



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

**Speaker: Honourable Keith Bain**

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**First Session**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023**

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House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2023**

**Sixty-fourth General Assembly**

**First Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Keith Bain

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

Angela Simmonds, Lisa Lachance, Kent Smith, Danielle Barkhouse, Nolan Young

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Welcome back, everybody, to the Spring Session. I know that everybody is going to be kind and generous to each other as we continue on through the entire Spring session.

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to table the 2022 Annual Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS****GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

**RESOLUTION NO. 581**

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall:

(1) read and table the message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor transmitting the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, for the consideration of this House;

(2) table the budget and Estimate Books;

(3) table the Government Business Plan;

(4) table the Estimate resolutions;

(5) deliver my Budget Speech; and

(6) move that the Estimates of Sums required for the service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024, being Supply to be granted to His Majesty, be referred to the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

Mr. Speaker, the budget will be presented on Thursday, March 23, 2022.

THE SPEAKER: Before we get into Introduction of Bills, I recognize the honourable member for Colchester North on an introduction.

TOM TAGGART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to make an introduction. In the gallery behind me is Jaegar Laird. Jaegar is a young man from Colchester North who is very politically motivated and very interested in public service. He's down here today to see how the Legislature works.

Jaegar will graduate from Cobequid Educational Centre this Fall and go on to Dalhousie University. I'm kind of hoping that maybe I can talk him into - Jaegar, if you don't mind, could you stand so that folks know whom I'm talking about? (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

TOM TAGGART: I was just going to finish up by saying that Jaegar's a great guy. Like I said, he's going to Dal next year. I'm trying to encourage him to maybe put his name forward to become a Page in this House. (Applause) Thanks very much. Welcome, Jaegar.

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

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to make an introduction. I'd ask these members in the gallery to rise when I call out their names.

I would like to welcome my partner, Mel Lucas; my wonderful constituency assistant, Lisa Rochon; our Eastern Passage PC Association president, Rhonda Vickers; and good friends Mandy Raftus and Janice Moore, who are the backbone of my constituency and the greatest support anyone could ever ask. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Indeed, we welcome all visitors to the Speaker's Gallery, and the West Gallery as well. Please enjoy your day. You'll see some interesting remarks coming forward, I'm sure.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 256 - Entitled an Act to Reduce Administrative Barriers to the Provision of Health Care. (Hon. Michelle Thompson)**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

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

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like to bring the attention of the House to the West Gallery, where we are joined by Sydney Brehaut, advocate and resident of Nova Scotia. We have Maria Campbell, director of government relations for Diabetes Canada, who's a mom of a child with Type 1 diabetes. We are also joined by Sherry Calder, Executive Director of Communications and PR, who's a resident of Nova Scotia who is also very active in advocating on behalf of those with diabetes. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Once again, we welcome all visitors to the gallery today.

**Bill No. 257 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 197 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Health Services and Insurance Act, Respecting Glucose Monitors. (Hon. Zach Churchill)**

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

[1:15 p.m.]

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring the members' attention to the West Gallery where we're joined by a long-time friend of mine, Valerie Haskett-Chugg from Antigonish County, who is here advocating on behalf of her community. Please be welcomed by the House. (Applause)

**Bill No. 258 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Residential Tenancies Act, Respecting Fixed-term Leases. (Suzy Hansen)**

**Bill No. 259 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Income Tax Act, to Reduce Income Tax. (Hon. Brendan Maguire)**

**Bill No. 260 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Residential Tenancies Act, Respecting Notices to Quit. (Gary Burrill)**

**Bill No. 261 - Entitled an Act to Amend Chapter 17 of the Acts of 1995-96, the Revenue Act, to Suspend Provincial Motive Fuel Taxes. (Fred Tilley)**

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

With the unanimous consent of the House, we will revert to Government Notices of Motion.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

#### **GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

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

HON. JILL BALSER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I read my Notice of Motion, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please.

JILL BALSER: Visiting us today in the Speaker's Gallery to recognize Nowruz are members of the Iranian Cultural Society of Nova Scotia, Afghan community, and Ismaili community.



I ask them to rise and accept the warm welcome of this House. (Applause)

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

**RESOLUTION NO. 582**

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

Whereas Nowruz is celebrated in many parts of the middle, central, and south Asia, particularly among peoples influenced by Persian and Turkic civilization and culture; and

Whereas Nowruz means “New Day” and marks a time of spiritual and physical renewal for those that celebrate it; and

Whereas for many people the first day of Spring marks the Festival of a New Year, or Nowruz, which is often celebrated with the major Spring cleaning of their houses and by wearing new clothes for the New Year;

Therefore be it resolved that members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing Nowruz and the importance of this time of year for many Nova Scotians, and in wishing all of those who celebrate it a happy Nowruz filled with happiness, success, and good health.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed. The motion is carried.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

COLTON LEBLANC: Thank you very much. In the gallery we have this afternoon joining us some members from my team from Acadian Affairs. Dans le galerie aujourd’hui, on a des membres de mon équipe du Bureau des Affaires acadiennes et de la Francophonie, Mark Bannerman, Lise Poirier, Margot Pozza, Gaston Saulnier, et Laura

Huyn Le. Staff from my department are here today and I ask all members to welcome some of my team members today to the Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister for Acadian Affairs and Francophonie.

### RESOLUTION NO. 583

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: À une date ultérieure, je demanderai l'adoption de la résolution suivante:

Attendu que le 20 mars de chaque année est reconnue comme La Journée internationale de la Francophonie pour célébrer la culture, les traditions et la diversité des millions de francophones dans le monde; et

Attendu que la langue française est présente en Nouvelle-Écosse depuis plus de 400 ans, soit depuis le premier établissement du peuple acadien à Port-Royal en 1605; et

Attendu que de nos jours en Nouvelle-Écosse, environ 35,000 personnes ont le français comme la langue maternelle et plus de 100,000 personnes parlent français, y compris les Acadiens, les francophones, et les nouveaux arrivants que se sont installés en Nouvelle-Écosse;

Par conséquent, il est résolu que les membres de l'Assemblée législative se joignent à moi et à tous les Acadiens et à tous les francophones de la Nouvelle-Écosse pour souligner La Journée internationale de la Francophonie et pour rendre hommage à notre communauté florissante.

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

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

Whereas March 20<sup>th</sup> each year is recognized as International Francophonie Day to honour the cultures, the traditions, and the diversity of the millions of French speakers around the world; and

Whereas Nova Scotia has been home to the French language for more than 400 years, beginning with the first settlement of Acadians in Port Royal in 1605; and

Whereas today about 35,000 Nova Scotians speak French as their first language and over 100,000 Nova Scotians speak French, including Acadians, francophones, and newcomers who make their homes in Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me and all Acadians and Francophones in Nova Scotia in recognizing International Francophonie Day and in honouring our flourishing community.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

#### **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

#### **IMMIGRANTS TO N.S.: WELCOMED BY RESIDENTS - THANKS**

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): As we gather for another sitting in this Legislative Assembly, I know each of us understands the privilege we feel to represent all Nova Scotians. I've travelled from one end of this province to the other, to hundreds of small towns and villages, meeting thousands of Nova Scotians who are enthusiastic about the future.

Our province is growing. We are embracing new residents from around the world who are choosing to live in Nova Scotia because they see we are a welcoming, resourceful, and optimistic province. On this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I would like to welcome our new residents who have moved to our province and thank Nova Scotians who have welcomed them with generosity and kindness.

We are blessed to live in Nova Scotia. Thank you to each person who works hard to make this province a better place to live every day of our lives.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

#### **TWO OFFICERS KILLED IN ALTA.: FAMILIES - CONDOLENCES**

HON. KEITH IRVING: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask members of the House to join me in a moment of silence following my statement.

I rise today to express my deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan, who were tragically killed in the line of duty in Edmonton. We in the Valley are particularly saddened by the loss of Constable Travis Jordan, who hailed from Coldbrook.

The sacrifice and dedication of our law enforcement officers cannot be overstated. Every day, they put their lives on the line to protect our communities and ensure our safety. The senseless deaths of Constable Travis Jordan and Constable Brett Ryan remind us of the dangers they face in their daily work.

Let us take a moment to honour the memory of these courageous officers and to recognize the selflessness of all those who serve in law enforcement. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid. To Travis's family and loved ones, please know that you are not alone. Our entire province stands with you, and we offer our deepest sympathies and support during this time of profound loss.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Please be seated.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I will ask the folks I mention to rise when I say your name. We are honoured to be joined today by many of the labour leaders in our province. They bring with them, I'm sure, the tens of thousands of members across this province who in many cases are working on the front lines of education, health care, and other important public services.

I'd like to welcome Danny Cavanagh, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour; Chris Melanson, CUPE Nova Scotia Board Council of Unions President; Jackie Swain from SEIU; Mary-Dan Johnston from CUPE; Sandra Mullen and Hugh Gillis, President and Vice President of the NSGEU; and Robert MacKay and Nelson Scott from CUPE, who are here from Chignecto Central and Cape Breton-Victoria. Please join me in offering these folks a warm welcome to the House. (Applause)

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

**WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY: FAIR TREATMENT - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, today is World Down Syndrome Day. My brother Adam and my cousin, Barbara have Down Syndrome, like 45,000 other Canadians. They have kindness that we can only wish to have, a joyful spirit that will brighten any room, and immeasurable love. Adam and Barbara have taught us so much about love, compassion, acceptance, and a lot of patience. They are independent people.

[1:30 p.m.]

This year's theme is With Us, Not For Us. People with disabilities have the right to be treated fairly and have the same opportunities as everyone else - working with others to improve their lives. Moving away from the charity model of disability, where people with disabilities were treated as objects and looked on with pity means doing things with and not for - making decisions with and not for. It means including organizations representing people with Down Syndrome in policy-making and decision-making.

I leave you with this: My brother's superpower is his extra chromosome. What is yours?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, before I read my member statement to recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, visiting us today in your gallery, the Speaker's Gallery, is Damini Awoyiga. Damini is a 15-year-old high school student. She is a spoken word poet, writer, activist, fashion designer, singer and art illustrator. She is the founder of DAMini Creatives and the Afro-Indigenous Book Club. It's a book club she created to encourage young people to read books written by Black and Indigenous authors, and to share the realities and experiences of Black and Indigenous Canadians.

Damini was the CBC's Artist in Residence for the Michaëlle Jean Foundation's Canadian Black Summit held in July 2022. She also enjoyed being a board member of the Nova Scotia Girls Institute for Resource and Learning. Damini is a recipient of many awards, including the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. She is also a member of her high school's student's council.

As a spoken word poet for the past five years, Damini loves to write and perform spoken word poems to bring attention to social justice issues.

I ask her to rise and accept the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**INT'L DAY FOR ELIM. OF RAC. DISCRIM.: FIGHT FOR EQUALITY -  
RECOG.**

HON. PAT DUNN: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to acknowledge March 21<sup>st</sup> as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this day in 1960, 69 people were tragically killed by police during their protests of apartheid laws in South Africa. Six years later, this day was proclaimed to observe this terrible event.

Nova Scotia is fortunate to have a population that is enriched by a kaleidoscope of difference races and ethnicities, yet racial discrimination still exists here and throughout the world. The theme for 2023 focuses on the urgency of the need to combat racism. Seventy-five years have passed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Racism has no place in our world. It must be condemned without reservation.

Thank you to the Nova Scotians who work so diligently to combat racism, including those special guests who have joined us here today.

I ask that all members of this House join me in celebrating Nova Scotia's racially diverse population and thanking those who have fought, and continue to fight, for racial equality.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY: CELEB. OF UNIQUENESS - RECOG.**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize that it is World Down Syndrome Day. I know we are joined in the Speaker's Gallery by many of our loved ones and their families. World Down Syndrome Day was created to recognize and celebrate the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21<sup>st</sup> chromosome, which causes Down Syndrome.

First, I'd like to celebrate those in Nova Scotia with Down Syndrome who have added so much uniqueness, love, kindness, joy, energy, and positivity into our communities from one end of the province to the other, and to our families. I'd also like to recognize the educators across the province who have worked so actively to build a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for our students.

The Halifax Nova Scotia Down Syndrome Society has actually identified that children with Down Syndrome are performing at rates today that would have never been dreamed of in the past. This is because of the love, support and advocacy of family members, parents, friends, educators, and volunteers. We're so fortunate to have such a strong community of people who support those in our society with Down Syndrome. But

we also need to recognize the impact and positivity that those with Down Syndrome have had on the rest of us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**INT’L DAY FOR ELIM. OF RACIAL DISCRIM.: CALL TO ACTION - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Throughout the world, people of African descent continue to be besieged with gross injustice. This includes workers of African descent within HRM and all of Nova Scotia.

As we sit here today, workers of African descent are rallying at Parade Square to stand up and be heard. Black workers continue to report on anti-Black racism and the toxic work environments that exist here in Nova Scotia. Indigenous peoples in racialized and religious minority communities in Canada continue to face racism and discrimination every day. This day serves as a call to action for individuals, organizations, and all levels of government to actively work to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, injustice, systemic racism, and hate.

I would like all members of this House to stand with me as we recommit our efforts to ensure all people are respected, have equal access and opportunity to be safe and to succeed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

HON. GREG MORROW: Mr. Speaker, before I read my member’s statement to recognize World Down Syndrome Day, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

GREG MORROW: Visiting us today in the Speaker’s Gallery are members of the Halifax Nova Scotia Down Syndrome Society. They include Allison Brewer, the Chair; Will Brewer, Advocate, Committee Chair, Mentor, and Town Crier; Kim Hanko, Vice Chair; Maureen Doherty, Carolyn Sinyerd, and Fiona Watt. We’re also welcoming guests from the Special Olympics, including Scott Flewelling, a parent volunteer, coach and provincial board member; and Patrick Flewelling, Special Olympic athlete.

Mr. Speaker, if it was appropriate, I would ask if Will would like to take the opportunity to show us his skills as a town crier.

THE SPEAKER: All right.

WILL BREWER: Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Whereas today is World Down Syndrome Day in the House, and I would love to acknowledge them. Thank you so much. (Standing Ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

**WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY: ENSURING EQUAL RIGHTS - RECOG.**

HON. GREG MORROW: Thank you, Will. Fantastic.

I rise in acknowledgement of World Down Syndrome Day. It is celebrated every year on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the third month as the numbers of this date symbolize a key trait shared by people with Down Syndrome: three copies of chromosome 21. Today is a day to celebrate the lives of people with Down Syndrome, and to ensure they are afforded equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities.

The theme this year - With Us, Not For Us - underscores the importance of taking a rights-based approach to supporting Nova Scotians living with Down Syndrome. We also want to acknowledge all the families, friends, and organizations who do their part every day to ensure With Us, Not For Us are not just words but are a way of life that all Nova Scotians respect.

I ask that all members of this Legislature join me in celebrating Nova Scotia's residents with Down Syndrome, and to let this wonderful community know that we in this House are with them, not for them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**CAPE BRETON ZOOMTIMERS: DOWN SYNDROME ADVOCACY - RECOG.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Mr. Speaker, I am also rising in my place to recognize World Down Syndrome Day. I rise to recognize the Cape Breton ZoomTimers, who, throughout the pandemic and continuing, have met with premiers, federal ministers, and elected representatives. They are great advocates in the community.

They're very close friends of mine and my wife, Stephanie, who is also one of those educators in the school system, in the learning centers.

Why we stand in the Legislature today: Charles Levatte is at the UN. Charles is a kid from our community. Mr. Speaker, you may be aware of the family. I know that the member for Cape Breton East may be as well. Charles is down representing N.S. at the U.N. right now promoting advocacy and self-awareness and self-support for individuals with Down Syndrome.



I rise in my place today to recognize all the ZoomTimers for the amazing friendship and the conversations that I have with them, but especially to recognize Charles, who's representing all of us right now at the UN supporting Nova Scotians. Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

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

### **CHILD, KEIRA JILL – BIRTHDAY WISHES**

LISA LACHANCE: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to recognize that today, March 21<sup>st</sup>, is my child Keira Jill's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Since we met Keira at seven months old, they have been an energetic force in our lives. We watch with admiration as they bring their curiosity, determination, passion, and dedication to our entire extended family and to their friendships, school, work, and to the hockey rink.

I made Keira a 17<sup>th</sup> birthday playlist because, like all teenagers, they appreciate when I suggest music they may like. Musicians over the decades have identified 17 as a pivotal year of transition from child to adult.

I ask all members to join me in wishing Keira a happy 17<sup>th</sup> birthday and a year full of joy, adventure, and success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, before I read my member statement, I beg leave to make an introduction.

Visiting us today in the West Gallery above me is Betty Thomas, a long-time advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in our province and a good friend to all of us here on this side of the Legislature. I ask Betty to rise and accept the warm welcome of this House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

### **THOMAS, BETTY: DIVERSITY WORK - THANKS**

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in our province, I would like to bring special attention to our friend Betty Thomas.

Betty is the consummate volunteer, spending a great deal of her time trying to make our society a better place for all Nova Scotians. Over the years many organizations have

benefited from her commitment to the community, whether as a member of the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia, the Black Cultural Society, the East Preston Lioness Club, and as the Chair of the Community and Race Relations Committee for the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Betty was also, you may not know, the producer and host of *Equality Issues* on a local cable television show for several years and is the president of our party's Diverse Communities Committee. Betty is passionate about acts of kindness and delivers a high level of client service as a Justice of the Peace.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House of Assembly to join me in thanking Betty for all she has done over the years to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

#### **C.P. ALLEN SCHOOL STABBING: SUPPORT - RECOG.**

HON. KELLY REGAN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise today to speak about a difficult day yesterday for the Charles P. Allen family of schools, and all of those who love those who are in that family of schools, when yesterday our school made the news for all the wrong reasons.

I want to thank the faculty, the staff, and the students for following directives on that day in the midst of a frightening situation. I want to wish a speedy recovery to the two staff members who are in hospital. I want to make sure that everyone knows that counselling is available. I do appreciate that counselling was made available at the school today.

I want to thank HRCE for reaching out when members of this Legislature began calling to ask what was going on and getting back to us to let us know what was going on. I know that all members of this House want to join me in letting people know that they are in our hearts and in our thoughts during this difficult time.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

#### **INCOME ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED: NEED IN N.S. - RECOG.**

GARY BURRILL: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that in Manitoba, major new improvements are being introduced between the first of this year and April for people with disabilities who receive income assistance.

(1) The basic needs component of these benefits in Manitoba is being indexed to inflation.

(2) Benefit levels are increasing \$100 a month.

(3) People with disabilities receiving provincial benefits are now able to earn up to \$12,000 a year without any impact on benefits.

[1:45 p.m.]

In Nova Scotia, by comparison, benefit levels have been frozen during this government's tenure. There is no indexing to inflation, and people with disabilities receiving income support can only earn approximately 25 per cent of what can be earned now without impact on benefits in the province of Manitoba. The upcoming budget provides an opportunity to improve this.

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

**BONNY LEA FARM: 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIV. - CONGRATS.**

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Bonny Lea Farm. Bonny Lea Farm offers a close-knit, supportive environment to empower adults with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities to grow and succeed.

They have built a strong partnership with Chester-St. Margaret's and a strong community of donors, sponsors, and volunteers to provide one-stop, all-inclusive residential services, enhanced programs, and work placement opportunities.

I'm excited to announce Bonny Lea Farm is turning 50 this year. That's 50 years of making a difference not only in the constituency of Chester-St. Margaret's but also in this province.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing their continuous work and to wish Bonny Lea Farm a happy birthday.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**GRAY, PADDY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize Paddy Gray from Sambro. Paddy is a legendary figure from our community. He has been a fisherman his whole life, making his living on the water. Paddy is an advocate for the community, including being the Harbour Master of Sambro. Paddy volunteers, works behind the scenes, advocates, and is a voice for the community and our fishers. The community is a better place because of Paddy, a true friend and community warrior. Paddy, thank you for all you do. Our community is better because of you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**HOLTHOFF FAMILY: SACRIFICE AND BRAVERY - RECOG.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Mr. Speaker, as I deliver my first member's statement of the Spring session, I feel compelled to acknowledge the sacrifice and the bravery of Mr. Gunter Holthoff and his young family. As my colleagues are aware, Gunter's wife Allison died tragically on December 31, 2022 while waiting in one of our emergency departments here in the province, suffering with abdominal pain. Gunter and his children have been through unimaginable pain and suffering but are trying to move forward through this loss.

I also want to acknowledge the tiny community of Tidnish, where the Holthoffs live. That community has wrapped their arms around this family as they go through this tragedy. Allison was a member of the local fire department; she was the deputy fire chief. She was involved in all community organizations. She was that mother who brought in teenaged children without a home. She was that person. All of the folks of Tidnish truly represent the lifeblood of our community. That is our people and the strength of our people. Nova Scotia Strong.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Permission granted.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I would like to draw the House's attention to the gallery opposite, where we have a guest today, Raeesa Lalani. Raeesa is the artistic director of the Prismatic Arts Festival, which is an incredible arts festival in the province, bringing world-class performances of all natures to Nova Scotia. As well, Raeesa is the chair of the board of Zuppa Theatre. You may have heard of Zuppa Theatre: It's the company that I worked with for 20 years. Now I'm on the board of Zuppa too, so I get to work alongside. Also, Raeesa was a student of mine at Dalhousie, in acting. She's just the best. I would like to welcome her to the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**MIGRANT WORKERS: NEED FOR MSI BENEFITS - RECOG.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: My member's statement is unrelated to Raeesa.

On this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I rise to draw attention to the unjust treatment of migrant workers, many of whom are racialized, in Nova Scotia. In order to access our province's public health care system, migrant workers

must have a one-year work permit, but unfortunately, contracts under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program are, at the most, eight months per calendar year. This means that all workers under that program have to pay for their health care or rely on insurance packages negotiated by their employers.

I draw to the House's attention Kerian Burnett, an agricultural worker from Jamaica diagnosed with cancer in September 2022 while working on a Nova Scotia strawberry farm. Ms. Burnett was fired after becoming ill, and so doesn't have access to private health insurance that was tied to her employment. She is accumulating thousands of dollars in medical bills.

No One is Illegal Halifax/Kjipuktuk has created a GoFundMe campaign to help her. I join No One is Illegal in calling on the government to extend MSI benefits to all migrant workers.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

**MOREAU, MICHAEL: SPEC. OLYM. ATHLETE OF THE YR. - CONGRATS.**

HON. KIM MASLAND: I rise today to congratulate Queens County athlete Michael Moreau on receiving the 2022 Male Athlete of the Year Award at the Special Olympics Nova Scotia Inspire Gala on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Michael has been competing for over 20 years in the sports of snowshoeing, athletics, and bowling. He was on Team Nova Scotia at the 2020 Winter Games in Thunder Bay, and earned a seat on the Team Canada contingent that was to compete at the World Games in 2022.

I ask all members to join me in applauding this inspirational young man on this well-deserved honour, and in wishing him continued success. I am truly his biggest fan.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**C.P. ALLEN HS STABBING: SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES - RECOG.**

BRAEDON CLARK: I would be remiss if I too didn't express my condolences to the Charles P. Allen High School family in light of the incident that took place at the school yesterday in my riding of Bedford South.

Like the member for Bedford Basin, I'd like to wish a speedy and fast and complete recovery to those who were injured, and thank the first responders and particularly the police and the paramedics who helped in a moment of great need.

As a former Cheetah and someone who has CPA near and dear to my heart, I ask all members of the House to join me in wishing the staff, students, and extended Charles P. Allen family nothing but the best as they begin the difficult but necessary healing process.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

**TWO FOUNDATIONS: GIFT TO DART. GEN. HOSP. - RECOG.**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize the Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation and the J&W Murphy Foundation on their unprecedented gift to the hospital announced today. Their gift will kickstart the \$15 million Lead On Capital Campaign, the goal of which is to positively impact patient care at the Dartmouth General.

This includes purchasing Dartmouth General's first and much-needed MRI unit, enhancing the emergency department, acquiring high-priority equipment, further developing orthopedic care, advancing health equity, and infrastructure changes, all of which patients have a right to expect and which they deserve.

As our hospitals and medical professionals continue to experience the strain of the health care crisis, please join me in thanking the Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation, the J&W Murphy Foundation, and the community of Dartmouth for generously stepping in to fill the gaps.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

**COVEY, ELIZABETH: SPEC. OLYM. ATHLETE OF YR. - CONGRATS.**

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I rise today to congratulate Elizabeth Covey of Lunenburg on being named Female Athlete of the Year by the Nova Scotia Special Olympics.

Elizabeth began competing 12 years ago after a schoolteacher involved with Special Olympics started taking her bowling on a weekly basis. Through that activity, she met a friend who introduced her to competitive swimming, and a love of sports was born.

Elizabeth has competed in both the Summer and Winter provincial games and the national Summer games in running, shot put, long jump, swimming, snowshoeing, and bocce. She's also a keen downhill skier and participates in the Able Sail program at the Lunenburg Yacht Club. Her bedroom, I'm told, is covered in medals and trophies.

Please join me in celebrating this remarkable young athlete.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**NOWRUZ: PERSIAN CELEB. - RECOG.**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'd like to take this opportunity, as my colleague from Digby-Annapolis did, to wish everyone who is celebrating Nowruz today a very happy Nowruz.

Nowruz has been celebrated for over 3,000 years, and over 300 million people across the world are celebrating Nowruz today. It emphasizes the importance of family, friendship, and cultural diversity, but what is really important is how many people from Iran, from Afghanistan, and from the Kurdish community are celebrating today.

We have a large community in Clayton Park West, and I'm just wishing them all a very happy Nowruz. I was always looking forward to Nowruz celebrations, especially for the Iranian event, but when I spoke to them yesterday, I said, how come I wasn't invited this year? They said they're not holding it because of what's happening in Iran, in solidarity with the women in Iran. My heart goes out to all the women in Iran on a day like today.

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

**CUPE SCHOOL SUPP. WORKERS: STRIKE VOTE - SOLIDARITY**

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the conciliation meeting with the provincial government and CUPE school support staff scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup>, I want to show solidarity with CUPE school support workers in Nova Scotia.

Support workers have voted 97.5 per cent in favour of taking strike action if an agreement that lifts education workers out of poverty cannot be reached. Most CUPE education workers earn less than Nova Scotia's median wage of \$35,000 per year. I don't think that is too much to ask.

The support staff in education drive children to school, keep the libraries open, work one on one with students, repair equipment, ensure recess and lunch run smoothly, keep school facilities clean, provide safe learning spaces, and administer clerical tasks. Schools, Mr. Speaker, do not run without them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

**GERRO, CHRISTIAN: SUMMER GAMES PARTIC. - CONGRATS.**

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Antigonisher Christian Gerro, who was named to Team Canada for the Special Olympics World Summer Games. Christian will be traveling to Berlin, Germany, in June.

Christian is a member of the Eastern Highlands Special Olympics team and competes in the 100-metre race as well as the standing long jump. Joan Conrad, regional coordinator, says Christian is one of her top athletes. Christian has been competing in the Special Olympics since he was young and competed at the national level in Vancouver in 2014 and in Antigonish in 2018.

I also would like to thank all of those who volunteer, giving their time and skills to help Christian prepare for the Summer Games. Christian is very fortunate to have so many wonderful people supporting him, from his coaches, who are training him, to all those in our community who are fundraising for him.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to wish Christian good luck as he proudly represents Canada at the Special Olympics.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

**INT’L DAY FOR ELIM. OF RACIAL DISCRIM.: ACTION NEEDED - RECOG.**

ALI DUALE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize that today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We know the harm of racial discrimination. I will ask all Nova Scotians to take action for this Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day, March 21<sup>st</sup>. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

**ORGANIZERS: PROTESTS AT PROVINCE HOUSE - CONGRATS.**

SUZY HANSEN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank the organizers of rallies and demonstrations happening today all within a stone’s throw of Province House raising awareness about serious challenges facing our province. Whether it’s racism in the workplace, respecting education workers, or ensuring that everyone has access to safe and affordable housing, people in communities are stepping up and demanding more from their government. I would like to ask everyone in this House to join me in congratulating the organizers and support folks of today’s events for fighting for a better Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

**DELANEY, REBECCA: FRANK HAYDEN AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.**

HON. KIM MASLAND: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Rebecca Delaney of Liverpool on receiving the 2022 Dr. Frank Hayden Athlete Lifetime Achievement Award at the Special Olympics Nova Scotia Inspired Gala on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.



This prestigious award is named in honour of the researcher and Companion of the Order of Canada who sparked the Special Olympics movement over 50 years ago. It is presented to an athlete who has best exemplified the spirit, philosophy, and goals of the Special Olympics movement over the course of their career.

Rebecca began competing at the age of 18 and has met with success at both the Winter and Summer games. She has earned the highest respect of her teammates and coaches, and all of Queens is so proud of her.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in applauding this inspirational young woman on this well-deserved honour and in wishing her a bright and successful future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

#### **MACNEIL, NATHAN: ADVOCACY FOR DIABETICS - THANKS**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize a young man from Cape Breton named Nathan MacNeil. Nathan came to my office very early in my time as an MLA, advocating on behalf of those with diabetes in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and beyond.

Nathan is a very strong advocate for the glucose-monitoring systems being free for all Nova Scotians. I fully support Nathan, and I'm so happy to stand here today with this Leader of the Liberal party who put that bill forward today.

Thank you, Nathan, for all your hard work and advocacy.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time allotted for Statements by Members has expired. The time is now 2:00 p.m. We'll move into Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers. We will be going until 2:50.

[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.: INFLATIONARY PRESSURES - ACTION**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Nice to be back in the House.

It has been 581 days since this Premier was elected, and during that time, inflation has really skyrocketed in Nova Scotia. People can't afford to put gas in their cars. The price of groceries is getting out of control. Whether it's milk, eggs, bread, meat, or vegetables, cooking family dinners has become more of a struggle for many families in Nova Scotia. In fact, Nova Scotians are expected to pay more than \$1,000 more in food this year. I will table that.

Also, despite the Premier's promise to stop this from happening, power rates are going to be going up 14 per cent. Inflation is continuing to raise prices, and mortgages and rents are going up as well. This is despite the fact that the Deputy Premier told us that inflation would just go away.

My question to the Premier is: When will this government take definitive action to help Nova Scotians dealing with inflationary pressures?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that important question. Obviously, the affordability issues facing Nova Scotians and all Canadians - and really, North Americans - are of concern to all governments.

A couple of things: Number one, we know what won't help, and that's the Liberal carbon tax, which is barreling down the trains towards us. I encourage the member to stand up against his federal cousins and against the Liberal carbon tax that won't be helpful.

In terms of definitive action, of course Nova Scotians know about the \$1,000 home heating rebate. We bumped that up from \$200. Of course, Nova Scotians will know about the support for heat pump installation.

We are taking definitive action and we will continue to take definitive action.

ZACH CHURCHILL: A reminder to the House and to Nova Scotians that we have a carbon tax coming to Nova Scotia because the Houston government cut the cap and trade system that we had as a replacement.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. I'd ask that the member withdraw the name of the individual in charge of government.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Allow me to rephrase, Mr. Speaker. We have a carbon tax coming to Nova Scotia because the Premier and his government cut a cap and trade system that was the replacement for carbon pricing in Nova Scotia to the detriment of Nova Scotians, we believe.

Also, the Premier says that this is a national issue, but in fact, Nova Scotia inflation is rising higher than the rest of the country. I'd like to ask the Premier why that is the case under his leadership.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's a Nova Scotian, and certainly maybe even a person alive, who believes that it's anyone but the Liberals who are pushing the carbon tax on Nova Scotians. We can stick to the facts on that. Carbon tax: bad thing. Not good. Won't help the environment, certainly won't help Nova Scotians, and it's a Liberal carbon tax. I wish that member would stand up against it.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Once again, Mr. Speaker, the great solutionist can only offer blame in this House instead of actual solutions to help Nova Scotians. What is he going to do about it? He didn't present an alternative. He actually cut the alternative that was in place to keep a carbon tax from coming here. Here we are, and all he can do is blame the Liberal party. I think that's shameful.

Nova Scotia has also been leading the country in homelessness. I'll table that. Nova Scotia was also last in the country when it came to housing starts, with vacancy rates at 1 per cent province-wide.

People in this province are facing real affordability issues. People don't see themselves getting ahead anymore. We have a generation of Nova Scotians who are worried that they will never be able to afford a home. Yet this Premier - all he can do is stand up in this House and blame Liberals for a carbon tax coming.

When is he actually going to provide some support to Nova Scotians who are not getting ahead right now because of this situation?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, just to correct the record: In fact, we did put a solution forward to the federal government. We put a very viable solution forward to the federal government. And you know what the Opposition party - both of them - said? They said no, thank you. No, no, no, no. All these Opposition parties - both of them - know about is no.

We're moving this province forward. They can be negative. We're optimistic about the future. Nova Scotians are optimistic about the future.

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

### **PREM.: DOCTORS FOR NOVA SCOTIANS - UPDATE**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier, and it's about a time that he said no just recently.

Later this year 4,100 people will lose their doctor when the South End Family Practice Clinic closes their doors. Dr. Maria Sampson from the clinic said, "The current state of health care in Nova Scotia and the lack of support for primary care providers has accelerated this closure . . . Despite working with the Nova Scotia physician recruitment

team for over a year, they have not secured a replacement physician to take over any of our patients.”

How bad is the primary care situation going to get before this government will help Nova Scotians who don't have a doctor?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I would say on that. Obviously, we work hard to support doctors and health care providers in this province, including those who are planning on retiring. There's quite a process there.

The only thing we ask in return - we have tried to provide resources to support people, maybe provide a nurse practitioner, maybe provide a family practice nurse - is that they support more Nova Scotians. We'll work with the doctors of this province, and I believe the doctors of this province know that.

What I would say to those Nova Scotians who are on the list needing primary care is we know we have made virtual care available to every single one of them. We know that we are attaching them to clinics. We know the pharmacy clinics are helping. The mobile clinics are working. We are moving forward because health care is demanding that we move forward with new solutions.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Speaker, people in this province deserve to have a permanent family health team, but two more doctors at the Spryfield Family Medicine Clinic are also leaving their practice. These doctors say that despite asking for help from this government, their calls for support have gone unanswered - they got a no. Dr. Rowicka said, “We are basically swamped, we are exhausted, we're on the verge of burnout.” I'll table that. These two doctors care for 4,000 people, but the government said they would only help them if they take on more patients.

Our Premier is a CPA. Surely he understands that 8,000 people without access to a family doctor is not worth pressuring a few burnt-out doctors to take on a few more patients.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Speaker, we're working to support the doctors of this province and the health care professionals of this province. People may have noticed the incentive we offered to health care workers just yesterday to say thank you for working so hard through this process.

We are supporting health care workers in this province in every way we can. No question, there's a lot of work to be done, and no question it's going to require a number of solutions. What won't help is the negativity of the Opposition on all these issues.

We want people to have access to primary care. We're coming up with innovative new solutions to move this province forward. We will support the doctors through that process.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Adding 8,000 people to the 137,000-person wait-list of people waiting for a family health team is not positivity - it's a problem.

David Wareing is one of the many Nova Scotians who will join that list when his clinic closes at the end of this year. He explains: This clinic has been here for my entire family through our health care needs. The clinic has supported us through the birth of two children and the death of one. The closing of this clinic means that our entire family is now without access to primary care.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier commit to going back to the table with these doctors and doing whatever it takes to keep these clinics open and these 8,000 patients with access to care?

THE PREMIER: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I have reached out to those doctors very specifically and offered to do whatever is necessary - as we do, as the team at Health does.

People will retire, and doctors should have a right to retire as well, without being made to feel guilty about it.

What I would say to the member's specific person and the message to him is that because you are on that list does not mean you do not have access to care. We have offered virtual care to everyone on that list - 100 per cent - and 50,000 Nova Scotians have signed up for that. Almost 97,000 Nova Scotians who are on that list have access to a primary care clinic where they can seek medical treatment, in person or virtually: 125 family physicians for 100,000 Nova Scotians, that's what we have in this province. They are supplemented, of course, by urgent treatment centres, expanded pharmacy services, and mobile clinics. There is access to care.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **FTB: BETTER PAYCHEQUE GUARANTEE - TIMELINE**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: It has been 581 days since the Premier was elected on a promise to give every single Nova Scotian working in the private sector a better paycheque guarantee. He promised to do that on Day 1 - and I will table that quote.

Since the cost of living has gone up month after month and families and seniors all across the province are feeling the sting of this, Nova Scotia continues to have some of the highest levels of inflation in the country. Our government programs are just not keeping

up, and people in the middle class and working class of this province are really having a hard time making ends meet and in planning for the future.

The government's economic platform was also a Nova Scotia Loyal program that would have incentivized and rewarded purchasing of local goods. We haven't seen that either. If there was a time to bring in two of the government's promises, it is right now during this inflationary crisis.

My question is: When are Nova Scotians going to see a better paycheque guaranteed to them in the private sector?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: I want to say that the priority of this government is fixing health care. It is costing a lot of money. That is where our focus is. I should remind the member we did introduce the More Opportunity for Skilled Trades, and we hope that that will support and encourage young people under the age of 30 to stay in Nova Scotia, come home to Nova Scotia, or to come here for the first time.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier said that Nova Scotians would be given a better paycheque guarantee on Day 1. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said it would be within the first 12 months of their government. Here we are, 581 days later, and Nova Scotians are dealing with higher rent, higher mortgage rates, higher food costs, higher power rates, higher cost on gas, higher cost on everything, and this government is backing down on this key election promise that they made to Nova Scotians. I guess a better paycheque guarantee wasn't much of a guarantee after all, was it?

Can the Premier or the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board tell us right now: Are they scrapping that election promise?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Mr. Speaker, the budget is coming on Thursday, and I think we should all wait to see what's in it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

### **DHW: FAMILY DOCTOR WAIT-LIST - FIX**

HON. KELLY REGAN: In the last 581 days, health care in Nova Scotia has gotten worse and worse - we've seen the doctor wait-list double to over 137,000; we've seen ambulance offloads increase. The government broke its promises to reduce the surgical backlog in its first 18 months, and to meet national surgery wait-time benchmarks. Just weeks ago, another family practice shut down because this government would not give the doctors in the clinic the support they needed to continue.

Over the 19 months of the government's mandate, the number of Nova Scotians who need a family doctor has grown higher and higher every single month - where is that fix the Premier promised?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure members in this House that the team has been working incredibly hard. We've had difficult circumstances, we've been working diligently with all of our partners across the health care system, looking at ways in which people can access health care. Attachment and access are not the same thing. We know that we have access through Virtual Care Nova Scotia. We know that we have virtual care emergency departments in this province.

We have 97,000 people who can access a primary care provider through virtual care with a referral to in-patient visits at the primary care clinic if they so choose. We have mobile clinics. We have stand-up respiratory clinics. We continue to work in communities to leverage their assets to make sure Nova Scotians get the care they need.

KELLY REGAN: Emergency room closures in Nova Scotia doubled last year, ER wait times are up across the province and, tragically, emergency room deaths increased by 10 per cent. This government has presided over one of the largest declines in primary care access in decades, and indications are in recent months it has actually accelerated that trend - not slowed it, accelerated it.

My question: How long does the Premier think Nova Scotians can afford to wait for him to fulfill his promises?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure the members opposite that we've already made historic investments in health care in this province, and we will continue to do so. It speaks absolutely to the mess we were left from the former government, and I can tell you specifically because I worked in it. But the beauty is we've been across this province talking to health care workers. We've talked to 20 communities about what it is they need. I'm confident in the team's ability and the budget we'll put forward to improve health care in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

### **DHW: ELECTION COMMITMENT - DELIVER**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, it has been over 18 months since this government was elected, and in their platform, it states "A PC government will cut out the inefficiencies related to the operation of our ORs and allow them to run outside normal business hours ... until the backlog has been addressed. ... Our goal will be to meet the benchmark standards for wait times, within 18 months of being elected." I'll table that. The minister's mandate letter commits to this as well, specifically, and I quote, to "Meet the

benchmark standards for wait times as established by the Wait Time Alliance within 18 months of being elected.”

[2:15 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, we are past the deadline. This is a promise that has been broken, and the mandate has not been met. Why did this government fail to deliver on this clear election commitment?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We really are pleased with the progress that the teams are making in this surgical wait time list. For the past six months, our surgical growth rate is less than 1, which says we are removing more people from the wait-list than we are adding. There have been 6,000 more cataract surgeries in 2023, an increase of 3,700 from 2022. We have opened additional in-patient beds at Dartmouth General as well as a third endoscopy unit. There are a number of investments and we’re making very clear progress in terms of our commitment to Nova Scotians.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: When appearing before the Health Committee in December, interim Nova Scotia Health CEO Karen Oldfield said, “to get into the national benchmarks, which we have set in our plan... It will take until mid-2025 to do that, and that will happen at a rate of 2,500 additional surgeries a year.” She also said, “Where is a Bible? We don’t have a Bible? Then I cross my heart. I cross my heart. We will move these surgical wait-lists.” I’ll table that.

My question is, when can the thousands of Nova Scotians waiting on the list expect 24/7 surgeries as promised in the PC election platform, and this year, are we going to hit the additional 2,500 surgeries as promised by the Nova Scotia Health CEO?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: The first thing I do want to make sure that Nova Scotians know is that our emergency surgeries are open 24/7, and that there is access in the event of an emergency, that patients can access that care. We are doing a number of things to support people who are waiting for surgery. We’re looking at an e-referral, centralized e-referral process, and centralized booking so that primary care providers can understand where the shortest wait-lists are for their patients. There were 1,098 same-day hip and knee arthroplasty surgeries compared to only 72 in 2019-20, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that that is progress.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **SNSIS: FIXED TERM LEASES - ACTION**

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services. I would like to share the story of Elizabeth O’Hanley, who used to live in an apartment in Dartmouth that cost \$925 a month. She was forced to move out along with



others in her building when her landlord refused to renew her fixed-term lease. Later, her unit was listed for \$2,200. This is one of dozens of stories like this, all of them perfectly legal.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister think it's acceptable that someone could be at risk of becoming homeless for no other reason than that the landlord wants to double the rent?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I appreciate the member bringing forward this question to the floor. Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that our government supports the intended use of fixed-term leases. What I have heard in the media the last number of months is specifically regarding the unintended use of fixed-term leases, and that is concerning. As we look to strengthen and to modernize the Residential Tenancies Program, we do engage with our stakeholders. We hear their feedback, both from the tenant and landlord groups. That's very valuable feedback. Again, any changes that I look to make in this Legislature are always looking through that lens of balancing the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm hearing that we should close that loophole.

Mr. Speaker, Diana Devlin was leasing a two-bedroom two-bathroom apartment from Peppermint Properties with her 92-year-old mother since 2018 when the landlord told them he would not be renewing their lease. Diana and her mother were paying \$1,800 a month for their apartment. A few days ago, it was listed for \$2,600. Diana and her mother are two of the many people facing this situation, all perfectly legal.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister continuing to allow fixed-term leases to be used this way?

COLTON LEBLANC: As it's been implied - I mean, some of the challenges in respect to what the member is raising today on the floor are regarding the rent cap. As had been noted previously, that is landlords trying to circumnavigate the existing 2 per cent rent cap. That's another topic that we've engaged with our stakeholders. I met with a number of the stakeholders last Fall and will certainly have more to say specifically in respect to the rent cap in the near future.

Again, we're continuously looking at ways of modernizing and strengthening the Residential Tenancy Program. That includes informing Nova Scotians of their rights and responsibilities and continuing the great work of awareness and education campaigns for both tenants and landlords that we started, and we'll continue to do that in the near future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

**SNSIS: HOTEL PURCHASE - JUSTIFY**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative government of Nova Scotia has recently released their health care development plan which, like many of their other plans, is heavy on promises and light on details.

Mr. Speaker, we'd like to know where in this plan it calls for \$34 million of government taxpayer money to purchase an unfinished hotel. That's 3.5 times its market value.

To be clear, an independent report states, and I quote, "...even with costly and time-consuming redesign and renovations, the building cannot be adapted to suit the patient profile without severe restrictions on patient admission eligibility." I'll table that.

Does the Premier think that acting against expert advice and drastically overpaying for an unsuitable building is a good use of taxpayer money?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member that we did pay within that price range. I'm not going to speak to a draft report, but one thing that's very clear is that the difference between our government and the former government is room for excuses and sitting on our hands.

This party here is interested in doing things differently. Embarking on a journey of transforming health care, of developing first time in Canada solutions - first time in Nova Scotia solutions such as a transition community facility that's going to increase capacity and access to beds in our province. We need beds, beds, beds. The Premier's been very clear. Let's do more and let's do it faster. Let's go like hell.

FRED TILLEY: The one thing that this government is doing differently is rewarding their friends - hiring their friends, paying their friends, and purchasing buildings at 3.5 times their market value. It is not a draft report.

Mr. Speaker, at \$34 million, this makes this unfinished hotel the most expensive hotel to ever trade hands in Nova Scotia, coming in at \$312,000 per room. To top it off, the minister stated in February that the government hasn't even decided how they will use the hotel, despite rushing to purchase it via an alternative procurement in a 24-hour time frame. I can table that.

Can the Premier tell the House exactly how the government will adapt this hotel, how long it's going to take, and how much it's going to cost?

COLTON LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, I believe, and I want to clarify for the record - perhaps the member can look it up as well - that assessment value is from 2019, prior to any development on the site. We engaged with an international firm to do that assessment of the property. We did pay it within range.

Again, on December 15<sup>th</sup> . . .

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

COLTON LEBLANC: On December 15<sup>th</sup>, we embarked on a different path to delivering more for Nova Scotians, and by doing it faster, by adding a new ER to the HI site, adding more beds to the HI site, adding more surgical capacity. These are all great things.

Again, we're not in the business of sitting on excuses, Mr. Speaker. We're looking to move forward on this file.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

### **OMHA: ONE HR. COUNSELLING - INADEQUATE**

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Mr. Speaker, last month the minister responsible for the Office of Mental Health and Addictions announced \$2.3 million per year for access to a one-on-one counselling session for Nova Scotians. I was elated, especially after the pandemic and the need for mental health, until I found out that it is one hour - a one-hour session.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that mental health requires a minimum of five to 10 sessions. They do not start treatment before four or five sessions. So whoever advised this minister that one-hour sessions are somehow going to help, I don't know.

On top of it, they are put on a wait-list for 100 to 150 days. Does the minister think that a one-hour session is access to mental health and the promise of universal mental health?

HON. BRIAN COMER: This is a new, improved service for all Nova Scotians. It is available for a host of reasons, ranging from gambling to depression or substance abuse disorder. These four pilot sites are embedded in the communities across the province. They're also accessible via telehealth and VirtualCareNS for all Nova Scotians to use.

Our goal is to help people early. This is a new service and complementary to our highly accessible acute services based in the health care system.

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the member, would the minister move the mic down a little bit closer? They're not hearing you very well on this side.

The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I thank the minister for the answer. However, he didn't answer my question at all. My question right now is: Wouldn't that money, the \$2.3 million, be better spent on reducing wait times for mental health services here in the province? I would like to ask the minister why this money is being given to a third-party provider for only one-hour treatment when we could have invested in more mental health counsellors from Nova Scotia so that the wait times are reduced.

BRIAN COMER: This is a free, evidence-based service offered by clinicians. They're all from Nova Scotia. I've been very clear from the start that we're going to leverage partnerships with the private sector.

As the reason why the third party - that was for the standard procurement process of the Province. I have no worries with that delivery of care.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

#### **DHW: FUNDING AGREEMENT BENCHMARKS - RELEASE**

HON. KEITH IRVING: We know the federal government has recently negotiated bilateral agreements with each province and territory in the country. Of the \$42.6 billion distributed nationally, the Nova Scotia agreement is for \$1.03 billion over 10 years.

If we compare what Nova Scotians are receiving to the other Atlantic Provinces, we find we are receiving the least amount per capita of any of the four Atlantic Provinces. In fact, if you look at the average, which includes Nova Scotia, we are receiving \$224 per person less than the average in the Atlantic Provinces. It doesn't sound like much, but it's \$230 million. Is there a good reason that Nova Scotia has the worst deal in the Atlantic Provinces? Is there a reason for this, or is this just poor negotiations?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Dear, dear, Mr. Speaker. I'm not a bit concerned about this. We always want more from the federal government. I'd be very happy if you'd write a letter yourself and tell them that we're very anxious to accept more. We've done very good negotiations. We have a good relationship with our federal counterparts, and I know that we can use that money and more. We'll continue to ask for more from our federal counterparts.

KEITH IRVING: I think what I heard there is that we got a bad deal. This cash infusion requires the Province to meet specific targets, and when it comes to specific targets, this government has been consistent in its failure to set them, and failure to meet them.

We do not want to risk being in a position where we fall short of these targets and risk missing out on our vital health care funding. We need to have our own oversight to make sure we're on track to meeting our obligations. Will the government release the

benchmarks that are part of this new bilateral funding agreement so that Nova Scotians can know if this government is meeting their targets?

[2:30 p.m.]

MICHELLE THOMPSON: What I would say a little less politely is that I don't agree with the member, and perhaps he could check his math.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

### **DHW: PUBLIC TRAVEL NURSING PGM. - COMMIT**

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. This government has spent tens of millions of dollars on private travel nurse agencies since it was elected. This is money that, instead of going into our public system, is being spent on for-profit nurse agencies.

Earlier, when asked about the high cost of travel nursing, the Premier said, we just can't compete with the appeal of travel nursing. Other provinces actually have an explicit plan to phase out the use of travel nurses. When will the province spend zero dollars on private travel nurse agencies?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We made a good start yesterday by spending \$350 million on 55,000 employees. We signalled to our registered nurses, LPNs and NPs across this province that they are valuable to us. We are looking at incentivizing people to come back.

We know that we need those travel nurses right now because of the shortage in the workforce, but we are committed. We've increased the number of seats. We've shortened the process in order to get legislation.

The answer to getting off the dependency on those nurses is to have more nurses in the system. We are very committed to that. Every nursing student in this province has been offered a job for the next five years. We've been looking at immigration pathways through the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment.

SUSAN LEBLANC: There's no question the retention bonus for nurses and other health care workers is going to help a lot of people. It may convince them to stay, but you can't retain staff where there aren't any in the first place. Some hospitals are working at an 80 per cent vacancy rate. These acute shortages are why the nurses' union has asked the province to create a public travel nurse program for Nova Scotia that would incentivize nurses to work in areas that are chronically short - like has happened in Manitoba, and in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Will the minister commit to creating a public travel nursing program in Nova Scotia so that staff in chronically short areas can get some help?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I would appreciate it if the member opposite would table the hospital in which there's an 80 per cent vacancy rate. I don't feel that's fair to be promoting that number and scaring Nova Scotians when that, in fact, is not the case. I have not been made aware of that.

We are doing a number of things across this province to support recruitment and retention of our nursing staff, as well as other health care professionals. We have the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment. We are working with Nova Scotia Health Authority around recruitment initiatives. We are working with nursing schools and investing in education in this province.

We have travelled throughout 20 communities in this province to speak directly to them, to tell them that there is health care opportunity in every corner and community in this province. We'll continue to do more to increase our nursing supply.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

#### **DHW: REINSTATE FAM. PHYS. INCENTIVE - COMMIT**

BRAEDON CLARK: Mr. Speaker, the doctor wait-list has doubled since this government came to power but if you drill down in the Central Zone it's actually even worse. It has tripled in the Central Zone. We are now the only Atlantic province that does not have any recruitment incentive to practice in the capital region for new family doctors.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Wellness if she agrees that it was a mistake to get rid of that incentive, and we are now seeing the consequences of that decision.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We do know that a large percentage of the Need a Family Practice Registry in the urban region is driven by immigration - people moving to this part of the province.

We also know that there are a number of physicians retiring, so there are a number of things that we're doing. We're working with Dal Family Medicine to look at incubator clinics to support new physicians in looking at a collaborative care practice in order to transition them out to community.

We're looking at a variety of ways to work with them. Dr. Nicole Boutilier recently reached out to physicians to tell them that we want to work with them in order to support them in their practices. We've increased the number of medical residency seats.

There are a number of things we're doing, and we'll continue to do more until we fix the health care.

BRAEDON CLARK: What is odd to me today is that both the Premier and the Minister of Health and Wellness have talked about how important it is to incentivize health care professionals to stay and practise here in Nova Scotia and we agree. Yet, at the same time, last year they axed the incentive that has led to really serious consequences in the Central Zone where the number of people without a family doctor has tripled. In the Bedford-Sackville region it is up six and a half times - 650 per cent - in a year and a half.

There needs to be substantial, real incentives to retain family doctors in the fastest-growing part of our province, as the minister mentioned.

I ask the minister: Will she commit to reinstating the much-needed incentive for family practice doctors in the Central Zone?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We know that there are a variety of ways in which physicians want to practise across this province, and we know that an urban practice is different than a rural practice.

We are working with physicians. We are working with Doctors Nova Scotia to better understand what the physicians would like to see. We are in the middle of negotiations with them now. There are a number of things that we are working with, and supporting practices in order to transition and transform health care from that single entry of physicians only - working together to a collaborative team approach.

MR. SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

#### **DHW: EXPERIENCED NSHA BOARD & CEO - REINSTATE**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Speaker, in the PC platform it states, and I quote: "We need managers with a broader range of expertise, and we need fewer managers. There appear too frequently to be redundancies in the work being done."

My question to the Premier is: After 19 months, why has the only change to the organizational structure of the NSHA been installing a political ally with no health care experience as the interim CEO?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We have a very dynamic health care leadership team. We have a CEO, the deputy minister, an administrator, and we have a physician who leads our health care system.

The current president and CEO of Nova Scotia Health Authority is a dynamic leader who is well known across not only this country but the world for her ability to

deliver results. She is a transformational leader. She has done incredible things since she has taken that position. I'm very pleased with the work that's happened under her leadership.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Respectfully, the current CEO has no health care experience.

The platform goes on to say, "We can establish this by optimizing the administration, based on the needs of the patients and the communities, to recognize different frames of expertise and backgrounds, more diversity and empowering patient-driven decision-making."

At one point in time, we actually had a diverse board filled with health care experts, but this government fired them all to install a political ally. When will this government reinstate a Nova Scotia Health Authority board with a CEO and a board that leads our health care system based on experience?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We continue to need an agile leadership team that's able to make decisions in a timely manner. Over the last number of months, we've been working on a health equity framework. There have been a number of community consultations that have been led by the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority to better understand the needs of diverse communities. We are going directly to people to hear from them in community to understand how best to support people who are equity-seeking - not only for community-based care but also in terms of the hospital.

There is more work to do, and there's more to say, but I'm very pleased with the way that our teams have reached out to community to better understand their needs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

### **MAH: SPECIAL LIST OF PROJECTS - EXPLAIN**

FRED TILLEY: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that being a friend or a political ally of this government pays dividends in Nova Scotia currently. Just recently, we saw that a former candidate had a special housing development project added to a special list, allowing that project to circumvent normal policies and procedures around housing developments.

Why do friends and political allies of the Premier and this government seem to get preferential treatment while other Nova Scotians are left behind?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that we have done an incredible amount of work over the last two years in housing. We've invested over \$200



million and done projects all over the province with all kinds of people. We will continue to do projects like that.

That project in that particular area had a component of seniors and long-term care. We've invested an incredible amount of money. As the member may know or may not know, there really had not been any significant investment in seniors and long-term care in three governments - and we're doing that.

So when we see projects that we can expedite and move along, we don't look at who they were. We look at what they can do and what area they are in. We're very pleased to have done that project.

FRED TILLEY: It just so happens by coincidence that this special project is led by a former candidate with, from my understanding, little to no housing development experience.

My question is: How do I get, or how does a Nova Scotian get, a project on this special list?

JOHN LOHR: I'm very pleased to say that, as the member may know, we just recently announced a number of projects - including a number up in the Cape Breton area. The way to get a project done is simply to apply, come to us and talk to us. We're open to hear from anybody. We're doing projects all over the province, including in the Cape Breton area, where the member is from.

We will continue to do projects. We will continue to work with Nova Scotians who want to work with us and who want to help us address the housing crisis which extends from one end of the province to the other.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

### **DHW: EMERG. CARE IMPROVEMENTS - UPDATE**

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In January of this year, Nova Scotians voiced collective outrage over the state of our emergency departments following the tragic deaths of both Allison Holthoff and Charlene Snow. In response, this government released a list of action items to improve ER care.

When these actions were released, there was some hope that this government had begun to understand the urgency and gravity of the situation. However, two months later, it's becoming clear that progress on these items has been slow.

Nova Scotians are desperate to see concrete actions implemented to improve ER conditions before another tragedy occurs. This government has no shortage of promises

and plans, but that's not enough. When will we see this government walk the talk on emergency care?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We too were very saddened to hear about the situations in the emergency rooms in January. It prompted us to act very quickly. There are patient advocates now in place in every emergency department in this province. There are waiting room care providers at Dartmouth General and the QEII, and there are processes around hiring more so that people can get care in the emergency room.

We have virtual care in the emergency department as well as support people who have low acuity in order to make sure that their wait is much shorter, and the average wait time for those folks is down around 50 minutes. We have hired physician assistants at Dartmouth General Hospital, and we are currently in the process of hiring physician assistants at Bridgewater.

We have a second Emergency Health Services airplane which will help move people through this province and put EHS trucks back on the road. There have been a number of issues . . .

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Mr. Speaker, we know the heartbreaking stories reported earlier this year are far from the only such incidents. Emergency room deaths are increasing, and Nova Scotians are alarmed. Data obtained through Freedom of Information showed that 2022 had both the highest number and highest proportion of emergency room fatalities in the past five years. I can table that.

Nova Scotians deserve the full picture of what's going on, and we need a government committed to preventing future tragedies. Earlier this year, our caucus called for an inquiry into ER deaths, but there was no response from the minister. I will ask her now: Will this government commit to conducting an inquiry into emergency room deaths?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We certainly are committed to reviewing anytime there is an unexpected outcome in our emergency rooms to ensure that we can always do better and look at how things are going.

We have to expect that the most critically ill individuals in Nova Scotia present to hospital through our emergency rooms. We know that that happens due to complex illness, unexpected life-threatening illnesses, or accidents. We are going to continue to see a proportion of people who have unsuccessful outcomes, and that does not mean that our dedicated staff are not working and skilled and capable of providing life-saving care.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**DED: LUNENBURG FOUNDRY BID - EXPLAIN**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: As we all know, government has made it a priority to consolidate power in the hands of the Premier and his ministers. As a direct result, we have seen this government act inappropriately.

My question to the Minister of Economic Development is: Why is it that the government decided to compete against a private bidder to attempt to acquire the Lunenburg Foundry shipyard?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: The bid that was made for the property at the Lunenburg shipyard was made in the absence of knowing what other bids were being made at that time. At this point, as the person who is also the member for Lunenburg, I have for sure concern but also optimism, because in meeting with proponents for offshore opportunities, it is back in the hands of the private sector. We as government will look to a future role.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'll take a stab at answering that question. It's because as usual, the facility was tied to friends of the government. As usual, the entire thing fell apart with the slightest bit of scrutiny.

Mr. Speaker, will the government conduct an independent investigation into the failed attempt to acquire the Lunenburg Foundry Shipyard?

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Mr. Speaker, it's far too early in the session for me to lose my Zen, but the people of Lunenburg County in particular know how utterly ridiculous an allegation that is - that this was related to friends.

This is a business with over a century of involvement, a linchpin service within the marine industrial sector on the South Shore. It was that concern for the provision of that service and, frankly, nothing else.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

**NRR: POWER RATE HIKE - EXPLAIN**

HON. KELLY REGAN: My colleagues and I have been urging the government to take action on power rates. Last year the government declared mission accomplished on power rates. A government release trumpeted the Premier's "PCs block NS Power's 12 per cent rate hike."

Mr. Speaker, here we stand today with a 14 per cent rate hike with who knows how much to come in two years. I guess the government figured the 12 per cent rate hike wasn't quite enough. It turns out that the mission was not accomplished.

I'd like to ask the Premier: How'd he get that so wrong?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I thank the member opposite for the question. It gives me an opportunity to stand up and talk about Bill No. 212. Actually, the NSUARB found that Bill No. 212 did its job. It reduced power rates.

As I said in the House last session, there were two phases of Bill No. 212: There was the non-fuel side and there was the fuel side. We capped what they could charge for their rates on the non-fuel side. I'd just like to remind the members of the House that in Nova Scotia there have been fuel adjustments for Nova Scotia Power rates for many years, long before this PC government took over, so we did protect the ratepayers in Nova Scotia.

KELLY REGAN: I will say that the minister was clear on that, but the Premier was not.

Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians can make neither heads nor tails of this government's energy policy. First, they claim that they're stopping rate hikes, now they're saying to suck it up and just live with the hike. They oversold and underdelivered.

They say that they are proponents of clean energy, then they extend the life span of multiple coal plants. They say that they are planning to meet our climate targets, but they are overseeing the stoppage or cancellation of almost every single renewable energy project in the province and forgiving 2.6 million tonnes of carbon emissions.

Mr. Speaker, the windmills of this province must be generating a lot of juice with all the sucking and blowing that this government is doing . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Question, please. I'm going to ask that the member retract that statement.

KELLY REGAN: It doesn't mean what a lot of people think it means, but it does mean that they're saying one thing and doing something else. My question for the Premier is: Are there any other ways that he's planning to hike people's bills this session that he'd like to tell us about?

TORY RUSHTON: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to remind Nova Scotians that we were the government that introduced green hydrogen to the process in Nova Scotia. (Applause)

Nova Scotia is not the only province that's in the competition with green hydrogen, but we're certainly leading the pack. We are putting in more megawatts of onshore wind. We announced 5 gigawatts of offshore wind. We're still working with the tidal power. We secured the solar program for Nova Scotians. To say that we're sitting on our hands is pretty rich.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **NRR: POWER RATES PROTECTION - ACTION**

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his government meddled in an independent process for Nova Scotia Power. As a result, the utility was downgraded, so it's going to cost them more money to get financing for any of these projects. That means more costs on the backs of customers of Nova Scotia Power who are Nova Scotians.

This government not only did not protect Nova Scotians from an increase in power rates, they made it worse for them, Mr. Speaker, and time will show that.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: As I said, this gives me an opportunity to talk about Bill No. 212. It was in the NSUARB's findings: Bill No. 212 from this PC government, that was agreed on unanimously in this House, did its job to protect ratepayers in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Speaker, it was found there that it would be double digits each year if it were not for this government.

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

### **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

The Honourable Leader of the Official Opposition on a point of order.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In response to a question from the member for Dartmouth North, the Minister has suggested that we ask the member where she got the 80 per cent vacancy. That was reported by CBC on March 21<sup>st</sup> of this year, and I'll table that for the minister. So in fact, the member was not scaring Nova Scotians, she was speaking on the fact of the matter where in some hospitals in Nova Scotia it's been reported that there are upwards of 80 per cent vacancy rates for registered nurses, licenced practical nurses, and nurse practitioners in some hospitals.

THE SPEAKER: That is not a point of order, that is just sharing new information. I recognize the Honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That concludes Government Business for the day. I move that the House do rise to meet again on Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Tomorrow is Opposition Day, so I will turn it over to my honourable colleague, the Official Opposition House Leader.

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

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For Opposition Day tomorrow, the Opposition will be calling Bill No. 257, the Health Services and Insurance Act (amended), Respecting Glucose Monitors; Bill No. 259, the Income Tax Act (amended), to Reduce Income Tax; and Bill No. 261, the Revenue Act (amended), to Suspend Provincial Motive Fuel Taxes.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do rise to meet again on Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Before we do adjourn, I recognize the member for Dartmouth North has an announcement. She already asked and I said yes.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder to any women members that we are meeting virtually tomorrow as the CWP - Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians - to discuss a very exciting project that we want to put forward in the Fall. You have the Zoom link. Cara Locke is helping us facilitate that. I hope you can make it if you are not at the Public Accounts Committee. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. With that, we stand adjourned until 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday.

[The House rose at 2:52 p.m.]

**NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)****RESOLUTION NO. 584**

By: Gary Burrill (Halifax Chebucto)

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

Whereas seniors' homelessness is a grievous and egregious issue in Nova Scotia, with 15 per cent of unhoused people in the province over the age of 60, and more than a quarter of the province's unhoused population whose first experience of homelessness has been in the past 12 months identifying themselves as seniors; and

Whereas the November 22, 2022 count of people sleeping outside in Halifax, Bedford and Sackville encountered 20 people that night who were over the age of 55; and

Whereas seniors being forced to sleep outside is an affront to the kind of province desired by the people of Nova Scotia, and is a problem that could be solved in the immediate short term with the appropriate application of resources by the Province;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly calls on the Government of Nova Scotia to immediately expand the availability of emergency housing and related services such that there will not be a single senior citizen involuntarily sleeping outside by September 1, 2023.