did have control over it. Maybe there's a deal on that, too. Maybe the minister could mention that in his closing remarks. What we know is that we have this bill in front of us that establishes an output-based pricing system, and this bill will usher in a carbon tax.

One thing that we haven't talked about is that right now, our understanding is that this bill will apply to the two biggest emitters in the province: Nova Scotia Power - which we've talked a lot about this sitting - and LaFarge.

Here's the thing: The cost that Nova Scotia Power pays, Nova Scotia Power doesn't pay. We pay those costs. Those are passed through to us. So we know that this bill will cost us more on our power bills, period.

We know that it will create a carbon tax, so it will cost us more at the pump, but here's what this bill and nothing else that we are seeing in this Legislative session will do, is soften the blow. None of it.

Under this legislation, in fact, there is a fund similar, perhaps, to the Green Fund, and that is - let me just find it, Mr. Speaker - Section 112ZC(2). (Interruption) The minister is helpfully reminding me that it is called the Climate Change Fund.

One of the things that this government can do under the Climate Change Fund is mitigate the economic and social impacts of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, Of course, they don't need this bill to do that. They could do it already. And they're not doing it.

What we are left with is a bill that costs us more at the pump, that costs us more on our power bill, that leaves many more questions than it does provide answers. It absolutely does not in any way protect ratepayers. I don't even know how that assertion could be made.

What needs to happen now is that the government needs to come clean and tell us what is going on. We don't have a climate plan, we don't have clarity on carbon prices, we don't know what the carbon tax will look like, and we don't know where the proceeds will go. And, Mr. Speaker, we will be watching.

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

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to clarify some misunderstandings with respect to Bill No. 208.

Obviously, every day we hear that climate change is severely impacting our planet. Most certainly, with COP27 in Egypt beginning, we're going to hear much more globally about the impacts of climate change.

As a parent, the impacts of climate change keep me up at night. Like my colleagues in this House, I worry about the future of our planet.

I do believe in this House, while we have our differences, we are agreed on some key fundamentals. Those fundamentals being that we need to transition to clean energy, we need to make our homes more energy-efficient, we need to make our buildings more energy-efficient. We need to shift to electric vehicles and to change how we commute to work, school, and other places, and there's so much more that we need to do. That's why we passed the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act last Fall.

Nova Scotia is a small place geographically, but we're committed to making the changes that are required to secure our future. That's why the first Act we did was passing the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act with the strongest greenhouse gas emission targets in the country: 53 per cent below 2005 levels.

Shortly after I became Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the first file that landed on my desk was carbon pricing. From there, I immediately directed my staff to get to work analyzing the options before us, because it became very crystal clear early on that the previous government didn't leave us much of an option.

Because carbon pricing was one of the very first briefings I had early on in the days, and the work that I directed my staff to do, to say that we waited until the eleventh hour is simply not true. We spent a year looking at every possible option that would help to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and be the least costly to Nova Scotians. We've met the federal deadline in submitting our plan.

We only had three options to respond to the strict new federal requirements on pricing carbon. The first was to continue a cap and trade system, and certainly that was analyzed. A second option was to have the federal backstop imposed on us, which will raise electricity rates by 8 per cent. That's not an option.

The path we chose was to develop a new Output-Based Pricing System for industry that is customized to our needs in Nova Scotia. If a federal OBPS system was imposed, we would see an 8 per cent increase. That is not acceptable to members on this side of the House.

Our government spent months looking at whether extending cap and trade was a viable option. Believe me, we looked at that - so much so that our Premier here in Nova Scotia reached out to Premier François Legault of Quebec and engaged in conversations. Is this viable, linking with California and Quebec? Based on an extensive analysis, it's not, and I'll tell you why.

Nova Scotia is simply too small a market for cap and trade to meet the strict new federal requirements. When we looked at linking with other markets - and we did a thorough analysis - it showed that by linking with Quebec and California, less revenue would have been available to be spent on priorities here in the province. That would have been given to other jurisdictions. That doesn't make any sense. I do not believe that loss of revenue to the Province would have been in the best interest of Nova Scotians.

As mentioned, allowing the federal government to implement their Output-Based Pricing System backstop here in the province is not an option that we were willing to consider, because of the impacts it would have on power rates - an 8 per cent impact.

Mr. Speaker, we really only had one viable option of the ones the federal government gave us, and that is to create an Output-Based Pricing System on industry that is designed in Nova Scotia and considers the local context of our communities. A system that holds big industry and Nova Scotia Power accountable to do their share to reduce emissions - those who produce about 50 per cent of our emissions.

Then, with respect, I've heard some commentary about smaller emitters. In the regulations, as we develop that, there'll be voluntary participants in this. In our analysis, we do believe that they'll sign up for the OBPS. It is in their interest, because if they don't, then the federal carbon tax is imposed on them, which would cause more financial hardships for their business.

The Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act has the same goal: to require large industry and Nova Scotia Power to do the work to transition away from fossil fuels and reduce their emissions. The reality is that the federal rules have changed significantly on pricing carbon. Cap and trade will not work going forward under those strict federal rules. As it nears the end of its four-year implementation period, we are also starting to see that it did not achieve the goal of reducing the emissions of Nova Scotia Power, our province's highest emitter.

We've had a lot of discussion in this Chamber in this session on whether the Government of Canada will now impose the federal carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, the decision is before the federal cabinet. All provinces are awaiting the decision from the federal cabinet, even provinces that submitted in April. Certainly, it's our hope that we shall hear soon from the federal government.

Let me be clear: If Ottawa imposes their Liberal carbon tax, it is going to cause a lot of financial pain for many Nova Scotians. That's why on this side of the House, since the Summer, we have been crystal clear - no to a Liberal carbon tax.

That is why we asked Ottawa to negotiate with us on deferring their carbon tax, and asked them to work with us on opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province through energy efficiency and renewable energy focusing on the development of offshore wind, green hydrogen, and developing the unbelievable potential of the Bay of Fundy. That's the path forward for Nova Scotia.

If Ottawa chooses not to defer the carbon tax, we will do everything we can as a province to help Nova Scotians with the added financial burden that a consumer federal carbon tax could be potentially imposed on us. That is why we have asked the federal government to give Nova Scotia a chance to show that our plan will achieve the same results as a federal carbon tax.

[8:45 p.m.]

We agree on the same outcome. We want to preserve the planet. We want to adapt and mitigate to the realities of climate change. But imposing a punitive tax on Nova Scotians in a time of historic inflation is simply not acceptable.

Those are the goals that we made law last Fall, combined with ongoing investments we have committed to make in energy efficiency and further actions in the coming climate plan, which will achieve the same outcome that the federal government wants to achieve with its carbon tax.

Before I close, I want to quickly speak about two points that have been made about Bill No. 208: first, that Bill No. 208 doesn't go far enough and only targets two emitters, Nova Scotia Power and LaFarge. To be clear, the forthcoming regulations will provide an option for some other industrial emitters to opt in. We expect all greenhouse gas emitters in Nova Scotia to contribute to achieving the legislated goals and targets as established in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. There is no choice for anyone to not begin the path to net zero.

These regulations in concert with renewable energy targets, coal closure requirements, and other programs will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions here in the province. As we develop the regulations pertaining to the Output-Based Pricing System, we hope to reach out to the industry that emits greenhouse gas emissions with a goal to get their feedback, which will then help to shape the regulations. This includes industry in sectors such as mining, manufacturing, packaging, and cement production.

Second, there have been comments made that investments in energy efficiency and helping Nova Scotians make the changes that they need to respond to climate change will stop. That is unequivocally false. Bill No. 208 creates the Nova Scotia Climate Change Fund. The title of the fund may change, but the fund still has the same goal and purpose and the same commitment from our government to invest in the actions we must all take in the face of climate change emergency.

Forty-four million dollars invested this year from the Green Fund. Fifty-seven million dollars invested from General Revenue for energy efficiency. On Monday, we launched the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund - \$50 million put aside so communities and not-for-profits can apply to the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities to deal with their climate change initiatives. That's climate action.

Our government remains fully committed to funding actions on climate change. We'll continue to make those key investments as we move forward. I am not only professionally accountable for our province's response to the existential threat that is climate change, but I'm personally committed to doing it the right way for our planet, our province, for my children, and for my community.

I feel privileged to be the minister of a department that is aligned with my personal values, and where I can make a positive difference for our planet, our province, and for Nova Scotians.

I may disagree with my federal counterparts and with the Official Opposition about the need for a consumer carbon tax at the pumps, but I know we are united in our resolve to do the right thing in the face of a climate change emergency that is impacting all Canadians.

I believe the climate change policies that Nova Scotia is creating through legislation, through our actions over the past year, and in our future planning will set us on the best path to reduce Nova Scotia's emissions, and help the global community respond to the climate change crisis.

I want to take a moment to thank my unbelievably talented and hard-working staff at the Department of Environment and Climate Change who worked diligently over the past year on Nova Scotia's submission to the federal government. Thank you for standing up for Nova Scotia.

I want the Opposition to know that, rest assured, we explored every possible option, always with the best interests of Nova Scotians in mind.

With those few words, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 208, amendments to the Environment Act. Let me say no to a Liberal carbon tax.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 208.

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. 203.

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

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

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Mr. Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 203.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 203.

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, I ask for a short recess as we await the arrival of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

THE SPEAKER: We'll recess until the arrival of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

[8:54 p.m. The House recessed.]

[9:12 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is without.

THE SPEAKER: Let His Honour the Lieutenant Governor be admitted.

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.]

[The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, preceded by his Private Secretary and by Mr. David Fraser, Sergeant-at-Arms, bearing the Mace, entered the House of Assembly Chamber. The Lieutenant Governor then took his seat on the Throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms then departed and re-entered the Chamber, followed by the Speaker, the Honourable Keith Bain; Chief Clerk of the House, James Charlton; and Assistant Clerk, David Hastings.

The Speaker, with the Clerk on his left and the Sergeant-at-Arms and Assistant Clerk on his right, took up his position at the foot of the Table of the House.]

THE SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the General Assembly of the Province has, in its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the General Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's Assent.

Bill No. 196 - Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act.

Bill No. 198 - Emergency 911 Act and the Emergency Management Act.

Bill No. 200 - Nova Scotia Museum Act.

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

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

Bill No. 205 - St. Francis Xavier University Act (amended).

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

Bill No. 207 - Electricity Act (amended).

Bill No. 208 - Environment Act (amended).

Bill No. 210 - Regulations Act (amended).

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

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

Bill No. 214 - Invest Nova Scotia Act.

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

Bill No. 216 - Build Nova Scotia Act.

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

Bill No. 222 - Housing Supply and Services Act.

Bill No. 223 - Municipal Finance Corporation Dissolution Act.

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

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

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

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

Bill No. 230 - Provincial Lichen Act.

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

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: In His Majesty's Name, I Assent to these bills.

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.]

[The Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour, the Speaker.

[The Speaker took the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: I would ask the members to join me in the singing of the national anthem.

[The national anthem was sung by the members.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I move to adjourn, I'd like to thank a number of people who helped make this session run smoothly.

On behalf of all members of the House of Assembly, I want to acknowledge the Pages. Come on in, guys. (Applause) Thank you, Pages. All of the folks at Legislative TV; the Clerks of our House, James, David, and their teams; the team at Legislative Counsel Office who draft the bills that we debate on the floor every day, thank you Leg. Counsel; the team in the Legislative Library for their help - they're a little too quick with the research sometimes for the Opposition members; House Operations staff, thank you to the House Operations staff; our fantastic Sergeant-at-Arms; the Commissionaires, of course - thank you to the Commissionaires.

Of course, our constituency assistants have been mentioned many times on the floor here, but they're the team that keeps everything going for us back at our offices when we're here. Thank you to our constituency assistants. Thank you to the entire Public Service. The public service in this province is second to none. I assure you, they're dedicated to Nova Scotians. Thank you to the Public Service.

And, of course, all of our families who make it possible for us to be here, taking care of everything that needs to be taken care of at home - trips to dance or practice, or whatever the case may be, but just being the supportive family that we have to allow us to do our job on behalf of Nova Scotians. Thank you to our families at home.

I won't be seeing too many of you that much any more, so I want to wish everyone happy holidays, and all the best in the new year, until we meet again. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I move that this General Assembly be adjourned until we meet again at the call of the Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now adjourn to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

Happy Holidays.

[The House rose at 9:24 p.m.]

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN ANSWERS**Given on November 9, 2022****(Pursuant to Rule 30)****QUESTION NO. 5**

By: Susan Leblanc

To: Hon. Karla MacFarlane (Minister of Community Services)

1. Last week, the minister stated, “We know right now that life is challenging in Nova Scotia, and this is happening because of forces out of all of our control.” While they don't control things like global markets, this government certainly has control over the actions they do and don't take to improve the wellbeing of Nova Scotians -- think like income assistance rates, paid sick days, and permanent rent control. As a local advocacy group stated in a recent letter: It is irresponsible for the government to ignore the many ways in which poverty is a political choice.

When will we see this government take control for the wellbeing of Nova Scotians?

QUESTION NO. 6

By: Susan Leblanc

To: Hon. Kim Masland (Minister of Public Works)

1. The Lancaster interchange in my riding has been a longstanding issue. For years the surrounding community has been asking for safety improvements, but accidents continue. I understand that HRM and the Province have come to an agreement about how to move forward, but the Province has to commit to it in its capital plan.

When will we see the money for the Lancaster interchange in the capital plan?

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 545**

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas it is Veterans' Week, and Remembrance Day is approaching; and

Whereas I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work of the Royal Canadian Legion Yarmouth branch 61; and

Whereas the Yarmouth Legion works incredibly hard all year round, and this time of year is, of course, especially busy, as its members dedicate their time and energy to putting together Remembrance Day services which are thoughtfully planned and extremely well attended;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Yarmouth Legion branch 61 President Brenda Hattie and the members of its executive: Kevin Gates; Billy Macnamara; Karen Deveau; Gregory Flemming; Adrienne Speck; Charles Crosby; Pam Macnamara; Roy Alamaro; and Ken Dennis who works tirelessly as the chair of poppy campaign; as well as the volunteers who run the Legion's bingo, which plays a major role in keeping the Legion going.

RESOLUTION NO. 546

By: Hon. Becky Druhan (Lunenburg West)

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

Whereas the volunteer work, kindness, and caring provided by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul - Saint Joseph's Conference, Bridgewater, is a priceless gift to those who are most vulnerable in Lunenburg County; and

Whereas the organization's mission is to "serve the poor with love, respect, justice and joy," and 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; and

Whereas this incredible group of dedicated people, some who have volunteered with the organization for as long as 34 years, say that they can't do this on their own, and it takes the collaboration and support of many other community organizations;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in extending our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Saint Vincent de Paul and its supporters, who truly make a difference in our community.

RESOLUTION NO. 547

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 Ryleigh Lake, a 16-year-old student leader at North East Kings Education Center in Canning, has worked tirelessly to bring Chris Koch to her school; and

Whereas speaker Chris Koch is an inspiration to all, having overcome disabilities and inspiring others through his If I Can program; and

Whereas Ryleigh Lake has recognized the importance of giving to her school and finding ways to provide hope and inspiration;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly acknowledge Ryleigh Lake's determination to inspire the student classmates and her efforts to bring Chris Koch to NKEC.

RESOLUTION NO. 548

By: Hon. Michelle Thompson (Antigonish)

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

Whereas Matthew Doherty is a Scottish heavyweight thrower from Antigonish who competes in Scottish heavy events locally and nationally; and

Whereas he recently competed in Tucson, Arizona, at the Tucson Celtic Festival and Scottish Highland Games;

Whereas he finished first overall in the lightweight division, setting five Canadian records and three world records;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Matthew as he has demonstrated that hard work and determination lead to great accomplishments.

RESOLUTION NO. 549

By: Hon. Michelle Thompson (Antigonish)

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

Whereas pediatrician Dr. Minoli Amit and family physician Dr. Michele Murphy have recently retired; and

Whereas Dr. Amit, who began practising at St. Martha's in 1982, was the first community pediatrician in Antigonish and has been a strong advocate for community specialists in Nova Scotia, for newcomers to the St. Martha's medical staff, and for new physicians in the pediatric department; and

Whereas Dr. Murphy has been practicing family medicine in Antigonish for over 50 years and has been a devoted and caring physician, always putting her patients first and being a most deserving recipient of Doctors Nova Scotia's Senior Membership Award in 2018 in recognition of a life devoted to her family practice;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish Dr. Amit and Dr. Murphy, strong role models for female physicians in both Antigonish and Nova Scotia, a happy and healthy retirement.

RESOLUTION NO. 550

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas the Sackville Business Association was recently presented with the Community Impact Award from Halifax Public Libraries; and

Whereas the Community Impact Award was established to recognize and thank those who have made a distinct, significant, and lasting impact on their community through their collaboration with Halifax Public Libraries; and

Whereas every year, the Sackville Business Association hosts Sackville Sandwich Week, which to date has allowed them to contribute over \$7,700 into the community food literacy programs with the Sackville Public Library;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the staff of the Sackville Business Association for their positive community impact.

RESOLUTION NO. 551

By: Hon. Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas the Suburban U17AAA Showcase Girls Soccer Team was recently crowned as Nova Scotia's provincial champions, qualifying them to represent our province in the 2022 Canada Soccer Club National Tournament in Surrey, British Columbia, last month; and

Whereas the team includes players from across HRM, and I would like to personally acknowledge Idara Akpan and Liberty Yuke from my constituency; and

Whereas Angela Akpan, Idara's mother, who dedicates her time as the team manager, was able to accompany the team to British Columbia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Idara, Liberty, and their teammates for proudly representing Nova Scotia by placing fifth at the national soccer tournament and wish them all the best for continued success.

RESOLUTION NO. 552

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas the MacGregor family has been a long-time presence in Nova Scotia's and Eureka's agriculture community, known best for milk; and

Whereas three years ago, the children expressed interest in growing and selling sweet corn and were definitely willing to put the hard work in; and

Whereas they are learning about hard work and the concept of how to run a business, but when asked what they enjoy most they were quick to answer with the community feel;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Hudson, Tanner, Bridget, and Nora the best in this and all future endeavors.

RESOLUTION NO. 553

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Sumac Farms in Chance Harbour held a reining competition, attracting 60 competitors from across the Atlantic provinces; and

Whereas it was the first one able to be held in two years due to COVID-19; and

Whereas strong sponsors also made this possible, and Little Harbour Fire Hall was given special thanks;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Sumac Farms on their successful event and encouraging new people into the sport.

RESOLUTION NO. 554

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Bridgeville hosted a rural venue to raise money and awareness of cancer's profile; and

Whereas the Terry Fox Run is a well-established event but benefited immensely by the restored community that the pandemic impacted; and

Whereas Bridgeville was one of two places that held an event on September 18th, Pictou being the other;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking all the people getting behind the common cause and may it continue.

RESOLUTION NO. 555

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Tom Dudka had a pumpkin on his Linacy property that he estimates would exceed 700 lb and will be close to 900 lb when picked, gaining an average of 15 lb a day; and

Whereas sunshine, rain, good soil, good seed, and 99 per cent luck is what Tom would say it takes to grow big pumpkins; and

Whereas Tom has been allowing his pumpkins to be displayed at the Aberdeen Sobeys for years and he finds growing them to be a great pleasure;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Tom Dudka for sharing his big pumpkins with us all.

RESOLUTION NO. 556

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas the Town of Westville sought to bring recognition of flying with pride; and

Whereas Westville police, the mayor and deputy mayor joined with other community members this September to gladly raise the Pride flag in front of the town hall; and

Whereas it's crucial that the LGBTQ2+ community has representation and participation in raising the flag during Pride Week is something Westville is glad to be a part of;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the Pride community and the Town of Westville in helping to honor our LGBTQ2+ friends and family.

RESOLUTION NO. 557

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Lieutenant (Navy) Jason Bond, a Canadian Armed Forces Critical Care Nursing Officer from Dover, was very active during the COVID-19 pandemic and was a member of the Canadian Field Hospital High Readiness Detachment; and

Whereas he was on call for any potential deployment of the field hospital in the event critical care support was required by the provinces or internationally; and

Whereas Lt. Bond was transferred to CFB Trenton in September 2021 to prepare for potential Critical Care Aeromedical Evacuation missions in the province of Alberta and was later deployed to Regina and Saskatchewan to work at the Regina General Hospital supporting their ICU overflow units;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me thanking Lt. Bond for his service to our country and for his outstanding service to Canadians providing his medical services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESOLUTION NO. 558

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Rachel Dent-Flyn, a first responder, who as experienced trauma and dealt with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) first-hand and knows how hard it is to cope with trauma; and

Whereas to assist others in the community facing the same struggles, Rachel has teamed up with another first responder to share their hard-earned coping skills and bring healing to others; and

Whereas this Spring the pair started a Friday night peer support group via Zoom for first responders to share, listen, and to support each other;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me thanking Rachel for her generosity and compassion to help others heal and gain the confidence they need to live their best lives.

RESOLUTION NO. 559

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Scott Baker is a firefighter with the Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency and has spent the last few years serving a number of fire stations throughout the municipality, has trained as a Hazmat technician, taken multiple driving courses, and has the qualifications to drive most, if not all, fire trucks within the city; and

Whereas as a first responder Scott has not received any time off throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and has worked continuously to ensure Nova Scotians received emergency services and care; and

Whereas Scott serves as the Pipe Major for the Union Fire Club Pipes and Drums and has supported his fellow firefighters in learning music, by teaching active firefighters to play the bagpipes, running practices, and preparing his musicians for events such as the St. Patrick's Day parades, Pride parades, and for funerals for first responders;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Scott for his service and support to his colleagues and fellow first responders to learn skills in the form of music to help them cope with their stressful and demanding job.

RESOLUTION NO. 560

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas Sergeant Beatty is currently serving as a medical assistant with the 33 Field Ambulance Army Reserve Unit and has been serving in the Canadian Armed Forces for the past nine years; and

Whereas during the pandemic Sergeant Beatty was tasked as a quick response medic (24 hours to move) for the pandemic response and held the position of operations assistant of the 33 Field Ambulance unit, along with instructing and developing recruit medics in their trade courses at Camp Aldershot; and

Whereas Sergeant Beatty juggled the demands of her military career while caring for her family and obtaining her Master's in Family Studies from MSVU;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me recognizing and thanking Sergeant Beatty for her service to Canada.

RESOLUTION NO. 561

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea-Prospect)

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

Whereas the Reverend Margaret Sagar of Terence Bay is a force to be reckoned with and cares passionately about her community, Canada, and the world at large; and

Whereas Margaret is an activist who lobbies for peace in the world and sustainability of the planet, has a deep passion for preserving our beautiful coastlines, pristine wilderness, and unique biodiversity for everyone to enjoy, and devotes great energy and enthusiasm to ensuring development does not negatively impact these areas; and

Whereas on a local level, Margaret has been an active volunteer with the S.S. *Atlantic* Heritage Park and Museum in Terence Bay, honouring the memory of those lost in the tragic sinking of the S.S. *Atlantic*, recognizing that the heroism and telling the stories of local fishers and their families who risked life and limb to save the victims is an important part of our local history that Margaret loves to share;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Margaret for her energy and devotion to our community and the planet.

RESOLUTION NO. 562

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Queens County volunteer Cathie Pearl-Wentzell is a retired teacher, known to many as Cathie-Pearl, who has been actively volunteering since moving to Queens in 1977; and

Whereas Cathie has volunteered at the Brooklyn Baptist Church, the Hospital Hustle, the Queens County Food Bank and Thrift Store, the VON, and Kinsmen, and all have benefited from her commitment to serving others; and

Whereas Cathie, a longtime Kinetite, has been awarded a Life Membership from Kin Canada, one of the organization's highest honours; and

Whereas in recent years, two alter egos have joined Cathie's efforts: as Sammy Scarecrow, she is a volunteer guest reader at the local library, and each year from December 1st through 25th, as Santa's Chief Elf, Cathie travels throughout Queens spreading Christmas cheer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding Cathie Pearl-Wentzell's spirit of volunteerism and thank her for all she does for the people of Queens.

RESOLUTION NO. 563

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Debbie Sponagle Taylor created the Funky Witches of the Mist in Spring 2019 to perform a fun flash mob broom dancing during Liverpool's Privateer Days, and women of all ages and mobility ranges were welcome; and

Whereas since this time the group has grown in size and popularity and the witches meet weekly to practice; and

Whereas the witches take up a collection of hygiene products to donate to the local food bank and they have entertained at various venues including Shocktoberfest 2019, Eventide Art at Night Festival 2019, Queens Manor, Privateer Days, Christmas on the Mersey, and the All Hallows Privateer Market, and in their colourful costumes their spirit is contagious and audiences love them;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly applaud the initiative and inclusiveness of this creative group of women in Queens, and thank them for sharing their enthusiasm and love for dance with our communities.

RESOLUTION NO. 564

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas South Queens Middle School students Josey Huskins and Calla Brown won the School Sport Nova Scotia provincial badminton championships in girls' doubles; and

Whereas the championships were held in Truro last April 29th and 30th; and

Whereas Josey and Calla's victory helped their school team to a fourth-place overall finish;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding these young athletes and their entire team, and in wishing them continued success in their future athletic endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 565

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Queens County realtor Kristopher Snarby has recently been named Exit Realty's Canadian Broker of the Year; and

Whereas Kristopher, only one of two individuals awarded this honour, received his award at the North American EXIT Realty Convention in Florida; and

Whereas in 2019 Kristopher purchased the brokerage with his partner and they have since expanded from Liverpool into Lunenburg and Shelburne counties, and Kristopher has previously been recognized as No. 2 in North America for the number of deals completed in 2021 and as No. 4 in North America for number of listings, and has completed over 900 transactions in his career to date;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Kristopher Snarby on this very impressive recognition, and in thanking him for choosing to maintain Queens County as a base for his successful brokerage.

RESOLUTION NO. 566

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas on November 12th, 2011, a fire destroyed the Main Lodge of White Point Beach Resort, and in a show of true Queens County spirit and determination, it reopened on November 8th, 2012; and

Whereas the full-of-character, new, and enhanced Main Lodge combines ecologically friendly, accessible features, yet it maintains the rustic and casual nature that brings visitors and locals back season after season; and

Whereas the breathtaking scenery, fine and casual dining options, recreation opportunities, conference and event venues, and live entertainment have continued to make White Point a target destination in our province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the owners, management, and staff of White Point Beach Resort on the 10th anniversary of opening their beautiful new Main Lodge. I wish them continued success and thank them for operating this vital and welcoming business in Queens County.

RESOLUTION NO. 567

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the U-15A Oxford Wildcats Baseball team played a fantastic 2022 season under the coaching abilities of Coaches Mark Darragh and Robert Parris and manager Nicole Spence; and

Whereas these players represented themselves in high regard of dedication and determination to win the 2022 U-15A Provincial Championship in Liverpool on Labour Day weekend after going down in the sixth inning to come back, tie the game, and win with a stolen home plate; and

Whereas Taylor Millet, Ayden Ellis, Ashton Levy, Hunter Smith, Lucas Clark, Hayley Jacklin, Noah Hibbert, Bayley Rushton, Marcus Hunt, Rain Wellings, Caiden Parris, and Owen Darragh walked off the field as champions with respect of the game, their opponents, coaches, and fans,

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the Oxford U-15A Wildcats Baseball team as Provincial Champions and congratulate this team on keeping the spirit of Baseball alive in Oxford and Cumberland County for years to come.

RESOLUTION NO. 568

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas 2022 marks the 28th year of The Coast's Best of Halifax Readers' Choice Awards, which celebrate the people, places, and things that make the Halifax Regional Municipality great; and

Whereas The Canteen, a downtown Dartmouth restaurant owned by Dartmouth North residents Renée Lavallée and Doug Townsend, received Gold in the Best Use of Local Ingredients category; Gold for Best Lobster Roll; and Silver for Best Restaurant and Best Dartmouth Restaurant; and

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Renée Lavallée, Doug Townsend, and the entire Canteen team on making Dartmouth proud and on being voted one of The Coast's readers' favourite places to eat for yet another year.

RESOLUTION NO. 569

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas 2022 marks the 28th year of *The Coast's* Best of Halifax Readers' Choice Awards, which celebrate the people, places, and things that make the Halifax Regional Municipality great; and

Whereas Charlie A'Court is a five-time East Coast Music Award-winning roots, soul, and blues recording artist based in Dartmouth North; and

Whereas Charlie A'Court won silver in the Best Blues Artist/Band category;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Charlie A'Court on being named Silver Winner in the Best Blues Artist/Band category in *The Coast's* 2022 Best of Halifax Awards.

RESOLUTION NO. 570

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas 2022 marks the 28th year of *The Coast's* Best of Halifax Readers' Choice Awards, which celebrate the people, places, and things that make the Halifax Regional Municipality great; and

Whereas Cheapy Tire on Windmill Road in Dartmouth North received silver in the Best Mechanic Shop Category;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the entire Cheapy Tire team at 302 Windmill Road in Dartmouth on being named one of the best mechanic shops in the Halifax Regional Municipality by *The Coast's* readers.

RESOLUTION NO. 571

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas 2022 marks the 28th year of *The Coast's* Best of Halifax Readers' Choice Awards, which celebrate the people, places, and things that make the Halifax Regional Municipality great; and

Whereas Coldstream Clear Distillery, located in Dartmouth Crossing, was voted the gold winner in the Best Nova Scotian Distillery category;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate co-founder Riley Giffen and the Coldstream Clear Distillery team on being recognized as the best distillery in the province by *The Coast's* readers.

RESOLUTION NO. 572

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas AAA is the highest level of minor hockey competition in Canada; and

Whereas recently several young Dartmouth North athletes were named to the Dartmouth Whalers' Under 13 AAA roster for the 2022-23 season;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Darrell Beals (No. 4) defense on being named to the Dartmouth Whalers' Under 13 AAA team for the 2022-23 season.

RESOLUTION NO. 573

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas 2022 marks the 28th year of The Coast's Best of Halifax Readers' Choice Awards, which celebrate the people, places, and things that make the Halifax Regional Municipality great; and

Whereas the Burnside-based Feed Nova Scotia provides food to 140 member food banks across the province and pushes for long-term solutions to hunger and poverty; and

Whereas Feed Nova Scotia won bronze in the Best Place to Volunteer category;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Feed Nova Scotia on being voted one of the best places to volunteer in the HRM by *The Coast's* readers.

RESOLUTION NO. 574

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas AAA is the highest level of minor hockey competition in Canada; and

Whereas recently several young Dartmouth North athletes were named to the Dartmouth Whalers' Under 13 AAA roster for the 2022-23 season;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Kean Osmond (No. 13) forward on being named to the Dartmouth Whalers' Under 13 AAA team for the 2022-23 season.

RESOLUTION NO. 575

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas AAA is the highest level of minor hockey competition in Canada; and

Whereas recently several young Dartmouth North athletes were named to the Dartmouth Whalers' Under 13-AAA roster for the 2022-23 season;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shiquell Beals (No. 5) forward on being named to the Dartmouth Whalers Under 13-AAA team for the 2022-2023 season.

RESOLUTION NO. 576

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas 2022 marks the 28th year of The Coast's Best of Halifax Readers' Choice Awards, which celebrate the people, places, and things that make the Halifax Regional Municipality great; and

Whereas every year the Nova Scotia SPCA helps 15,000 pets through animal rescue, progressive programs, and rehoming opportunities; and

Whereas the Burnside-based Nova Scotia SPCA won gold in the Best Place to Volunteer category for the fifth time;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate the Nova Scotia SPCA for taking such good care of our furry friends and for being voted the Best Place to Volunteer by The Coast readers.

RESOLUTION NO. 577

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas AAA is the highest level of minor hockey competition in Canada; and

Whereas the Dartmouth Whalers' recently named their Under 13-AAA roster for the 2022-2023 season;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jack Baldwin, Darell Beals, Shiquell Beals, Oliver Bruce, Noah Dauphinee-Muise, Gavin Garnett, Harris Jones, Nate Koharski, Matt MacDonald, Silas Mullins, Parker Murphy, Medius Roosen, Jude Sim, Rowan Smith, Cole Taylor, and Jack Taylor on being named to the Dartmouth Whalers Under 13-AAA team for the 2022-23 season.

RESOLUTION NO. 578

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas 2022 marks the 28th year of The Coast's Best of Halifax Readers' Choice Awards, which celebrate the people, places, and things that make the Halifax Regional Municipality great; and

Whereas in November of 2021 one of Dartmouth North's most famous, and beloved residents, Woody the Talking Christmas Tree, made a comeback, after a 15-year absence from Mic Mac Mall; and

Whereas it is no surprise that Woody, who even made an appearance on The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon, won gold in the category of Best Local Character;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Woody the Talking Christmas Tree and their entire team on being named Best Local Character by The Coast's readers.

RESOLUTION NO. 579

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Oxford Wildcats U-14 Girls team had a very successful 2022 season under the coaching staff of Joe Reade, Jason Dickie and Jamie MacDougall; and

Whereas these girls were the 2022 U-14 Girls Provincial Champions, a title this team has carried for three consecutive years; and

Whereas the team members, Emma Reade, Lily Dickie, Mia MacDougall, Sophie Mazur, Carrie Mazur, Jasmine Wood, Hayley MacDonald, Grace Weatherbee, Julia Sharpe, Alora Adams, Danica Hebert, Kenliegh Lawless, Sierra Foley, and Ella Tapper committed to each other their dedication and work ethic;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate and celebrate the Oxford U-14 Girls Wildcat team on a successful season and three consecutive provincial championship seasons in a row.

RESOLUTION NO. 580

By: Hon. Becky Druhan (Lunenburg West)

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

Whereas Shelley Blanchard retired in August after an incredible 46-year career in the retail industry, which included becoming the only female manager in Atlantic Canada in 2001, when she took over as manager of the Bridgewater Save Easy after her dad, Michael Blanchard's retirement; and

Whereas in 2009, Shelley Blanchard became the assistant manager of the Bridgewater Atlantic Superstore and was quickly promoted to manager where under her leadership the store grew to be at times, the fourth-busiest store in Atlantic Canada; and

Whereas Shelley Blanchard prided herself on being respectful to all whom she worked with and to everyone who walked through the Bridgewater Atlantic Superstore's doors and "she aimed to turn upset customers into the best customers";

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Shelley Blanchard on her retirement and thanking her and her team, who were known for their "sea of orange" t-shirts, bearing a community spirit tree that they proudly wore at BBQs and events.