



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Karla MacFarlane

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

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

First Session

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2023

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HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2023

Sixty-fourth General Assembly

First Session

1:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Karla MacFarlane

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

Lisa Lachance, Danielle Barkhouse, Nolan Young

THE SPEAKER: Order. We will now begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: As Speaker of the House of Assembly, and pursuant to Section 163 of the Elections Act, I am pleased to table the annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer of 2022-2023.

The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Advanced Education.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Speaker, before I read my notice of motion, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRIAN WONG: In your gallery, we have some representatives from Mount Saint Vincent University. Mount Saint Vincent is celebrating their 150th anniversary this year, and I know that a number of members of this House are alumni of the Mount, including myself. I'll ask that you all join in welcoming these guests.

Joining us today are: Dr. Joël Dickinson, president and vice-chancellor of Mount Saint Vincent University; Kelly Gallant, associate vice-president, University Relations; and Sister Sheilagh Martin, member of the Mount Saint Vincent Board of Governors, appointed by the congregation of the Sisters of Charity.

I ask the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause) With that, I shall move to the notice of motion.

THE SPEAKER: We welcome you here today. Thank you so much. It's an honour to be here with you.

The honourable Minister of Advanced Education.

RESOLUTION NO. 807

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

Whereas Mount Saint Vincent University is celebrating their 150th anniversary; and

Whereas Mount Saint Vincent University has a proud history of strong, continued record for innovation in education and research, and is a proud supporter of their community; and

Whereas many members in this Chamber have benefited from an education at Mount Saint Vincent University and from being a part of the Mount community;

Therefore, be it resolved that all members of this Legislature join in congratulating Mount Saint Vincent University on their 150th anniversary and looking forward to their continued story and benefit to our province.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 400 - An Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Motor Vehicle Act, Respecting Speed Limits in High Population Density Areas. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

HON. GREG MORROW: Speaker, before I begin, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

GREG MORROW: In your gallery - the Speaker's Gallery - I'm honoured to introduce Scott Beaver of the St. Mary's River Association. Scott is joined here by his parents, Rene and Carol. I ask Scott, Rene, and Carol to rise to accept the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. A pleasure to have you.

The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

ST. MARY'S RIVER ASSOC.: CONSERV. WORK - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the St. Mary's River Association in Sherbrooke.

The St. Mary's River Association promotes the conservation and betterment of the St. Marys River through habitat restoration, land protection and stewardship, continued monitoring, and participating in management of the fisheries of the river.

For many years, under the leadership of their chair, Scott Beaver, they campaigned the Province to protect the Archibald Lake area, its animal and rare-species habitat, and its direct connection to the St. Marys River.

On August 28th, with the St. Marys River behind us, I announced on behalf of my colleague the Honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change the protection of the Archibald Lake Wilderness Area. It was a proud day for Scott and his family, including his daughter Sadie, who did a fantastic job as the emcee for the event, as well as residents and members of the association.

Speaker, I'd like to congratulate Scott and all members of the St. Mary's River Association for their dedication to the betterment and conservation of the St. Marys River and everything that surrounds it. Their hard work will preserve this beautiful river for many generations to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'd like the House to join me in recognizing some individuals in the West Gallery. Nikunj Kachhadiya, director and founder of the Indian Festivals Club of Nova Scotia; Nirav Mistry, director and president; Dolly Mirpuri, communication director; Pratik Patel, the treasurer; Nikunj Patel, secretary; Jainish Patel, media coordinator; and Amit Kachhadiya, public relations officer.

If those individuals could stand and please be recognized by the Chamber, that would be really appreciated.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

ORGANIZERS: DIWALI CARNIVAL - THANKS

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, last month I had the opportunity to visit a beautiful celebration at the Diwali Carnival in Halifax. Diwali is a festival of lights celebrated by millions of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists. India's most-awaited festival is a celebration of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

From delicious food to exciting performances, India's culture was on full display at the Diwali Carnival all weekend long. Events like this help all Nova Scotians learn more about the culture of the many people who live here in our province. I'm so grateful that I got to attend the carnival with my family. My daughters particularly enjoyed the colourful rangoli that was created for the event and is said to be the largest on the East Coast.

Thank you all to the organizers and specifically to Nikunj Kachhadiya, director and founder; Nirav Mistry, director and president; Dolly Mirpuri, communications director, Pratik Patel, treasurer, Nikunj Patel, secretary, Jainish Patel, media coordinator, and Amit Kachhadiya, public relations officer, who comprise the board of the Indian Festivals Club of Nova Scotia.

Speaker, I'd like the House to join me in congratulating them for their incredible work and thank you to Vishal and Shelly Bhardwaj for joining us as well. Happy Diwali. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. I hope that you enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

KIW. GRAHAMS GROVE COM. BLDGS.: OPENING - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I rise to recognize the opening of a beautiful new community space in Dartmouth this past Summer.

The Kiwanis Grahams Grove Community Buildings are the shared home of the Dartmouth Kiwanis Club and the Dartmouth Dragon Boat Association. Both provide a gorgeous new gathering place for the whole community.

In collaboration with Halifax, the space integrates environmentally conscious planning and the Rick Hansen Foundation accessibility certification. The land, originally a seasonal settlement for the Mi'kmaw people, was blessed prior to construction, and the building's design echoes that of traditional carved long boats.

I'm thrilled to have this gorgeous, progressive space available to our community. I hope it will inspire more thoughtful and inclusive planning throughout the province.

THE SPEAKER: Before we continue, there is a request to revert to . . . It's okay. We will continue.

The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

LEGION BRANCHES: REMEMBRANCE DAY - RECOG.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, every year on November 11th, Remembrance Day, we take the time to honour those Nova Scotians who have made the ultimate sacrifice and laid their lives down in the name of freedom. At the same time, we honour those who left their homes and families to serve and came back forever changed.

Nova Scotians have a proud and honourable tradition of selfless service and honouring those who have served. I wish to extend a personal acknowledgement and to thank the volunteers, veterans, members, and their families of both the Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 165 Uniacke & District Branch and the RCL Calais Branch No. 162 in Lower Sackville, as well as the many other Royal Canadian Legions across the province.

On behalf of all Nova Scotians, we're grateful to those who sacrificed so much.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction prior to my member statement. In the West Gallery today, I am honoured - I'd like to have them stand and be acknowledged - we have Canon Beazley and his parents, Shelly and Dan Beazley. Welcome.

I'd like the House of Assembly to acknowledge their presence here today.
(Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth.

BEAZLEY, CANON: IWK FUNDRAISER - RECOG.

LORELEI NICOLL: I'm honoured to stand and recognize young Canon Beazley and his Halloween House of Doom fundraiser.

In 2021, Canon required surgery to remove his kidney and a tumour. He was diagnosed with a Stage 1 Wilms tumour, and he entered his second surgery within 13 days. The next day, he began a 24-week chemotherapy regimen. As a way of thanking the IWK Health Centre for their support, care, and understanding, Canon turned his love for all things Halloween and spooky into a fundraiser for the hospital.

For the third year in a row, Canon and his family have hosted the amazing annual #enterifyoudare House of Doom on Lindenwood. For three incredible nights, Canon and the House of Doom's scare crew bring the haunt to life, delivering terror to all those who dare to enter. To date, Canon's House of Doom has raised almost \$45,000 for the IWK Health Centre. (Applause)

I want to ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing the determination and courage of Canon Beazley and his family and to thank him for making dreams come true - and a few Halloween nightmares. Thank you, everyone. (Standing ovation)

[1:15 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour on an introduction.

HON. TONY INCE: I'd like the House to stand and recognize two people I have here today. As I call your names, I would ask you to please rise: Dr. Karly Kehoe, professor and Canada Research Chair in Atlantic Canada Communities, and chair of the Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Canada Studies; and Alex Marland, Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership, Department of Politics, Acadia University. I ask the House to give them a warm welcome and thank you for coming. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome and thank you for joining us today.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

UACWA: WOMEN'S CONF. - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize the United African Canadian Women's Association. On October 28th, the UACWA held a women's conference at Akerley Campus, with the theme of the conference being Empower H.E.R: Heart health, Embracing ourselves as women, and Resourcefulness as a woman.

The conference featured these notable speakers: Sharon Davis-Murdoch, Ann Divine, Dr. Agnes Chinelo, Diane Govindsamy, and Bernadette Hamilton-Reid. All of the conversations that we had were with a focus on women's health and how we can take care of ourselves, embracing our sisterhood. Lots of connections were made and friendships and bonds were created as we celebrated over food our womanhood and learned more about taking care of ourselves and how we should take care of our own health.

I'd like all members of this House to help me congratulate the United African Canadian Women's Association for such a successful conference and the incredible work that they've done. I look forward to more presentations in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

CARR, HOLLY: LIGHT IN THE FOREST EXHIBIT - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I rise today to recognize and congratulate local Canning artist Holly Carr, who will be presenting her work *Light in the Forest* at the Museum of Natural History in Halifax.

Light in the Forest was created by Holly as a mental wellness project to spread a message of hope and resilience. The project has taken many forms on its journey, from a painted silk project at the Acadia Art Gallery to a multi-media production with art, dance,

music, and spoken word. It was the winner of a Moonbeam Award, and *Light in the Forest* was named top children's book by the Canadian Children's Book Centre for 2021.

Please join me today in recognizing and congratulating Holly Carr for her artistic interpretation and contribution to furthering the awareness of mental health in society.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: May I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

KEITH IRVING: I'd like to draw everyone's attention to the West Gallery, where we're joined by a very accomplished family. We have Dr. Martin Fleckenstein, who's one of our valued family physicians; and his wife, Shelley Fleckenstein, whom I've recognized in this House before, who is the founder of Kings Physiotherapy, now director and owner of CBI Health Group. They, of course, are proud parents of Ben, who is also here and is the subject of my member statement. I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

FLECKENSTEIN, BEN: JOINING POLICE FORCE - THANKS

HON. KEITH IRVING: Today I want to recognize a remarkable young man from Wolfville. Twenty-one-year-old Benjamin Ross Fleckenstein has recently achieved a lifelong dream of working in law enforcement. Following his graduation from Acadia University, Ben enrolled in the Atlantic Police Academy and earlier this year graduated with a grade of 4.2.

I'm very pleased to acknowledge that Ben is now serving as a police constable with the Kentville Police Service. Ben's journey through King's-Edgehill School in Windsor was marked by his unwavering commitment to academic excellence, sportsmanship, and community service as a volunteer. In 2017, Ben was the recipient of the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award, which recognizes the contribution of students outside their formal education and empowers them to develop their leadership skills within their community.

Speaker, we need young leaders to join our police forces, so I'd ask the House to please join me in thanking Ben and wishing him much success as he embarks on his career in law enforcement.

THE SPEAKER: Nice to have you here. Enjoy your visit and congratulations.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes. Please do.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I would like to introduce everyone today to an incredible young man from our area of the province - Amherst, Nova Scotia - Mr. Braeden Lines. Braeden, I'll ask you to stand. Braeden is a native of Amherst. He's a student at St. FX University studying Business Administration, as well as the Management and Leadership Program.

Braeden is a former member of the Amherst Anson Royal Canadian Air Cadets, and fortunately for me, is a very strong supporter, loves democracy, and the topic of politics. I'm so proud to have him as part of our team. Thank you, Braeden, for coming today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House. Enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

LINES, LARRY: AMHERST LITTLE LEAGUE - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise today to recognize Braeden Lines's father, Larry Lines, a devoted volunteer with the Amherst Little League. For over 30 years, Larry served in executive positions, helped with fundraising, and more importantly, coached countless young people in the art of baseball, resulting in too many pennants and league championships to count.

This past Summer, the league recognized Larry Lines's dedication and commitment to the youth of Amherst by naming the newly constructed T-ball park in his honour. Larry worked for many years for the Amherst Public Works Department and juggled that work with hours upon hours each Summer at the little league park.

While he is still a fairly young man, unfortunately, Larry is now experiencing dementia and resides in a local care home. I am certain every former baseball player who was coached and encouraged by Larry wishes him the best and thanks him for his unwavering dedication to the game he loved.

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

INT'L INUIT DAY: CELEB. OF CULTURE - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, unusakut, or good afternoon. I rise today to mark International Inuit Day. November 7th commemorates the founding of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. It was founded to promote and celebrate the unity of Inuit from the U.S.; Inuit Nunangat, or the four Inuit regions of Canada; Greenland; and Chukotka, the Inuit region of Russia.

The Council works to promote Inuit rights, safeguard the Arctic environment and protect and promote the Inuit way of life. At their 2023 meeting, they released a statement whose preamble reads:

“The Arctic is our homeland. Our traditional territories cover the entire Arctic region. Over thousands of years, we have nurtured reciprocal, symbiotic, and respectful relationships between our Peoples and the Arctic environment . . . Our cultural identities, our languages, our values, our spirituality . . . are tied to our environment, of which we are an intimate part.”

Across Canada, celebrations are held on November 7th to share Inuit culture, language and food. Speaker, I ask all members to say nakurmiik, or thank you, to Inuit people, organizations and communities who protect and promote their important culture and heritage.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

CHEVERIE, KORI: COACHING CAREER - BEST WISHES

HON. PAT DUNN: The newly formed Professional Women's Hockey League has named New Glasgow's Kori Cheverie as the first head coach of their Montreal team. Kori was the first female to be full-time assistant coach with a men's university sport team when she joined the Ryerson Rams bench. She was also the first female to be on the coaching staff of the Canadian Men's National team at the 2022 Under-18 Tournament.

As well, Kori has been an assistant with the Canadian Women's team since 2020, head coach of the Nova Scotia Girls team and on the bench with the Pittsburgh Penguins. Kori joins Spryfield's Troy Ryan as one of the first six coaches named in the Professional Women's Hockey League. Pictou County's sports fans are wishing Kori Cheverie great success in this new league.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

SISTERS OF CHARITY - HFX.: 175TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

HON IAIN RANKIN: I rise on the occasion of the celebration of the Sisters of Charity - Halifax 175th Anniversary upcoming in the next year. The Sisters of Charity - Halifax is a congregation of Catholic women based in Halifax, founded on May 11, 1849, when four sisters arrived in Halifax from New York to respond to the bishop's request for teachers. The sisters opened the first school at St. Mary's Convent, and soon expanded into ministry and to orphans, unwed mothers, the elderly, sick, and those desolate and underrepresented.

Quickly, the congregation's mission to give joyful witness to love - love of God, of one another, and of all persons - would profoundly shape the history of Nova Scotia with several notable events, including nursing cholera patients; quarantine on McNabs Island in 1866; opening Mount Saint Vincent Motherhouse and Academy for Girls in 1873, and Mount Saint Vincent College, now known as Mount Saint Vincent University; as well as founding the Halifax Infirmary in 1886.

True to the words of their founder, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, there is no road - the road is made by walking. The sisters' ministry has expanded in Canada, the U.S., Bermuda, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. The sisters' leadership on several social justice initiatives - with a focus on women, children, and those underrepresented - have included any human trafficking, fostering racial justice, and responding to the cries of the poor and the climate crisis. The sisters' last remaining convent in Canada is the Star of the Sea Convent, located in Terence Bay, and operates as a Seton spirituality centre. I ask the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating the sisters on 175 years of joyful witness.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

QUARMYNE, LILIONA: LIVE ART DANCE ART. DIR. - RECOG

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, Liliona Quarmyne is a dancer, choreographer, actor, singer, teacher, curator, and all-round awesome person who lives in Kjiptuk. For several years, she has been the artistic director of Kinetic, and created and performed with such groups as the Arrivals Legacy Project, the International Association of Blacks in Dance, Mayworks Kjiptuk, Zuppa, Vote of Dance, and many more.

She is a wonder to watch onstage. Her performances are rooted in great physical strength and tempered with softness and fun. Liliona is interested in the relationship between art and social justice, on the body's ability to carry ancestral memory, and on the role that the performing arts can play in creating change.

Liliona has just begun her first season as artistic director of Live Art Dance, Atlantic Canada's premier dance presenting organization, which is excellent news for both Nova Scotia audiences and for performers from here and away. With Liliona at the helm of

this important organization, I'm sure Live Art will thrive and expand. I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Lilion Quarmyne as she embarks on this new role, and to thank her for her contributions to art in our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

OAKLEY, NANCY: CREATIVE N.S. AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH BAIN: Speaker, on November 3rd, the Creative Nova Scotia Awards were presented to 10 artists, recognizing their excellence in artistic achievement. One of those recipients was Nancy Oakley, a visual and craft artist from Eskasoni First Nation.

Nancy received the \$5,000 Indigenous Artist Recognition Award. This award recognizes Indigenous artists who have emerged from their initial training and development and are active in the Nova Scotia/Mi'kma'ki arts community.

I ask all members of the House of Assembly to please join me in passing on congratulations to Nancy, and in wishing her further success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

NOVAK, CHARLIE: WWII SERVICE - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, I rise on my feet to recognize a family member who served in World War II. Many folks in the Legislature here and across communities of our province are going to be taking the time to remember family members who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our democracy, so I rise in my place to recognize my grandfather, Able Seaman Charlie Novak. He served on the *HMCS Montréal* throughout World War II and, as I said, he and other members of the Novak and MacIntyre families served in the war.

I rise in my place to recognize my family and the families of others across this province who, as I have said, paid the ultimate sacrifice so we could be here in the Legislature today.

AUTISM N.S. - CB REGION: FUNDRAISER - THANKS

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I rise to bring recognition to the Cape Breton Region Chapter of Autism Nova Scotia. On June 3rd, we were privileged to join the community at the Membertou Sport & Wellness Centre for Walk Your Way for Autism. Close to 200 community members walked together, raising money to help the Cape Breton Chapter continue their fantastic work providing support, education, advocacy, and building

on programs and services. Thank you to all the sponsors and volunteers for a great day of games, activities, surprise guests - including Mayflower Molly and Elsa and Anna from *Frozen*. Thank you again to Autism Cape Breton for being there to support, educate, and advocate.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request to revert back to Introduction of Bills with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

It is agreed.

[INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:]

Bill No. 401 - An Act to Amend Chapter 120 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Early Learning and Child Care Act. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

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

[STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

TRANSCENDENTAL GRP.: ACCESSIBLE CLINIC - CONGRATS.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Today I rise to congratulate the Transcendental Group on opening the first fully accessible dental clinic for persons with physical disabilities in Nova Scotia. This is a wonderful milestone for those who may be challenged by a traditional dental office setting. Of particular note is a ceiling lift in the operatory to lift physically challenged patients to the dental chair.

I am always happy to see the progress that Dartmouth is making to become accessible for all of its residents, and this particular milestone deserves praise. The commitment that the Transcendental Group has made to the health and wellness of folks is very deserving, and this is of great significance to the wider community.

I ask colleagues to join me in congratulating Transcendental Group, Dr. Simar Hundal, and the whole team at Transcendental Group for this awesome achievement.

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

GARNIER, JANE: VOL. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Today I rise to celebrate the remarkable achievements of Jane Garnier, a deserving recipient of the 2023 Youth Volunteer Award given out by HRM. The annual volunteer awards event highlights residents who have made a profound difference through their selfless contributions of time and skills to various programs and services.

Jane is an outstanding example of the positive impact one can make by giving back to the community. Jane wholeheartedly invests 100 per cent of herself into everything she does. Her boundless energy and enthusiasm were a source of delight for camp participants at Chocolate Lake Recreation Centre. Jane's genuine and caring nature is evident as she takes the time to connect with program participants, making their camp experiences fun, exciting, and truly memorable.

Jane also generously gives of her time to support community cleanup efforts and volunteers at a local soup kitchen. Her selfless contributions have undoubtedly enriched the lives of many within our community.

Speaker, I invite all members to join me in applauding Jane's exceptional efforts and the positive impact she has made in our community. Thank you, Jane, for all your outstanding contributions to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

MCCORMACK, BILL: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I rise to recognize the end of an era in Dartmouth South. This week, Bill McCormack closed Antoine Hairstylist after 63 years in business on Portland Street. For so many Dartmouthians, Antoine has been a fixture on the block, along with Moffatt's, and many can't remember a time when this humble salon didn't exist.

Bill hung up his scissors in 2022 at the age of 80 to care for his wife, Lillian, who sadly lost her battle with cancer this past September. They raised their two children, Paula and Billy, in their home above the shop during their over-50-year marriage. Community members are recalling many years of good conversation, wedding hairstyles, and excellent service at Antoine.

The landscape of downtown Dartmouth is certainly changing, but we are lucky to have a long history of strong community members to inspire us. Please join me in thanking Bill for his years of service to Dartmouth and wishing him a well-deserved retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

PYE, ARCHIE: DONATIONS - THANKS

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to recognize local businessman Archie Pye for his ongoing generosity to our community. Mr. Pye is the owner of Dartmouth Central Plumbing and Heating in Eastern Passage.

He recently donated a significant amount of money to the Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation for funding towards our first MRI machine. Archie and his family also generously gave a \$1,000 donation to the Eastern Passage Music 4 Mental Health fundraiser. This donation specifically ensured that the MLA for Eastern Passage had to jump off the wharf at Fisherman's Cove the next day.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in thanking Archie Pye for his generosity and commitment to his community - your generosity does not go unnoticed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

ORGS.: BEDFORD MINOR BASK. ASSOC. - THANKS

BRAEDON CLARK: Speaker, today I'd like to recognize and thank everybody involved with the Bedford Eagles Minor Basketball Association - the volunteers, the parents, and of course the players. Bedford Minor has been one of the largest youth basketball organizations in the province for a long time. It was a big part of my life growing up as a kid. After a long hiatus I am back in the gym, helping to coach my son with the Little Eagles - the six- and seven-year-olds - every Sunday night, chasing around 25 six-year-old boys and get my workout in.

It's a lot of fun, it's an amazing sport, and it is great to be back with it. I just want to thank everybody involved with Bedford Minor Basketball for helping hundreds and hundreds of kids in Bedford enjoy the great game of basketball.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

HRM COUNCILLORS: WORK - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize our HRM Reginal Council. The Regional Council is comprised of Mayor Mike Savage and 16 councillors. Together they represent the main legislative and governing body for the Halifax Regional Municipality and its 16 districts.

Councillors sit on boards, committees, commissions, and community councils in the district where they have been elected. I'd like to thank District No. 1 councillor Cathy Deagle Gammon; District No. 2 Councillor David Hendsbee; District No. 3 Councillor

Becky Kent; District No. 4 Councillor Trish Purdy; District No. 5 Deputy Mayor Sam Austin; District No. 6 Councillor Tony Mancini; District No. 7 Councillor Wayne Mason; District No. 8 Councillor Lindell Smith; District No. 9 Councillor Shawn Cleary; District No. 10 Councillor Kathryn Morse; District No. 11 Councillor Patty Cuttell; District No. 12 Councillor Iona Stoddard; District No. 13 Councillor Pam Lovelace; District No. 14 Councillor Lisa Blackburn; District No. 15 Councillor Paul Russell; District No. 16 Councillor Tim Outhit; and of course our Mayor, Mike Savage.

Thank you all for the work you do in keeping the HRM on track.

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

CROWELL, JASON: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. BRIAN WONG: Speaker, if you have ever driven down Highway No. 2 in Fall River, you would have noticed the beautiful flowerpots that line the road. These are all thanks to local businessman and philanthropist Jason Crowell, whose commitment to Fall River is tireless. His volunteer work continues with the annual installation of our community Christmas tree and many other local events. He is also a former president of the Fall River and Area Business Association, which helps promote, support and be a voice for businesses in the Fall River and surrounding areas. Jason embodies all that is Nova Scotia Loyal. Please join me in thanking Jason for his hard work, dedication, and passion for our community, and all its businesses and residents.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West, joining us virtually. Please go ahead.

BIRDLAND REC & GARDEN: AWD. RECIPS. - CONGRATS.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I rise today to congratulate two amazing organizations in Clayton Park West. The winners of the CommunityVotes Halifax 2023 Awards were announced this week. Birdland Rec received gold, and Birdland's Community Garden received silver.

Speaker, Birdland Rec was created by the Rockingham Recreation Society led by Alesha MacIntyre. The society plans family-friendly and youth events, like pumpkin-carving contests and youth campfire evenings in their amazing outdoor skating rink.

Birdland's Community Garden consists of volunteers and amazing gardeners. It was created as a place to meet new neighbours and serve the community with delicious vegetables. They also have many events throughout the year, including plant sales in the Summer.

I want to thank these two incredible community organizations for making the Rockingham neighbourhood an inclusive and friendly place to live. I ask the House to join me in congratulating them on their well-deserved awards.

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

CFS DAY OF ACTION: STUDENT SUPP. - SOLIDARITY

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise in my place today to recognize that tomorrow, November 8th, is the Canadian Federation of Students' Day of Action. The federation works across the country to advocate for students' most important needs, and the Nova Scotia chapter will be out in full force tomorrow to do the same.

As I've mentioned before, Nova Scotian students pay the highest tuition in Canada, while we continue to go through cost of living and housing crises. Fees for international students are uncapped and those coming from abroad to take advantage of our post-secondary sector options are faced with impossible decisions on how to make ends meet. Students of all backgrounds are taking on more and more debt just to continue their education. All of these issues and more will be hot topics at the day of action tomorrow.

I ask that the House join me in sending our support and solidarity to the Canadian Federation of Students Nova Scotia ahead of their day of action and resolve to work together on new solutions that will benefit our province's students.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MILITARY VETERANS: SERVICE - RECOG.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, as we approach Remembrance Day, I rise to remember and thank veterans: those who served in past conflicts, and those who have given their lives to defend our country during times of war and conflict.

I also want to thank current Canadian Armed Forces members, RCMP members, peacekeepers, and reservists for their service. I also acknowledge the generations of military families who have accompanied their loved ones through military life and have made their own sacrifice for Canadians.

My grandfathers were WWII veterans, and Remembrance Day has always been a day of reverence in our family. After the war, they carried many visible and invisible scars.

I rise to remember my grandfathers, Private Frank MacDonald, Trooper Gordon MacRae, and Private Donald John MacDonald. I rise to thank my cousin, retired reservist Corporal Mitchell Wong, who served in Afghanistan in 2010, and to thank my son, Captain Matthew Thompson, serving as an infantry officer in 1 RCR of the Canadian Armed Forces

who is currently deployed to Latvia. These wonderful men have served their country well, and I am grateful for and proud of each of them. Lest we forget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

BOULIANNE, SYLVIE: MNB AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

RONNIE LEBLANC: On October 19th, at Music New Brunswick's Prix MNB Awards ceremony, Sylvie Boulianne's song "Desfois c'est moi" was honoured as the song of the year, Chanson de l'année.

Sylvie, who comes from a musical family in Meteghan Centre, followed in her parents' footsteps, pursuing a music program at the University of Moncton. After graduating from the University of Moncton, Sylvie completed a graphic design course and now works in that field. She has also ventured into songwriting, and with the encouragement of her family and friends, recorded her first EP, titled with the same name: *Desfois c'est moi*. Since its release in April, the EP has garnered significant attention, culminating in Sylvie receiving the prestigious Prix MNB Award this Fall.

I kindly request that all members join me in extending a heartfelt congratulations to Sylvie Boulianne for this well-deserved recognition.

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

VOL. FIREFIGHTERS: COM. SERV. - THANKS

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, volunteer firefighters every day face challenging circumstances in service to the community. One would think that answering emergency calls would be enough hard work for these volunteers, but they continuously go the extra mile or 10, whether it is coming together to raise \$3,400 for muscular dystrophy, as Scotchtown, New Victoria, and New Waterford did on a single day; passing out treats to trick-or-treaters, like the South Bar Volunteer Fire Department; treats and a fireworks display hosted by the Reserve Mines Fire Department; or the Grand Lake Road Volunteer Fire Department, which opened its doors to a COVID-19 testing centre and respiratory clinic. Thank you to all the volunteers who serve their community every day. It is much appreciated.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

KOC COUNCIL 7077: SPECIAL OLYMPICS - RECOG.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: Speaker, I rise today to applaud the Knights of Columbus Council 7077 of Lower Sackville.

Each year, members of the council host their annual regional Special Olympics games, which take place on the Metropolitan Field in Lower Sackville. Special Olympics Nova Scotia provides training and competition opportunities, while enriching the lives of Nova Scotians of all ages with intellectual disabilities through sport.

This year marked the 31st year of the regional games, which brought athletes from across the Halifax Regional Municipality to our beautiful community of Lower Sackville on June 10, 2023.

I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly join me in applauding the Knights of Columbus Council 7077 for their continued commitment in providing these athletes with opportunities to showcase their capabilities, talents, and skills.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

ELLIOTT, SHARON: COM. SERV. - THANKS

CARMAN KERR: A constituent I'm happy to recognize today for her exceptional work is Sharon Elliott. Sharon is the first and longest-serving senior safety coordinator in the province.

Through her work running the Annapolis County Seniors' Safety Program, Sharon has improved the lives of countless older adults by helping them obtain housing, leave abusive situations, avoid scams, access government programs, and much more. I was also given the honour of presenting her the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal earlier this year. She's very deserving of that award.

I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Sharon Elliott on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and in thanking her for her years of service to the community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

NEW PUGWASH LIBRARY: OPENING - CONGRATS.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise to congratulate the Village of Pugwash and the recent official opening of the \$2-million-plus Pugwash Library.

The residents of Pugwash have been hoping to have a new library constructed for a number of years. The library was housed in the old train station, which wasn't entirely suitable for a library with accessibility and safety issues. Located right by the bridge overlooking the inner harbour, the new facility welcomes young and old to check out the collection of books and much more, and is open every day but Sunday.

[1:45 p.m.]

Thank you to the commitment from the Municipality of the County of Cumberland and a very successful fundraising campaign led by Dennice Leahey and Elizabeth Clarke. They raised over \$500,000 locally.

Construction began last Summer and the official opening was held July 29th as part of this area's Harbourfest weekend. I had the honour of attending the event, and it was very obvious how excited the community is to have this new gathering place. Please join me in congratulating Cumberland Public Libraries and the citizens of Pugwash on the addition of this new centre of fun and learning.

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

GOURLEY, BETTE: TREE FOR BOSTON DONATION - THANKS

LARRY HARRISON: One hundred and six years ago, after the Halifax Explosion devastated the City of Halifax, our province continues to thank the City of Boston for their assistance by sending them a Christmas tree.

This year the residents of Stewiacke are honoured that the tree chosen to be displayed in Boston will be coming from our community. Bette Gourley is donating the 45-foot white spruce that has been growing in the family's front yard for 40 years.

The Gourleys' tree has been on the Boston Christmas tree in-waiting list for nearly a decade, and this year the spruce is finally tall enough to be chosen. The tree is scheduled to be cut down on November 15th and will be leaving the province on the 19th. The official Christmas tree lighting will take place at the Boston Common on November 30th.

I ask all members of the Legislature to join with the residents of Stewiacke in thanking the Gourley family for donating this year's tree for Boston.

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

WESTPHAL-COLE HBR. FIREFIGHTERS: AWDS. - THANKS

LORELEI NICOLL: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Westphal-Cole Harbour Fire Fighters Association, who recently held their first awards banquet since prior to the pandemic.

The association started in 1962 and is comprised of firefighters, both career and volunteers, retired firefighters, and community members who have become honorary firefighters, such as myself. The association has a long history of responding to community needs during emergencies and supporting other needs when identified. The association also

gives time and financial support to various community groups, the largest being donating over \$872,000 to Muscular Dystrophy Canada since 1983.

This year's banquet saw 16 members being recognized for five years through 55 years of service to the association. It also saw Kathleen McCarthy and Robyn Croft recognized as the association's Members of the Year for 2021 and 2022. I wish to thank all these valued members of our community.

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

WINNERS: WINTER IN THE BAY CONTEST - CONGRATS.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: The Winter in the Bay Art Exhibit and Writing Contest includes submissions of short non-fiction and/or fiction-based essays on a theme of the current year's art exhibit. This is the third year for the contest, whose theme for 2023 was "Coming Home."

Each year, submissions are selected for a prize for first, second, and third place, with the winners of the fiction and non-fiction essays published in the *Masthead News*. All essays are published online and, depending on funding, may be published in a book.

I want to congratulate the three winners of the Winter in the Bay non-fiction essay portion of the contest: Suzanne Borkowski, Lauren Miller, and Conor Kelly. The fiction essay contest winners were announced this past April.

Speaker, I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating this year's winners and thanking the volunteers for their excellent work on Winter in the Bay.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

PRICE, NANCY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: One of the personal highlights of my time as MLA so far has been the honour of presenting constituents with Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal. One constituent whom I had the pleasure of presenting the medal to is Nancy Price.

Nancy has been a passionate community volunteer since the 1970s. Her contributions include coaching hurdles and figure skating, helping to develop the James House Museum, and being part of the steering committees for the new school and the Bridgetown Sports Hub. She is certainly a very deserving recipient of this award.

Speaker, I invite all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Nancy Price on receiving Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and in thanking her for her years of service to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction. Seated with us in the Speaker's Gallery, we have the Premier of Saskatchewan, Scott Moe. Thank you, Scott, for joining us today. (Applause)

Scott was first elected to the Saskatchewan Legislature in 2011. He was elected leader of the Saskatchewan Party on January 27, 2018, and sworn in as Premier of Saskatchewan on February 2, 2018. Premier Moe was born and raised on a grain farm. He and his wife Krista currently reside in Shellbrook.

He was educated at the University of Saskatchewan, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. He previously served as Minister of Environment, Minister of Advanced Education, Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Water Corporation, and Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency.

Of note, I believe Premier Moe is quite steadily ranked in the polls as one of the most popular premiers in the country. (Applause) Thank you, Premier Moe, for joining us today. He's accompanied by Shannon Andrews, his chief of staff, and Ashley Knisley, his executive assistant.

THE SPEAKER: It's a pleasure to have you present in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. I hope you enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Argyle.

SURETTE, DAVID: VIKING SHIP CONSTRUCTION - CONGRATS.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Speaker, not many people can say they have their very own Viking ship, but David Surette's six-year-old grandson, Amund Nedreberg, can.

In 2017, after having seen the 100-foot *Myklebust* being reconstructed while visiting his daughter and her family in Norway, David began construction of the 25-foot replica Viking ship in his barn in West Pubnico.

Then in August 2018, tragedy struck. A car accident claimed the life of his wife, Annis, and left him with multiple injuries. While his body healed physically, he continued to work on the ship to help start healing his heart from his profound loss. David was determined not to launch the vessel before his grandson could be present. After six years, the day finally arrived. On October 13th, the *Big Dragon* was launched.

Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating David Surette on this magnificent labour of love.

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

FARROW, LAUREN: PHARMACY WORK - RECOG.

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Speaker, today I stand to congratulate an exceptional individual, Lauren Farrow, an exemplary pharmacist at the Clayton Park Shoppers Drug Mart.

This year, Lauren was named the 2023 Pharmacist of the Year for her dedication to pharmacy and her ability to inspire other pharmacy professionals. Lauren's strength lies in her ability to remain unshaken in the face of the most intense pressure. Her clinical knowledge, leadership qualities, and patient communication make her both an outstanding manager and a role model.

Even on the busiest of days, Lauren is the calm in the storm and a source of reassurance for everyone. Her poise and unflinching resolve have earned her the affectionate nickname of being the "breath of fresh air in the pharmacy."

Please join me in expressing my deepest appreciation for Lauren's exceptional contributions to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

VOLS.: ENFIELD VILLAGE SQUARE - RECOG.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Speaker, I'd like to bring recognition to the citizens who came forward to clean up the Enfield Village Square for the Summer. Enfield In Bloom put out a notice looking for volunteers to help get the Enfield Village Square all tidied for the warmer months. More than 10 volunteers came together to lend a helping hand to put some beauty back into the square after the Winter months. I would like to thank Enfield In Bloom and the volunteers who came together to help clean up a beautiful space in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

MURIMBOH, THOMAS & SARAH: SCIENCE FAIR - CONGRATS.

HON. KEITH IRVING: In May 2023, Thomas and Sarah Murimboh from Wolfville, along with two other students from the Annapolis region and teacher Rob Davies, attended the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Edmonton, Alberta. The event brought

together Canada's top young scientists from grades 7 to 12 for a week-long competition at the University of Alberta.

Thomas's science fair project was on the benefits of probiotics, and he saw some late nights gathering information and getting results from samples. The effort paid off in a big way when Thomas was awarded the gold medal in the senior level at the Canada-Wide Science Fair.

Right on his heels was Thomas's sister, Sarah, who won a silver medal, intermediate level, for her science project on the effects of humidity and temperature on deformities in *Tenebrio molitor*, a.k.a. mealworm beetle larvae. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating both Thomas and Sarah on their great achievements and wish them both great success on their future science competitions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

REEVES, JAKE: WALSH SWORD RECIPIENT - RECOGNITION.

HON. KENT SMITH: I rise today to bring recognition to Jake Reeves, Cadet Chief Warrant Officer of the 2741 Eastern Shore Army Cadet Corps in Gaetz Brook. Jake was awarded the General Walsh Commemorative Sword as Canada's Most Outstanding Army Cadet for 2022-2023. Jake will also be the National Army Cadet Representative for the same time period.

It should be noted that this is only the second time that an army cadet in Nova Scotia has ever received this high honour, and Jake is the first male army cadet to be recognized for this award. Jake was also honoured with the Royal Canadian Legion Cadet Medal of Excellence in 2021. In addition to this national award, he recently earned a gold medal in men's youth at the 2022 Biathlon Zone Championship.

Jake, a graduate of Eastern Shore District High School, is currently attending his first year of engineering at Dalhousie University. I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating Jake on receiving this exceptional award, and to wish him continued success with his education, athletic endeavours, and career.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West, joining us virtually. Please go ahead.

DAYCARE OWNERS: COMMITMENT - THANKS

RAFAH DICONSTANZO: I rise today to show my support and appreciation for all daycares in Clayton Park West. This summer, I had the pleasure of visiting one of Clayton

Park West's oldest continuously running daycares, KIDS R KIDS Early Learning Centre, which first opened its doors in 1995 and currently operates with 106 spaces.

[2:00 p.m.]

I met with the owner, Heather, and her staff to learn about their day-to-day operations and some of the challenges they are facing. Heather mentioned to me that the fee cap that has been in place since 2016 and the inflation crisis have created many difficulties for her and many of the other daycare owners across Nova Scotia. Many daycare centres are struggling, and we have seen many close. I ask the House to join me in thanking our dedicated daycare owners like Heather who are committed to providing top-quality daycare in our province.

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. It is now time for Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers. It is 2:00 p.m., we will finish at 2:50 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: BUILDING COSTS - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, residential construction prices are up 8.5 per cent year over year. This is the second-highest in the country after Toronto. Costs for single detached homes in Nova Scotia are up close to 10 per cent. Building costs for low-rise apartments are up over 10 per cent. This is the highest in the country. Townhouse construction prices are up 9.6 per cent, also the highest in the country. Now Nova Scotia is ahead of the national average of overall increase in construction costs, which is at 6 per cent, and I'll table that.

The Premier's housing plan is all built around the private sector outpacing its current rate of development. How are they going to do that with prices so high when it comes to building?

THE PREMIER: Of course, we know we need more housing stock, that the solution to the housing crisis is more housing. We know that costs are going up, and there are a number of other delays. We have a couple of bills before this Legislature right now that I would encourage the member to support, which would help get projects moving forward, which would help with cost efficiencies, and of course, the elephant in the room, the carbon tax has driven the price of everything up. The member opposite has a chance to stand up against his federal cousins and say no to the carbon tax. Let's get it off everything. Let's let Nova Scotians move forward without the carbon tax.

ZACH CHURCHILL: These costs are going up in Nova Scotia under this Premier. We have the second-highest increase in building costs in the country after Toronto. When it comes to low-rise and townhouses, we have the highest construction costs in the whole country. Certainly, the Premier knows he can't just blame that one issue that affects every single province across the country. Construction costs are growing faster and faster here than anywhere else in the province. Developers are telling us that they're not going to be able to build affordable housing units. Speaker, how is the Premier going to get affordable housing units built when developers that he's banking on are telling him that they're not going to be able to do it?

THE PREMIER: There are many developers, not-for-profits, many organizations that want to build housing. They tell me about the delays with the permitting process. They tell me about some of the other fees that are built into the process. Just right here in HRM, the number of different types of fees that are built into a project are significant.

There's a bill before the Legislature that would cap those fees, would help keep things affordable. This member has a chance to get behind that and support Nova Scotians by standing up to unnecessary fees, standing up to the unnecessary carbon tax, and putting Nova Scotians before his Liberal friends. Let's put Nova Scotians first, Liberals second.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, here's the reality of the situation: This Premier has overseen the highest increases in rent in the whole country, the highest inflation in the country, housing starts that have gone down 50 per cent year over year under his watch, a vacancy rate close to 0 per cent here in our capital city. Homelessness has doubled under his watch, and now construction costs are at an all-time high.

The reason the Premier is still in this House is because we still have a lot of questions about these housing bills that they have not demonstrated are going to have any impact on increasing housing stock in this province. They can't even answer simple questions. There has been no analysis done.

My question to the Premier: How is he going to double the population of this province when he's not building enough houses for the people to live in now?

THE PREMIER: We have been very transparent about what's required. We have been very transparent about what is necessary with our housing program. We're being open and honest with Nova Scotians. I wish that member would be transparent and open and honest about the Auditor General investigation that his party is currently subject to. I wish that member would be open and honest about the RCMP investigation that was called under his watch. Speaker, we will continue to be open and honest with Nova Scotians. That member has a chance to do the same thing.

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

PREM.: DOCTOR SHORTAGE - ADDRESS

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I want to ask the Premier about the real state of health care here in Nova Scotia. We hear daily from people waiting to be attached to primary care in their communities. One unattached rural Nova Scotian without transportation used to get a year of a life-saving prescription from a walk-in. But now with Maple, he can only get 90 days. He bikes 40 kilometres to get that medication. Maple, I'll remind the Premier and the Speaker, is a private company that is now being paid public fees for each service on top of its multi-million-dollar untendered contract. I guess this is better than not getting medication at all. My question to the Premier is: Will the Premier tell us when the 144,000 Nova Scotians on the Need a Family Practice wait-list are going to be attached to a real, live, human, health care practitioner in a collaborative care clinic in their community?

THE PREMIER: I'm very proud of the work that the Health Authority and the minister and the department have done to make sure that Nova Scotians have different options to access care. Of course, the member has mentioned virtual care. That is an access point that's helping many Nova Scotians, hundreds of Nova Scotians every day, saving them travel time, saving them wait time.

Speaker, the member should be aware that when a virtual care appointment happens and it's determined that the patient needs to see somebody, they can get into one of our primary care clinics. They can do it very quickly, in a matter of days. I think that happens 20 per cent of time, that the virtual care person says, "I really want you to see somebody," and they get them into a clinic within a couple of days. Virtual care is part of the future of health care and it will be here to stay. It's an important part of the future of health care.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I want to note that every time I have asked a question about when people on the Need a Family Practice wait-list will have attachment to a primary care provider, we have not gotten an answer, so we're going to tick this off as one more time.

It is now commonplace to hear of people waiting hours in the city for an ambulance, whether it's kids lying on the football field in the middle of Halifax, in the cold, with an injury, waiting for an ambulance to arrive, or the family in Chezzetcook who were told when they called 911 that there was no ambulance available when their son had a life-threatening injury. A paramedic said about that case, this is happening literally daily - someone has died or they weren't able to be treated on time. I will table that.

I'd like to remind the Premier that there is no amount of innovation that will replace a trained paramedic or nurse in a medical emergency.

My question to the Premier: When is the Premier going to make sure that when people call 911, an ambulance shows up?

THE PREMIER: Nobody wants to hear those types of stories, certainly not our government, certainly not those health care professionals who are responding and doing incredible work to support patients of this province.

Since we are in the mood to remind members of things, I will remind that member of the Patient Access to Care Act, which was a nation-leading piece of legislation that passed through this House, that talks about common sense credentialling, helps us get doctors here, helps us get nurses here, paramedics and health care professionals.

That member voted against the Patient Access to Care Act. That's a good piece of legislation that will help get us the health care professionals here that we need.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I will remind the Premier that we on this side of the House support democracy and that Act, but many of the Premier's acts concentrated the ability to decide whether someone could practice here in the hands of one minister and that is inappropriate. We echoed every single health regulator in the province in coming to that decision and asking them to take it back and make it a better bill.

Whatever the innovations for health care that the Premier loves to announce, let's hope that they work better than the virtual care pilot in Ontario, which we heard today actually did nothing to alleviate the stress on emergency rooms and was mostly used by people who already had a physician. It didn't work, and I'll table that.

The Premier is poised to give Maple up to \$20 million for uncertain returns and no impact on attaching patients to permanent primary care.

My question to the Premier: When is the Premier going to do what it takes to actually fix the health care system?

THE PREMIER: When we met as Premiers this week, we talked about innovations that are happening across the country. Sometimes innovations - when you're first out of the gate, you've got to pivot a little bit and get it just right, but that shouldn't stop the attempts at progress.

Our virtual care pilot program we have here is different than the one in Ontario. What I would say to the member, with your editorial about democracy, is maybe the member wants to speak to the nurses' college, which has got on board and are processing 18,000 applications. Maybe the member wants to speak to the College of Physicians, which is getting onboard and recognizing certain schools.

When it comes to licensing and accrediting health care professionals, I'll listen to those people, not to the Leader of the NDP.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

MAH: HOUSING LEGISLATION - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I want to thank the Premier for putting his fine statesmanship on display here today in the House. We are asking serious questions about homelessness and a lack of plan from this government on housing and what do we get? We get cheap shots and the Premier acting more like he's a member of the Opposition than he is the Premier of the province and not taking responsibility.

Speaker, last month the federal government partnered with HRM to announce the fast-tracking of 10,000 new units for housing in Halifax. Now the Premier says he is going to look into legislation that would prevent municipalities from working directly with the federal government to deliver housing.

My question to the Premier is: If the Premier is so committed to getting more housing in our housing stock here, why would he want to get in the way of municipalities working with the federal government to make just that happen?

HON. JOHN LOHR: The reality is something that virtually every province has identified. What has happened is the federal government, through their programs, has gone directly to the municipalities. That result has been that where Atlantic Canada should have received approximately 7 per cent of the Housing Accelerator Fund, we have received 4 per cent - simply because many of our municipalities do not have the bandwidth or the scale to make those applications, to apply to that or, quite frankly, are not actually operating in the housing sphere.

This is a policy change by the federal government for their own reasons. I can't explain why. They can explain why they did that, but this is something that many - all of our provinces across the country - have said, Look, the provinces have the responsibility for housing . . .

ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I mean, the reality here is that we have seen this government not work collaboratively with other orders of government. We have seen them attack the federal government non-stop. We have seen them not reach out to municipalities. The Mayor of Halifax didn't even get a call before they brought in a bill. Now, when municipalities and the federal government actually work out deals that are going to deliver thousands of new units to the province, the Premier and the minister say, No way, we can't let that happen.

My question for the Premier is: Do the Premier and the minister actually understand what is happening here and perhaps they can recognize that maybe they are actually the problem here?

JOHN LOHR: Just to give an example, I will suggest that the member recall that there was a \$5 million fund going to CBRM, which was housing accelerator money that CBRM wasn't even expecting. They turned it down. The public outcry was such that they turned to us and said, "Help." We got involved and we are helping them sort that out. This is what we are dealing with the federal government. We have a current bill on the floor which deals with some of these housing accelerator issues and I hope the member will support it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DOJ: CROWN CASES THROWN OUT - ACT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Last week we established in this House that provincial Crowns are the ones who are indicting the most serious crimes in this province. We also established that the prosecution has characterized that the justice system is on fire - similar to what the judges were saying when vacancies were left for months on end.

The minister just tabled that there are 23 cases and counting being thrown out after Jordan applications - five times the amount more than there ever has been year to year. My question is: Why is this government always in reaction mode and how many more cases will it take before this government reacts to this issue?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: What I have offered before is that we are aware of the backlogs. We are aware of Jordan. We are trying to deal with those. I will tell the House that we are trying to expedite some things that we were looking at for this coming budget to see whether or not we can get those approved through Cabinet to get them forward quicker.

Of course, as we all know, the Public Prosecution Service - their union is coming up in December and so I am sure when we meet to negotiate their new union contracts, all these things will be brought up by them at that time, as they are now in the media.

IAIN RANKIN: The question is: How many more - exactly how many more cases? As we sit in the House, we have 23 cases now being thrown out. This is a public safety issue. I just want to ask the question: We don't have to wait for a budget to add resources. How many more cases will it take before this minister acts and adds resources to the justice system?

BRAD JOHNS: The honourable member may forget - I did for a minute - it was only about one hot minute that he was Premier here and in government when the Crown

prosecutors in this province went on strike the last time. It certainly didn't help with the backlogs, and we're dealing with those now.

[2:15 p.m.]

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

DOJ: SYSTEMIC RACISM IN PPS - ADMIT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I can remember in 2018 when we added dedicated prosecutors for sexual assault. I can remember when I was the Minister of Environment and we added dedicated prosecutors for environment, or in 2020 when we added a dedicated prosecutor for human trafficking. These are the types of things that we're asking the minister to do.

I want to highlight an issue of the culture within the Public Prosecution Service. The minister cited the vacancies, and I want to chart a timeline for the minister. The former director had retired after his statement of fair treatment of African Nova Scotians. Secondly, an independent report had to be conducted by Laura Williams and Associates to look into these discriminatory practices within the PPS. Then this past Spring, there were challenges with what was called a train wreck or "a complete disaster" by the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute to try to train . . .

THE SPEAKER: Question.

IAIN RANKIN: . . . designed to support implementation of fair treatment. My question for the minister is: Will he admit that there is systemic racism within the Public Prosecution Service?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: What I would say is that, as with all government, I think that the PPS has its challenges as well. I believe that's why the director had the report done. I know that just recently they hired an equity and anti-racism director up there as well. Those are certainly being looked at.

IAIN RANKIN: That's the second time I asked the question for that acknowledgement, which I wasn't able to get fully, so that's disappointing. We are aware of that hire, but communities cannot trust the institution, and that's why I'm asking the question. There was a FOIPOP to look at the recommendations in the independent report, which was 100 per cent redacted. We don't know anything that came out of that report. We know staff analyzed the report. I'd ask the minister: If he's not willing to share what's in the report, perhaps he can share just the high-level recommendations so that we can defeat systemic racism in the Public Prosecution Service.

BRAD JOHNS: I'd remind the member that we just recently put the first African Nova Scotian Chief Judge on the bench, Perry Borden. We had an African Nova Scotian SIRT director. As far as the report itself, that was a report that was through the Public Service Commission and the Director of Public Prosecutions. I direct the member to ask them if he would like to see the report.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DHW: ACCESS TO CONTRACEPTION - COMMIT

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. For many Nova Scotians, the cost of birth control prevents them from accessing this basic form of health care. It's estimated that one in three Nova Scotian workers do not have health benefits, and not all benefit plans offer equal coverage of the care. Insufficient access to birth control leads to worsened health, well-being, and socio-economic outcomes for patients, families, and communities. The minister has worked extensively as a health care provider. Does she find it acceptable that so many Nova Scotians can't access this important medication?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, we're looking at universal birth control over the last number of months. We know that there are a number of people, through Family Pharmacare, who can access birth control, providing that there is a medication component. I certainly know in the instance of IUDs, in order for those to be covered under Family Pharmacare, there does need to be a medicinal and hormonal component to that.

We continue to look at ways to support Nova Scotians. We also know that through the Department of Community Services, as well, there's free birth control available to those who meet the criteria. We are working all the time to cover things that are important to Nova Scotians, and we'll continue to do that review.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The minister will know that there are gaps in providing contraception. Earlier this year, British Columbia became the first province to provide access to free prescription contraception. Nova Scotia needs to follow suit. It's estimated that for every dollar spent on contraception access, there's up to \$90 in public savings. The Access Now Nova Scotia Coalition has called on government to urgently address this issue, supported by organizations like the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia College of Family Physicians, the Dalhousie Department of Pediatrics, the Dalhousie Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, the North End Community Health Centre, and many others. I will table that list. Will the minister commit to ensuring that every Nova Scotian has access to no-cost contraception?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Our Pharmacare Program is under incredible pressure, as we all know. Not only do we have advancing technologies and therapies, but we also

know the costs of drugs are going up. As a department, we continue to look at what we're best able to supply to Nova Scotians. We want to make sure we have things that are accessible to them and that are needed. There are always competing priorities, and we will continue to balance and look at those over the coming months. We will do what we can to support Nova Scotians.

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

DOJ: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE - PREVENT

LORELEI NICOLL: We know that since the pandemic, there has been an increase in intimate partner violence, leading to tragic outcomes for women and families. This was also outlined in the final Mass Casualty Commission report, which this government committed to implementing in full. However, more needs to be done to address the impacts of intimate partner violence.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: Will the government call intimate partner violence a public health emergency and immediately address the urgent need to prevent more tragic cases of domestic and intimate partner violence?

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, through you to the honourable member, we are following through with the Mass Casualty Commission's recommendations. Intimate partner violence was one of those issues that were brought up.

I would let government members know that this government decided to take a multi-departmental view on those recommendations, so there are several departments - not just Justice - that are looking at those. Regarding the specific question of the member about a public health emergency, that should probably be referred to another department, which would be the Department of Health and Wellness.

LORELEI NICOLL: The federal government passed an important piece of legislation called Keira's Law, which is in honour of the late four-year-old who was murdered by her father. Her father had a history of domestic violence, and when her mom told the judge of his history of coercive control, the judge said, "Domestic violence is not relevant to parenting." I'll table that.

The intent of Keira's Law is to amend the Judges Act to establish seminars for judges on intimate partner violence and coercive control, in addition to other forms of education they must undergo. Other provinces are making amendments for their judges. Ontario made amendments to the Courts of Justice and Justices of the Peace Acts, and they require education about the impact of gender-based violence for provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: Is the government going to ensure that all provincial judges are educated on both intimate partner violence and coercive control, like the federal government?

BRAD JOHNS: Of course, violence against women and children - any family member - is unacceptable. We certainly do not condone, and we stand against that. My department, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Wellness, the Department of Community Services, and other departments, is working to address issues of domestic violence. What I would say to the member is that I think that is probably a really good idea, and I will take that back and look at it in our office.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BNS: HOUSING UNITS - BUILD

BRAEDON CLARK: Speaker, the Province of Nova Scotia owns a prime piece of real estate in downtown Dartmouth at the corner of King Street and Alderney Drive. This is a piece of land that could support up to 27 storeys in terms of housing units - hundreds of units. Nineteen months ago, Develop Nova Scotia - now Build Nova Scotia - closed a request for proposals for that site for housing. Yet if you showed up at that site today, you would still find a parking lot and no housing. I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Build Nova Scotia: Why has it been almost two years since that RFP closed and no housing units have been built on that site?

HON. KIM MASLAND: The successful consortium that accepted that bid has been met with challenges and some changes. We know there has been an increase in interest rates. There have been labour shortages and an increase in market prices for lumber. Build Nova Scotia continues to work with the group, and I'm happy in the direction that we are going.

BRAEDON CLARK: Just today, we've seen examples of how this government does like to pass the buck and put the blame on housing. We see that they don't like the fact that the federal government is working with municipalities to direct nearly \$100 million in housing to Halifax. Yet this piece of land I'm talking about is not owned by the federal government. It's not being held up by municipal bylaws, because it is municipally owned. This is a provincial piece of land. My question to the minister is: I wonder if the minister could give us a timeline as to when units might be built on that site, and when people in Nova Scotia might actually be living there?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, we are concerned about every project, and we want to see projects go ahead. We remain in communication with them, and I invite them to meet with our department.

As for the \$100 million, I guess the member was not listening. I'll explain it again. We have received, in Atlantic Canada, approximately 4 per cent of that housing accelerated fund money, when we should have received 7 per cent in the normal course of percentage-of-population distribution across the country. If that's not a concern to the other side, I am shocked, because that is hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

We're happy to see Halifax get \$100 million. What about all our other municipalities?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DCS: SHELTER BEDS - RENEW

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, the government announced the location of 50 new beds at the end of last week, but we know that's really only a net gain of 30 beds, since they decided not to support Christ Church in Dartmouth to provide more shelter this Winter. We have incredible people on the front lines willing to help and provide both service and space, but this government won't work with them. My question to the Minister of Community Services is: Why won't this government renew those 20 shelter beds so desperately needed in the HRM?

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Certainly, we have been stating for many months now that we sense the urgency. We've been working hard as a department to secure a location that could meet the needs that we're seeing with the increase in people sleeping rough.

The shelter location that we did secure has 50 beds, as the member opposite did mention, but I would say that it also has the ability to ramp up to 100 beds, and to host people experiencing homelessness in emergency situations. I would say that it also has the ability to house all genders, and people 16 years of age and older. We continue to work hard to support people experiencing homelessness.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'll respond to that by saying, well, ramp up then. Get it done, right? If that location has the ability to do it, I hope the government moves as quickly as possible to get it done.

This week we also heard from service providers on how frustrating it is that they don't know where the new shelters will be outside of the HRM. It is frustrating for those working on the front lines when they can't tell people where shelter is going to be because this government won't tell them.

I will give the minister another opportunity to tell the public, including those needing housing: Where will the 100 shelters outside of the HRM be? How many more shelter spaces are coming to the CBRM?

[2:30 p.m.]

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Again, we are working hard with Pallet, the provider of those shelters - 100 here for the HRM, and 100 for outside of the HRM. Speaker, we are having those conversations with service providers. We're having conversations with municipalities. We are looking at provincial lands in those locations. We are working as diligently as we can to make sure that we support people - not only here in the HRM, but across Nova Scotia - who are experiencing homelessness.

I would add that we do have a shelter that is going to be up and running by mid-month, in Bridgewater, as well as a shelter that has been opened in Amherst as well. We are doing our work, we're working hard, and we'll continue to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

MAH: INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE VICTIMS - SUPPORT

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Premier or the Minister of Health and Wellness, since the Minister of Justice couldn't answer this. Following two widely reported fatal instances of gender-based violence last week, advocates and organizations are calling on government to declare this issue a public health emergency. This situation is made worse by the housing crisis. A dire lack of affordable housing means that many people experiencing this violence face potential homelessness if they decide to leave.

Speaker, emergency shelters are full, and the wait for public housing, even on the priority list, is years long. When is this government going to provide real supports to people who are fleeing intimate partner abuse?

HON. JOHN LOHR: This issue wears hard on all of us. We're all deeply grieved by any of these circumstances. I know that this goes across government, and a number of us could answer it. I'll just answer from the point of view of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, where we have the priority access list in public housing. As the member knows, we are in the process of looking at overhousing, where we have people who are in public housing in three- or four-bedroom units. We're trying to get them into single units if they're a single person. That process will enable us to take in more of these people who are fleeing gender-based violence because typically it's a family with several children needing several bedrooms. This is something. We also have a portal for people fleeing . . .

SUZY HANSEN: I'm so glad to hear that the government is deeply grieved about the situation, but I didn't get an answer on what it does right now.

Our offices hear stories regularly about people facing gender-based violence who are left unsupported by this government. In one instance, a person leaving a partner due to gender-based violence lost her income assistance benefits and had to reapply without support or so much as a taxi chit to get her to her intake appointment. As one advocate stated, this is a deterrent to reporting violence and a huge burden to place on people. People are dying, homeless, facing impossible decisions.

Why is this government leaving so many people without the supports they need to face gender-based violence?

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: We recognize the challenges for people who are experiencing gender-based violence and certainly the challenges with homelessness and that being an issue. We are working really hard as a government with supportive housing, with recognition that there is absolutely more to do. I can't speak to specific cases, but our department will work hard to make sure that people are supported to the best of our ability when they're experiencing certain situations like this.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DAE: STUDENT HOUSING PLAN - RELEASE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, a story this week highlighted just how dire the student housing situation is in Cape Breton and, frankly, all over the province. Cape Breton University student Gowri Menon's school week begins at 3:00 a.m. with a 400-kilometre drive. Menon lives in Halifax with her husband and family, where she also works. Her classes are crammed into two days a week. She spends the other five working to pay for gas, rent, and accommodations for her short stays in Sydney for school, hence the early morning and late night trips across the province. Her story, sadly, is not unique. Many students have long commutes and are just barely scraping by to try to get their education. My question to the Minister of Advanced Education: Does he think that this is the typical student experience for newcomers coming to Nova Scotia?

HON. BRIAN WONG: We welcome international students right across Nova Scotia. We do realize that there is a large influx of international students in the Cape Breton area. We really appreciate that, of all the places in the world that these students could go, they choose Nova Scotia. Students do have choices, Speaker. Students do have choice of where they want to live or if they want to travel. However, with the challenges that we're experiencing now in Cape Breton, some students are travelling, and they are using the travel. Let me remind you that there are - not necessarily for families - but Cape Breton University itself does have room in their residences for some of the students that it could certainly fit.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: That's the argument, Speaker. The minister says there are choices, but there are really not choices. It's not just in Cape Breton; it's across the province. Housing is a huge issue for students who are coming here to study.

Speaker, there are 10,000 students at Nova Scotia Community College campuses across the province, and there are over 55,000 students who attend university in Nova Scotia, many of whom want to stay and make Nova Scotia their home but can't because of how expensive it is to live here and how impossible it is to find housing. Why won't this minister acknowledge the 55,000 students attending our universities and release the student housing plan that he promised?

BRIAN WONG: The student housing strategy doesn't build accommodations. They don't build units. Together with what we're doing provincially, I'm very proud of the work that the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing has done. We'll continue to build; we'll continue to listen to students.

The announcement of three Nova Scotia Community College builds very early on in our mandate is big. We have 200 units right across the harbour, a hundred just up the road, and 50 in Stellarton that we've already announced. We've already invested in Cape Breton, \$5 million towards the Tartan Downs project; \$3 million here in Halifax. We'll continue to invest. A paper document does not build housing, but we'll continue to do what we can.

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

NRR: ENERGY POVERTY - FIGHT

HON. PATRICIA ARAB: Speaker, we know that energy poverty is a huge issue in our province, with 37 per cent of Nova Scotians experiencing energy poverty, and nearly 3,000 Nova Scotia Power customers having had their electricity cut off this year because they could not afford to pay their power bills. Last year, the Minister said an advisory group he was assembling to review standards and penalties for the utility would also consider the idea of alternative rates. My question to the Minister: When will the advisory group be enacted so work can be done to help Nova Scotians living in energy poverty?

HON. TORY RUSHTON: As the member would know, we did establish also, on top of that, an electrical task force that is out in the field right now having communications with stakeholders and evaluating how the process of electricity is divided up. We do have partners that do assist with Nova Scotia Power rates and navigating through that system. Certainly, we're looking very forward in the early months of 2024 for that task force to have the report back to us as government.

PATRICIA ARAB: Our offices have started to hear from worried Nova Scotians who have heard that Nova Scotia Power wants to download the costs of the \$25 million bill

from post-tropical storm Fiona to customers. I can table that as well. However, we know that Nova Scotians cannot afford this, and this government needs to ensure that Nova Scotians will not end up footing this bill. We will continue to have storms due to the climate crisis and it's not the job of Nova Scotians to have to foot the bill of the power company. My question to the Minister: Can he assure all Nova Scotians that they will not need to foot Nova Scotia Power's bill?

TORY RUSHTON: As the member would know opposite, this is a decision that will be before the NSUARB. It's not a decision the government can make. As in past, we will be stating our case to the NSUARB and the ratepayers of Nova Scotia. They're first and foremost in our thoughts in this government.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DCS: COST OF LIVING SUPPORTS - PROVIDE

BRAEDON CLARK: Over the next two years, power rates in Nova Scotia are going to go up 14 per cent; rent, year over year, is up 9.5 per cent, and yet we find ourselves in another House sitting where no significant legislation has been brought forward to make life more affordable for Nova Scotians. Instead, we hear vague generalities about targeted supports, and in many cases those targeted supports don't even apply to the people who need them the most. So, I would ask the Minister of Community Services: Where are the supports that Nova Scotians desperately need during this cost of living crisis?

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: It's no question that Nova Scotians, Canadians are all facing significant challenges. The cost of living is impacting many Nova Scotians. Rising interest rates, high inflation, federal taxes, those things matter and impact many Nova Scotians.

We have created many targeted supports. Again, I will reiterate a number of them - increasing the Nova Scotia Child Benefit over the last two budgets. We have had targeted supports for people on income assistance. We have increased the Seniors Care Grant. We have reduced child care fees. We continue to look at ways to support Nova Scotians. We know there's more to do, and certainly we'll continue to do what we can, Speaker.

BRAEDON CLARK: In the minister's response, he did point out some of the shortfalls that I was mentioning in my question. The child benefit is no good if you don't have children; the Seniors Care Grant is not going to help you if you are not a senior; and income assistance - the vast majority of income assistance recipients are single people, and this government has frozen income assistance for the past two years.

Yes, interest rates. Yes, labour. Yes, the cost of materials. Those are things that are outside the control of the Province.

My question to the minister: What will the Province do to make sure that next year, we don't receive another F on poverty reduction?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Again, targeted supports are targeted at specific individuals and specific groups, and we do work hard to target supports for various groups across the spectrum here in Nova Scotia. Again, we can talk about support to food banks that we've provided; we can talk about the rent supplements that have been provided by this Province. We can also talk about the funding for heat pumps for low-income residents of Nova Scotia. This government is focused on supporting our most vulnerable, and we'll continue to do what we can to support those individuals.

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

DED: CAPE BRETON RAILWAY - PROTECT

KENDRA COOMBES: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. For years, Nova Scotia has been paying to maintain the railway that connects Cape Breton to the mainland. The future of this connection has recently come into question, when the minister stated: "Does this make sense for the taxpayers of Nova Scotia . . . to preserving essentially, you know, it's not a cow path" but it's not really an asset. My question to the minister is: Does the minister recognize the importance of this connection to the people of Cape Breton?

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: We recently received confirmation of the very good news, I believe, of CN purchasing a stake in the railway. We've had some clarification that that stake includes not only the mainland line, but what is often referred to as the Sydney Subdivision. Certainly, an earlier government made the decision to protect - I would say to buy time on an opportunity relating to the tracks into the Port of Sydney. We will be looking in the next few weeks at whether we will renew that contract and the opportunities related.

KENDRA COOMBES: The minister is correct: Last week, CN announced that it has purchased a stake in this railway. Cape Bretoners have questioned what this means for the future of the region. The CEO of the Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce stated: "Opening up that rail line would reconnect Cape Breton Island to the rest of the country and the rest of the province, thereby lowering the cost of living for everyday residents, and that's of course incredibly important and top of mind for everyone."

I'm hoping that the minister will make her intentions very clear around the provincial subsidy and the stake in the railway.

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I believe, looking at the intention of the agreement that exists - whereupon the taxpayers of Nova Scotia pay \$30,000 a month, and have been

- we're now in for over \$1 million to retain a potential opportunity, but certainly we would not be looking at the government of Nova Scotia operating a rail line.

[2:45 p.m.]

What we need to understand, as we enter these last weeks of the current calendar year and the annual renewal period, is whether there is indeed an opportunity that justifies this continued investment. If there is, we're in, and if there's not, we may have decisions to make.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HCR: INFIRMARY PROJECT - BEGIN

HON. KEITH IRVING: My question to the Premier is: When will this government break ground on the QEII Halifax Infirmary project?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I have spoken in the House before about the importance of this project, and going back to last year's announcement, which focused on actually being able to deliver the priorities on the acute needs of the HI site. That includes more beds, more surgical capacity and, of course, a new emergency room; 2023 has been and continues to be a design year. I have acknowledged in this House - I've acknowledged with media that enabling works did not start this Summer as anticipated, but we are focusing on design and making sure that when we start digging holes, we're not digging holes just to have holes dug.

KEITH IRVING: With great fanfare, there was a news release and an announcement last December that more was coming faster. The minister indicated that they would start in April. In May they announced, with another press release, that they had reached an agreement to start advanced work, and the minister said, "Today is an excellent example of how we are delivering on our plan to do more and go faster"; \$254 million in the budget to do more faster this year. September's fiscal update: delays in health care projects. A few weeks ago, the minister announced the hiring of an architect with an NDA. Now we are designing like hell. Two and a half years with this project. My question to the minister is: When is the minister going to accomplish something?

COLTON LEBLANC: I think we are still filling in the holes that were left by the previous government. Their plan - I'll remind them because they seem to forget very quickly - their plan would not have been able to be executed by the construction industry. It would have taken many, many years - north of 10 years, probably - before we would just automatically turn on the lights and have a health care facility.

We recognize that we need to have a design before we start digging holes and moving equipment on site. Again, time and time again, I am reminded of the lack of

awareness from the members opposite pertaining to the construction industry. It has been very complicated. It's been very challenging over the last number of years. We are working hard. The staff are working diligently to move this in the right direction and we will get it done.

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

HCR: HEALTH FACILITIES - BUILD

HON. KEITH IRVING: Speaker, the minister's only words when he changed the direction on this project last December - he knew what he was doing, presumably - he came out and announced that they had an agreement to begin work. Clearly, he didn't realize that he had to go back to the drawing board. Two and half years later, while the VG is falling down, this project has gone nowhere for two and a half years. We're back to the drawing board. My question to the minister is: Will you get to work and please build some health facilities for Nova Scotians?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Contrary to their contrary opinion, if I can say it that way, we are, in fact, delivering more health care infrastructure. I will give credit where credit is due. The Bayers Lake QEII Community Outpatient Centre will be a significant investment and improvement to the health care facilities of our province. I will also point out that although there are some Negative Nellys on the opposite side pertaining to the Hogan Court community transition facility, a brand new, innovative solution - I know they do not like innovative solutions - but we recognize on this side of the House that we need to do something. The cost of doing nothing is unacceptable and if anybody in this province wants to know what the cost of doing nothing looks like, they just have to look over there.

KEITH IRVING: Let's talk about the cost of doing nothing. Two and a half years with no progress on a multi-billion-dollar building, when construction prices have increased 30 per cent one year, 10 per cent the next. This government has just cost at least \$800 million dollars more to deliver health care facilities.

My question to the minister is: When are you going in the ground?

COLTON LEBLANC: Speaker, with the rhetoric coming over there, it sounds like . . . (Interruption)

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

The honourable member for Kings West.

CHRIS PALMER: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please.

CHRIS PALMER: In the East Gallery are two of my friends who came in from Kings West today. They wanted to come in and have a peek at their democratic process. They have had a great experience here, I'm sure. I want to introduce my friends Geo Mathew and Nithin Joseph. They are from the Nova Scotia Annapolis Malayalee Association, a community of over 400 now in the Annapolis Valley who are doing great things in recognition of cultural events.

I've been fortunate to take in some of their community events like their New Year's celebration and their Onam celebration that took place at the end of August. I'm actually on the viral video doing a lot of traditional music with them. It's been great.

I do want to recognize their participation in our area and thank them for coming in. Geo is an immigration consultant and Nithin is a realtor. We're very thankful to have them in the Annapolis Valley. Their entire community, they had so much of the vibrancy of our community, and I'm just thankful that they came in today. I please ask all members of the House to help me in giving them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. Thank you for coming.

The honourable member for Dartmouth East on an introduction.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Permission to make an introduction. In the East Gallery we have one of my oldest lifelong friends. He and I went to high school and university in Montreal in the early 2000s. I went east, he went west, settling in Vancouver and starting his family there. My friend here, Stephen D'Souza, is here in Halifax for the National Conference on Ending Homelessness, representing the Homelessness Services Association of British Columbia.

Quite frankly, I don't think I've seen Stephen since Grade 11, when we shared a locker together at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School in Montreal. I'd ask my colleagues to give a warm Nova Scotia welcome to Stephen. (Applause)

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

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I do beg leave to make an introduction. I'd like to bring everyone's attention today to the West Gallery, where Axel Renick is visiting the Legislature. Axel is a Grade 11 student at Charles P. Allen High School and doing his co-op at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. He started his co-op with the Career Pathways division of the department in October and will be spending every Tuesday with the team until January.

Axel is the leader of the GSA Club at his school and recently volunteered at Hal-Con. He likes Dungeons & Dragons, reading, and sketching. He is hoping to do his next co-op placement in pre-Primary and is interested in exploring a career in sociology or education. I'd like to ask all members of the House to give Axel a warm welcome. We were thrilled to welcome him into the Department of Education and thrilled as well to welcome him here to the Legislature. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. I hope you enjoy your visit.

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier, in Question Period, referenced an RCMP investigation into the Liberal Party. I have to state for the House there is no such investigation. The Premier did not table any substantiating . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. That is not a point of order. A point of order is based on breach of rules of the House. (Interruption) I am correct. It's not a point of order, but perhaps there is something else you would rather say.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I'll rise on a point of privilege.

THE SPEAKER: I will hear your point of privilege. Please go ahead.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier made misleading comments in the House today. He did not substantiate any of those comments. I believe he's referencing an Elections Nova Scotia referral to the RCMP . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. The only way you can deliver on a point of privilege of what someone else said is by giving notice to the Speaker ahead of time. You would have to put it out in a notice of motion, setting out the allegations, then looking for a debate within the House, but you have to write that so I can review it before I rule on it. Thank you.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: I'm happy to address the member's comment, and maybe bring it to a head now. I know that in the Summertime elections, the Chief Election Officer found that the Liberal Party had broken an elections law and asked the RCMP to investigate that. If the member wants to update the House on the status of that investigation, how it went, his feelings of why the RCMP were called in, I'm sure the House would be happy to hear that. My reference was purely to the fact that the Chief Elections Officer did call in the

RCMP to investigate, which I believe is a fact, and I can table all kinds of articles about that if the member so pleases.

THE SPEAKER: We're going to move on. We dismissed the point of order. We would like to move on from there, and we'll carry on with Government Business at this point in time.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

THE SPEAKER: I will now leave the Chair. We will just take a short recess in order to prepare for Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

[2:57 p.m. The House resolved into a CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker Lisa Lachance in the Chair.]

[10:20 p.m. CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. Deputy Speaker Nolan Young resumed the Chair.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on Bills reports:

THE CLERK: That the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 323 - Regulated Health Professions Act.

and the Chair has been instructed to advise that the committee has made some progress on this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: That concludes government business for the day. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Wednesday between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m. Considering tomorrow is Opposition House Day, I will turn it over to my honourable colleague to call business for the day.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Opposition House Leader.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Tomorrow is Opposition Day and I have indicated to both House leaders that we will be sending the bills that we will be debating along shortly.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that we do now rise to meet again tomorrow between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 11:59 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion carries. We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 10:21 p.m.]