



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

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS:	
Gov't. (N.S.): Support Ceasefire in Israel-Palestine Conflict - Request, G. Burrill	7251
Gov't. (N.S.): Provide Landlords with Heating Subsidy - Request, R. DiCostanzo	7252
TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS:	
Response to Question on Dangerous and Unsightly Premises, Hon. J. Lohr	7252
Response to Question on Judicial Training, Hon. B. Johns	7252
WCB 2023 Q2 Report to the Community, Hon. J. Balsler	7252
GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 819, Remembrance Day: Significance - Recog., The Premier	7253
Vote - Affirmative	7253
Res. 820, The Bridge: Help for Homeless - Recog.,	

Hon. T. Boudreau.....	7254
Vote - Affirmative.....	7255
Res. 821, MacDonell, Sr. Margaret: Contribs. to Gaelic Com. - Recog.,	
Hon. A. MacMaster.....	7255
Vote - Affirmative.....	7256
Res. 822, Bragg, John: Blueberry Industry Contrib. - Congrats.,	
Hon. G. Morrow.....	7256
Vote - Affirmative.....	7257
Res. 823, No. 2 Construction Battalion: Mil. Serv. - Recog.,	
Hon. T. Grosse.....	7257
Vote - Affirmative.....	7258
Res. 824, Diwali: Hindu Celebration - Recog.,	
Hon. J. Balsler.....	7258
Vote - Affirmative.....	7258
Res. 825, Notices of Motion Under Rule 32(3) - Approve,	
Hon. K. Masland.....	7259
Vote - Affirmative.....	7259
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS:	
No. 403, Income Tax Act (amended),	
F. Tilley.....	7259
NOTICES OF MOTION:	
Res. 826, Job-Protected Unpaid Leave: Need - Recog.,	
Hon. K. Regan.....	7259
Vote - Affirmative.....	7260
Res. 827, Home Heating: Tax Exemption - Consider,	
C. Chender.....	7260
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS:	
Vols.: Ground SAR - Thanks,	
Hon. B. Comer.....	7263
Remem. Day: Significance - Recog.,	
Hon. K. Regan.....	7264
Israel-Hamas Conflict: Solution - Support,	
C. Chender.....	7264
Lun. Co. GSAR: 45th Anniv. - Recog.,	
Hon. S. Corkum-Greek.....	7265
Israel-Hamas Conflict: Victims - Support,	
Hon. K. Regan.....	7266
Mural Creation: Honouring Miya Harris - Recog.,	
S. Leblanc.....	7267
Simpson, Roy Burton: Death of - Tribute,	
Hon. G. Morrow.....	7267
Leg. Staff: Support During Sitting - Thanks,	
Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	7268
Horizon Ach. Ctr.: New Van - Congrats.,	
K. Coombes.....	7269
Perrin, Sgt. Walter Alvin: Mil. Serv. - Recog.,	

T. Taggart.....	7269
Vols.: Wildfire Support - Recog., Hon. B. Jessome.....	7270
Trans Day of Remem.: Fight Discrim. - Support, L. Lachance.....	7270
Remem. Week: Mil. Serv. - Recog., L. Harrison	7271
Moment of Silence.....	7271
Gomes, Kelly: CA Work - Thanks, Hon. B. Maguire	7272
Leg. Staff: Support for MLAs - Thanks, S. Hansen	7272
Leg. Staff: Support - Thanks, Hon. K. Bain	7273
Remem. Day: Mil. Serv. - Recog., C. Kerr.....	7274
Daughter, Freya - Birthday Wishes, Hon. I. Rankin.....	7274
ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS:	
No. 1,344, Prem.: Better Paycheque - Commit, Hon. Z. Churchill	7274
No. 1,345, Prem.: Nova Scotians Struggling - Act, C. Chender	7276
No. 1,346, MAH: Conflict of Interest - Explain, Hon. Z. Churchill	7278
No. 1,347, MAH: Favouritism - Prevent, Hon. Z. Churchill	7278
No. 1,348, NRR: Coal Plants - Decommission, Hon. I. Rankin.....	7280
No. 1,349, FTB: Seniors' Income Benefit - Implement, G. Burrill.....	7281
No. 1,350, DCS: Income Assistance Rates - Increase, Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	7281
No. 1,351, EECD: Universal Lunch Program - Introduce, Hon. K. Regan.....	7283
No. 1,352, MAH: Rent Supp. Threshold Decision - Reverse, B. Clark.....	7284
No. 1,353, EECD: Daycare Spaces - Increase, S. Hansen	7285
No. 1,354, DOA: Food Program Cut - Explain, C. Kerr.....	7286
No. 1,355, MAH: Vuln. Persons Registry - Support, L. Nicoll	7287
No. 1,356, DFA: Illegal Lobster Sales - Stop, R. LeBlanc	7287
No. 1,357, DCS: Income Assistance Rates - Increase,	

K. Coombes.....	7288
No. 1,358, DHW: Special Needs Dental Care - Address, Hon. B. Jessome.....	7289
No. 1,359, ECC: Food Inspection - Review, Hon. B. Maguire	7291
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS:	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 396, Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act, Hon. T. Ince	7292
S. Hansen	7293
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	7294
Hon. T. Ince	7295
Vote - Affirmative.....	7295
PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 348, Lunenburg Common Lands Act (amended), Hon. B. Druhan	7296
Vote - Affirmative.....	7296
No. 351, Bethel Presbyterian Church, Sydney Act (amended), Hon. D. Mombourquette	7297
Vote - Affirmative.....	7297
No. 369, Riverport Electric Light Act for Polling District No. 2, in the County of Lunenburg, The (amended), Hon. S. Corkum-Greek	7297
Vote - Affirmative.....	7297
PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING:	
No. 337, Electricity Act (amended), Hon. T. Rushton.....	7298
Hon. I. Rankin.....	7298
S. Leblanc	7300
Hon. T. Rushton.....	7301
Vote - Affirmative.....	7302
No. 340, Municipal Reform (2023) Act, Hon. J. Lohr	7303
Hon. D. Mombourquette.....	7304
K. Coombes.....	7311
Hon. B. Comer	7316
Hon. Z. Churchill	7317
C. Chender	7320
J. White	7321
L. Nicoll	7323
Hon. K. Irving.....	7326
Hon. J. Lohr	7329
Vote - Affirmative.....	7332
No. 329, Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended) and Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act (amended), Hon. J. Lohr	7333

Hon. Z. Churchill	7334
C. Chender	7340
L. Nicoll	7344
K. Coombes.....	7347
B. Clark.....	7349
S. Hansen	7353
Hon. K. Irving.....	7360
Hon. B. Maguire	7364
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	7368
Hon. S. Craig.....	7371
Hon. J. Lohr	7375
Vote - Affirmative.....	7379
No. 320, Tourist Accommodations Registration Act (amended),	
Hon. J. Lohr	7379
Hon. Z. Churchill	7380
S. Hansen	7380
A. Duale	7383
Hon. J. Lohr	7384
Vote - Affirmative.....	7385
No. 339, Financial Measures (Fall 2023) Act,	
Hon. A. MacMaster.....	7385
Hon. K. Irving.....	7386
C. Chender	7386
Hon. A. MacMaster.....	7388
Vote - Affirmative.....	7388
No. 332, Workers' Compensation Act (amended),	
Hon. J. Balsler.....	7388
B. Clark.....	7389
K. Coombes.....	7389
E. Smith-McCrossin.....	7391
Hon. J. Balsler.....	7392
Vote - Affirmative.....	7392
No. 323, Regulated Health Professions Act,	
Hon. M. Thompson.....	7393
Hon. K. Regan.....	7393
S. Leblanc	7393
Hon. B. Adams.....	7393
Hon. M. Thompson.....	7394
Vote - Affirmative.....	7394
ARRIVAL OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR.....	7394
BILLS GIVEN ROYAL ASSENT:	
Nos. 119, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 327, 329, 332, 334, 337, 339, 340, 348	7395
Nos. 351, 369, 396	7396
ADJOURNMENT, House rose to meet again at the call of the Speaker	7397
NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3):	
Res. 828, Fitzpatrick, Connor: Pan Am Games Medal - Congrats.,	

C. Chender	7398
Res. 829, Spence, Craig: Pan Am Games Medal - Congrats., C. Chender	7398
Res. 830, Russell, Michelle: Pan Am Games Medal - Congrats., C. Chender	7399
Res. 831, Melanson, Riley: Pan Am Games Medal - Congrats., C. Chender	7399
Res. 832, MacKenzie, Sloan: Pan Am Games Medal - Congrats., C. Chender	7400
Res. 833, Team N.S. Athletes: Special Olympics - Best Wishes, Hon. Z. Churchill	7400
Res. 834, Baldwin, Adam: SOCAN Songwriter of the Yr. Awd. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7401
Res. 835, Jackson, Andrew: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7401
Res. 836, Classified: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7402
Res. 837, Austin, DeeDee: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7402
Res. 838, Aeryn, Elyse: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7403
Res. 839, Arrival: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7403
Res. 840, Gailey, India: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7404
Res. 841, Jackson Wilson Duo: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7404
Res. 842, Jah'Mila: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7405
Res. 843, Mullane, John: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7405
Res. 844, Hines, Jon: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7406
Res. 845, Kayo: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7406
Res. 846, Kilmore: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7407
Res. 847, Smith, Micah: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7407
Res. 848, MacDonald, Nik: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7408
Res. 849, Peanut Butter Sunday: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7408
Res. 850, Demille, Phil: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7409
Res. 851, MacInnis, Rankin: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats.,	

Hon. Z. Churchill	7409
Res. 852, Aucoin, Rich: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7410
Res. 853, Steel Cut Oats: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7410
Res. 854, Spencer, Terra/Caplan, Ben: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7411
Res. 855, The Bombadils: N.S. Music Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. Z. Churchill	7411
Res. 856, Billard, Lynn/Kennedy, Yvonne: Crotched Poppies - Congrats., Hon. B. Comer	7412
Res. 857, Ultimate Party & Rental Store: 10 th Anniv. - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	7412
Res. 858, Dormiedy, Krista Long: Fledglings & Folk - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	7413
Res. 859, Vols.: Fultz House Museum - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	7413
Res. 860, Hughes, Janey: Prov. Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., Hon. S. Craig.....	7414
Res. 861, Mailman, Lyle: Concert Organized - Thanks, Hon. S. Craig.....	7415
Res. 862, Organizing Team: Recycle Your Cycle Project - Thanks, Hon. S. Craig.....	7415
Res. 863, Sportwheels: Bicycle Donation - Recog., Hon. S. Craig.....	7416
Res. 864, Royal LePage Anchor Realty: School Supply Drive - Recog., Hon. S. Craig.....	7416
Res. 865, Sack. Bus. Assoc.: Hosting Events - Recog., Hon. S. Craig.....	7417
Res. 866, Vols.: Souls Harbour Rescue Mission - Thanks, Hon. S. Craig.....	7417
Res. 867, Rofihe, Baraket "Barry": Death of - Tribute, Hon. B. Druhan.....	7418
Res. 868, Barrett, Gloria: Death of - Tribute, Hon. B. Druhan.....	7418
Res. 869, Hale, Evan: Com. Serv. - Thanks, The Premier.....	7419
Res. 870, MacDonald, Dan: Com. Serv. - Thanks, The Premier.....	7419
Res. 871, LaGreca, Jason: Seniors' Safety Dedication - Thanks, The Premier.....	7420
Res. 872, Davison, John: Service During Emergencies - Thanks, The Premier.....	7420
Res. 873, Dunn, Kenny: Service During Emergencies - Thanks, The Premier.....	7421
Res. 874, Kenny, Megan: Service During Emergencies - Thanks,	

The Premier.....	7421
Res. 875, Sneer, Paul: Service During Emergencies - Thanks, The Premier.....	7422
Res. 876, Livingston, Rod: Service During Emergencies - Thanks, The Premier.....	7422
Res. 877, Dewtie, Seymore: Service During Emergencies - Thanks, The Premier.....	7423
Res. 878, van Ween, Wayne: Service During Emergencies - Thanks, The Premier.....	7423
Res. 879, MacDonald, Adele: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7424
Res. 880, Crowell, Anne: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7424
Res. 881, Rennie, Dave: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7425
Res. 882, Boyd, Donna: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7425
Res. 883, Moore, Douglas: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7426
Res. 884, Melanson, Durline: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7426
Res. 885, Boyd, Fred: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7427
Res. 886, Jost, Harry: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7427
Res. 887, McCormick, Heather: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7428
Res. 888, Hafting, Jeff: Prov. Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7428
Res. 889, Medill, James "Jim": Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7429
Res. 890, Hightower, Jo-Ann: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7430
Res. 891, Smith, John: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7430
Res. 892, Morley, Julie: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7431
Res. 893, Williams, Monica: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7431
Res. 894, Price, Nancy: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7432
Res. 895, Steenken, Niko: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7432
Res. 896, Young, Noel: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7433
Res. 897, Duggan, Sheila: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats.,	

C. Kerr.....	7433
Res. 898, Lenthall-Ascott, Stuart: Queen Elizabeth II's Plat. Jub. Medal - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7434
Res. 899, Disney, Wayne: Vol. Awd. Recip. - Congrats., C. Kerr.....	7434
Res. 900, Memories Café & Eatery: New Owner - Best Wishes, Hon. K. Masland.....	7435
Res. 901, Hobson, Noah: New 3D Printing Co. - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	7435
Res. 902, Woodford, Sandra: Retirement - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	7436
Res. 903, Mitton, Sarah: Athletic Achievements - Congrats., Hon. K. Masland.....	7436
Res. 904, Rudderham, Tim & Gloria: Retirement - Best Wishes, Hon. K. Masland.....	7437
Res. 905, Oickle, Vernon: Book Publication - Thanks, Hon. K. Masland.....	7437
Res. 906, McCluskey, Elaine: Atl. Book Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc	7438
Res. 907, Gaudet, Ian: Pan Am Games Medal Win - Congrats., S. Leblanc	7438
Res. 908, Jarin, Ismat: Bangladesh Com. Assoc. Supper - Thanks, S. Leblanc	7439
Res. 909, Hoque, Md Ahsanul: Bangladesh Com. Assoc. Supper - Thanks, S. Leblanc	7439
Res. 910, Davison, Nicola: Atl. Book Awd. Recip. - Congrats., S. Leblanc	7440
Res. 911, Rahman, Suriya: Bangladesh Com. Assoc. Supper - Thanks, S. Leblanc	7440
FILED PETITIONS:	
Petition for the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Re Bridgewater Watershed Protection Alliance (Hon. B. Druhan).....	7442
Petition for the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Re Bridgewater Watershed Protection Alliance (Hon. B. Druhan).....	7442



HALIFAX, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 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, please. We'll begin the daily routine.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GARY BURRILL: I beg leave to present a petition, which reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, call on the Government of Nova Scotia to join the groundswell of voices across our province and around the world calling for a ceasefire in the Israel-Palestine conflict.”

I have also signed this petition.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

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

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of my constituency of small landlords.

“We are asking the Provincial Government to provide landlords who pay for their tenants’ heat with immediate and on-going oil subsidies, to offset the impact of both increasing home heating costs and rent control policies.”

I have affixed my signature, as per the rules of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, in response to a question yesterday from the member for Halifax Needham in regard to dangerous, unsightly premises, I want to just table the process with HRM to engage that.

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, in response to a question from the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth on Tuesday in regards to judicial training, I’d like to table an answer for her and for the Clerk and members of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The paper is tabled.

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Speaker, I beg leave to table a report: the *WCB Nova Scotia Report to the Community, 2023, Q2*.

THE SPEAKER: The report is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

RESOLUTION NO. 819

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Speaker, I hereby give notice that on a future day I shall move the adoption of the following resolution:

Whereas Remembrance Day provides an opportunity for all Nova Scotians and Canadians to reflect upon the sacrifices made by our veterans and current members of the Canadian Armed Forces in defence of our freedoms and values; and

Whereas Nova Scotia has a proud history of contributing to the defence of Canada with many courageous individuals from our province having served across the globe in both World Wars, the Korean conflict, peacekeeping operations, the 1991 Gulf War, and most recently, the operations in Afghanistan; and

Whereas it is essential to remember and express gratitude for the sacrifices made by our veterans and active-duty service members, recognizing their unwavering commitment to our nation and its people;

Therefore be it resolved that the Nova Scotia House of Assembly acknowledges the profound significance of Remembrance Day and extends its deepest gratitude to all veterans and current members of the Canadian Armed Forces for their dedication, bravery, and sacrifices in the name of peace and freedom, and encourages all residents of our province to actively participate in Remembrance Day activities, be it through attending local ceremonies, wearing a red poppy, or observing a moment of silence at 11:00 a.m. on November 11th. Lest we forget.

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. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction before my notice of motion.

I would like to direct the members' attention to East Gallery. Here today with us we have Sheri Lecker and Rylee Booroff from Adsum for Women and Children and Eric Jonsson from The Bridge. Together with Laura MacKay from Welcome Housing, these four individuals have done incredible work at The Bridge ensuring that vulnerable Nova Scotians experiencing homelessness receive the supports that they need.

I'd like my member colleagues here to please join me in welcoming them here to the House. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Community Services.

RESOLUTION NO. 820

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

Whereas everyone deserves a warm safe place to call home, but sometimes people experiencing homelessness need additional supports and may have complex circumstances that can include challenges with their physical and mental health; and

Whereas our service providers have come together to create The Bridge, a first in Atlantic Canada shelter with integrated health services to help people access the wraparound services they need; and

Whereas the Department of Community Services service providers have taken a leadership role in supporting the health sector to better respond to, and meet the needs of, people experiencing homelessness in collaboration with VON and Northwood;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of the House of Assembly join me in recognizing Laura MacKay from Welcome Housing, Sheri Lecker and Rylee Booroff from Adsum for Women and Children, Eric Jonsson, and their incredible teams for their leadership and commitment to supporting innovative solutions that are improving the outcomes of people experiencing homelessness in HRM at The Bridge.

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.

The honourable Minister of Gaelic Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 821

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

Seach gura b'è neach-labhairt dùthchasach na Gàidhlig a bh'ann am Piuthar Mairead NicDhòmhnuill a rugadh ann an Hillsdale, Siorramachd Inbhir Nis is i a bha 'na ban-sgoilear chliùiteach is i a bha aon dhe na ciad ceumnaichean do Roinn nan Cànanan Ceilteach is An Litreachasan aig Oilthaigh Harvard, a' coimlionadh Doctaireachd a' sin ann an 1969; and

Seach gun do chum Piuthar Mairead oirre a bhi 'na Ban-Chathair do Roinn na Ceiltis aig Oilthaigh an Naoimh Frannsaidh Xavier, a' teagasg iomadh oileanach mu bhòidhchead na Gàidhlig is i a dh'fhosgail iomadh sùil is cridhe do chultur nan Gàidheal is dh'a litreachas; and

Seach do chuir Piuthar Mairead iomadh rud cudthromach ri eòlas litreachas nan Gàidheal thro'n leabhar fhiachail aice, *The Emigrant Experience: Songs of Highland Emigrants in North America*, an cuide ri bhi a' toirt taic ri Gàidheil na h-Albann Nuaidhe is thairis oirre thro'n mhisneach a thug i do dh'oileanaich is sgoilearan;

Mar sin, biodh e 'na rùn gun aithnich a' Phàrlamaid Bheag Piuthar Mairead NicDhòmhnuill airson na h-uile a chuir i ris a' choimhearsnachd Ghàidhealaich ann an Albainn Nuaidh is gun cuir sinn clach air a càrn.

A Labhraiche Urramaich, tha mi a' guidhe gun téid brath-gluasad an darna taobh agus gun téid a' chùis air adhart as aonais deasbaid.

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

Whereas the late Sister Margaret MacDonell was a native Gaelic speaker from Hillsdale, Inverness County and a celebrated scholar, being one of the first graduates of the Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, earning her PhD there in 1969; and

Whereas Sister Margaret went on to chair the Department of Celtic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University, teaching many students on the beauty of the Gaelic language and opening hearts and minds to Gaelic culture and literature; and

Whereas Sister Margaret made important contributions to the study of Gaelic literature with her influential book *The Emigrant Experience: Songs of Highland Emigrants in North America*, as well as supporting Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia and beyond through her encouragement of Gaelic learners and scholars;

[1:15 p.m.]

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly recognize and honour Sister Margaret MacDonell for her many contributions to the Gaelic community in Nova Scotia and that we place a stone on her cairn.

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.

The honourable Minister of Agriculture.

RESOLUTION NO. 822

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

Whereas the founder of Oxford Frozen Foods, John Bragg, was recently honoured by a nomination from the Wild Blueberry Association of Nova Scotia and inducted into the Atlantic Agriculture Hall of Fame in recognition of his years of commitment to the agriculture industry in Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Mr. Bragg has been a major contributor in building a high-tech, innovative wild blueberry industry in rural Atlantic Canada with international exports and growing his business from a first processing plant in 1968 to now representing 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the wild blueberry industry worldwide; and

Whereas he holds many well-deserved honours, including being chosen Outstanding Philanthropist of the Year in Atlantic Canada, being promoted to the Companion of the Order of Canada, being awarded multiple honorary degrees, and most recently being inducted into the 2023 class of the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House recognize and congratulate Mr. John Bragg of Oxford for his lifelong dedication to our wild blueberry industry, this province, and his community.

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.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 823

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

Whereas the No. 2 Construction Battalion, formed in Pictou, Nova Scotia, on July 5, 1916, was the only battalion in Canadian military history composed entirely of Black service members, who were barred from serving during the First World War; and

Whereas facing racial discrimination and being assigned to non-combatant roles such as timber cutting for military uses, the bravery and contribution of the No. 2 Construction Battalion during their service in World War I went unrecognized for a long time; and

Whereas the dedication of the No. 2 Construction Battalion was finally acknowledged during African Heritage Month in 2016, and further cemented in an official national apology from the Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence in July 2022, which addressed the injustice based on systemic racism;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly join me in honouring the No. 2 Construction Battalion, acknowledging their significant contributions to our nation's history. We remember.

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.

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

RESOLUTION NO. 824

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

Whereas Sunday, November 12, 2023, marks the day of the celebration of Diwali, which is known as the Festival of Lights; and

Whereas Diwali is an important festival in Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness; and

Whereas many Nova Scotians will observe this joyful celebration by lighting lamps, visiting with friends and family, exchanging gifts, enjoying delicious food, and honouring the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, who brings prosperity for the year to come;

Therefore, be it resolved that all members of the Legislature wish all those who celebrate a Diwali filled with hope, prosperity, and promise for brighter days ahead.

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

THE SPEAKER: There is a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister for Public Works.

RESOLUTION NO. 825

HON. KIM MASLAND: Thank you, Speaker. I hereby request that the following motion be adopted without notice, pursuant to Rule 32(5) of the House of Assembly Rules and Forms of Procedure.

Be it resolved that all the congratulatory motions deposited with the Clerk pursuant to Rule 32(3) of the Rules and Forms of Procedures of the House of Assembly from October 12, 2023, to the rising of the House today that have not been otherwise considered by the House of Assembly be approved.

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.

Are there any further government notices of motion?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 403 - An Act to Amend Chapter 217 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, The Income Tax Act, to Increase the Volunteer Firefighter and Volunteer Ground Search and Rescue Tax Credit. (Fred Tilley)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

RESOLUTION NO. 826

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

Whereas the federal government changed Employment Insurance rules in December 2022 to allow persons who were suffering from illnesses to access Employment Insurance for up to 26 weeks; and

Whereas Nova Scotia labour law currently only guarantees employees working in provincially regulated industries a maximum of three days unpaid leave due to illness, which is insufficient for people with serious illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and MS; and

Whereas the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration will discuss the issue of leave for chronic illness during a meeting of her federal and territorial counterparts in the new year;

Therefore, be it resolved that the House directs the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration to consult and study this issue, discuss it with her provincial and territorial counterparts - with the intention of providing Nova Scotians facing serious illnesses while working in provincially regulated industries with job protected unpaid leave - and report progress back to the Legislature by the Spring Legislative Session, 2024.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

All those in favour of the motion? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

RESOLUTION NO. 827

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

Whereas Nova Scotia is experiencing a year of devastating extreme weather that is accelerated by climate change; and

Whereas programs aimed at supporting energy efficient retrofits such as heat pumps remain hard to access, especially for low-income Nova Scotians, and effective climate action must address the very real affordability concerns of regular people; and

Whereas thousands of Nova Scotians continue to struggle with dramatic increases in the cost of living, and all members of the Legislature ought to join the Nova Scotia NDP to call on the federal government to remove all tax on home heating, exempt all home

heating from carbon pricing, improve access to home retrofit programs, and increase federal investments in those programs;

Therefore be it resolved that the House of Assembly directs the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development at the earliest possible opportunity to summon witnesses and provide an examination of the merits of exempting home heating from taxes and carbon pricing and improving access to home retrofit programs.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed?

I hear several Noes. The notice of motion is tabled.

The honourable member Annapolis.

CARMAN KERR: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

CARMAN KERR: In the West Gallery, we have two Annapolis County councillors. I would like to introduce Lynn Longmire from District 5 and Clyde Barteaux from District 4. I invite all members to give them a warm reception. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Colchester North.

TOM TAGGART: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TOM TAGGART: In the East Gallery is a long-time good friend of mine – two, actually. First is Mr. Scott Pearce, who is the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and mayor of the Township of Gore, a beautiful rural community outside of Montreal. He's here today at the NSFM meeting. With him is my former colleague in the Municipality of Colchester, Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart, who will be - when Scott is done - the incoming chair or president of the Federation of Canadian municipalities. Welcome, guys. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. Enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: In the West Gallery - nine years ago, a family came to Canada from Syria, came into my office, and I had the pleasure to meet them and their daughter, Dooaa Almsalma. Nine years later, Dooaa is now working out of my office as a student. I want to welcome her and hope that everyone can give her a big round of applause. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. Enjoy your visit here.

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

HON. BRIAN COMER: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRIAN COMER: If I could draw everyone's attention to the East Gallery, we have some special guests here with us today. I'll ask them to stand as we mention their names: Greg Jones, the president of the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia; Jim Roper, former fire chief with the Pictou Landing fire department and past president of the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia; and Eric Wade Jennings, past chief of the Debert Fire Brigade and vice-president of the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia. I ask all members of the House to give them a warm round of applause. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. It's a pleasure to have you.

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

BRIAN COMER: Greg, Jim, and Eric are among the more than 7,000 volunteers who make up our fire service and ground search and rescue operations in Nova Scotia. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: I'm sorry. Are you hoping to make a member's statement?

BRIAN COMER: Just continue an introduction if that's okay.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: We're not on to Members' Statements yet, but certainly when we are, I will recognize you immediately.

The honourable Leader of the New Democratic Party.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Sure.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite, where we are joined by Leitha Haysom and Kacy DeLong, who are councillors in the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg and I'm sure are here to watch the festivities today. Please give them the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Addictions and Mental Health. (Applause)

VOLS.: GROUND SAR - THANKS

HON. BRIAN COMER: Thank you, Speaker. Lots of positive vibes in here today. That's great.

Back to my comments on Greg, Jim, and Eric. They are among the more than 7,000 volunteers who make our fire service and our ground search and rescue operations in Nova Scotia. Certainly, in the last several years, we have called on our volunteers like never before, and they have always been there. It is hard to find the right words to say thank you for the many, many hours you put in outside of your day jobs, outside of your families, to support others, neighbours and strangers alike, on what are often our worst days.

There is no way to repay our volunteers for the hours they have given in services in our communities across Nova Scotia, but there are ways we can be there for them when they are there for us.

Today we announced the new Mental Health Support Service for volunteer firefighters and ground search and rescue people across Nova Scotia. It will launch in

December and will include a range of health and wellness services, including individual and family counselling. To our guests, we are all grateful for your service.

I would ask the House to please stand and welcome the guests, and acknowledge their work they do every day. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

REMEM. DAY: SIGNIFICANCE - RECOG.

HON. KELLY REGAN: Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition in honour of Remembrance Week. On Remembrance Day we pay tribute to all of those who served and continue to serve. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month we honour their service and sacrifice. It's the courage of our military personnel that has provided us with the rights and freedoms we enjoy today.

We pause to remember the brave sacrifices and acknowledge a debt we can never repay. We pay tribute to those who have lost their lives and those who have been physically or mentally scarred by their service as well as their family members and loved ones. The military has a special place in the identity of our province. We are proud of that identity and we thank the Nova Scotians who continue to serve.

I encourage everyone to take some time to reflect on the sacrifices made for all of us this week. Lest we forget.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT: SOLUTION - SUPPORT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, Nova Scotia is home to many Palestinians and to many Jews and in vigils, rallies, kitchens, and living rooms across this province, Nova Scotians gather to worry about the fate of their loved ones and to mourn the thousands who have been killed in the Israel-Hamas war. Meanwhile, here at home and across the country, hate is on the rise. Mosques and synagogues are increasingly targeted. There is little tolerance for opposing views and instances of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are increasing. We unequivocally condemn these.

As leaders in this House, we must do what we can to bring comfort, compassion, and solace to those who need it most. We must offer love and tolerance in the face of extremism and hate when it manifests at home and in our communities. As Nova Scotians gather to express themselves, share their grief, and support each other, we must ensure that everyone feels safe in their expression and seen in this Chamber.

Once again, I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in amplifying calls for the release of hostages, the establishment of humanitarian pathways, a political and diplomatic solution to the crisis, and a ceasefire in the region.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Before I make my statement, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Speaker, I would like to direct the attention of the House to your gallery so that I may introduce two of my constituents. Sherry and Craig Veinot are pillars of the Lunenburg County Ground Search and Rescue Team, where Sherry has served as Search Director and Craig is a Training Officer.

This past September, they each received their 35-year Service Awards, so a combined 70 years of search experience and service between them. Sherry is also President of the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association, and served as the Nova Scotia representative on the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada.

Thank you for joining us here today, and I would ask you to rise and accept the warm welcome of the House of Assembly. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for being here. I hope you enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

LUN. CO. GSAR: 45TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of Lunenburg County Ground Search and Rescue on the occasion of its 45th anniversary. This volunteer organization provides critical assistance to law enforcement when people go missing at home in Lunenburg County and beyond. They also assist in evacuation efforts, such as those related to recent wildfires and flooding in our province, and they teach woodsproofing - what to do if you become lost in the woods. In fact, they have one of their Hug-A-Tree sessions coming up in Riverport on November 18th.

I am so grateful for the dedication of these individuals and their families who, like our volunteer firefighters, devote many, many hours to training and fundraising, all in addition to their search services, and who remain ever-ready when emergencies arise.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT: VICTIMS - SUPPORT

HON. KELLY REGAN: I rise today on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition. The situation in Israel and Palestine has escalated rapidly, and thousands of people - Palestinians and Israelis - have died. In the wake of these brutalities, Nova Scotians have mourned with families, and prayed for the safety of those impacted by the dangerous situation in the Middle East.

Here at home, it may seem as though we are helpless, but Nova Scotians can and should stand against all forms of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and hate.

The Premier has used language that has only caused further division on the issue, and failed to recognize our local Palestinian community, which lost family members in homes abroad. We as elected officials need to ensure we are not using language that will inflame the situation, but stand strong for our local communities impacted on both sides.

We must work to bring us together for peace. To those impacted, both near and far, we are with you, and we stand firmly committed to international law, and the ultimate goal of peace, safety, and security in the Middle East.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, may I make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please do.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'd like to draw the House's attention to the gallery opposite, where we have two amazing young people from Dartmouth North. My friend Ronnie Harris is a student at Woodlawn High, born and raised in Dartmouth North, and also a great door-knocker of folks, but I think he's pretty committed to my campaign and the next one, so no one's allowed to take him.

Next to him is Kayley Dixon. Since I was elected, I've known Kayley. She's also from Dartmouth North, and has done incredible work with the youth. She is a youth herself, but is a great youth leader for ones coming up behind her.

I'm about to do a member's statement about Ronnie's sister, Miya, so I'd like to ask you all to welcome them. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. Enjoy your visit.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MURAL CREATION: HONOURING MIYA HARRIS - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Three years ago on June 10th, 15-year-old Miya Harris died of an accidental drug overdose. She was a daughter, a sister, a Dartmouth High student, and a much-loved member of the North Dartmouth community.

After Miya's celebration of life, her friends looked for a way to grieve her loss. Guided by youth worker Kayley Dixon, and supported by inspiring communities, the youth began to do work with an art therapist. They would gather monthly, and the result is a beautiful mural that is now displayed on the outside wall of the Dartmouth North Boys and Girls Club.

The mural - conceived by Miya's friends and painted by Trackside Studios - depicts a large book of Miya's life with butterflies all around. The mural honours Miya and celebrates her life. Its creation is a way for those who loved her to channel their grief. In front of the mural is a beautiful wood bench created by Dartmouth North resident and teacher, Ian Stewart. Community members can now sit and remember Miya or just take a moment for themselves.

I ask all members of the House to join me in remembering Miya Harris, and in thanking her friends and family for turning their sadness into a beautiful symbol of love and hope.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

HON. GREG MORROW: I beg leave to make an introduction ahead of my statement. In the East Gallery is someone who needs no introduction to the House - a familiar face to members, staff, and our friends in the media. Marla MacInnis is a valuable member of the team of Communications Nova Scotia. I'm introducing her today because she is a great-niece of the gentleman I'm going to honour in my member statement. Welcome, Marla. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

SIMPSON, ROY BURTON: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

GREG MORROW: Speaker, I rise today to honour Roy Burton Simpson of Boylston, who passed away on August 18th at the age of 99.

Private Simpson was the last surviving veteran of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 81, Guysborough. Roy always attended the parades and Remembrance Day

ceremonies with his fellow veterans - including my grandfather, Bernie Worth. As the number of local veterans grew smaller, Roy still attended the ceremonies, proudly wearing his medals and saluting the flag.

Born in Boylston on April 15, 1924, Roy moved to Ontario as a teenager to seek employment. On his 18th birthday, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Army. He became a soldier in the Toronto Scottish Highlanders Regiment. Upon completing his training, he immediately volunteered to go overseas. Roy was a frontline soldier from the time he enlisted until the end. He saw action in England, France, Belgium, and Germany, and was a proud soldier in the liberation of Holland.

Eventually, Roy moved home and met his future wife, Dorothy Hull. They bought a farm and worked hard to make a living while raising two sons, David and Gary, and three foster daughters, Margaret, Florence, and Carla. Through the years, Roy volunteered with the Manchester-Boylston Fire Department, and was an active member of the Chedabucto Curling Club.

During this Remembrance Week, we remember Private Roy Burton Simpson and his service to our country. Speaker, we extend our deepest sympathies to his family on the passing of their hero, father, and papa.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

LEG. STAFF: SUPPORT DURING SITTING - THANKS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place - it seems like we're coming to the end of this session, much to the disappointment of all. I say that jokingly, but I want to be serious for a second. I want to say this.

It's been a lot of long hours. We've been in here a lot. We've been debating a lot of important bills. While we're doing that, staff have been here day and night. The hours were called late every night. We were here late every night, debating those bills and making decisions on behalf of Nova Scotians. The staff really stepped up. They were here every night, supporting us in any capacity they could. It's not easy.

I rise in my place today, as one of the House Leaders here and someone who engages with staff a lot, to thank them so much - whether you are Pages, media, anybody involved with Legislative Television, our Clerks, and everyone for just doing an outstanding job, not only this session but every session.

Thank you to all of you, and thank you, Speaker.

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

HORIZON ACH. CTR.: NEW VAN - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise today to inform the House of some great news. Horizon Achievement Centre is the proud owner of a 2023 Chrysler Pacifica from Colbourne Chrysler. A special thank you to the Cape Breton Credit Union, which started this fundraiser with their Helping Hands Fund, a contribution of \$16,000. Thanks to everyone who's contributed, including the Kiwanis of Cape Breton Golden K, families and friends. Horizon's monthly 50/50 and the ongoing fundraisers will continue to support this initiative. To date, they have raised \$54,262. A thank you to Vango Signs and Designs for the van's design. The new passenger van will enhance and increase the community's connection for people with varying abilities, support their social enterprise operations and leisure and recreational programs, and provide opportunities for learning and independent living. Congratulations, Horizon Achievement Centre.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

PERRIN, SGT. WALTER ALVIN: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

TOM TAGGART: As we commemorate Remembrance Week, I would like to pay tribute to Sergeant Walter Alvin Perrin. His daughter, Alice Pugsley, sent me the citation Walter received when he was awarded the Military Medal in 1945, at age 22.

The citation, awarded on April 28, 1945, commends his heroism, stating: "Sergeant Perrin has commanded his three-inch M-10 self-propelled gun and detachment with exceptional courage and leadership." It goes on to say: "When his troop was supporting a unit of 4 British Infantry Division, this Non-Commissioned Officer showed courage and leadership of a high order." The citation ends with: "The initiative and devotion to duty of Sergeant Perrin have been a great source of encouragement and inspiration to his whole troop."

This is why Remembrance Day is so important to Canadians. It's because of people like Walter Perrin, who stood in the face of danger and were an inspiration to the soldiers under his command.

Sergeant Perrin passed away in 2018, and is missed by his family every day. Nearly a year ago, his daughter Alice was in London and stood in the very spot where her father had received his Military Medal. Standing in front of Buckingham Palace, she held his picture and the announcement in the *London Gazette*, knowing how important it is that we remember our brave heroes like Walter Alvin Perrin.

Speaker, I would like to table a copy of this citation so that it may be kept in the records for all time. Quite honestly, this citation goes into more detail about his bravery. Allowed?

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: I would like to remind the member we're up to two minutes now.

TOM TAGGART: Thank you, Speaker. We will remember.

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

HON. BEN JESSOME: I beg leave to make a quick introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BEN JESSOME: In your gallery today, we are joined by a number of community members from the Hammonds Plains-Lucasville community. I'll ask them to stand when I recognize them. From the Hammonds Plains Volunteer Fire Department, Captain Keith Cuthbertson; Ken Mitchell; Mike Deagle; and Trevor Bracken. I wasn't done yet. (Laughter) Last but not least, we have representatives from the St. Margaret's Centre. General Manager Charleen Cameron and Andrew Grimmet are with us today as well. (Applause)

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

VOLS.: WILDFIRE SUPPORT - RECOG.

BEN JESSOME: Thank you for the opportunity to recognize just a few people who were extremely hands-on during the wildfires this Summer. Of course, the fire took place on a Sunday, so our volunteer team was the first on scene. Charleen and Andrew made a point to make a home for these teams of emergency responders and firefighters who around the clock came in, got a few hours of sleep, fed, and were back out there to fight fires as quickly and as often as they could. I would be remiss if I did not, after the Summer that we had, make a point to join my colleagues from all around the House in recognizing some of our local heroes.

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

TRANS DAY OF REMEM.: FIGHT DISCRIM. - SUPPORT

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise today to note that soon after this House rises, the Transgender Day of Remembrance will be marked on November 20th. In the face of rising transphobic hate, it is even more important this year to stand in solidarity for inclusion and safety in Nova Scotia. We will mark the day here at Province House by raising the Transgender Pride Flag and gathering with community.

I urge all members, wherever they find themselves on November 20th, to gather with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and demonstrate your commitment - our shared commitment - to standing up to transphobic bullying, discrimination, and violence, and to building a better Nova Scotia.

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

REMEM. WEEK: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

LARRY HARRISON: I rise today in honour of all those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. During this Remembrance Week, we pay tribute to those who have answered the call of our nation and sacrificed to provide us with the freedoms that we enjoy every day in Canada.

We are very fortunate to sit in this House as representatives of democracy and voices for citizens around this province. It is because of the sacrifices of our veterans that we have been provided with this opportunity. We must remember to live up to promises made to them by this nation when they were deployed to foreign battlefields. We must strive to be a nation worthy of their commitment, to uphold the values that make them proud to wear the flag on their uniforms.

I encourage all Nova Scotians who have the ability to attend a service this Remembrance Day and to thank their local veterans and service members for their sacrifices.

I ask that the members of the Legislature join me in paying tribute to our heroes and committing to all veterans and active service members that we will honour you and we will remember. Lest we forget.

Speaker, I ask that the members of the House pay tribute with a moment of silence.

THE SPEAKER: We will stand for a moment of silence, please.

[A moment of silence was observed.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: In the West Gallery today, we are joined by Kelly Gomes, my long-suffering constituency assistant of 11 years. Kelly is not only my CA, she is also my co-campaign chair and former riding president. She is a jack of all trades.

I'd ask that everybody give her a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

GOMES, KELLY: CA WORK - THANKS

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I will say, Speaker, before I speak - surprisingly, in 11 years, I think this is the first time Kelly has - the second time she's graced us with her presence.

Today I want to take a moment to thank Kelly Gomes, my constituency assistant, my office manager, and my partner in all things community. Kelly has been beside me since the beginning, and she has earned every single penny. From the text messages at all hours of the night to my random ideas that she brings to life, putting community events together, and delivering groceries. She fills out applications and she is always, always there.

Kelly has decided to hang it up and will retire next year. I know she will miss my non-stop texts asking her to create event after event after event, my pestering, and all the things I do to drive her nuts.

In all seriousness, I could not and would not do this without you. None of this is possible without you. I want you to always remember that. You are the unsung hero of all of this. Enjoy your retirement, know that I love and appreciate you, and keep those sneakers close, because there's a provincial election coming soon. (Laughter)

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

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: Speaker, I'd like the House to join me toward the West Gallery, where we're joined by my sister, Zahlee Kennedy Churchill, who is here today with her friend Josh, I believe. Thank you so much for coming out to watch the proceedings today. I ask the House to give them a warm welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

LEG. STAFF: SUPPORT FOR MLAS - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize the team of folks who help us all do our job daily here in the House, from the House of Assembly staff, Scott and Kyle, who keep us on track and make sure all of the daily business runs smoothly; Chuck and the Commissionaires and the police officers, who all keep us safe and secure in this space; the

Pages, who consistently keep us refreshed and are available to get us items we need and table our information, on their feet at all hours; the Library staff and Legislative Counsel, who are helpful with their information and our needs in and outside of this House; the Clerks, who do all of the paperwork, advise on all of the ways of the parliamentary process, keeping us all in line; to Legislative Television Broadcast and Recording Services, who make sure the sound is right and the cameras are on point, and who also make sure our seven fans are updated; the Sergeant-at-Arms, who directs us when and how we do business to keep us focused; and to all our staff, families, and anyone else whom I may have missed who have supported us through these long days and full debates.

I'd like all members to join me in thanking all of these folks for their hard work and patience during this Fall sitting. (Applause)

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

LEG. STAFF SUPPORT - THANKS

HON. KEITH BAIN: Speaker, I rise today to say thank you to all the staff who have worked to keep this sitting of the Legislature running smoothly, and we certainly all know that hasn't been easy.

The team, including the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Clerks, the Pages, the staff at Leg TV, and House Management have put in a lot of hours and have all done a wonderful job over the past several weeks. I wish you all a wonderful Winter season, until we meet again in the Spring.

Speaker, having been in the Chair that you presently hold for more than two years, I've gotten to know the staff, and I can tell you that they are tremendous. We're fortunate to have them.

I also must thank all the people who work behind the scenes to make our lives easier. Our caucus staff, who you rarely see unless they happen to be sitting in the gallery, are always available to help when we need assistance. They listen when we need advice, they chat when we need support, and they bring us snacks when we need a boost of energy. They're invaluable to each of us.

We all know that the MLAs are only a part of what makes this Legislature work. I ask each of you to join me as we thank all the members of this team for their invaluable assistance during this session and beyond. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

REMEM. DAY: MIL. SERV. - RECOG.

CARMAN KERR: Speaker, this Saturday is Remembrance Day. On the 11th hour, on the 11th day, on the 11th month, Nova Scotians will take a moment to reflect on the tremendous sacrifices that so many Canadians in uniform have made on behalf of all of us, including my grandfather, Dr. Jack Kerr. We all owe a debt of gratitude to members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Merchant Marines, and the RCMP, who have selflessly put their lives on the line to serve our country.

[2:00 p.m.]

I would also like to acknowledge the extraordinary work completed by the Royal Canadian Legion members across our province to support veterans and to ensure that the sacrifices made by Canadians across the globe are not forgotten. There are four exceptional Legion branches in my constituency; Middleton Legion No. 1, Port Royal Legion Branch No. 21, Bridgetown Legion No. 33, and Lawrencetown Legion No. 112. I look forward to chatting with all members this Saturday, November 11th.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect, on a quick introduction.

DAUGHTER FREYA: BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. IAIN RANKIN: It's actually a member's statement. I know it will be quick. I just want to say Happy Birthday to my daughter Freya. She'll be two on Sunday. I just wanted to be able to say that again this year.

THE SPEAKER: We will now begin the order of business, Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers.

The time is now 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.: BETTER PAYCHEQUE - COMMIT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier promised Nova Scotians in his election campaign that he would give them a better paycheque, however Nova Scotia now has the second lowest weekly wages in the whole country, and this is at a time when we've also led the country with inflation. We knew the Premier would not be able to execute on this

election promise, but he can put more money in Nova Scotians pockets by cutting their income tax. Will the Premier commit to doing that today?

THE PREMIER: Speaker, I thank the member for this important question. Certainly, we've said that for that particular platform promise, we're taking a look at what's really possible there. In the meantime, I do think there are many Nova Scotians that have benefited from government policies and do have a better paycheque.

I'm thinking about CCAs; I'm thinking about those who are benefiting from the MOST program. I encourage the members opposite to help us promote that wonderful MOST program. It's helping a lot of people. We know that Nova Scotians are struggling.

We also know that the government is under significant pressure to invest in housing, to invest in health care, to invest in Nova Scotians. These things are always a balancing act, but the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board will lead a robust budget process and I'm sure a lot of things will be under consideration in that process.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier promised those working in the private sector that they'd have a better paycheque because of his government's investment and then he gets up and lists those in the public sector. There's a clear difference there. Nova Scotians across the province, whether they work in the public or private sector, are facing the highest rental increases in the country.

Nova Scotia has seen, as I mentioned, the highest inflation rate in the country. We're the only province in the country to fail on food security. Now we actually find out that the Premier has also cut a program that provides more than \$70,000 in food coupons to low-income families. Can the Premier please tell us why that program was cut, particularly with those that are most financially vulnerable in the province and who sometimes require these coupons to actually put food on the table for their families?

THE PREMIER: I just want to remind the member we make government policy for all Nova Scotians, regardless of where they work. To his point, many of those who are benefiting from the MOST program would in fact be working in the private sector for sure, on job sites around this province. But we focus on all Nova Scotians in terms of government policy.

I'm not aware of any cuts to any programs. There are some that have been frozen. I believe the member might be referring to a cut that the federal government made to a certain program, but I'm happy to speak further with the member about his concerns on that program.

ZACH CHURCHILL: The Premier and the government keep mentioning this MOST program. Only a fraction of the dollars that have been budgeted toward that

program are actually being used. Skilled trade workers aren't taking them up on this program. It's not helping with the skilled labour shortage or helping a lot of Nova Scotians.

The Premier says he governs for all Nova Scotians, but what we've seen is they're not governing for those that are of the lowest income. They have frozen income assistance, and they have frozen income assistance at a time when every cost for people is going up.

They have cut \$70,000 out of the food coupon program. That is a provincial program that is run by the Minister of Agriculture. Can the Premier please tell us why, when we're dealing with the highest costs in the country, is he cutting funding to those that are most financially vulnerable?

THE PREMIER: I am happy to discuss with the member the program that he might be referring to. I'm not sure that it's accurate, his statements on that. What I would say is we know Nova Scotians are struggling. We focused on targeted supports. We have a number of targeted supports that are helping many Nova Scotians.

In terms of the MOST program, it is an innovative program; it's a new program. Sometimes it takes time for new programs to be known widely, to be accepted. When I tell people, sometimes they just don't believe me: Is that true? Is that really happening? The Opposition can be part of promoting something that is positive. They don't always have to be negative about programs. This is a wonderful program. I ask the member to maybe push that out to his social media channels and herald this wonderful program.

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

PREM.: NOVA SCOTIANS STRUGGLING - ACT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier about a number of important issues that Nova Scotians are facing that are united by a common theme: the Premier acknowledging a problem, but then failing to act.

Since the start of this session, New Democrats have been fighting for things that matter to everyday Nova Scotians. The Premier knows that the cost of living is the No. 1 issue facing the people of this province, but when we asked for a seniors income benefit that would help Nova Scotia seniors live in dignity, he said no. When we pointed out that new families are losing hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars through the practice of wait-list fees, the Premier agreed but then refused to ban it. People are struggling, but the Premier has refused to discuss taking the HST off of groceries, freezing Pharmacare fees, or establishing a school lunch program.

When will the Premier act to meaningfully help the people of this province who are struggling?

THE PREMIER: Every day this government is working to support Nova Scotians, to assist Nova Scotians - every single day. I could list a litany of programs that we're supporting, that we're expanding, that we're creating - every single day, Speaker.

To the member's point, it's actually very rare that I just say no. I often take this information, we go away, and we think about it. It's very difficult to make government policy in Question Period in 45 seconds. We listen. We go away. We assess. We see what's possible. On a number of those things, we'll do that. HST is already off most of the things that you would buy at the grocery store, but we're open to looking for ways to help Nova Scotians. We don't just say no.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I want to ask the Premier again about wait-list fees for child care. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has finally agreed that the practice of predatory and unfair wait-list fees is wrong, but they are still being charged, and we are no further along in addressing the issue of banning fees. Will the Premier be very clear and commit that unfair wait-list fees will be stopped by this government?

THE PREMIER: Access to affordable child care is fundamental. We're making great strides and making sure that there is affordable child care for Nova Scotians. I'm very proud of the work that's being done on that file. The minister has already said that that's a practice that's inconsistent with access to affordable child care, and the department is looking at what is possible in that respect. We'll continue to look at that.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We look forward to action on that file. This is a government that repeatedly agrees that we have an important issue on our hands but then doesn't address it. Take seniors' incomes: The government agrees that the state of seniors' poverty is critical, acknowledges that almost every other province has an income benefit for seniors, and then says we would certainly consider doing it. Now the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board says there's nothing to be done. Again, the Premier has acknowledged an issue, but his government has refused to do anything about it.

I will ask again: Will the Premier ensure that seniors have an income benefit that equals what seniors get in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador - all of which are more than what seniors get here?

THE PREMIER: That list of provinces - I'm not aware of any of them that has a Seniors Care Grant, yet we do here in Nova Scotia. We understand the need to support Nova Scotians where we can. We'll always want to do more, but we certainly understand it.

This year, as a province, we absorbed close to \$5 million in additional pharmacare costs. We have held the line on Seniors' Pharmacare. Obviously, the costs are rising, but

we didn't pass that through, and we added a bunch of new therapies to that program too. It wouldn't be fair to say this government does nothing. In fact, this government is a government of action that accomplishes a lot. We have lots to do, but we're getting lots done. I completely reject the premise that we do nothing because it's not true.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: CONFLICT OF INTEREST - EXPLAIN

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: This past weekend, premiers from across the province came to Halifax and they all stayed at Scott McCrea's hotel, Queen's Marque - probably the most expensive hotel in the province. This is also an individual who is closely aligned with the Premier, who chaired his transition team, has fundraised for the Premier, is a close friend and personal ally. Does the Premier understand how this could be perceived as a potential conflict of interest or favouritism?

THE SPEAKER: I'm going to seek some advice on this . . . (Interruption) I'm going to rule the question out of order, on the premise that we have no idea - I'm pretty sure the premiers of other provinces are on their own expense accounts that the taxpayers of Nova Scotia aren't paying. We'll move on to your second question. Go ahead, please.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Certainly. They all just decided to stay at that one hotel. I won't ask another question on this, but I bring this up because the government has brought forward a piece of legislation that allows them to overturn decisions made by HRM, that allows them to hand-pick their preferred developers to move on some of the biggest housing developments in the province, and we on this side of the House are worried that there's going to be favouritism. What mechanisms for accountability and transparency will the Premier bring in to ensure that favouritism does not happen when all the power is concentrated in the office of one of his ministers?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I reject the assertions of the Opposition entirely, and I can tell the member that we have seen clearly that we see this - again, we're discussing Bill No. 329, we see these being used, these powers at the end of the process, not before. We respect the municipal planning strategy, absolutely, and all of the permitting that's required. We work with anyone who wants to build in Nova Scotia. We want to see them build. We want to see this province built, and we reject this type of negative thinking.

THE SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

MAH: FAVOURITISM - PREVENT

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: This isn't negative thinking. This is legitimate concern over favouritism, which we've actually seen a pattern of with this government. This is a government that has fired independent boards, put on personal friends of the

Premier to run them, and this is a government that now is allowing the minister - whether it's at the beginning of the process, or at the end - to make a final decision that can overrule a local municipality. There are no protections in the law as presented that will stop them from choosing favourites, picking winners and losers. My question to the Premier is: Will he make amendments to this law to ensure that Nova Scotians are protected from favouritism?

HON. JOHN LOHR: What I can tell the members is that we lived through eight years of their government as well and saw many things happen, and they do similar things. What I will say is that they may remember, in terms of who was appointed. I will ask the member to recall who we put at the head of our Executive Panel on Housing - former Minister MacLellan, right away. We'll take talent wherever it is. We'll take good advice wherever it comes from.

THE SPEAKER: Just to remind the member to be considerate of how you phrase. We are not to be asking questions about bills or amendments.

The leader of the Official Opposition.

ZACH CHURCHILL: Thank you, Speaker. I'm concerned that the minister can't answer this question. We've seen examples in the country where a Conservative government intervened with municipal decision-making. It led to scandal, an RCMP investigation, favouritism. We've seen other examples, like in B.C., where there was an intervention, but it was around rules. Rules were changed. It didn't give the minister the ability to make their own decisions on who got what or pick winners and losers. They actually just changed the rules they didn't like.

My question to the Premier: If they want to intervene with HRM decision-making and have issues with some of the rules that are in place, why didn't they just change the rules, instead of giving the minister unilateral ability to pick winners and losers when it comes to development?

JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I will first remind the member that this party is not under an RCMP investigation right now. What I can say is that this is a very different situation than Ontario. I know the member would like to tag that with us. That is a totally different circumstance, where we've said we're absolutely committed to the MPS - the Municipal Planning Strategy. We want to see that built out. In fact, our bill calls for the suburban planning strategy to be built out. We respect those strategies. We respect the permitting processes. We're working for the growth of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

NRR: COAL PLANTS - DECOMMISSION

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, power bills have gone up by 7 per cent under this government. They're going to go up again by another 7 per cent, and the minister has said they're doing everything they can because this is fuel costs. I want to ask the minister: There have already been three coal plants that were previously scheduled to be decommissioned now. What is the new timeline? There is a new 2030 Clean Power Plan that says four coal plants will continue to be operating in emergency use. My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables: What are the four communities that will have coal plants decommissioned, and what's the timeline to see that happen?

[2:15 p.m.]

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question and the interest in our 2030 Clean Power Plan. Not only did we say we were going to do it, but we also put a plan in place. There are things such as the 80 per cent renewables that we didn't just say we were going to do - we legislated it. It's off coal. We said we were going to do it. We also legislated it.

I'd like to point out that there are going to be some changes in that. It's a very new plan. We are still having dialogue back and forth with our federal counterparts, our neighbours in the New Brunswick area, and Nova Scotia Power about what plants are going to be into what detail. As soon as that's available, I look forward to sharing that with all Nova Scotians.

IAIN RANKIN: The interesting part about that is Nova Scotia Power is already talking to workers about which plants will close - plants like the Trenton plant, which was previously going to be transitioned to natural gas and is now planned for full closure. Employees want some certainty on where they're going to be able to get support.

The minister has said that it is in law - that they've made the law and that coal plants will close. I want to ask the minister: How much of the commitment from the federal government or even from the Province - how much funding will go to ensure that all our employees who are currently working at coal plants have that support when they close?

TORY RUSHTON: I've had the chance to speak to this on the floor, as has my colleague from the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, who takes the lead on this. We do take the responsibility for electricity generation within my department and other things, but the frank matter is that we've had these conversations with Nova Scotia Power. We know they are talking to their employees. Across the different government departments, we're having these conversations. It's not the end of a career for these workers. It's a new career in green energy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

FTB: SENIORS' INCOME BENEFIT - IMPLEMENT

GARY BURRILL: My question is for the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. Last week, people concerned about seniors' poverty were encouraged when the minister indicated an openness to creating a provincial seniors' income benefit. I would keep an open mind, he told reporters. When it makes sense to do so, we would certainly consider doing it. People were deflated yesterday when, in answer to a question here, the minister walked back that openness and reverted, as the Premier did earlier, to talking about the Seniors Care Grant - practically the only seniors supplement in Canada that requires an application and receipts. Is the minister really going to close the door on a seniors' income benefit in the province with the worst seniors' income in the country?

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, this is the challenge. I think it's great for Opposition to bring ideas forward, but when they're brought forward in Question Period in short snippets and before - in response to media questions on those matters - it can create a lot of confusion for the public. What I would say is that when government decides on these kinds of things, we don't do it in an answer in Question Period. We don't do it in a media scrum. As we have said, and as I have said, we are always open to ideas and will continue to be.

GARY BURRILL: Speaking of creating confusion, yesterday the minister spoke about issues he saw about seniors' income benefit. He spoke about identifying how many people live in a certain house and finding out whether or not a person is actually in that house and about the CRA - all different kinds of issues.

Doesn't the minister think that the governments in the provinces of B.C. and Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba and Ontario and Quebec and New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador have figured all these things out, and isn't it time for us in Nova Scotia to follow their lead and establish a seniors' income benefit for the low-income seniors of our province?

ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, the member started his question last week with a criticism of the Seniors Care Grant, saying that it was not as good as an idea that he had. That's fine, but none of those provinces have the Seniors Care Grant. It was a new initiative started by this government. It helped seniors stay in their homes. We've heard a lot of positive feedback on that program. We intend - let me be clear on that - for that program to continue.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DCS: INCOME ASSISTANCE RATES - INCREASE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, we have gone through another House session where we've not seen any increase in income assistance for our most

vulnerable Nova Scotians. During this time, we have the highest inflation rates in the country, the cost of living has continued to rise, homelessness has continued to rise, food insecurity has continued to rise, yet this government's solution: Freeze income assistance for the last two years. It is shameful.

Something that this government could do is index income assistance rates to inflation. This would directly help the health and safety of hundreds of Nova Scotians who are struggling right now. My question to the Minister of Community Services: What will it take for this government to increase income assistance rates to inflation?

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Our government is absolutely concerned with the challenges facing Nova Scotians, cost of living challenges, affordability issues, rising interest rates, inflation, Speaker.

Our government has provided targeted supports and will continue to look at opportunities to support Nova Scotians. I think of the Nova Scotia Child Benefit increased in the last two budgets, I think about targeted supports for those on income assistance over the last number of years. My colleague just talked about the Seniors Care Grant and supporting seniors in poverty.

Again, we'll continue to do what we can to support Nova Scotians and continue to look at our programs to make sure that we are supporting Nova Scotians who are feeling vulnerable.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: There is nothing more direct than income assistance to help people in this province. The targeted supports the minister has continued to talk about are not even close to good enough. They are failing Nova Scotians and I don't know why this government continues to ignore it. I will repeat for the umpteenth time in this House: We are the only province to get an F on poverty reduction. It is unacceptable that this government is okay with that grade. My question to the minister: Does he understand that by indexing income assistance to inflation, he could help improve the lives of our most vulnerable?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: We recognize that poverty is a significant and complex issue. We recognize that it is often intergenerational and systemic. We recognize that Nova Scotians do need supports. Again, I'll highlight targeted supports that we have created as a government. I can talk about the funding for heat pumps for low-income seniors. We'll talk about the investments that we've made in foster care changes, some of the most expansive across the country in that regard.

We can talk about the supports that we had for children with disabilities. We know that this is a challenge for Nova Scotians and we'll continue to look at ways that we can support our most vulnerable.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

EECD: UNIVERSAL LUNCH PROGRAM - INTRODUCE

HON. KELLY REGAN: Speaker, yesterday while the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development in this province was busy blaming the federal government for not implementing a universal food lunch program, over in Newfoundland and Labrador their premier, Dr. Andrew Furey, got down to work and actually announced an \$85 million program over two years to reduce childhood poverty. This included expanding their lunch program to every single school in the province. Why won't Nova Scotia follow Newfoundland and Labrador's lead and introduce a universal lunch program?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Let me be very clear: We are not waiting for the federal government to take steps to increase access to food at schools. We know how important it is for our students to have access to food in schools and that's why we have introduced pilots. That's why we have expanded access to food through programming with our partners at Agriculture, through programming with our partners at Nova Scotia Health.

Let me also be clear: I don't blame the federal government. I am calling upon the federal government to participate and support us in our work but we are not waiting. Make no mistake, we are increasing access to food in schools and we are supporting our students in that regard.

KELLY REGAN: Two of our Atlantic counterparts that were not rolling in big surpluses like this government has had for the last two years have announced and are getting to work on implementing a universal lunch program - not pilot projects - to reduce child poverty. This government grandstands, makes excuses, and does pilot projects. It's shameful. Kids in Nova Scotia deserve better. My question to the minister is: Why won't this government commit to reducing poverty by providing free food in schools now in every school?

BECKY DRUHAN: I want to be clear for any students or families who are concerned about access to food in schools, if a student needs access to food in schools, we have resources available for those students. Every single adult in our school system is aware of the need to ensure that we provide support for our students and every school has food and funding and support available to do that.

We know that we can improve universality of access in schools and that's why we are doing pilot programs. That's why we are expanding the programs that are available because we know we need to do this work and we are doing the work. We are not waiting for our federal partners but I would encourage the Liberals across the way to speak to their federal colleagues because it is irresponsible for us not to use whatever funds are available. The federal government has promised this and we do hope that they are going to follow through.

[2:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

MAH: RENT SUPP. THRESHOLD DECISION - REVERSE

BRAEDON CLARK: Speaker, the median income for a Nova Scotian receiving a rent supplement is \$15,816, and yet, on this signature housing program, all that this government has done is make it more difficult for applicants to apply and more difficult for them to qualify by changing the income threshold from 30 per cent of income to 50 per cent of income. The minister talks a lot about how important it is that there is great demand and that is exactly the argument why the income threshold should be reversed back to 30 per cent. My question to the minister is: Why will the minister not do that?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I have answered this question before and I am happy to do it again. I thank the member for the question. The reality is that this is a federal-provincial cost-shared program which now has \$10 million in federal funding, \$40 million of our funding, and we are going to increase it this year. We are going to put \$21 million more in to continue to meet the tremendous demand.

We have the most successful rent supplement program in the country in terms of money, and I think I have explained that before. Some of my colleagues, when we meet - other provincial ministers - are asking the feds for permission to use that money elsewhere because they haven't spent it but in reality, we are doing it. We've asked the federal Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, the Honourable Sean Fraser, for help. Let's have a little more help here from him.

BRAEDON CLARK: I understand that the minister has answered this question in the past and the reason why I keep asking is because the answer is not sufficient. For rent supplement recipients, 17 per cent of them are at risk of homelessness, 15 per cent of them are living with mental health or addictions-related issues, 18 per cent have a disability. From day to day this government found \$700 million to fund a housing plan overnight, and yet they can't find any more money to actually help people who are struggling. For the thousands and thousands and thousands of Nova Scotians who are one missed paycheque, one accident in their car, away from eviction - my question to the minister is: When will the minister change this policy back?

JOHN LOHR: Speaker, we have been a government of action. We have invested almost \$300 million already. We will continue to invest more in the housing crisis and we will continue to invest more in rent supps. I've said an extra \$21 million this year and more projected out in further out years. We continue to invest in these programs. We recognize how important they are for Nova Scotians, and we continue to do what we can.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

EECD: DAYCARE SPACES - INCREASE

SUZY HANSEN: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. In Nova Scotia, nearly 50 per cent of children live in a child care desert, meaning they live in an area where there are three children for every one child care space. We're increasingly hearing that even wait-lists are full. Fee reductions only mean so much when families can't even find a space available. My question to the minister is: Can the minister tell me when there will be a daycare space for every child who needs it?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: We are on a five-year journey to transform child care in Nova Scotia. We have had wait-lists in Nova Scotia for daycare for decades. We have had expensive daycare fees in Nova Scotia for years. We have under-supported the sector, underpaid ECEs for decades. We are taking all the steps that we need to do to create a system that supports our ECEs, provides them with wages that are professional and fair; that ensures that we have spaces across the province to meet all Nova Scotian needs; to meet the needs of our rural families, our urban families, people who work shift work, people who have seasonal work.

This is a transformation that is taking years. It will take years. If I could snap my fingers and do it overnight, I would, but that's impossible with a transformation of this magnitude. We are doing the work, and we will get it done.

SUZY HANSEN: I want to say a five-year transformation means these kids will be in school and we're going to have more children who are going to need to be on wait-lists. No date, no timeline. Parents are beyond frustrated by the state of our child care sector.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The member for Halifax Needham has the floor.

SUZY HANSEN: Thank you, Speaker. Parents are beyond frustrated by the state of our child care sector and the widespread impacts of shortages. Last week the government member for Hants West referred to these types of concerns as "hocus-pocus, this picture that's being painted." Well, some of the hocus-pocus we've heard this week is one parent told a local radio show that some daycares they contacted are reporting wait times of four years. Another told how her family were left without child care after two separate daycares closed on them this year alone. My question to the minister is: Is the minister going to take these concerns seriously, or does she also think they're just hocus-pocus?

BECKY DRUHAN: I can assure the member and all Nova Scotians that I absolutely do take these concerns seriously. That's why I'm sitting in this House. That's why I'm sitting in this seat. Significant change is needed, and we are taking the steps that we need to take to create that significant change, but you can't create thousands of spaces overnight. You can't rectify decades of wrongs overnight. The work is complex, the work is challenging, but we are up to the task. We have already created over 3,300 new spaces.

We have reduced fees by half. We've increased ECE wages, and we're going to keep doing this work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DOA: FOOD PROGRAM CUT - EXPLAIN

CARMAN KERR: The Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia offers a Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program launched in 2019. It distributes coupons to those who have difficulty buying healthy food. The coupons can be redeemed at farmers' markets all over the province, and vendors are then reimbursed. However, this morning on CBC Radio, the Executive Director of Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia was sounding the alarm on the cuts to the program.

Over \$70,000 was cut from this program, impacting hundreds of households. The government should be increasing access to local healthy food, not cutting important programs that offer food security. Earlier, the Premier had blamed this cut on the federal government. I'll ask the Minister of Agriculture: Why is he cutting funding to this program?

HON. GREG MORROW: I'm happy to rise and answer this question, and correct some misinformation that's been said here during Question Period. The provincial government has not cut any funding to this program. This program started in 2021 with the government investing \$350,000 in the Nourishing Communities Food Coupon Program, by the Premier at that time, the member for Timberlea-Prospect. It's a great program. Then what happened, in late 2021-22, the government of the day - this PC government - actually increased the funding to \$422,000. We maintained that level of funding through the years, and the provincial funding has not changed.

CARMAN KERR: We also heard that the Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia has become increasingly frustrated with the delays in the food and beverage strategy. Farmers need support, and they're being told that any new funds are contingent upon what's in that strategy. The *What We Heard* report is finished and completed. The consultation is complete. What is the delay?

GREG MORROW: There's no delay. We're developing a comprehensive food and beverage strategy in this province, and it's not simple. It's a cross-government approach to addressing food security. Fourteen departments are taking part in the development of this strategy, and we're working very hard. We had nearly 2,000 responses from Nova Scotians to help us develop it, and we appreciate the response. We want to make sure that we have a plan that works for all Nova Scotians. We're going to take the time to get it right. We'll have more details soon.

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

MAH: VULN. PERSONS REGISTRY - SUPPORT

LORELEI NICOLL: It was welcome news that HRM, as the largest urban and rural municipality in this province, is creating a vulnerable persons registry. However, climate change does not know municipal boundaries, and many vulnerable persons live in municipalities that won't have a vulnerable persons registry and could be disadvantaged during a natural disaster. My question is to the Minister responsible for the Office of Emergency Management. Does he not see the problem with only some municipalities having a vulnerable persons registry?

HON. JOHN LOHR: What we see is that Kings County has had a vulnerable persons registry for some time. We're very pleased to see HRM take this step. When we look across the nation, these vulnerable persons registries are managed at the municipal level for several reasons. One is that the EMO response tools are held municipally - the fire department resources - and at the municipal level they know their people best. We're very pleased to see that. There's also the registry that Nova Scotia Power has for vulnerable people as well. That registry is related to vulnerable in terms of electricity use, which they maintain. So we're very pleased to see this step being taken by the municipality.

LORELEI NICOLL: It's imperative that vulnerable people in every corner of this province are able to get the help they need during a natural disaster. I'm thinking of my own mom, who lives alone. With the climate crisis, we need to be prepared for more storms and strengthen our response in times of disasters.

I had the great opportunity to speak with the municipal leaders at the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities. They all agree that they would like some assistance with a vulnerable persons registry. Will the Province at least help fund and expand capacities in municipalities so that all Nova Scotians can benefit from a vulnerable persons registry?

JOHN LOHR: We're taking an unprecedented step by increasing funding to the municipalities by some \$40 million to \$50 million a year already. In terms of that MOU renegotiation, there's a Schedule A, I think we call it, that is other things in terms of those negotiations with the municipalities. We're open to whatever conversations the municipalities want to have.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

DFA: ILLEGAL LOBSTER SALES - STOP

RONNIE LEBLANC: The Leader of the Official Opposition and I sent a letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture on October 18th calling on the minister to meet with his provincial counterpart in New Brunswick, the honourable Margaret Johnson, Minister of Aquaculture and Fisheries, to address the increasing illegal sales of lobster. We have seen seizures in Moncton of 110 crates containing 8,000 lobsters caught in District 34

this past Summer. We are hearing multiple reports of lobster boats leaving from St. Mary's Bay to Grand Manan to sell their catches. Will the minister immediately commit to meeting with his counterpart in New Brunswick and establishing an interprovincial enforcement strategy to address the increased illegal sales of lobster?

HON. KENT SMITH: I want it known in this House that I share the concerns brought forward by the member. I don't want the member or the House to think that we're taking these concerns lightly. With most things in life, there are things that we can do and things that we cannot do. I'm going to focus on the things that we can do.

First, I will say that we have been in touch with our counterparts in New Brunswick, and we'll continue that dialogue. We have also had conversation - my very first meeting as minister was with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. I brought forward the concerns that we were hearing from industry. I'd also like to share that, with respect to joining forces, we have put forward a steering committee to focus on finding solutions to this issue. Nova Scotia actually chairs it along with DFO and three other organizations.

RONNIE LEBLANC: Frustration is growing as illegal fishing continues in District 34. The industry is calling on the minister to increase the fine to \$1 million for buyers who illegally buy lobster, and more importantly, to immediately provide additional enforcement officers on the ground needed to make this policy effective. Can the minister provide us with a timeline as to when his department will increase the fine to \$1 million as previously committed to by his government and the former minister? Will the minister commit to providing additional enforcement resources that the industry has been calling for?

KENT SMITH: The answer is that the timeline has to go through legislation. I am committed to increasing the fines to \$1 million for convictions under the Fisheries Act. Again, I have advised the House before that that requires legislation, so I look forward to tabling it as soon as appropriate.

With respect to additional things that we can do to try to curb the illegal activity, I would like to advise the member and the House that on October 17th, we issued a letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada asking for help with increased conservation and enforcement efforts. We sent a letter on October 17th to the Minister of National Revenue asking to help curb the illegal cash sales side of things. On November 3rd, we sent a letter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, asking them to expedite prosecution . . .

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

DCS: INCOME ASSISTANCE RATES - INCREASE

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Earlier this week, the Premier apologized to Nova Scotians living with disabilities for "years of historic,

systemic discrimination.” He stated that, “It is how we collectively treat our most vulnerable citizens that defines us as a society.” My question for the Premier is: How does it define us when the income assistance rate for a single person with a disability leaves them living in deep, punishing poverty?

[2:45 p.m.]

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: We certainly recognize with the apology that people with disabilities should be living in the community of their choice, and certainly should be empowered to make the decisions that they need to support their needs and personal fulfillment. We’re embarking on a generational transformation regarding how the Province supports people with disabilities. I certainly want to acknowledge the contributions of persons with disabilities, their families, and the communities for their engagement in this process. We’re continuing to move forward with this, and looking forward to working with the disability community on meeting the needs of that remedy.

KENDRA COOMBES: Increasing income assistance rates is one of those ways that it can help. The income assistance rate for someone living with a disability is only \$950 per month. Even if you add all other provincial and federal benefits on top of this, this amount is still over \$13,000 below the poverty line. In his apology, the Premier said, “Vulnerable people rely on their government to level the playing field, and we have failed Nova Scotians living with disabilities in this regard.” In the spirit of this apology and acknowledging the rights of people with disabilities, will the Premier increase income assistance rates to allow Nova Scotians to live with dignity?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: We recognize the challenges that people with disabilities face every day. In our moving forward over the next five years we’ll be looking at ways to support our most vulnerable people and people with disabilities. Again, I’m looking forward to working with the Disability Rights Coalition of Nova Scotia, as well as others in the community, to certainly make sure that we’re supporting people with disabilities to the best of our ability.

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

DHW: SPECIAL NEEDS DENTAL CARE - ADDRESS

HON. BEN JESSOME: Speaker, oral disease is a major problem for patients with special needs. They often lack the ability to practise routine oral hygiene and have limited access to a facility that can deliver the care they require. They frequently need the use of advanced behavioural management techniques, such as sedation or general anaesthesia, which require specialized ORs.

There are few options for these patients that exist, as is clearly demonstrated by the more than 130 adults with special needs who remain on the IWK Health Centre wait-list

even though they have aged out. Wait times currently sit at more than two years. During this time, we see the progression of dental disease, resulting in pain, infection, and significant impact to overall health.

My question to the minister is: What is the government doing to address this matter for these Nova Scotians?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Recently, in the 2023-24 budget we increased our investment by \$4.7 million to improve oral health for children and for individuals living with special needs. To the member's point, this includes looking at compensating dentists in the community in order to do oral sedation, which wasn't covered previously. We've managed to increase the compensation for that. There's coverage of silver diammine fluorides - not my strength, dentistry - but we have increased the funding to make sure that we can stop dental caries in community and we've increased dentists' compensation for children and those covered under special needs programs.

BEN JESSOME: Thank you, and to continue that momentum I'd like to acknowledge a joint proposal that's been developed by the Nova Scotia Dental Association and Dalhousie University's Faculty of Dentistry that will assist this issue: they have renovated their pre-clinical and clinical spaces with hospital-grade medical devices; they have operating rooms that are built to CSA group standards; they had a donation from an alumna, Theresa Chiang; and they can perform general anesthesia. These assets, Speaker, together with the necessary sustainable funding, could provide access to the over 1,000 special-needs patients in our province. Furthermore, it will allow more timely management for patients at our IWK Health Centre. My question to the minister is: Will the government commit to ensuring that Dalhousie University is supported with the necessary operational funding to enable this program?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, some of the things that I just talked about not only looks at folks who are living centrally but it also allows dentists in our rural communities across this province to perform early intervention in order to prevent people from needing to have that specialized care.

We also have the development of an oral action plan that's under way. As we've done in the formal health care system, every asset we have in this province and our ability to partner is really important in order for us to have access to care. We'll continue to work with the Dentistry Association in the province and Dalhousie University to make sure that we get the patients the care they require.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

ECC: FOOD INSPECTION - REVIEW

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: First of all, I want to thank the minister for meeting with a constituent of mine recently, a constituent who became ill from eating at a restaurant. When she did her research, she found that the restaurant had 72 infractions, including storing open food in a bathroom. My question to the minister is: Will the minister commit to reviewing the regulations to address the most blatant offenders and report it back to the House?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: In the division of Inspection, Compliance and Enforcement at my department, we oversee our public health officers. I want to assure Nova Scotians that they can have complete confidence in the food they buy from restaurants. Along with that, Speaker, Nova Scotia has one of the strongest food safety systems in the country. We have dedicated staff doing inspections and audits of restaurants, grocery stores, and food service facilities. I encourage the honourable member, I encourage every member here . . .

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

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou, on an introduction.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I just want to make an introduction. In the West Gallery we are joined by a few representatives from the Cape Breton Regional Municipality: Mayor Amanda McDougall is here, and Deputy CAO John MacKinnon. I ask everyone to offer the welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

HON. KEITH BAIN: Although I already introduced two of them a few days ago, they brought another councillor with them. That's a polite word that I'm using, because Councillor Dauphinee and I are sharing stories all the time.

I would like the members to welcome once again the CAO for Victoria County, Leanne MacEachen; Warden Bruce Morrison; and Deputy Warden Larry Dauphinee. I ask that they stand and receive the warm welcome of the House. (Applause) (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: I'm okay with that. Welcome to the Nova Scotia House of Assembly.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Thank you, Speaker. Would you please call Private Member Public Bills for third reading.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Bill No. 396, the Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act.

BILL NO. 396 - Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 396, the Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act. For those who don't know or aren't aware of what sickle cell disease is, it is an inherited blood disorder which affects mostly people of colour. This lifelong condition affects somewhere between 5,000 and 6,000 Canadians - most of them people of colour.

Sickle cell disease is usually diagnosed at infancy and affects the hemoglobin - the molecule in the red blood cells that delivers oxygen to the body. The condition causes bouts of severe anemia, puts patients at risk for life-threatening infections, and often requires regular blood transfusions. It also causes random episodes of severe body pain that occur when misshapen hemoglobin molecules become lodged in the patient's blood vessels.

Research has found that, on average, the life expectancy of those with sickle cell disease is 52.6 years, with male expectancy being 49.3 and female, 55. As those individuals get older, increased risk for stroke and lung, kidney, spleen, and liver disease and damage is possible. Leading causes of death with sickle cell disease are infection, pain, episodes of acute chest syndrome, and stroke. Death can be sudden and unexpected.

Speaker, of the 74,817 people hospitalized in North America with sickle cell disease, 69,899 - that is 93.4 per cent - are Blacks; 3,603 - which is 4.8 per cent - were Hispanic; and 1,025 - that's 1.8 per cent - are Caucasian or white.

Thousands of Canadians suffer from this disease, and support and treatment options have not improved for decades. Research and increasing awareness are critical for this disease.

In 2006, the World Health Organization announced June 19th as Sickle Cell Awareness Day. In 2008, the United Nations proclaimed June 19th World Sickle Cell Day. In 2017, Canada recognized June 19th as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day. In 2018, the Halifax Regional Municipality recognized June 19th as Sickle Cell Awareness Day.

I'd like to thank the many supporters of sickle cell disease: the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada, the Senate of Canada, the sickle cell disease association of Nova Scotia in HRM, and HRM. I would be very proud to be able to stand here and say that the Province of Nova Scotia and the government are also adding to the awareness of this disease.

My time in this Chamber has seen many of us come together to move and recognize pieces of legislation jointly - all together, unanimously - and I'm very proud of all of us who do that when we do it. I would be over the Moon if we, as this Legislature, could also recognize June 19th as Sickle Cell Awareness Day.

It is important because the disease also carries stigma. Many of those individuals who are dealing with sickle cell often, as they get older - as I've indicated earlier - when they go to hospitals, they are often questioned about why they're there, because the disease requires opioids to help those individuals deal with such pain.

There is recorded information that shows that many people would go home, get dressed up, and change their appearance so that when they're going to the hospital, people may look at them differently - as not drug addicts. Then when they get to the hospital, there's such lack of awareness of the disease that many of those same individuals don't get the proper treatment. They will leave and go to another hospital to try to get the treatment. When that happens, often people are seen as hopping from hospital to hospital, looking for opioids or drugs, when in fact they are not getting the proper care that they need for the pain and suffering they are dealing with.

I am extremely proud of all of us in here, especially in those times when we can all come together unanimously to put forward a piece of legislation that we know raises awareness and can change the outcomes for individuals who are suffering medical issues.

Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to address this piece of legislation, and with that I end my speech.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm glad to rise on Bill No. 396, the Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act. Last evening, there were a lot of emotions in this space. I think sometimes it's good for us to be human beings and understand what sensitive issues are. I was grateful to be able to share that with everyone. I spoke about a friend of mine who had passed away before his high school year ended. Actually, he was about to graduate, and no one knew that he had

sickle cell anemia. The energy and the light that radiates from knowing this person is what continues that awareness and what continues the work that a lot of people do to make sure that folks know what sickle cell awareness is.

[3:00 p.m.]

As the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth had mentioned, sickle cell disease can lead to severe chronic pain, serious bacterial infections and tissue death, and eventually at some point, a loss of your life. A lot of folks suffer in silence, but as well, they suffer without any type of relief other than some other forms and whatever that looks like health-wise. Lifespans for those people, as the minister mentioned, are between the ages of 52 years and 56 years. I was very saddened when my friend, who was not even 19, had passed.

I also want to say that it's fairly common among people of colour and African descent, and of the Caribbean and other areas in those spaces as well. It's also a time for us to be more aware so that we can talk about those things that are happening so folks can be tested. It's important to raise the awareness of sickle cell disease because we also need to know how we can screen for these things and improve diagnosis and treatment of this disease.

I think this is a wonderful piece that is being brought forward, and it's also great to see that there's a unanimous agreement. This is how we would love to continue to see how our work can be done by having conversations across the floor. Once again, I support the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth for this particular piece of legislation, and I'm grateful to see that we all agree.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I rise in support of the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth's bill to create Sickle Cell Awareness Day. Sickle cell affects millions of people around the globe, a cause that demands our attention, our empathy, and action. I'm here to express unwavering support for the Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act.

Sickle cell disease is a silent battle fought by many. The transformation of cells from a smooth circular shape to a crescent shape leads to a cascade of challenges, from blood vessel blockages to chronic pain, severe bacterial infections, and even organ failure. The implications are profound, affecting not only individuals but entire communities.

The statistics are alarming, and the impact is felt worldwide. The life span of individuals with severe sickle cell disease can be reduced by as much as 30 years. Approximately 5 per cent of the world's population carries the trait gene for sickle cell disease, with the percentage soaring to 25 per cent in certain regions. It is incumbent upon us as representatives of the people to address the global health challenge.

The Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act proposes a significant step forward in this regard. By designating June 19th as Sickle Cell Awareness Day, we are not only aligning ourselves with international organizations like the World Health Organization and the United Nations, but also sending a powerful message of solidarity to those affected by this debilitating condition.

Raising awareness is the first crucial step towards progress. This Act emphasizes the need for uniform screening of newborns, improved diagnosis, and enhanced treatment for sickle cell disease. It is a call to action for better health care. I can say as a nurse that, unfortunately, I'm sad to say that there are many health care professionals who do not have enough education about this disease. I hope that this Act will help create more education as well.

By enacting the Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act, we declare our commitment to a healthier, more informed future. Let us stand together and recognize June 19th as a day to remember, a day to advocate, and a day to unite in the fight against sickle cell disease. In doing so, we not only honour those who suffer, but pave the way for a brighter, healthier tomorrow. I urge each of you to join me in supporting this crucial bill and making a difference in the lives of millions. I also want to thank and congratulate the member for Cole Harbour on tabling this bill.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the honourable member, it will be to close third reading.

The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HON. TONY INCE: I move to close third reading on Bill No. 396, the Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading on Bill No. 396, the Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Private and Local Bills for Third Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 348, the Lunenburg Common Lands Act.

Bill No. 348 - Lunenburg Common Lands Act (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: I do move that Bill No. 348, an Act to Amend the Lunenburg Common Lands Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker, this is an example of collaborative work that we've done with the municipality. This Act will enable the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg to grant conservation easement on common land in the Cape LaHave Islands. This will preserve an incredibly special environment, a diverse ecosystem, and the beautiful flora and fauna that exist there.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

BECKY DRUHAN: I move to close third reading of the Lunenburg Common Lands Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 348, the Lunenburg Common Lands Act.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 351, the Bethel Presbyterian Church, Sydney Act.

Bill No. 351 - Bethel Presbyterian Church, Sydney Act (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I appreciate everyone in the House moving this forward. This is a bit of an administrative amendment. These amendments are needed for the Bethel Presbyterian Church. I know the member for Cape Breton East can appreciate this organization. Some of them actually reside in his area as well. They have been trying to make this change for a little while and we're happy that we can get it done for them. I close third reading, Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 351.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 369, the Riverport Electric Light Act for Polling District No. 2, in the County of Lunenburg (amended).

Bill No. 369 Riverport Electric Light Act for Polling District No. 2, in the County of Lunenburg (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: I move that Bill No. 369, the Riverport Electric Light Act for Polling District No. 2, in the County of Lunenburg (amended) be read a third time.

As I read that, I am reminded of the hours of eloquence expressed the other evening on the names of bills but put simply, this is an act that will enable the only independent utility in the province not owned by a municipality to engage in immediate need for capital upgrades that will support growth in this particular region of the province.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 369.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

[3:15 p.m.]

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

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Would you please call Bill No. 337, the Electricity Act (amended).

Bill No. 337 - Electricity Act (amended).

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

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Speaker, I move that Bill No. 337, an Act to Amend Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2004, the Electricity Act, be now read a third time and do pass.

This is very much a house-cleaning item to ensure that what we said we were going to do with this Act in the Spring actually allows us to do it. In talking with stakeholders there needs to be a few changes in wording and such to ensure they can do what they need to do to help us get on our plan of the 2023 Clean Power Plan.

That is a plan now that will allow us to get off coal by 2030. It will allow us to reach about 88 per cent renewables by 2030. That exceeds our goal and we won't stop there. I listened to debate on Friday about the title and some things that might be missing in this bill. I know my colleagues across the floor were listening in the Spring when we did make some changes and I was very pleased to hear them reference some of those changes that we enabled for some things to happen, which certainly shows that we are all focused on the renewable energy aspect to get off coal and have as many renewables on our system as possible. I look forward to comments across the floor.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I rise to speak on third reading in support of Bill No. 337. I think this bill is important to move forward with the battery storage in our province and will help us build on our leadership position nationally when it comes to renewable energy, specifically on wind power.

I did bring up concerns relative to the bill and ensuring that we are including the existing sites that are across the province and their opportunities to grow and expand the

existing projects. They're called hybrid sites or co-locating of the batteries adjacent to the existing wind. I think this is really important because, as I'm being told, my understanding is we could save - it makes intuitive sense - significant costs to ratepayers, in the order of magnitude of 10 per cent to 30 per cent. That makes sense because you don't need to build as much more new infrastructure. You can use pre-existing interconnection infrastructure and actually utilize the resource of wind energy a lot better, having the batteries on site. My understanding is that they can be deployed one to two years faster than having a new interconnection infrastructure. That makes sense because it's simpler to study, permit, and construct these sites alongside pre-existing areas where we have wind.

The other advantage to that is that we already have largely community support where we have wind developments. Some communities are pushing back against wind development. There is precedent for this type of initiative throughout the United States, where approximately half of existing battery energy storage projects are directly integrated with existing renewable energy generation. I think that's a clear example that it can be done. It will help make sure that we have business certainty if that's clarified. Potentially, since we're passing the bill tonight, we can look to regulations so that we have consistent regulatory permitting and commercial barriers knocked down, and that we understand that there are ratepayer savings, potentially, if we have that business certainty.

We know there are proponents that are ready to start making investments in capital for these hybrid expansions, but we need to remove the uncertainty of whether or not they will be included when there is any request for proposals that goes out.

Energy storage is obviously a big part of the solution as we start to wean ourselves off coal as that baseload power. The question really is: When will the hybrid expansion projects be defined in this legislation? How will a level playing field be established so the province can benefit from competitive investments in the independent purchase agreements? What is the plan to enable the first wind power and energy storage projects to proceed? These are some of the questions that we have, and also the question of how much federal support is available through existing programs to ensure that we're actually able to reduce the impacts on ratepayers, and when these tenders will actually go out in the future. There are a couple areas that we just have questions on.

It's actually being proposed in other provinces right now - in Ontario and, I believe, Alberta as well - looking at how the regulatory barriers can be reduced. I think Nova Scotia can play a leadership role in our country to ensure that we are getting the lowest-cost storage options on the energy grid. The recent tenders in Ontario have demonstrated that batteries can be even lower-cost than natural gas for capacity. This is a really big opportunity that we need to get right, and that we have a way to monetize these investments for proponents that already have existing sites and potentially can bid with brand new sites that have wind, given that we are about to tender about 1,000 megawatts. I'd like to see some battery storage at these sites, at least as an option, and ensure that there's competition in the market.

With those few words - I think I'll speak a lot less on this reading. I appreciate - obviously, I support the bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, I'm happy to rise to speak to this bill. We in the NDP see the development of new energy-storage projects as an important part of our transition to a more sustainable and reliable grid. As we switch our energy composition from coal-based to renewables, like wind and solar, and pursue increased electrification, we need battery backup to allow our grid to respond to increases in demand or changes in the weather. The intermittent nature of these energy sources means that investing in battery storage will be crucial to ensuring that Nova Scotians have reliable access to power. It's good to see this government moving forward on this and supporting the development of these projects.

We have two reservations about the approval process established in Clause 2 of this bill, which says:

“The Governor in Council may prescribe an energy-storage project proposed by a public utility and owned wholly or in majority by the public utility, if in the opinion of the Governor in Council the project is in the best interests of ratepayers. When prescribing an energy-storage project under Subsection 2(A), the Governor in Council shall prescribe any terms and conditions of the project that the Governor in Council considers necessary, including the project size and location.”

There are a lot of interests at play in the decision-making for these large industrial projects: potential environmental, community, economic impact, our sustainability goals, and, of course, affordability for ratepayers. The complexity of this, we believe, requires that these decisions should go through the independent and impartial body of the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. As we heard at Law Amendments, “An essential component of energy justice is fair and equitable decision making of which accountability is a main component.” That's from the EAC, the Ecology Action Centre's submission at Law Amendments, so I can table that.

In our governance of energy, and specifically electricity, the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board act as an accountability mechanism independent from the governing party. Instead, these decisions will be left wholly to the discretion of the minister, a worrisome pattern that we've noticed from this government in removing any kind of accountability or transparency from the process.

This bill says that projects will be approved if the opinion of the minister is that it's in the best interest of ratepayers. However, there is no information or direction on how this will be determined. Again, too much is left to the minister's discretion - we've seen this

over and over in this session of the Legislature - and without any accountability mechanism, it'll be hard to determine how or why decisions are made. Unlike in a NSUARB hearing, there will be no opportunity for community or public input.

We understand that currently, the NSUARB is not able to properly weigh all of these interests without a specific mandate to consider sustainability. Without this, the NSUARB is sometimes restricted from making decisions that would yield long-term sustainable benefits. This was a point raised at Law Amendments by the Ecology Action Centre, who were not opposed to the principle of this bill but argued that it should be the NSUARB and not the minister empowered to make these kinds of decisions and called the provisions of this bill a band-aid solution.

Addressing this gap in the NSUARB's mandate is a long-term fix to this problem, and it is one that we brought forward a year ago in our Bill No. 98. This bill would create a sustainability mandate for the board, requiring the board in their decisions to consider and apply the principles, long-term objectives, goals, and plans set out in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act.

It would also create a sustainability advocate, someone who would intervene in NSUARB hearings to advance and voice sustainability concerns. This role would ensure that this new mandate is followed by NSUARB proceedings. We heard in Law Amendments that assigning a sustainability mandate to the Utility and Review Board removes the need for amendments such as those in Bill No. 337 by ensuring that sustainable development is a fundamental component of the governance of our utilities, and that the board remains a useful accountability tool for the interests of both ratepayers and Nova Scotians down the line.

We think that advancing this, whether or not in the form of our bill, would remove the need for the parts of this bill that we're debating today, and implore that the government consider this as a long-term solution that would ensure continued transparency and accountability in the approval of these and other projects.

To close, we will support this bill, because we recognize the need for battery storage projects to meet our climate goals. However, we urge the government to start looking into other ways that they could advance these and other priorities that don't just give the minister ultimate power in decision-making.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the honourable Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, it will be to close third reading.

The honourable minister of Natural Resources and Renewables.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Just a couple of quick comments in response. I'm not going to be able to respond to everything right now, but I'm certainly always available for

conversation. These are two very small changes to what we've already done in the Spring. One of them is a sleeved power-purchasing process, where we have the power producer having an agreement with the customer and utilize Nova Scotia Power to manage that transition of electrons through the system. That's one of the provisions. The other one, we also wanted to clarify is existing projects that were already being discussed. We gave the power to them in the Spring to actually carry on those projects with the changes we made. So that carried on.

What we're doing now is allowing Nova Scotia Power to also have that ability to do battery projects. They didn't feel that they had the power within what was done in the Spring to actually carry on their battery projects; they asked for the update in this. We felt that as the grid system owner, they should have the ability to do this work as well. That's the change to the battery storage.

This is in no way going to stop any of the private investors that have an interest with moving with battery storage as well. There have already been - I know from some of the stakeholders - conversations about federal support as well and finances. That is taking place.

This is not to skip any permitting processes as projects do come in. It still has to go to Governor in Council. In response about the NSUARB, this is to get the battery storage going a little bit quicker, as soon as we can. But I don't want to presuppose what the Clean Electricity Solutions Task Force is going to report back in early 2024. They may have recommendations on what we do with the NSUARB. We're holding tight to hear back from them.

These two changes - minor changes to this, are going to help us with the 2030 power plan and get us kick-started right now so we can move forward. I certainly appreciate the support.

I move to close debate on Bill No. 337.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 337.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

JOHN WHITE: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 340.

Bill No. 340 - Municipal Reform (2023) Act.

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: I move that Bill No. 340, An Act Respecting Municipal Contributions and Grants, be now read a third time.

When I became minister, the Premier tasked me with renegotiating the 30-year-old memorandum of understanding with the municipalities - a challenging piece of work that no prior government had been able to do since the 1990s.

This piece of legislation includes amendments that will support some of the changes negotiated with our municipal partners over the past year; negotiations we undertook in good faith. This enabling legislation represents countless hours of discussions and negotiations between the Province and the municipalities, and it was a good process.

I would like to take a moment now to thank the Service Exchange Renegotiation and Municipal Government Act Review Committee for their hard work and diligence in helping with these discussions and negotiations - in particular Mayor Murray Scott and Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson for their chairing. According to the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, this process has worked well. I will table a letter we received from them supporting the work of this committee shortly.

Once we had an early agreement, the Province hosted an additional 29.5 hours of consultations to ensure each municipality had its say. Two full meetings were dedicated specifically to CBRM to explain the MOU, listen to their concerns, and answer their questions.

We have sent letters to CBRM, and I will table these, and the other letter mentioned as well, asking for a decision about whether they wish to be part of the Service Exchange Agreement with everyone else, or if they wanted a separate agreement. In the absence of a decision, we included CBRM in this agreement.

This legislation is just a start. It opens a pathway forward to continue discussions on things like roads and policing. It is a good deal for municipalities. It will mean more money and more support for communities across the province. In fact, this MOU puts nearly \$50 million more into municipalities, and that's a good thing for all municipalities, including the residents of Cape Breton, CBRM.

It's real money - money that municipalities may choose to use as they see fit, to build housing, improve infrastructure, create new recreation spaces and opportunities for their residents, or reduce taxes.

We heard from municipality after municipality in Law Amendments Committee, and they agreed this is a good deal and a great path forward for the municipalities. We have received letters of support from 37 municipalities that are looking forward to a new negotiated deal. I will table that.

The vast majority of municipalities support this bill, but CBRM has been clear they are not supportive. Is there more to discuss? Absolutely. Those talks will start soon. I think Her Worship Pam Mood, Mayor of Yarmouth, hit the nail on the head when she described getting everything you want all at once as a fairy tale.

[3:30 p.m.]

Speaker, this is the real world. Negotiations are just that: discussions aimed at reaching agreement between parties with differing goals and needs. There's bound to be compromise, and maybe not every detail gets landed just where you hope, but the talks will continue on the outstanding items, and there is opportunity for review built into this process. In five years, we'll regroup to ensure that the agreement is doing what it's intended to do: effectively supporting the needs of municipalities and Nova Scotians in our municipalities, towns, and villages.

While there's been much distraction in recent days and weeks, our focus has been undeterred. I was given a strong mandate to renegotiate the Service Exchange Agreement with municipalities and this is what we have done. With this legislation we are laying the groundwork for a new agreement and a road ahead. It's been 30 years in the making and it's historic. We will move forward with this bill and CBRM will be part of the MOU, but we also commit to working with CBRM in the short term and long term. In the short term, my staff and I will meet with CBRM to discuss immediate pressures and provide suggestions on better management of their finances.

With that, I invite comments from my colleagues on Bill No. 340.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm going to say a few words. You always say you'll go through all of this conversation and debate on the bill, and you hope that cooler heads prevail and that people can understand the plight of a community, and then you hear wording like "distraction." There's been a distraction for the last number of weeks.

A community comes up, pleads its case on the foundation of an MOU that in the long run leaves a community with less and doesn't reflect the uniqueness and the size of the municipality. They come to Halifax - not guns blazing - they come with some legitimate amendments. One of them, which the government voted against last night, that everybody at home has now seen, the one where I tabled to go and sit down and renegotiate with Cape

Breton Regional Municipality - I had hoped that that would happen until I heard some of the words that I just heard - "distraction."

It's almost like the letter that went to all the CAOs except the CAO of CBRM. I thought after that misstep that people would take a second look, but when I heard the word "distraction," I'm sitting here going, really? We're still there. I would argue - and I've said this to the minister before - I don't think they're his words. I've talked to the minister about the MOU. We've had the opportunity to talk about it.

When you say "distraction" - there's legitimate debate that's been happening here for two weeks. We use the hours that are outlined by law for us to debate a bill for long hours. We're all here very long. We can all reflect on that, sooner than later, when we go back to our communities. These were legitimate conversations that were coming from a community - even in the end, as a community.

This bill is going to go through, we're going to be part of this, but here are several amendments that we think we can bring forward to strengthen the relationship and the MOU but also renegotiate. Let's give it some time. Let's come up here in a diplomatic way. Let's come up here as a community, meet with the government, and plead our case at Law Amendments Committee - which was excellent. We had political representatives and staff representatives come forward with a lot of great information. I had hoped the government would take a step back and say, Okay, there's been a lot of conversation and some relationships have been affected. We're going to take a step back, and we're going to meet with the CBRM.

I still hope that happens. The minister has indicated that in this - he has also indicated last night in the conversations we had during Law Amendments Committee. Again, here comes more correspondence from the government: Oh, this big distraction.

It's not a distraction - this is what we're elected to do. We had the second largest municipality come forward - they've made the case that the negotiations started off on the worst footing possible when staff went in and said, Well, you can raise your taxes up to 16 per cent.

This doesn't reflect any of the conversation around the uniqueness of the CBRM.

Now we hear wording from the minister, saying: Well, we'll go in and help them financially manage the place.

Really? That's where this is going to end when it could have been: You know what? We see the uniqueness of a community that's in this memorandum, that is 10 times the size of every other municipality, which . . . (Interruption)

Back to what I was saying. Any MOU is just dealing with so many larger complexities in trying to operate their municipality. As we and the CBRM have said, if the MOU works for other communities, that's fantastic. The minister referenced letters from Yarmouth. We've said from the beginning that if this works for municipalities, we know that some will be able to access money under the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant - I'll get into the Capacity Grant in a second.

Instead of saying: We're going to be able to talk about service exchange, we're going to talk about the issues you brought up around transit and financial capacity and some of the recommendations that SERMGAR made that never made it - which is one of the key foundational problems with what's happening here - you came into third reading and said, This has all been a distraction. You don't know how to manage your money, so the next meeting we're going to have is when we come down and show you how to do your job.

Why? Nobody wants this fight. This is why we've been debating this for as long as we have, because there are legitimate issues within the bill for a community that, in the long run, is going to be left with less at a time when they're seeing, for the first time in decades, growth, hope, and economic development. Why leave them with less right now? Give them what they need so they can eventually not have to worry about a Capacity Grant.

We don't want any community - I hope the day comes when every community is sustainable and whoever is in government never has to have this conversation about it. They have a healthy relationship with the government, service exchange is done, and communities are self-sustaining.

As I've talked about at length, the CBRM is in a situation where finally, after a generation of economic decline and transition from industry - to now, when we're seeing entrepreneurship and strategic government investments over the last few years that have spurred growth - they're on the cusp. The minister talks about keeping the grant where it is for several years. In the long run, the education costs are going to be such that it's going to be a net loss to the municipality - a municipality that's dealing with full services - one of the largest police forces in Atlantic Canada, a full-blown transit system that's at the brink because they just don't have the capacity to keep up with growth.

We're into third reading, and I was hoping that in third reading - it's going to pass. There's going to be a recorded vote. The government is going to cast their ballot, and we're going to cast our ballot. I was hoping that - the pure message coming out of this was that we're going to try to re-establish the relationship with the CBRM. Aside from the MOU and all the impacts that that's going to have, you have this deteriorated relationship that is obvious.

I can tell you that at home, Speaker, people are really paying attention to this now because they're sitting going: What are my taxes going to look like? What is service going to look like in a few years? People are starting to pay some attention to this stuff.

I was hopeful that the message from government today was going to be just purely: We support this. The minister outlined it in his comments - why this is good. He talked about the two people who chaired the group. They talked about support of the NSF. M.

The NSF. M., in my conversations with them, are saying, Well, the CBRM deserves a separate deal. If you're supporting the comments of the NSF. M., why don't you support that comment and go in to negotiate a new deal?

I don't know why, in third reading, you would come in with language like that. Not only does it not help the relationship with the municipality, but politically - I have said this multiple times standing here, saying that all of this conversation can stop - the whole debate could have stopped, this distraction could have stopped long ago if they just would have said, We're going to take a sober second thought here. Okay, the CBRM has come up. They're not coming confrontationally. They're coming saying, Here are some amendments that would help us. Get us to a point where will Bill No. 340 is more beneficial to us as a community and this ends. It could have ended long ago.

Well, the letter to the CAO really - in tennis they call those unforced errors. That was an unforced error.

Here's another one. What is this relationship? Why does this government have this relationship with the CBRM? I don't understand. Why are we using language like this, like they can't do their jobs? We need to go in and show them how to financially look after things.

I was a councillor. I know many of the people in the CBRM, and I was on the government side. We had our debates, and we did that. They're good people there. The presentations we saw from staff at Law Amendments Committee were excellent. These are people who are committed to the long-term viability of our community, and they were just told by the minister: You don't know how to do your job. We're going to come in and show you how to do it. That's where we're going to leave this.

It's really unfortunate to me that that language was used. That was the last thing I expected, Speaker, on this bill, that that would be the opening remarks for the bill, that we're going to tell the CBRM how to do their job.

Again, it goes back to the argument in the correspondence and the letters and the concerns that mayor and council brought forward. I'm not going to get into tabling all of these documents. We have tabled document after document. It goes back to foundationally, for whatever reason, the Premier won't meet with the CBRM. They don't want to

communicate with the CBRM. The CBRM is outlining the concerns that they have. The CBRM is in a transition period where it's doing a lot to support the province. It's like the Premier does not want to engage.

Then the messaging comes in, which I would argue didn't come from Municipal Affairs and Housing – it came from someone politically who said, This has all been a distraction, and they don't know how to do their jobs anyway. It's just disrespectful, right? Again, another erosion of the relationship from a staff and negotiation perspective, but also, I would argue, from a representative's perspective.

[3:45 p.m.]

I don't get it. Why do this? Why end it like this? Why use that language to reflect a community where all they want to do is grow, support their most vulnerable, get away from the capacity grant and supports eventually, and just prosper after decades and decades of decline? That is ultimately all any community wants. But here we are in third reading, and that's what we get.

That just solidified for me what we've been talking about for the last two weeks. I don't even think it is coming from the minister. Like I said, I've had conversations with the minister on this. I know what he is trying - like the MOU is important. It is. It's important to communities - I understand. He mentioned in his comments how long this has been going on. You know what? If you got it right for everybody, great. You know what I mean?

If communities are supported, we are happy with that, but when a community comes forward and portrays what they have, and then the foundation of it in the end is, again, this fight: Here we are - let's insult the CBRM in third reading. To what end? When you could have come in and said: The CBRM is going to be in Bill No. 340. We've presented our case, but we are going to sit down with the CBRM and talk about some of those unique challenges that they've expressed in the Law Amendments Committee.

The amendment that I put forward last night didn't cost the government one cent. It was goodwill. Go down and renegotiate, have a conversation. The government voted it down. I still had hope, but then I heard "distraction," and then I heard, We are going to go in and tell them how to do their job. That is really why they voted it down - because this is their plan for the CBRM. It is really unfortunate. It doesn't have to be that way.

You have representatives who are watching this now at home, here, you know. They want to re-establish a stronger relationship. They understand that they are going to be lumped in now - well, they are going to be part of this bill. They diplomatically and respectfully come to have those conversations, and are told they don't know how to do their jobs. That's awful, but now I'm not as surprised. I thought the CAO letter was an unforced error, but now I know that was purely intentional - that letter.

They come in here with comments that say “distraction” and they’re going to tell you how to do your job. They knew exactly what they were doing when they sent that letter, and it is a complete disrespect to the CBRM. Now we are in third reading of Bill No. 340 and the CBRM is going to be part of it. I am really disappointed because I thought that we would be kind of coming to conclusion on the fact that they are going to be part of this.

The government is going to go down, the government is going to have a conversation. The minister indicated that a bit last night, as well - but now they don’t know how to do their jobs. They are nothing but a distraction. We’ve been nothing but a distraction. Them coming to Halifax and presenting all these amendments have been nothing but a distraction. Fighting for their community has been a distraction. It’s all been a distraction to the government. It goes back to this relationship that, for whatever reason, I don’t know why - like I said, I don’t even blame the minister half the time for it.

I know how we are. You see a person operate for years. A few of us have been here for a while. It’s like, again, I hear wording that I’m, like: That does not come from that man. It does not. That’s not how he operates. They’re not his words. So where are the words coming from? They’re coming from the Premier’s Office. That’s where they’re coming from. This relationship does not have to be like this at all, but it has been continuous since this government took power - that for whatever reason, these distractions, we’re going to go in and tell them how to do their job, and come up to Halifax and we’ll pretend to listen.

Here we are, on the last day of the Legislature, and the government, the same thing - if we can get into HRM too, that’s coming. The HRM bill is coming, and the HRM folks will talk on that. But you’re going to end the session with insulting the CBRM. I just don’t understand the strategy of, well, we’re just going to tell the government of the second largest municipality of 100,000 people that they don’t know how to their job.

What does that mean? Does that mean all the police in the CBRM don’t know how to do their job? Maybe they should hear those words, or the firemen and women, or all the senior managers or all the public works employees. They are nothing but a distraction when their jobs are on the line. It’s all a distraction to the government. It’s noise - they don’t know how to do their jobs.

I can go down the list. What about our bylaw officers who are going to be picking up the tab on some of the other bills that are better here, arguably. What about all those people? They don’t know how to do their jobs. They are a distraction.

What about the most vulnerable people in all the shelters in our community at the CBRM? Are they a distraction? Is the government going to go down and tell them how to do their job? Because it’s all interconnected. Everything is interconnected. Instead of coming in here and saying CBRM, we get it, and CBRM, we’re going to sit down and have a conversation, you came in and insulted them - 100,000 people in this province are

nothing but a distraction to this government. All the people who support them every day don't know how to do their jobs, so this government is going to go down and tell them how to do it.

You can't defend those words in this debate. You can defend policy. You can defend the school piece, if you want, if you are on the government side. You can defend the \$4.5 million. You can debate it all you want, but you cannot debate what was said today. It had nothing to do with policy. It had nothing to do with what was in the bill. It had nothing to do with it at all. It had nothing to do with any of the issues or the challenges that Bill No. 340 is trying to solve for people. You can't defend it because all the government did was take a personal shot at the mayor and council. A distraction - the second-largest community is a distraction to this government.

As I said, the senior staff, the police, the fire, the public works, the people who support our seniors, the bylaw officers, every employee who works at the CBRM is a distraction to this government - and this government is going to go down and tell them how to do their job.

Wait until that message goes home. Wait until that message makes it home. It's not going to be just mayor and council who are going to hear it, I am going to guarantee it. The police are going to hear it. The fire are going to hear it. The public works are going to hear it. The clerks are going to hear it. Everybody in the CBRM was insulted today by this government because somebody politically cannot get over the fact that the CBRM exists, and they do not want to have a relationship with mayor and council.

It is so frustrating because it doesn't need to happen. Negotiate in good faith. That's all everybody is asking. Look at the components. They're in this bill. The CBRM - work with them. Take a look at some of their amendments and ask, What can we do? Some of them are free of charge. The government voted against that one last night. People are starting to find that out. But my God - I don't know if that's unparliamentary, Speaker. Getting close. I agree with you. I agree. Other words have been used, but anyway.

I just don't understand. I've been doing this for a while, and I've spent most of my time on the government side. I've spent some time in the Department of Municipal Affairs, and I know the staff in Municipal Affairs. Some of them are there, some of them are not. But they would never write correspondence to say that this was a distraction, or that they don't know how to do their jobs. They're good people in that department. It's political. It's a purely political statement to say that.

Again, this one the government can't defend. Defend your policy, defend your laws, defend what you put on the floor, that's fine. That's what we do. But to say they're a distraction, and to say that you're going to go down and show them how to financially look after themselves - wow. I'm shocked by that. Shocked.

I didn't even actually plan to get up this long. I was hoping that I was going to get up and just say, the minister has made a commitment, that's great. I'm not supporting this bill, but I had hoped that the relationship was going to be mended - that folks were going to sit down, collaborate and have a conversation. Oh boy. I just can't. I'm so surprised by those comments.

So I will not be supporting Bill No. 340 for various reasons, especially now. Because that relationship - man, I just don't get that. But I'll go back to the fundamentals very quickly, then I'll take my place.

CBRM, 100,000 strong, the second-largest municipality by far, is now reflected in a bill that is very good for communities. Many have supported it, as the minister has said. Great. Wonderful. But you have a community that is so much larger, so much more complex, providing so many more services, some of the largest services in Atlantic Canada. They don't know how to do their jobs, though, Speaker.

The second-largest police force in Atlantic Canada doesn't know how to do their job - but they have all of these complex services that just cost more. They're running full transit. They're running these things, and they want to be diplomatic about it. They're willing to sit down with the government whenever they want. But as I said - and I'll stop here - what did I learn today? CBRM is nothing but a distraction to this government and the people who work for CBRM don't know how to do their jobs.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I was prepared to get up and say that I was happy to see that this bill brings about benefits to many municipalities, and that they support the contents of the bill, the municipalities that have been underfunded and undersupported for far too long. But right now, I am actually very, very angry, and I am very, very disappointed. I sat here and I saw a minister stand up and call the residents of the CBRM a distraction. The residents of the CBRM are not a distraction. I'm sitting here. The member for Sydney-Membertou, the member for Glace Bay-Dominion, and the member for Cape Breton East - their residents are not a distraction.

That is what the minister just called all of our residents. A distraction. How anyone can sit here and have their residents called a distraction should be absolutely ashamed of themselves. It is disrespectful. To stand up in third reading and spend the time insulting the residents of the CBRM, the mayor, council, and staff. A distraction is what they were called. The residents of the CBRM are going to remember that. I'm going to spend every day making sure that they remember what this government just called them.

A council colleague of mine - two, actually - the late Ray Paruch and Councillor Darren Bruckschwaiger used to say: Here, why don't we go up to Halifax and just hand them the keys, because they don't pay any attention. Now this minister, using PC math,

wants to go to CBRM and teach them about finances, when this government can't even tell when they're going to have a surplus or not. They think they're in deficit all the time, and yet they make surpluses: PC math. This government, who thinks that using 1995 funds in 2023 is appropriate for municipalities: PC math.

The distraction is not the CBRM residents. The hocus-pocus and distraction are coming from the government side. This Progressive Conservative government is the distraction and the hocus-pocus.

[4:00 p.m.]

Now that I've got that out of my system - I was prepared to get up here very calmly and talk, until colleagues of mine, people whom I worked with, my residents - the residents of the CBRM - were insulted by this PC government. Shameful. It is shameful to continue to pick a fight with a municipality - the second-largest municipality, need I remind you, Speaker.

It is concerning that after months of work and negotiations and surveys and eventually the recommendations that came from the Service Exchange Renegotiation and Municipal Government Act Review - through the service exchange agreements - many of these recommendations that were provided, the proposals that were given, had no follow-through. The minister and the Premier chose to ignore all the proposals in the SERMGAR report. I shouldn't say that - I should say that they looked at the SERMGAR report and then told everyone that what they were proposing in their bill was what the SERMGAR report stated, only for us to find out when the SERMGAR report was released that the SERMGAR report was not reflected in the bill.

The amount of funding - I want to talk about this. One noticeable thing about this, about the bill, was that it did not include increasing the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant funding. This amount has been stagnant for years, and this PC government and the CBRM MLAs on the government side campaigned on increasing the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant. They campaigned on a temporary doubling of the grant. It was one of the first things this minister announced in his role, stating - and I'm going to table all documents later. He stated: "Municipal services are incredibly important to the everyday lives of everyone in our province and over time, these services have become more expensive to deliver." We agree with the minister.

It is unfathomable that not only did the doubling not continue, but no new funds were even added into the fund. Instead, the existing pot of money was reworked and redistributed to let the minister pick the winners and the losers. The losers here would include the Cape Breton Regional Municipality and the residents of the CBRM who, under the new proposed formula, will receive less than what they have in the past. The Province has agreed to top them up, but only to their previous total and only for a period of five years - PC math.

The CBRM is not alone in this. There are 17 municipalities - including the CBRM - that are expected to receive less funding under this new formula. In a time when everything is rising, this government decides they're going to keep the 1995 money and redistribute it - PC math. They're not great at calculations.

All this talk about election promises prompted me to look up what this government said in their platform:

“For several years, the PC Caucus called on the Liberal government to ask the Auditor General to prepare a report on equalization payments. They did not respond. Our MLAs continued their efforts and wrote directly to the Auditor General and requested that a report be commissioned on the subject of equalization. The answer was no, that the request for the report has to come from the Premier and/or the Minister.

The PC Party feels that municipal equalization should be reviewed and modernized. What form it will take, we won't know until such time as it has been properly assessed by the Auditor General.”

Now as far as we know, this government did not request any report or input from the Auditor General. Instead, this formula was determined behind closed doors and left to regulations - broken promises. What this government seems to be great at is breaking promises - getting elected and breaking every promise. Don't worry; they just think people being upset about broken promises is a distraction. Residents being upset about broken promises is fair, and they should be upset when promises are broken.

This government voted down amendments that would have increased Municipal Financial Capacity Grant funding on more than one occasion. I can't figure out, for the life of me, how this government expects municipalities to double their population without doubling, or at the very least increasing, the funding to municipalities. Another strange thing that's left to the regulations - which, by the way, let's all remember, don't ever come back to this Chamber for a vote - is the determination of which municipalities will actually be exempt from mandatory corrections and housing contributions.

In the bill - if you look at Clause 3, Section 26(2), Clause 9, Section 11(4), the word “may” is used, not “shall”. Now, grammar lesson: “may” is can, “shall” is must. Very important legal terms, very important legal terms, Speaker. This raised alarms to us. This benefit could be changed down the road. Municipalities could be excluded from this, and it wouldn't have to come through legislation before this House. Even if these provisions weren't drafted with this ill intent in mind, it's worrisome that this government kept the door opened for it to occur.

Overall - I have to say this - we were happy to see this bill recognize the SERMGAR recommendations to end these mandatory contributions. Municipalities have

been advocating for this for years, possibly decades. We're glad that this government actually listened to that. It's unfortunate that the HRM was not given the opportunity to participate in this arrangement and that there is no guarantee that these exemptions will be included in the eventual HRM MOU or any assurances that no incremental costs will be shifted on to HRM taxpayers as a result of this bill.

[4:15 p.m.]

The minister's September 21st email to the CBRM mayor outlining their "options" also did not guarantee that these contribution exemptions would be provided if a separate negotiation took place and meant the CBRM taxpayers would not have seen any relief in the interim. That's quite the threat.

Let's talk about that CAO letter that did not go to CAO Marie Walsh. That was very much a veiled threat to a lot of municipalities. Get on board, don't mind the CBRM, tell them that they're being bad boys and girls and that they should smarten up and act right, or the whole deal is off. It's ridiculous.

They have a majority government. The bill is going to pass regardless of what anyone says on this side of the aisle. It was a veiled threat so that the support for this bill would flow in out of the fear of municipalities losing out.

Let's talk education contributions. Despite being a provincial responsibility, municipalities have been required to make annual contributions to education that are increased annually with inflation. It was a recommendation of the SERMGAR that these increases be frozen and that this government engage in productive discussions towards phasing out these contributions entirely.

Annual increases to these contributions, as I have stated before, are projected to continue and have serious impacts to the financial health of municipalities. The CBRM estimated this cost to increase by over \$5 million by 2030, and to play a significant role in ongoing municipal deficits.

I went online and I started doing some tax assessments. I have them here. The provincial education rate that a taxpayer in Dominion pays is 31 cents on the dollar. Their total assessment on the hundred is \$2.0154.

I can read everything, but I hope you all take my word for it that the education rate, besides hydrant - actually it's more expensive than hydrant and sewer. It's one of the highest things on their property taxes.

Glance Bay: Provincial education rate is 31.56 cents. Their total assessment rate on the hundred is \$2.0418. Education is still the highest. The education rate for county is, again, 31.56 cents. Assessment rate is just under two dollars, at \$1.87 on the hundred and

still, education is one of the highest. New Waterford: education, 0.3156 cents and total assessment rate, \$2.20.

Education is, considerably, one of the highest costs that residents of the CBRM pay on their taxes. Yet this PC government - that minister, that premier - decided that no, the municipalities would still continue to pay on education. And the answer to that is what? Because it's the highest on the bill.

But this isn't a CBRM-specific issue. The freezing and phasing-out of these contributions would be a benefit to all municipalities and was raised as an issue in the SERMGAR survey with the recommendations that included municipalities across the province. The CBRM CFO said at Law Amendments Committee that we understand that including the entire education transfer in this bill requires much more discussion and planning but an amendment to the bill that would see the immediate freezing of education at the current amounts needed to support the mounting pressure faced by municipalities and their residents by this one remaining transfer, which is a provincial responsibility.

The impact of continued municipal deficits will fall onto the residents. The CBRM described at Law Amendments Committee as having no choice but to increase tax rates further. I said this in a few of my speeches in front of you all on this bill: Any savings any municipality thinks that they're going to get from this bill without an increase in the municipal capacity funding, education will eat it all up. Yet the minister ignored the SERMGAR proposal.

Let's talk the separate negotiations for the CBRM. The mayor of the CBRM, Mayor Amanda McDougall, and the Deputy CAO are here today with us. During Law Amendments Committee, when they were here, the mayor stated, We asked that the CBRM be offered the opportunity as the HRM: negotiate an agreement outside of the general MOU process that reflects these exceptionalities.

The unique circumstances of the CBRM include a heavy debt load. When the CBRM had forced amalgamation, the debts of those that amalgamated were not forgiven, yet other municipal units that have consolidated have had incentives provided to them. Had the CBRM been provided that same opportunity during amalgamation, the financial situation they are in now could have been avoided.

Other unique circumstances were outward migration, slow economic growth, and infrastructure deficits and needs. This all impacts the viability of the CBRM - the second-largest municipality and the second-largest population centre - and it is currently receiving approximately half the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant funds.

For years, our party has advocated for equalization fairness and investments into the viability of the CBRM in light of these unique circumstances. I am proud to have been

a part of that. I am proud to have my name on a bill that is sitting on the order paper regarding that, but this funding was not what I had in mind. It's a slap in the face.

We're disappointed to see this government fail to recognize the needs of the CBRM in their negotiations and the work on this bill. This is not a fair deal for the entire Island of Cape Breton, because its largest centre is going to see a cumbersome burden on them. Those residents are going to have a financial burden on their taxes.

We are urging this government to work with the CBRM to ensure the viability and prosperity of this region and amend this legislation to ensure that the separate negotiation takes place and that the CBRM residents are not penalized for this. Our amendments did that, yet they were voted down by this PC government.

Maybe the minister and the Premier could show some humility and kindness and not insult the CBRM and the residents of the CBRM any further when they do go to negotiate.

We are unable to support this bill. We do not support this bill in its current form. Despite multiple amendments and testimony at the Law Amendments Committee, this government refuses to ensure that this bill is equitable for Nova Scotians across this province. This government is refusing to hold true to past campaign promises or accept the expert recommendations of the SERMGAR Committee. With that, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

HON. BRIAN COMER: I just want to get a few remarks on the record. I know this has been a very passionate topic of debate over the last number of days in the Legislature. First off, I just want to say that I have a great deal of respect, certainly, for anyone who is in elected office in Cape Breton, whether that be the municipal, provincial, or federal level of government. It certainly can be a very challenging place for politics. I've seen that throughout sessions in the House for the last couple of years.

Certainly, as a provincial government, we have made and continue to make, I would say, historic investments across CBRM, in health care and education, and public works infrastructure with the medical school; I could list provincial investments for a long time. I think we have significant investments in Cape Breton, for sure.

A lot of the conversation is focused on the desire for Cape Breton - the municipality - to have a conversation with the minister and his senior staff, which the minister has committed to doing. They are going to have their own conversation. I think, at the end of the day, this agreement is better for the residents of CBRM than the previous agreement that they've had for many years. That's just the facts.

There's been disagreement on the flow-through piece and these sorts of things, and these are certainly issues that the minister can address with the staff in conversation with the municipality, but overall, this should be a savings for the residents of the CBRM. I know that's how it's intended.

I'm not trying to politicize the issue. I think we have seen that a lot throughout the course of conversations on this issue. I'm just trying just to state the facts and my opinion for the record. I certainly had a great deal of respect for the council, for sure. I think, as we move forward, there are definitely pressures in Cape Breton in transit and housing that are real issues. Those are issues that we'll certainly try to address as part of these conversations and with other departments within the provincial government as well.

I will be supporting this bill because I think it's a better deal for the CBRM right now. That being said, I know from the conversations there are some immediate concerns. I've been on the record, and so has the minister, to say that he will hear those concerns and sit down and have a conversation with the CBRM. I would just like to add, too, the topic of the Charter hasn't been brought up in a while and it's been something that I think is a really key piece of this, that could really chart a path forward for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

I think this is a situation where the sky is not falling, despite what we're hearing from the politicized issues of this. Cooler heads can prevail. We can all work together and I certainly see a path forward for CBRM, and the Province will certainly be there to support them along the way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I've got some brief comments on this. I will preface them by saying we are going to have a free vote in third reading on this, in our caucus, and that's recognizing that there are a number of constituencies that we represent where the municipal leaders certainly are supportive of this. I do know that the negotiations for the MOU have been ongoing and have probably gone through three governments of all three political stripes. This work was going on back when I was in the Department of Municipal Affairs. There have been a lot of years that have led to this moment as well. I do know there's broad-based support amongst the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, but I do have to state that I don't support this bill with a completely clear conscience and that is because of how I believe the CBRM has been treated throughout this.

First and foremost, and rightfully so, the CBRM expected the Premier to come through on his word, where he promised that he would double equalization payments. He said that in the *Cape Breton Post*, and I've tabled that article here. Council rightfully believes they should be able to hold the Premier to his word, which was also part of the election platform that the PCs ran on - by the way, an election platform that has now been taken off the internet by the party, probably because this isn't the only commitment made

in that platform that the government has not moved forward with. It a curious thing to do after you get elected, to take the platform off the internet.

I also think the CBRM - the mayor, council, and staff - have been disrespected by the government, first with the refusal of the Premier or the minister to even meet directly with them, sending a deputy in their stead. Not meeting peer-to-peer, elected office to elected office.

[4:30 p.m.]

Thirdly, I also really question the letter that was sent out by the minister's office. A letter that at best was in bad taste and inappropriate, and at worst was misleading, threatening, and coercive. This is a letter that was not sent out to elected officials. It was sent out to staff asking them to lobby their elected officials to isolate CBRM, and to turn other municipalities against them.

And not only them, but also against the Opposition parties who have voiced concerns over this bill. That is extremely problematic. I really do hope that the minister addresses that letter. I do think the House and our municipalities, particularly CBRM, deserve an apology for that. And I hope we get it in the minister's closing comments here.

I also want to echo that I believe the minister's comments about CBRM standing up for their residents, standing up and trying to fight for what was promised to them by the Premier and the Progressive Conservatives in their platform. That is not a distraction. There is legitimate concern in CBRM around the impacts of this bill to their finances, and the ability to provide services without increasing taxes to the residents.

CBRM is in a unique situation within the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities. They are the second-largest municipality by population, by economy. The next-largest, I believe, is Truro, and it's about 10 times smaller than CBRM. So, they, I think, have a very good rationale for having their own charter, their own agreement with the Province, as HRM has.

I do think there is sound rationale for that, because of the uniqueness of their situation, the unique challenges that also come with being the second-largest municipality. We've heard the minister say that there was an effort to try to negotiate a separate deal with CBRM, but I've tabled the letters in this House - they are on the record - that I believe provide evidence that that effort to negotiate was not done in good faith. It was done with a financial threat hanging over the council - that, okay, if you do want to pursue your own agreement outside of this MOU, you can certainly do that, but that means your money will be held at what it currently is, and you might be brought back to previous funding levels.

Also, the minister in writing said that the CBRM did not respond to him when it came to negotiating their own deal. I've also tabled evidence in the House that shows very

clearly that's not the case, that there were efforts made to actually accommodate the minister to attend council and begin negotiations.

I do believe that the CBRM particularly has been failed by this process. I do think they have been mistreated by the government. And they're not the only municipality that has. We have seen that with HRM as well, and I do believe that there seems to be a disregard by the current government on the importance between the municipal leadership elected in this province and themselves.

While I know that this bill does have broad support among many municipalities, we have heard that there could be up to 16 or 17 that are concerned about it, because they will be losing funding. I do think it is worth recognizing that many municipalities and leaders from municipalities have expressed concern about how this situation with CBRM has been handled by the government.

It's not just officials from CBRM who have been upset about the letter, or believe it to be inappropriate. I was at the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities today . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. I would ask the member not to be using props. Props aren't permitted - your pen.

ZACH CHURCHILL: I absolutely will put my pen down, Speaker. No problem. I was at the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities today, and certainly the letter from the minister was a conversation among many municipal leaders and municipal staff. That approach has really not been appreciated. They have not seen the likes of such a partisan letter, again, that provided misinformation on the legislative process, suggesting to municipalities that if they did not engage in lobbying the Opposition parties and CBRM, they could lose this, even though that's impossible unless the majority government of the PCs, who brought this bill forward, actually chose to take it off the order paper. They suggest that there's a deadline. There's no deadline, and in fact this piece of legislation isn't even going to come into effect until the next fiscal year.

Again, that letter is, I believe, a black stain on the minister's office and the government. I do think it needs addressing in a proper apology.

While I will be supporting, broadly, the principles and outcomes of this piece of legislation - recognizing that it has been many years in the making and that it certainly has the support of municipal leaders from my area and I know other areas - I need to put on the record that I do not have a completely clear conscience in doing that, for the reasons that I've stated. I certainly hope that the minister does, in his closing remarks, take some time to address the serious situations that have been brought up in debate tonight.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I will rise and say a few words. Much of what I have to say has already been covered, so I will stick to just a very few points.

The first thing that I will say is that our caucus will be voting against this bill because, while we understand that the bill as written is good for many municipalities, it's a bill that, like this government, picks winners and losers. We don't believe that the legislation that comes through this House should do that, particularly when we're dealing with the municipal units of this province.

The fact of the matter is that this bill will pass. This is a majority government. We want to be crystal clear that - for all of the reasons that have been outlined by my colleague, by the Leader of the Official Opposition, and by others - it shouldn't. It shouldn't, because it picked one municipality, and they stand to suffer from the implementation of this bill. It could have so easily been avoided, Speaker. It could have easily been avoided.

Now we're hearing backtracking, and the sky's not falling, and we had the conversations, and we tried our best. I think any reasonable person would agree that nobody tried their best.

In our constituency offices, we send letters all the time. Today, someone had trouble in public housing with mould, so hopefully I can grab the minister about that. In the meantime, we send a letter, we call the property manager, and we try to work with it. But then we can't say that we've had a full engagement with the department, because they send a letter back saying, Sorry, we're not going to do anything about it. That's what happened here. There was a meeting, as I understand, in August - an exchange of letters. Then the hammer dropped.

As has been pointed out, the CBRM is the second-largest municipal unit in the province. It has unique benefits. It has unique challenges. It has unique opportunities. None of those are possible if it is lumped in with all of the other municipal units in the way that it is in this bill. For that reason, we don't support the bill.

I want to say a little bit, again, about this idea that this government did anything close to trying their best. In their negotiations, they asked everyone to sign confidentiality agreements, non-disclosure agreements. That's not doing their best. That's wanting to hide something. In their conversations, they exchanged official letters but didn't sit down and have a conversation. That's not doing your best. That's avoiding the inevitable.

Doing their best is a thing we hear from this government a lot. What are you going to do about the people who are sleeping outside? Well, we're going to do our best. Will you actually raise income assistance rates to the point where people can contemplate being able to afford a place to live and something to eat? Well, we're doing our best.

Once again, this bill shows that this government is not doing its best. To the criticism that we are politicizing this bill, I will remind the members that we are politicians. We are in this House to express our political opinions. Our political opinion on this bill is that it picked a loser. It picked one municipality, which happens to be our second-biggest municipality, and said, That seems hard. This is a government that wants to deliver good news and doesn't want to do the hard work when the good news is hard to come by.

This was a situation where there wasn't an easy announcement, there wasn't a ribbon-cutting, there wasn't a photo op, there was a really difficult conversation that had to be had, over a long period of time, with people who knew what they were doing and were in power to make decisions, around a table where people's feelings would be hurt and there might be some upset but that you could get to the other side. That's something we haven't seen from this government. That's the conversation that didn't happen.

We in the NDP don't believe that legislation that moves through this House should make choices like that. For those reasons, we will not be supporting this. Before I sit down, I want to conclude by saying there is a very clear path here. The mayor and the councillors and the municipal staff who spoke at Law Amendments Committee didn't say, Give us \$100 million more. They didn't say, Give us a charter. They didn't say, Grant all our wishes right now. They said, Sit down with us, give us a separate agreement, we're 10 times bigger than the next largest municipality. We're more like the HRM than we are like any of these people. We need our own agreement and without it this municipality will struggle and it will be the fault of this government.

I hope the government will take that seriously and after the discussion in this Chamber and after we rise, will think better of the stance they have taken - which frankly seems to fall on quite deaf ears - and will decide to give the CBRM its own agreement and let them be the wonderful, viable municipality that we all want them to be.

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

JOHN WHITE: Speaker, I'm sitting here listening. Negotiations did indeed start off wrong because in our very first and my only meeting with council, I was threatened this was going to be political and it did become political.

I was hoping that today we were going to be able to make amends to that. Last night we left here with an open conversation, I guess. We became aware of each other, our situations and a lot of stuff happened. I'm still feeling the effects of that today.

I'm very disappointed that we're sitting here arguing again after I thought we made amends on a lot. I look across the floor and I say to the members opposite, the reform is not perfect, by any means. I said here in my first speech on this that I would love to take my truck up here and take a bag of money home to Cape Breton.

It's just not reality. This is negotiations that went wrong. A lot of bad things were said back and forth. I get it, I understand, words matter. But we are doing no good by dragging Cape Breton through the mud here again, and the government through the mud because come the end of this, we still have two years to govern and we still have a relationship that needs to be mended. Those are my thoughts on that.

[4:45 p.m.]

As far as distraction, the CBRM, I will not sit here and listen to that, that the CBRM staff are a distraction to anybody on this side. I will not listen to that at all. When I think about . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, order. There's lots of chatter coming from all sides here. Let's tone it down. Let's take it back a step here.

The honourable member for Glace Bay-Dominion.

JOHN WHITE: When I think about the construction that's on the go in Cape Breton and an economy that has never been as strong as it is - that is a beautiful thing. I give the past government credit for some of that, but it's continuing now. To say that relationships are strained to that point - it has not stopped. Cape Breton has been receiving a lot of work, and I think we're doing great right now.

I will remind the members that this MOU has not been opened in 30 years. We're talking about amalgamation that was forced on us by a Liberal government. Here we are, 30 years later - we're opening it, at least. It's a difficult conversation. We've been in this House for a month now, debating back and forth, and nobody wanted to talk about it. I can see why nobody opened it. I think this is hard to do, and I think it's the right thing to do. It is 100,000 people. I think it needed to be done.

I don't want it to be said that it's winners and losers. It's hard to say somebody's losing when you're saving \$4.5 million in annual debt. I've said since Day 1 that it's a choice. I'm on record as saying CBRM mayor and council, who have the right to govern the municipality, have a choice: if they're going to allow that \$4.5 million to be passed to their citizens or if they're going to use it for whatever they need to. That's their choice.

That's why I said from the beginning that this debate should not have taken place here in this House, and it should not have taken place in the public. It should have been taking place at home in council chambers when we first had the choice to decide. The choice is to do a charter, which is what we've sought for years. I still think that's the right choice to go with. I would love to hear the CBRM say they want to do the charter. I think it's the right thing to do, and I would be happy to help them with it. Even though I wasn't involved in the process, I'd love to help them with that. I offer myself up on that.

Fifty million dollars to municipalities across this province is not anything to sneeze at, that's for sure. It's not winners and losers, not by any means.

I'm not going to be long. I just want to say this: I stood up only to say that communications matter, and I'm very happy to hear the minister talk about continuing communications. He's going to meet with the CBRM mayor and council. I think that's the right thing to do. I hope they can mend this relationship. I truly do. I don't think we're doing any good by sitting here bickering back and forth. We all know it's going to pass. We all have an opinion on it.

If anything was said here in the last month that we all agree on, it's that we all see Cape Breton as having special circumstances. Transportation needs help. It absolutely needs help. We cannot have almost 10,000 people coming into the municipality every year and be committed to providing public transit when 70 per cent of those folks using that - that's the size of some of the towns under this MOU. We absolutely need help. I would like to see more help there. I understand some is coming - I hope it is soon - but to say \$4.5 million is a loser is just not right. This thing is muddy enough that we don't need to continue to muddy the waters anymore.

Cape Breton faces a lot of circumstances that most in the province do not, because we're under this Act and because we're so big - the land mass, the streets that we take care of, the garbage collection on such a geographical size - it's just so much. We do need help. We absolutely need help. There's more to come. The minister has been very clear that there are other articles to do, and this is a start. It's not the end. It's not the golden bullet. It's not everything.

I'll leave it at that. When this is done and this bill is passed - recorded vote or not recorded vote, it doesn't matter, I know how I'm voting. When it's over and done, I really hope the mending of relationships is what matters. I really hope that begins immediately.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: It's interesting hearing everyone speak. It is about a memorandum of understanding, and it is titled the Service Exchange Renegotiation and Municipal Government Act Review. You've heard the acronym here as SERMGAR.

I agree that every municipal unit in Nova Scotia needs help, but you can't fully understand unless you sit around those tables to fully understand their respective budgets.

That's what this is about. I'm referring to, and I'm going to be reading certain parts of this agreement that's before me, the recommendations made - I want to acknowledge the good work of the committee - in some regard I agree that they do see it fully and they have worked with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Every municipality needs help including CBRM:

The recommendations made with this understanding by the committee that the robust consultation will take place which will provide an opportunity for all municipal units in Nova Scotia to provide feedback. Municipalities don't have input on the contribution amount determined.

There's no costing. They refer to a formula in this agreement, but there is no formula. It's just referred to. We heard that at the Committee on Law Amendments.

To address the issues, the committee has made several recommendations based on their research for updating the formula . . .

Still no real formula.

. . . to ensure an accurate representation of municipalities. The updates aim to make sure that appropriate comparison groups are used, review classifications for municipalities, and modernize standard expenditures.

Aligned with the resolutions of the NSFMM over the past 5 years, the committee proposes that the provinces' funding for the amount of the finance grants be increased annually by the CPI.

I believe that that was entertained and looked at as an amendment. I would like for the minister to review that and actually respond whether that will be given some consideration. Anyone in municipal government knows that when it comes to taxation, the least you can do is try to do it by CPI.

I think the most confusing part was at the beginning when the minister said that this whole agreement is to sort of alleviate the pressure of housing and corrections from municipal units. He stood here introducing this bill saying that the money we're giving to municipalities is going to help them provide housing. Are they in housing or are they out of housing? I heard the Minister of Community Services many times saying that they're working with HRM on matters of housing. Yet are we in housing?

Now, it's Schedule A. I'm going to read it because I think that, as we talk about continuing to work with municipal units, those are the things that we will be looking for in the Legislature as far as an understanding goes:

Schedule A:

The committee and the province have agreed to engage in ongoing discussions over the next five years with the aim of addressing key issues and ensuring the continued effectiveness of the agreement. Both parties are committed to conducting an annual review of Schedule A and making necessary amendments to the MOU.

In addition, regular progress updates on the agreement and Schedule A will be provided on a biannual basis to ensure transparency and effective implementation.

I'm reading from a document that I could not get on any website. I would hope that the biannual review will be available somewhere online.

The review class structure of Class No. 1 and Class No. 2 specifically in the context of municipal consolidation or amalgamation. This discussion point is the current priority of the SERMGAR committee. It is recommended that both parties continue to work together with the expectation of implementing changes within one year.

Policing models and associated costs is another bullet item. Fire and emergency services, municipal contribution, education rates, and phase out DNA lab contributions, grants in lieu, increase tax tools, regional enterprise networks, the creation of a program for municipal regionalization, roads, municipal speed limits, transit, public transit electrification, and community transit boundaries. That will be all great work. I don't expect it before the next election.

As I started off talking about respective budgets, Speaker, this is what is the critical piece right now because every municipal unit right at this time is starting to plan their budget for their next fiscal year, including CBRM. What amount they get - anything helps, but at the end of the day we all know it's never going to be enough.

Now, I'm going to go to HRM, as the largest amalgamated municipality, the largest rural municipality. I'm going to quote and read what was presented to the Law Amendments Committee. It is already part of the public record, so I need not table it:

HRM has not asked for any special or separate deal and would have liked the choice of whether we could participate in the arrangement with other municipalities. The province has suggested that HRM must be dealt with separately and that they recognize there is more complexity and different matters that potentially could be discussed with HRM and, like any amalgamated municipality, that is what CBRM has been asking for, because of the complexities.

HRM is asking - and I hope that the minister will respond:

We are asking the province to commit to a schedule of meetings to complete the service exchange discussion with HRM and we would like assurance that no incremental costs would shift to HRM taxpayers in the interim as a result of Bill No. 340, relieving other municipalities from that obligation to pay forward housing and corrections or otherwise.

I hope the minister will address that in his response as to when exactly the HRM can expect a phone call to discuss how their budget might be impacted going forward, especially for the next fiscal year.

[5:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I just wanted to rise and contribute to the discussion here. I agree wholeheartedly with my colleagues on this side of the House, and I just want to put on the record a few additional thoughts. Some of the thoughts I have expressed through various phases of the bill.

First of all, I'll be supporting the bill. I represent two municipalities, and Wolfville, of course, is the biggest winner in this agreement, with an increase of nearly 1,400 per cent, so they obviously are extremely happy with this agreement and have encouraged me to do everything I can to ensure that it gets through the House.

The Municipality of the County of Kings's reaction, on the other hand, was more of a - and I'll use my 29-year-old son's word - meh. They weren't too excited about it. There wasn't really much there for them. Kings County has been trying to engage with the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the issue of roads, on J-class roads, for years. They feel that this work that's been undertaken has really fallen short of the work that needs to be done.

The big issues at the municipal level, and they were just outlined there in Schedule A - education funding, policing, roads - this is where the really hard work comes. Unfortunately, their easy work has become very, very hard. I'll talk a little bit about the failure of the process.

These are two issues. The hard work has not been done. We're nibbling around the edges. Yes, it's great to get corrections and housing off the municipal tax bills, but as I pointed out in an earlier conversation about this, the impact to municipalities is a total of \$19.7 million according to a document that outlines the benefits, the winners, and the losers. In fact, I wanted to point out to my colleague from Glace Bay that the document identifies a column with respect to the losers. There are 16 of them, and Cape Breton is the biggest one.

The benefits of this agreement are \$19 million. As I pointed out, I did some quick math with respect to the inflation that will be applied to the education bill to municipalities. The education bill will go up \$17 million while \$9.7 million is coming off. The benefits to municipal taxpayers will be eroded very quickly because the government continues to ask the municipalities to collect education funds on their behalf.

The other issue was the total failure of process here. My colleagues - both leaders of the two Opposition parties articulated this quite well. The process really has been a failure. There has been a sort of divide and conquer, which is outlined or evidenced very clearly in the letter from the minister to the CAOs. Clearly, that was an effort to divide and conquer municipalities by pitting one municipality against their colleagues. It's completely inappropriate.

Again, to go to my colleagues from Glace Bay about why we are politicizing this - it was the minister's letter that identified the Liberal Party as being the problem. That was extremely disappointing. In my 17 years in municipal and provincial government, I don't think I have ever seen a letterhead of a government minister using political parties in the body of the letter. It's completely inappropriate and calls into question the ethics here in terms of how government is being conducted.

The biggest loser in this is municipal-provincial relations. We can argue over \$1 million here and there, but the chill that has now occurred between the government and our municipal partners is palpable. I felt it at the federation meeting when I attended this morning. Our two biggest municipalities, representing probably now nearly 600,000 Nova Scotians - CBRM and HRM - are extremely disappointed with the processes and how this government is interacting with them. It's a very disappointing and really shocking way to relate with partners when we are serving the same citizens - the same Nova Scotians - throughout the province.

With respect to process - I did put some of this on the record earlier - I thought the letter from Mayor Peter Muttart from the Municipality of Kings County shares some of the frustration and concern with respect to this whole process. If I may, I just want to read a few paragraphs here, from a view of a municipality that doesn't see themselves as big winners or big losers in this agreement. They are outlining how the process has been a failure, I think.

“Regrettably, the Roads Committee’s report was overtly withheld from municipalities. We have just now received it as a result of numerous complaints on that front.

Also, the SERMGAR Committee was formed to discuss, consult and report regularly to municipalities. Instead, the members were asked to sign Non-Disclosure Agreements, did not report to municipalities and appear to have taken on the status of a negotiating committee. To top it off, that committee also had not shared its report with either the NSFMB Board or membership prior to us all being presented with what had the appearance of a fait-accompli. Therefore, it cannot be inferred that any of the recommendations have come from the municipalities. I have truly been confused by such cloaked procedures. They have done nothing to inspire confidence in the process.”

The mayor goes on to say further in the letter:

“The Municipality would like to provide comments related to the engagement process that was undertaken and the broader objectives associated with Municipal Reform.

In the 1995 Service Exchange, the Province set out a schedule of Municipal and Provincial responsibilities and undertook an effort to balance the expenses associated with each. The whole concept was preceded with a ‘discussion paper’ that provided details and a strategic focus that enabled knowledgeable discussion on the issues by all parties. Similar thought does not appear to have been applied to the current process, significantly impeding any opportunity for well-informed discussions between the province and municipalities. In the information recently released, there is a significant gap in costing of the program elements for each order of government. From a Municipal Reform perspective, this current proposal does not advance reform objectives but rather perpetuates at best and deteriorates at worst, the status quo. To quote a well-worn but applicable adage, we are ‘re-arranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*.’

It is this Municipality’s position that any type of Service Exchange should be undertaken in the context of a broader Municipal Reform effort, preferably following a study and recommendations by an independent third-party subject-matter expert.”

Those words, I think, underscore what the concerns have been from municipalities with respect to the process here that has really failed Nova Scotians. It’s hurt the relationship between municipalities and the Province. It has undermined the trust. Now, when we need to get to the real hard work, we are doing that from a position of suspicion, of a lack of trust, and a feeling that they could be used as pawns in a divide-and-conquer manner.

I just want to put those issues on the table. I think just one last point to add: it does seem odd that when the Province goes to work on eliminating housing and corrections from the tax bills of Nova Scotians, they failed to do that with HRM. The government should be dealing with all municipalities equally and fairly. To not involve HRM and give the taxpayers of HRM the benefits of the elimination of housing and corrections from their tax bills, I think, again, creates an environment of distrust, playing municipalities one off against the other, and really hurting Nova Scotians in general across the province.

THE SPEAKER: I just want to take an opportunity to recognize some familiar faces in the West Gallery here. I see we have our councillor, Larry Turner, as well as his

lovely wife, Susan, whom I went to school with. It was just nice to see you here today. I hope you enjoy your visit here at the Nova Scotia House of Assembly. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Thank you, Speaker. It is a pleasure to say a few extra words on Bill No. 340 before I close debate. There were many comments, and I will try to address a few of them. I apologize if I don't. In regard to the members from Kings South, HRM, and - I don't remember your constituency. (Interruption) Cole Harbour - yes, immediately. We are committed to negotiating with HRM 100 per cent. We've been, I could say, distracted by floods, fires. Our department has been overwhelmed with work from all of the things that have happened in Nova Scotia this Summer. We will certainly get to that as quickly as we can.

I do want to take a moment to thank our staff in the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the hard work that they put into this, and all the members of the SERMGAR committee, of which there was a significant number. I am very pleased, really, to have the Official Opposition's support - largely have their support - in this in terms of how they will vote anyway, and if not in terms of their comments. It's been a remarkable debate, in my opinion. It's one that I haven't seen in 10 years of being here.

The question of NDAs - that was requested, to be honest, by both the NSFMM and by our own staff. The reason NSFMM wanted it, I think, was - and I would be speculating - to allow free exchange of ideas. The reason our staff wanted it was that there were parts of the information provided by our staff that our legal people felt was confidential information, and to provide it to a third party required some level of confidentiality in terms of the information in the data on the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant and the calculation. In terms of that calculation, it belongs to the NSFMM. It is their calculation. It is complicated, and I have seen it. Anyway, that's the reference to that.

I just want to say that we have very strong advocates for Cape Breton in the member for Glace Bay and the Minister of Addictions and Mental Health. Was the charter on the table in the beginning? No, it wasn't, but they advocated very strongly for it, and so we are listening. We continue to listen to them, and we appreciate them very much. The member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier - we do listen. I do listen to your comments, and I hadn't heard before your call for an audit or the Auditor General's involvement. I actually didn't hear that before. (Interruption) I heard you say it. (Interruption) Oh, I thought you were calling for it. Okay, if I misunderstood you, my apologies.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the floor.

[5:15 p.m.]

JOHN LOHR: I would just say this to the people of the CBRM. Look back eight years of the previous administration. Was there any extra municipal financial grant money given? Look around you at the amount of construction going on. We've got your back. We're supporting the CBRM. I want you to know that. I know we are in a squabble with your council, but - and I apologize for that in the sense that I - that doesn't reflect our attitude towards the CBRM. I can tell you that the times I've been there - in reality I can't believe the transformation in the CBRM currently. It was only a few years ago with steady decline in population and you wondered who was going to be the last person to turn the lights out in CBRM. I don't feel that way anymore - largely driven by CBU, but not entirely, other things too - your own energy and enthusiasm.

We're spending money in CBRM at an unprecedented rate as a government. We're working hard for you. I want you to know that. The deal...

THE SPEAKER: Order. Just a reminder - and I noticed this the other day with a number of members speaking as well - you speak through the Chair. We're not allowed to be looking at the TV as if we're speaking to someone outside of the Chamber.

JOHN LOHR: Thank you, Speaker, I will try to remember to do that. I do want to say to the people of CBRM that we're working for them. CBRM is changing. We recognize that. We've got their back. Their members here have got their back.

The reality is this deal stands every one of our 48 municipalities to the better. The Municipality of Kings to nearly a million dollars better. The Town of Yarmouth too, nearly a half a million dollars better - not quite half a million. Every single municipality is better off with this, none better off than CBRM, which stands to the better on the two items, the net operating losses and corrections to \$4.5 million.

How CBRM uses that is up to them, but from what I understand they will pass that on to their citizens. It is a \$4.5 million tax break to them, which is a good thing. However each municipality chooses to use that is up to them. We respect that totally. That's real money and it's a benefit to them.

For the benefit of third reading, I will explain a little bit about the pre-1981 schools. The reality is a pre-1981 school probably has asbestos in it and it is complicated and expensive to remediate or remove. We're willing to take that on. I know for some municipalities the comment is it's eight, nine years too late. That's the reality because they've already taken them over.

The question is: Why do the municipalities take back these pre-1981 schools? That is, going back in time. Education was a municipal responsibility. When the province took it over, the municipalities agreed to put money in through property taxes, which used to fund

100 per cent of education and now fund a small portion. We're putting a lot of other money into education, believe me, but the reality is that is the history of that.

The other reality is that, yes, there's a lot more work to do. Schedule A has many items, as the member for Cole Harbour listed. They're not going to be easy to negotiate, we know that. We'll continue to work on this.

As the member for Kings South mentioned in his letter from the mayor of Kings County, the B part - what we call Schedule B roads - once we got to the public discussion phase there was resistance on that, so we responded by pulling that out and said: We'll look at that a little bit further, and further study that issue of J-class roads. We're listening there too.

Those are all things that I just want to point out. There are probably things I've forgotten. With that, Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 340.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading debate of Bill No. 340, the Municipal Reform (2023) Act. Would all those in favour . . .

There has been a request for a recorded vote. Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[5:19 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. I will ask the Clerk to conduct the vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[5:25 p.m.]

YEAS

Hon. Barbara Adams
Hon. Kim Masland
Hon. Allan MacMaster
Hon. Twila Grosse
Hon. Michelle Thompson
Hon. John Lohr
Hon. Trevor Boudreau
Hon. Timothy Halman
Hon. Kent Smith
Dave Ritcey
Hon. Brian Wong

NAYS

Hon. Derek Mombourquette
Susan Leblanc
Claudia Chender
Kendra Coombes
Suzy Hansen
Gary Burrill
Lisa Lachance

Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek
Hon. Brian Comer
Hon. Colton LeBlanc
Hon. Jill Balser
Hon. Pat Dunn
Hon. Greg Murrow
Hon. Becky Druhan
Larry Harrison
John White
John A. MacDonald
Hon. Keith Bain
Chris Palmer
Tom Taggart
Nolan Young
Hon. Steve Craig
Hon. Keith Irving
Hon. Brendan Maguire
Hon. Zach Churchill
Hon. Iain Rankin
Lorelei Nicoll
Braedon Clark
Ali Duale
Carman Kerr
Ronnie LeBlanc
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

THE CLERK: For, 36. Against, 7.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier on an introduction.

KENDRA COOMBES: Thank you, Speaker. He just left, but I want to welcome Councillor Eldon MacDonald, CBRM Councillor for District 5, to the Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 329.

Bill No. 329 - the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended) and Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act (amended).

[5:30 p.m.]

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: I move that Bill No. 329 be now read for a third time.

Speaker, the province is in the midst of a housing crisis like we've never seen before. Over the past two years, we've been working on a number of fronts with all levels of government, businesses, and community partners on solutions, but we need to do more and we need to be better for our residents.

The amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter and the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act will remove barriers, increase density, and ensure that housing remains a primary focus in our most urban centre.

Many of the amendments should come as no surprise to anyone who has read the 2022 Deloitte report as they relate directly to recommendations coming from the HRM Housing Development Barrier Review.

Creating a Trusted Partner Program for qualified developers was a key recommendation in the report and will help pave the way for those certified professionals who are known for providing quality development submissions with a more streamlined process.

The Trusted Partner Program, primarily about engineers and architects, doesn't give a free pass to certain people for all the development opportunities in the city. It will certainly not mean that developers get to skip out on any of the required studies or regulatory requirements associated with projects.

Quite the opposite - it recognizes those who truly understand the process and are prepared to work with HRM planning to bring more quality housing projects to light a little faster. That's important. These amendments are intended to enhance our work with the HRM. We've done a lot of great work together on the housing file and I'm confident we will continue to do so.

As I've said many times, it's simply a matter that planning rules have not been able to keep pace with the increasing needs and demands of the modern-day housing landscape. Times have changed and policies have not kept up. That's resulted in some very viable developments like Beaver Bank Road and others being denied or severely delayed.

We've listened to feedback provided in the Law Amendments Committee and we've made some adjustments to provide more clarity and flexibility to make changes in regulation.

We've modified the language related to freezing fees, capital contributions, and bonus zoning to clarify that this is not about taking current fees away. It is about not raising fees or changing formulas to ensure that developers have some stability over the next two years as they build new housing units. It can avoid passing those additional costs on to residents.

As I've noted before, we've provided an avenue to change the calculation of fees, if necessary, with ministerial approval. We've also broadened the scope of authority provided to the CAO to make planning decisions, putting more authority in the hands of the municipality than ever before.

These amendments are about removing barriers and helping speed up smart development where it's needed for the benefit of all residents. We've also brought in amendments to enable tax breaks to HRM businesses affected by the devastating fires this Summer. Those were requested by the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

This is a housing crisis which has been made worse by these fires and floods. This government is committed to taking actions needed to increase housing supply so that more Nova Scotians can have a safe place to call home.

With that, I'll invite comments from my colleagues on Bill No. 329.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: There's been extensive debate on Bill No. 329. On third reading I will reregister some major concerns I have about this bill and the government's failure to bring in even amendments to it that could support transparency, accountability, and even reporting.

I will state, first and foremost, that we do have a housing crisis. It is impacting nearly every single community across the province. We do have to build homes more quickly. We do have to reduce the costs of building. We've suggested a number of pieces of legislation that can help us achieve that.

We do not have any evidence that this bill is going to do these things. The minister has not provided any analysis to suggest that there are going to be any developments that happen more quickly as a result of this, or how many more units are going to be built as a result of this.

At its heart, what this bill does is it gives the minister unilateral authority to step in, overturn, or supersede a decision that's made by the HRM. I think that is a problem. That creates a scenario, I believe, that can lead to corrupt behaviour - incentives from partisan ministers of any political stripe who hold that seat to engage in favouritism for friends and allies and donors.

I'm particularly worried about this because we have seen a penchant in this government to reward friendly individuals with access, with decisions. We've seen this Premier cut independent boards and replace them with individuals he referred to as his personal friends. I mentioned earlier today in the House that the premiers from across the country came and stayed in Halifax. They were hosted by the Premier. They just so happened to stay at the hotel that's owned by one of the Premier's biggest fundraisers, biggest supporters, who plays an unknown role in the administration of this government, who has allegedly directed some housing policy, and who is the chair of the transition team for the Premier. I'm sorry, but I don't believe the argument that it was just coincidence that all the premiers from across the country chose to stay at that one place.

I believe we've got a real problem with this bill that can lead to bad behaviour and might not necessarily lead to the outcomes that we're expecting or that we hope for. We've heard from the mayor and municipal councillors on this, who have already signed off on, I think, 12,000 or more new units that are being delayed not because of process, according to the mayor and council, but because of interest rates, availability of labour, in particular, and high costs of building.

I've spoken to developers who have echoed that. Many developers are not building right now, for a number of reasons. They don't know if they can get the return on their investment, even with building of market-priced units - which, by the way, are the highest rents in the country right now. I have heard from developers who are confused about this bill - some who are favourable and think this is going to help them get their projects off the ground more quickly. Time will tell if that happens or not, but the fact is that the viewpoint of developers is different. That is what makes me worried about there being winners and losers that are chosen here, depending on whether they're aligned or friendly with the government or not.

Again, the fact that the government and the minister did not support simple amendments to this bill that would have just ensured that the government reported on their interventions to the public, I think, is of great concern. I mean, the only reason you don't want to report on things of this nature is because you don't want people to know what decisions you're influencing. There's no reason to want to hide any of this information from the public if the government has confidence that no untoward decisions are going to be made or that no favouritism is going to be had on this.

We've seen this happen with the PC government in Ontario. Again, not the same exact legislation, and not the same situation, but there are similarities here. The legislation

that was moved in Ontario allowed the minister, as I've talked about previously, to engage in favouritism, overrule local decision-making and local planning, and pick winners. They just so happen to be developers who had ties to the party and donated to the party and whom the minister's chief of staff had met with.

We don't know who's pushed for this. We don't know if the chair of the government's transition team - who is a developer, and who seems to be getting some perks because of his relationship with the Premier - was the one pushing for this. We don't know this because the government has refused to answer these questions. In Ontario, the intervention that they had has led to a scandal, has led to an RCMP investigation, has led to an Auditor General investigation, has led to an apology from the Premier, and has led to Cabinet resignations.

I'm not saying the same thing is going to happen here. I certainly hope it doesn't, but I believe that this piece of legislation is creating the conditions that can lead to that, and I do think that is worth noting. I'm not the only person who thinks this. This has been reported on in the media, it's been commented on by mayor and council and by other people outside of this Chamber who've looked at this legislation who are fearful of it. It is a concern for municipalities across the province.

I've spoken just this week to a number of municipal leaders, from small communities and large towns relative to the Nova Scotia landscape. They are worried about this intrusion into their autonomy, their authority, their ability to make decisions for their constituents and plan the growth and housing needs of their community.

This government has also made decisions on housing and building that municipalities can't even move on, because they did not take the time to consult. An example of this is in Bridgewater, where, unbeknownst to the mayor and council, the government announced, I believe, that some of their public housing new builds are going to be in Bridgewater. The mayor and council don't know if they can even accommodate that, because their sewage and wastewater pipes are at a maximum.

This can also lead to bad decisions from an outcome perspective, where approvals are given, where perhaps we don't even have the infrastructure capacity to move on them. I think this is a problem. I want to compare - again, I'm not saying that there doesn't need to be work done with municipalities to change the regulatory framework to reduce costs and unnecessary burdens in the process, to build more quickly. I think there's some legitimacy to that.

I think we do need to modernize our rules and regulations right now, our bylaws, to ensure that we are building as quickly as we can, and that there aren't unnecessary regulatory barriers in the way. Some regulatory barriers are important, around environment, around safety. Some of them probably aren't - that are more about individuals not wanting to have apartment buildings in a single-family neighbourhood.

I want to compare how this government and the Ford government engaged in making these changes, compared to the B.C. government, because this was an issue in British Columbia. How British Columbia handled this issue was, they didn't give one individual in a partisan government unilateral ability to overturn municipal decisions, or to play favourites when it comes to building and housing, with large-scale, multi-million-dollar projects.

What B.C. did was they changed the rules. They changed the bylaws. They didn't give an individual or their minister superseding authority. They changed the rules they didn't like, and those rules would then apply to everybody. That is a very distinct difference between how this government is handling the situation and how a government like B.C. tackled this.

I think it's worth referencing how B.C. handled this, because it makes a lot more sense for lawmakers - which we are, and which the minister is, and the Premier is, and this Chamber - lawmakers. It makes a lot more sense for lawmakers to change laws and rules. That's our job. That makes a lot more sense than giving one individual unilateral authority to either overturn or make decisions that impact development, and that we don't know whether it's going to be fair, or that there's going to be due process with that.

So in B.C., to deal with housing, the Minister of Housing, Ravi Kahlon - I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly - introduced legislation aimed at increasing small-scale, multi-unit housing in the province by forcing municipalities to change zoning rules to make it easier to build townhomes, multiplexes, and laneway houses.

Generally, the requirements will allow a minimum of one secondary suite, or one laneway home in all single-family duplex or residential zones. Within municipalities of more than 5,000 people, zoning will allow for three to four units in select areas on single-family or duplex lots, depending on lot size. A minimum of six units will be allowed in select areas zoned for larger single-family or duplex residential located close to transit stops with frequent service.

The minister's words: "Municipalities covered by the legislation may permit additional density if desired, but cannot have bylaws that allow for fewer permitted units than the provincial legislation."

It's a very clear difference here from the approach of British Columbia to addressing rules or processes they believe are a hindrance to development. They changed the rules. They changed the bylaws. They could say how many units they believed these changes would allow to be built. They believe it's in the magnitude of 60,000 new units that could be built in 10 municipalities over the next 5 years.

Not only did B.C. approach this same issue in a much more responsible way - one that is based around the rule of law, around fair and consistent process, and around

regulatory certainty - they also did the analysis so they could tell the public how many new units would be built as a result of this.

[5:45 p.m.]

We have not had that analysis provided by this government. Bringing in a piece of legislation that is heavy-handed and that gives the minister, and therefore the Premier, a consequential level of control and power over who builds in Halifax and where they build - they couldn't even tell us what the impact of this is going to be. I do think this legislation is wrong in several ways, even from a development perspective.

What do business people want from government? What do they need? They need regulatory certainty. They need to understand what the process is and what they must do to go through it. I have heard this directly from developers. There is a lot of confusion out there. I believe that in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, I listed a number of questions that developers have about this. They don't know what to do.

This piece of legislation might also have broken the law of the Province in the HRM Charter, which states explicitly and clearly that changes to the Charter require consultation with the municipality. It states that in the law. I believe this government is breaking that law in this legislation.

Now what's happening - HRM certainly agrees with that - I believe there's going to be a court challenge to this. Now we have two levels of government - our biggest municipality, which is dealing with the largest pressures of growth and the largest increases in our population, potentially being at legal loggerheads with the Province. How is that going to help housing get built faster? It's creating uncertainty in the market. It's creating uncertainty for business people, who are the ones putting their capital on the line to build projects. There is a real risk that this might slow down development and housing.

Instead, what we need is co-operation between our largest municipality and our province. There needs to be a war-like effort on housing, and that means an all-hands-on-deck approach. That means everybody working together. We know, based on what the experts are telling us, we need 70,000 new units in the next five years to keep up with current demand.

That's 70,000 new units at a time when housing starts have gone down 50 per cent year over year, and at a time when the Premier and the provincial government are saying we're going to double the population. We don't have enough houses for people to live in right now. This is a literal crisis in housing. It's not hyperbole to say that. It's not an exaggeration. This is an actual crisis that is getting worse, year over year. We are seeing it show up in a number of ways. There are a number of symptoms of this crisis. Again, the most acute - the worst of all - is the homelessness, the doubling of the homeless population here in Halifax, and increasing in other parts of the province.

We are seeing it with our fixed income seniors, who, like in Cape Breton, are living in large, single-family homes that they're having a harder time affording to maintain but they can't get out of because there are no affordable rents or units even available because the vacancy rate in this province is close to zero per cent. There are all these single-family homes that could potentially be on the market for the young people coming up - young families who need family homes, who need affordable places to live, who are now telling us, through polling and anecdotally in our offices, that they don't know if they'll even be able to afford a home in Nova Scotia or find a place to live.

This is a crisis. It is not going to be fixed, I don't believe, by a provincial government that is unwilling to work with our municipal partners or the federal government - or will stand in the way of federal-to-municipal deals that are also leading to, hopefully, accelerated development in housing.

This bill is about control. It is about who gets to decide, I believe. I believe it's about if one of the friends of the government are not getting what they want to get, they know that they can call on the minister - but most likely the Premier - to intervene. Now the minister has the authority to do that.

Furthermore, this is not going to do anything to build more affordable housing. Not only could this bill potentially negatively impact market housing because of the confusion it's creating, because of the legal challenges that are going to be fought out in court, it's not going to do anything to build more affordable units or emergency housing or transitional housing. In fact, this bill may be stripping organizations that are in the not-for-profit sector that do a lot of this work from necessary funding, and the province has not indicated that they are going to replace that money.

For those whom market housing - whether it's rental or a single-family home or duplex or townhouse - is not attainable financially, who need affordable units, or those who are even escaping a dangerous and abusive situation with a spouse or a family situation, or those who are found homeless, this bill will do nothing to help any of those people. That has to be a key part of addressing housing.

This is the signature bill of this session. This is the government's big claim, legislatively - that they're dealing with housing. They're going to build more, faster. The government has not produced any evidence that it's going to do that. Again, I think there is great risk in this bill when it comes to favouritism, and transparency and accountability that's going to be tied to that. I think it's creating confusion in the market, which can impact development in a negative way and slow it down. I believe that if the government was committed to doing an intervention, that actually looking at the rules, the laws, and the processes and changing those would be a much more reasonable, responsible way to handle this. The fact that they didn't handle it that way, I do think is concerning.

The last point I'll make, which I also think is important, is that this piece of legislation may actually be breaking the laws of the province, which is the legislators on the government side's first duty to uphold.

For those reasons, our party will not be supporting this bill.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I am going to rise and say just a few words about this bill. I share many of the concerns that have been raised. I think at the heart of the challenge of this bill is, again, a pattern where, since this government has come into office, it has essentially eliminated arms-length decision-making. We don't have independent Crown corporations, we don't have a board of the Nova Scotia Health Authority, and we don't have places where the expertise of the public service can be put to the work for which it is intended.

We have ministers with an increasing amount of power. We saw a template for this bill in the Patient Access to Care Act, which has expedited a lot for regulated health professionals but also gave the Minister of Health and Wellness exclusive power to determine whether a health professional is able to practice in Nova Scotia - which is astonishing.

Every single health regulator spoke out against that bill, and we are replicating that here in the arena of planning. Now we have a Minister of Health and Wellness who happens to be a nurse and have a lot of experience in health care, but she is not a regulator. We have a Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, whom I am sure has immersed himself in the work of the department, but he is certainly not a planner.

We are, as I think has been said, laying the ground for corruption. When we see a situation where the public service can be overridden, where other orders of government and their input can be dismissed, and where decisions can be made behind closed doors, alarm bells should go off. That is not a democratic way of doing things.

I will say for the tenth time in this Chamber that this is a government that campaigned on transparency, good government, doing things right, and showing those Liberals how they were really going to do it right. We've seen literally the exact opposite. At every turn, we have seen a move toward consolidation of power and toward decisions being made and bills voted on in the dark. I think it should really give people pause.

As has been said, this bill is supposed to create housing, yet we have no guarantee this bill will create a single unit of housing. It might, but what it will do is create the possibility for a lot of corruption. I'm going to call it like it is. We have no evidence that's happening. I am not saying it is, but this is why we have good governance and why we have a public service. This is why we have planners. This is why we have arms-length

decision-making, so we don't create the possibility of this kind of possibility. That's what we're seeing.

[6:00 p.m.]

We've seen this in Ontario, where governments suddenly have a thirst for building in the wilderness - Sandy Lake. We've seen where governments want to consolidate power over planning, which at the provincial level, they have very little expertise. Then we've seen deeply unfortunate consequences, both for those governments and for the people they serve. We should all be concerned about that as we look at this legislation.

This bill isn't about building housing; this bill is about a government being able to do whatever it wants. If this government wanted to build housing, they could just build housing. The Premier's words: The solution to the housing crisis is to build housing.

We're not building housing. We're consolidating power. That's not the same thing - not by a long shot.

Dartmouth Cove - we talked about this this week in the Legislature. In my constituency, we have a piece of former industrial land. Does it need cleanup? Yes. Does it need as much investment as many other sites that the government has put projects on? No. Is the private sector building all around it? Yes. Does the King's Wharf development stand just adjacent to the site? Yes.

It could support 1,000 units, Dartmouth Cove. Not only is the Province not building housing there and not only did they not accept it as a special planning area, now they just don't think that they're going to. I thought that this government was about building housing. They're not building housing, Speaker. They're consolidating power. That's what we're seeing here.

Just to bring us around to the pattern, there are two main bills coming out of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing this sitting - the bill that we just debated and this bill. These are two bills that, if you had to boil it down, one gives CBRM a crappy deal and one gives HRM a crappy deal. Two bills, two biggest municipalities in the province, bad deal.

I understand that this government wants to choose where the announcements are. They want to choose where the investment is - ideally, where they can cut a ribbon with a minister. At some point, people will notice. If we want to grow this province to two million people, guess what? Most of them are going to live in the big cities.

Yes, we need to grow our municipalities all across this province. Yes, we will continue to grow them. We now have over half a million people in HRM, yet do we know where the four schools announced are going to be? No. The government won't tell us.

Do we know how this bill that usurps all of the authority from HRM is going to help build housing in HRM? No. Because even the special planning areas and the joint task force that we talked about in the last sitting have yet to open a single door and offer a single bed to a person who needs housing.

Meanwhile, the Rapid Housing Initiative that has been undertaken with the two other orders of government that seem to actually be able to talk to each other has built and delivered housing - hundreds of units of housing. Hundreds of units of truly affordable housing - shocking.

It's not nearly enough. We need so much more.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I thought this would be the best time to say that "crappy deal" is unparliamentary. It's on my list here. I would ask that you retract that.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Yes. I will retract "crappy deal" and replace it with "bad deal." I will stay away from the colloquialisms.

I do want to reiterate that when the Council of Premiers met last weekend, I had the chance to sit down with the Premier of British Columbia and had previously met with his Housing Minister. I think that British Columbia is instructive.

They are upzoning. They are changing zoning. They're doing it in collaboration with their municipalities. They're not usurping power. They're changing rules in a way that benefits communities. Not every community is happy about it, but they're engaging with their municipalities.

Mayor Mike Savage called this bill an "autocratic intrusion." The mayor of HRM is the only directly elected municipal official - not the only one, I suppose other mayors are - who has a constituency of half a million people - half the population of our province. He said that this bill is an "autocratic intrusion." This government dismissed that criticism. That is a massive, massive accusation and it's true.

Then the question is why. I want to get back to the special planning areas and the joint task force. We had this exact same conversation in the last sitting, more or less, when the task force was established. That was the first intrusion into the planning of HRM. They said that you could go through all of the normal municipal channels, or you could come and knock on our door. Maybe we'll expedite things.

We had lots of criticism about that, but HRM was at the table. There was planning expertise at the table. Now we've just cut out smart. We've cut out the expertise.

We have only - to the members who criticized the political nature of this conversation: Oh please, first of all. And secondly, that's exactly what this is. It is only

political decision-making, by definition. If the minister can, by himself, decide what planning happens right across our biggest municipality, that means it's a political decision. He's not relying on his staff. He's not relying on planning. He might be, but he doesn't have to. That is troubling. That should be troubling to all of us.

I could go on and on, but I will just come back to say there are so many things this government could do to build housing. Number 1, build housing. But Number 2, there are programs - we've talked about this, you know, there are programs - but those are really a drop in the bucket.

There's been an announcement of public housing, 220 units. Someday, some of them might get built. Apparently a bunch of them can't, because the lots where they've been announced aren't actually serviced. We don't even know where some of the areas are. That is a little drop in the bucket.

Of at least 70,000 units by 2030 - many of them here in the HRM - 33,000 of those, at least, need to be deeply affordable. This government has - not even a drop in the bucket of the announcements has been deeply affordable housing. And that is what the thousand-plus people living outside, many of whom still have no idea how they will make it through the Winter, need.

We didn't hear anything about that in this Chamber. We didn't hear about the regulatory and legal changes that are being made to ensure that people stay alive through the Winter. We didn't hear about the regulatory and legal changes being made so that we could build complete communities for the two million people whom the Premier says are going to come.

We get some weird argument about, Oh, well we need them to come so we can build the housing we need. But what are they going to do in the meantime, live in a tent? We see that. If you go to the Shubenacadie Canal in Dartmouth, you see the little huts that the Irish workers lived in while they built the canal. We're sort of past that now. What? They were Irish. Yes, Irishtown Road. It's right in the middle of my district. That's an interesting story in itself, but we won't talk about that right now. But we're beyond that. That's not how we do things now.

We are a wealthy province. We are a wealthy province. The world is on fire right now. There are so many people struggling, and we are so lucky, and we can't find a way to make sure that everyone has a roof over their head? And we can't find a way to pass a bill that actually provides housing for people in this province?

Shame. Honestly. Because this is a bill that paves the path for corruption, that continues to consolidate power, that at least has deeply upset the biggest municipality and economic engine of this province and might even have created some kind of communication breakdown, which will not bode well for any of us, or our constituents.

This bill does a lot of things, none of them good, and none of the bills that have come forward meet the challenges that we actually have in housing.

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

LORELEI NICOLL: Well, I'm not sure what more can be said here in the House. We've all heard it tonight again, to emphasize just how damaging and how dangerous this bill truly is. It does nothing to expedite the construction of the 11,000 units already approved for construction in HRM.

It does nothing to help the homeless. It does nothing to address the immediate need for student housing. It does nothing to address the cost of money and the shortage of skilled labour, which are the true causes of construction delays. We even heard the Minister of Public Works this week acknowledge that those were the reasons for the delays in construction in Dartmouth Cove, which was referenced already.

Why is it different for the HRM, if labour shortages and interest rates are causing delays for the Province to actually provide housing on land that they own? It actually also eliminates one of the most powerful tools used to promote the development of affordable housing: bonus zoning.

It's interesting. As I stand here, I'm starting to see a pattern, not necessarily the pattern identified by the NDP but a pattern by this government. Bill No. 225 came rushing in here; we had to do something right away about the noise bylaw in HRM. Oh, but then it was all resolved by council at HRM, so it's not a big deal. Everyone's happy, that's good, but there was a need to hurry up in here and bring this bill.

Now - the minister just mentioned it in his opening comments - Beaver Bank was denied by Council. Rush another bill into the House because, boy oh boy, somebody is not happy.

The minister is actually on social media, on the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities' account, saying people are resistant to change, it's human nature, it's time to set aside not-in-my-back-yard sentiments. Well, it looks like Beaver Bank's concerns were the fact that for a small community there were already 250 homes being built and five multi-unit buildings, so guess what their concerns were? Infrastructure. No one seems to be thinking of that.

No, it's not even schools. Schools are pretty; you can do ribbon-cuttings at those things. What's not pretty is what runs underground, and it's unparliamentary to say the word but it's got to go somewhere.

Right now, there are a dozen special planning areas in HRM. Where is that going to go? The wastewater plants are at capacity in many of the neighbourhoods. Who is going to

address that? On the earlier bill, I spoke about budgeting. You don't want unforeseen uncertainties when you do budgeting. I've been there and I understand how difficult it is.

[6:15 p.m.]

Going back to the whole, kind of, not in my back yard, I can speak from experience that it takes leadership to weigh all perspectives and listen to local knowledge and make a decision on what's best for the people - that gentleman right there - all for the public good.

You have to weigh everything. You have to listen to all sides, but I have strong concerns about what this means for the future of HRM. Growth is great but growth has to pay for growth - back to the budgeting thing.

Now the minister referenced the Turner Drake & Partners document, which was to address housing. Is there anywhere in the Turner Drake document that addresses how to provide infrastructure for this housing? I think not.

The first thing - as someone who built her first house at a very young age - the first thing I needed was land. No land, no house. I am mentioning that because it seems that this government is upset with the municipality for having gone into an agreement to provide housing through the federal government. Well, it so happens that the federal government owns land in HRM, so why wouldn't they work with HRM to provide housing? I am referring to Shannon Park in particular. The HRM Centre Plan, which I'm sure everyone has read. I spent 10 years on HRM's Regional Plan, and I know it very well.

I moved into an area that was developed in the 1970s, and the provincial housing commission created the Forest Hills affordable housing plan. The commission is gone but guess what delayed it? As water and sewer were being extended, they realized they didn't have water. A deal was struck with the Prestons to allow Lake Major water to be provided for that growth. I understand when my colleagues spoke of engaging the African-Nova Scotian community, but will they not want it in their backyard? Is that the sentiment? Is that going to be regarded as noise?

Going back to bonus zoning, I know full well that some developers don't really agree with providing a million dollars or a couple of million dollars to the municipality so that the municipality can provide grants for affordable housing, again listening to one side of the situation to provide housing. The bill and the Centre Plan and the Regional Plan, but the Centre Plan itself - what it did was bring certainty. The one thing you don't want to do ever is to change the rules mid-stream in any situation. The growth you are seeing today is because the Centre Plan gave that certainty to the development world in HRM. Now they are all going to wonder again: Do I go through the development application process with HRM and deal with those planners who are problematic? Do I go to the task force and work with them with regard to who owns the land or do I go right to the minister?

The minister would want us to believe that he is only going to be engaged when the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board is going to make a decision. Going back to the Beaver Bank application and project, it went to the NSUARB. The NSUARB said, You have the right to develop. Go ahead. Again, it didn't need to involve the minister. This bill is a dangerous overreach and it appears to be an ill-conceived, knee-jerk reaction designed to check a red tape reduction check box on a so-called housing strategy. In fact, it does nothing, as I've said earlier, to address the housing needs and it is clearly just a performative smoke screen to give the appearance of action on this very urgent issue of housing. It's bad policy and I am sure the government knows it.

Amendments were put forward to make it a bit more accountable and it made it a little bit better. I am acknowledging the amendments put forward by the government. No other amendments were entertained. It's most disappointing that this government's inability to admit that it may not have thought things out fully and its complete lack of any desire to listen to legitimate concerns in your backyard or elsewhere and adopt any proposed amendments to improve this imperfect bill undermines this entire legislative process.

I put forward a bill, not much fanfare. It was asking this government to consider and look at legislative amendments that sit somewhere, maybe on the minister's desk, where the HRM Charter would like to have authority. There are five of them pertaining to housing but there is one in particular that I am going to point out. There was a request that the Province amend the Public Utilities Act to allow the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to give Halifax Water the ability to waive their fees for non-profit affordable housing. There's a priority. Why isn't that before us? If it's about providing housing, being critical - in particular, we know that the increase in housing stock is not for affordable housing.

I would really want to leave this with the minister and have him look at that bill, to come up with a process that actually looks at things that would enable the HRM in themselves, within their charter, to actually be able to allow and create more housing in a well-planned method going forward.

We are kind of tired of the blame game - everyone is. To have the Premier say, Right now we have a federal government and they believe in a divide-and-conquer approach to things, as we see that around some of the funding announcements going on. If you, as a government, feel that the federal government is applying divide and conquer, imagine what this bill does and makes the HRM feel like - the same way. Divide and conquer.

I could go on, but as I said, a lot has already been said. There is a pattern. This government is listening to only one side of the equation: the development world and the developers themselves. (Interruption) I don't know which ones. That's irrelevant.

A public process in planning is very much needed; a private one, not so much. It's the funniest thing; when you listen to other perspectives, your idea just gets better if you address the negative aspect of it. Making proper leadership decisions is listening to the people and trying to address their concerns.

I'll leave it in the words of Mick Jagger: You don't always get what you want.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: We've got another terrible, bad bill before us in this Legislature. Let's go back, shall we? Law Amendments.

At the Law Amendments Committee, many of us were alarmed but not surprised to hear from councillors and municipal representatives and the urban planners of their shared concerns about this bill and the potential financial safety and community risks it poses. One councillor warned that this bill would create new, bigger problems than what it is intended to address. The HRM residents could be facing higher taxes, less complete and livable communities, fewer amenities, potentially unsafe or environmentally hazardous developments, and not least of all, a complete lack of input into the development of their communities.

Nova Scotians need meaningful involvement in these important decisions. For one person, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to make these decisions without any oversight or transparency is worrisome and has dangerous possibilities.

During the Law Amendments Committee, Mayor Savage stated that the bill is an autocratic intrusion. We agree with that assessment from the mayor. We also agree with the mayor's comparison of this bill to the Ontario PC government's ongoing Greenbelt scandal, which serves as a real example of unchecked and opaque decision-making in development. This is not something we should be taking lightly. It is something we need to take in all its seriousness. The Greenbelt scandal is a serious issue in Ontario, with legal consequences. There's potential of this happening here in Nova Scotia due to this type of bill. We could get rid of this bill and vote down this bill to ensure something like this does not happen.

Make no mistake, Speaker, we understand the depth of the current housing shortage. We understand the needs of people who are living in homes they cannot afford, struggling to get by, and those who are living on the streets - living rough - and do not know where they are going to lay their heads at night. We understand that. We have real knowledge of it. We also understand that the number of additional units needed is no small undertaking and will require commitments and collaboration across every level of government.

Decisive action and bold moves are necessary, but this bill is not the solution. Mayor Savage made it clear that current developments aren't being held up at the approval stage. Instead, it's a labour shortage and construction and financing costs that are seeing projects stall. It is not the fault of the HRM.

[6:30 p.m.]

Where is this PC government's action on this? Rather than this undemocratic power grab, the Province could be taking action by expanding the Nova Scotia Community College's trade program capacity, waiving tuition, and encouraging direct entry to the trades. They could address the financing challenges that affordable housing initiatives face and make fast and accessible upfront funding available.

Most presenters at the Law Amendments Committee came with the request that this bill's progress be paused. Unfortunately, the government members of the committee did not take any of this valuable insight to heart and instead pushed this bill forward as presented.

This is not the government's first intrusion into the Halifax development process. The minister was already granted sweeping powers to approve developments and override bylaws in Bill No. 63, which established the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality. While this panel granted the minister authority as the ultimate decision-maker, it did have the panel and experts providing thoughtful recommendations to the minister. It did have HRM partners at the table and did provide some small amount of transparency in decision-making. When Bill No. 63 was introduced, we expressed concerns that planning was going to happen behind closed doors. Little did we know the extreme approach this government would be taking in just two short years. The minister will be claiming full control of planning and development in the HRM, and as my colleague, the leader of the NS NDP stated, this bill is taking the smarts out.

We are arguing that this bill is bringing about a system with no planning. It is the HRM that has a robust planning and development department, that has the experts and planners on staff. The provincial department simply does not have this capacity. What this bill is proposing will completely shut any expertise out of decision-making in favour of the whims of the minister and developer friends.

We also have significant concerns about what sped-up and uninformed development decisions could have on our environment. At the Law Amendments Committee, the Ecology Action Centre expressed concerns that HRM priority plans - like the Green Network Plan and the Integrated Mobility Plan, among others - will no longer be considered in the negotiation of development agreements and won't be followed. This government brushes off a shiny document containing actual objectives, such as preparation for climate-related emergencies like flooding or wildfires, issues such as we had with Fiona, GHG reduction, land protection and conservation.

We're concerned that without planning, without these priorities, we'll see developments push forward inappropriately and dangerously without proper egress routes in flood-prone areas, in areas of high ecological value for biodiversity.

In conclusion, our caucus will not be supporting this bill. It is an egregious overreach that will not result in improvements to the housing crisis, and certainly will not create more rent-geared-to-income units, which is what is desperately needed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: I'm happy to speak here at third reading on Bill No. 329, which I think is a really important and deeply flawed piece of legislation. I want to start by recognizing that I certainly, 100 per cent, absolutely believe that we need to be building a lot more housing in Nova Scotia. I say that as a general statement, of course, but also from a generational perspective. I'm one of the younger members here in the Chamber. There are some millennials here in the Chamber, a handful of us maybe. I don't know if we have any Gen Z members yet, but those two generations have been absolutely slammed, hammered and crushed by an avalanche of pain when it comes to housing over the last four or five years.

We're talking about home price increases in Nova Scotia of easily 60 per cent to 80 per cent, and in some cases double; interest rates that have gone from 1.25 per cent to 5 per cent in a few years; rents that are up hundreds and hundreds of dollars a month. I think people my age and younger are full of anger, frustration and fear around what's going to happen on housing. I 100 per cent support all efforts to get more housing of all types built in this province as quickly as we possibly can. If I thought this bill would do that, I would be happy to support it, but I don't think it will do that in any way, shape, or form. Only time will tell, but I think there's a very good argument to be made that it won't.

I'll start by talking about the confusion that I have around what the government and what the minister intends to do with the powers that are contained in this piece of legislation. If you read the bill, you understand one thing, and then if you listen to what the minister has to say, you understand something entirely different.

The minister has said - I heard him say something to this effect this morning, at the NSFM conference - that this legislation grants him powers that he will only use in very specific and defined circumstances, after all other avenues have been exhausted, perhaps after Council has rejected a development that everyone else agrees is a good idea and that the UARB says is a good idea. I would accept that argument from the minister if that's what the legislation said, but it doesn't.

It's not that long of a bill. It's not that complicated to read. That is not what the legislation says at all. The legislation says - and I'm paraphrasing here because we certainly know that bills aren't written this way - that the minister can do whatever he

wants on planning and development in the entirety of the HRM. That is what the bill says. It does not say the minister will use his discretion in cases where a project has received X, Y and Z approvals, and the UARB has said the HRM Council was wrong. That's not what it says at all.

I would hope that when the minister talks about what the bill will do, what he says matches up with what the bill says - and it doesn't. That raises some major red flags for me, and I don't think it should give any comfort to anyone who has questions about how this bill will actually be used.

To echo some of the comments that were made earlier by the Leader of the Official Opposition, I think what B.C. is in the midst of doing on housing policy is really interesting and really instructive. Over the past few weeks in B.C., the government has introduced five pieces of legislation that do a whole host of things on housing: everything from short-term rentals to major zoning changes, to expansion of density around transit, to new affordable housing funds, to municipal housing targets for municipalities - all good things that change rules. They change existing rules.

What this piece of legislation does is it eliminates rules entirely. To me, if you want to work with municipalities - which have an essential role to play in housing, because they control land use planning, deciding where things can get built and what can get built there - it makes much more sense to change the rules to allow more housing to be built in a fair, transparent way than to eliminate the rules, and that is what this bill does. This bill completely and totally eliminates the rules. It says that the minister can designate the HRM - a municipality the size of Prince Edward Island, roughly - as a special planning area. Every rock, stick, and tree, if that's what the minister decides to do. Whereas what we see other provinces doing is a much smarter and more constructive approach.

British Columbia has said, These are the floors municipalities must meet for zoning across the province. You have to do this at a minimum. If you do more, that's great, but you don't have to, but you do have to meet this minimum. They're not saying, Do it now, and if you don't, we're going to take all power. They've said, We're giving you until June of 2024, so you've got nearly a year to work through these processes with us. We're going to put forward \$10 million into a digital application fund, so that developers who are applying for applications and developments in municipalities can get it done quickly and easily, and the province is helping municipalities doing that. They're saying, We're giving you nine months to make these changes, rather than eliminating all rules yesterday and saying, Come talk to the minister if you want things to get done.

They're doing really smart things, like saying that if a development site is within 800 metres of a major transit station, it is automatically approved for X amount of density, X amount of stories, because when you have a transit station - there's a major bus terminal that just opened in the last year or two, right next to Charles P. Allen High School in my riding, and across the street there are two 12-story buildings. On Innovation Drive, which is

where that bus station is located, there are probably 10 buildings between 6 and 12 storeys. Those people live close to transit. If they want to walk to the bus station, it's five minutes down the road or it's literally across the street.

That is smart, sensible planning. It's not getting rid of all rules and saying, Go talk to the minister and we'll figure it out. It's hard to believe when I say it that way, but that's what this is. That is what this does. Other jurisdictions have taken proactive, constructive, healthy steps on housing and are seeing the results, too - not just B.C. New Zealand, on a country-wide basis, has done some interesting things on zoning and planning; the state of Oregon; the city of Milwaukee just a few days ago; and the city of Houston has done an amazing job on zoning. Some of these places are in very blue states, some are in very red states, and some are on the other side of the world. The commonality is that they recognize that it is a matter of teamwork and co-operation.

On other bills, I've talked about process versus outcome. The process of this bill is off the rails, and I think that's obvious. The outcome remains to be seen. I have my doubts. We've heard from other members about how deep the hole is on housing. To have a governing piece of legislation for planning and development in our largest municipality that is vehemently opposed by the municipality in question, does not give me much confidence that we're going to see outcomes we want - e.g., more housing builds, especially affordable housing, which has no mention whatsoever in this piece of legislation.

It's obviously a critical piece of the puzzle when home prices are doubling in five years, when rents are up hundreds of dollars every year, and when vacancy is close to zero per cent. Affordability is the guiding light of housing policy, and I don't think the phrase "affordable housing" appears in this legislation. If it does, it's only in passing.

The process of this bill is very bad. It will be very bad going forward. Other members have talked about it at length, but there is no reason why we should have confidence that this process will lead to transparency or to good outcomes. It could lead to abuse of power. That is not fearmongering. That is not speculation. That is informed presumption based on how this bill was written and what we've seen in other jurisdictions.

I agree - as the Leader of the Official Opposition and as the minister have said - that there are areas where the municipality and the Province can work together to reduce red tape, to reduce timelines, to make sure planning processes are clear and transparent, and we don't have endless and overlapping hearings, and to avoid relitigating the same thing three different times at three different meetings.

All of that is fine. I have no issue with that. I feel very strongly that we should be moving towards a more streamlined and efficient model of planning for housing, but we can't do it at the expense of any kind of accountability or transparency. The fact of the

matter is - we all know this, we're all part of the democratic system - it's messy, it's inconvenient, and it's frustrating at times, but that's the point.

[6:45 p.m.]

There are diverse opinions on all things, and particularly on things like what kind of neighbourhood I'm going to live in. Do I think that any one person or any one group should have veto power? No. I live in a community, and I represent a riding that has been built up very quickly over the last 10 to 15 years. It's very mixed. On half the streets, you'll see single-family homes. On the other side of the street, you'll see townhouses and row houses. At the end of the street, you'll see a 6-storey building or a 12-storey building. It's wonderful. Everybody's happy. There's transit.

On the bottom floors of the buildings, there are coffee shops, convenience stores, and restaurants. It's a great place where you don't have to leave if you don't want to. It's walkable. There's green space. It works. It's not reinventing the wheel here.

I just think that this legislation - I thought the special planning area piece was bad enough - this is a whole other can of worms, and I really have concerns about how it's going to play out.

As I have said before, I have three special planning areas in my riding alone. I do want to see development happen, but it has to be done in the light of day. Under this legislation, it is not at all clear that that is going to happen, and it is not at all clear that it is going to lead to more housing faster, which apparently is the intention of the government, even though the outcomes thus far have not shown that whatsoever.

Speaker, I just want to summarize: Co-operation should be the name of the game on housing, from all three orders of government - the federal government, the provincial government, and the municipal government. That, I think, should be uncontroversial, but it's not, apparently. Co-operation should be the name of the game. This bill is defined by coercion. We need to be moving toward a co-operative model. This legislation is coercion.

If this bill, which appears to me to be the flagship piece of legislation on housing for this government - at least during this session, if not during the entire term of this government - if this piece of legislation is going to be this government's flagship legislation on housing, then I think we should all be extremely concerned that the housing crisis, as bad as it is now, is only bound to get worse under this government and this very flawed piece of legislation. For those reasons, I oppose it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUZY HANSEN: In our West Gallery, we have the executive director of ANSDPAD, Ms. Bernadette Hamilton-Reid. We would like to you to stand up and accept the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm actually really glad to stand and talk about Bill No. 329. Any opportunity I get to stand up for HRM, I will absolutely do so. As an HRM MLA, it is fitting for us to be able to stand here and speak the words of those who typically don't actually get heard in this House.

We've heard many times this evening that this bill is such a bad bill, and it's been repeated many times. Maybe if we say it about 20 more times, they might possibly hear us. I'm saying on record that this bill is not a good bill. Whatever way we paint this bill, with housing - whatever way we want to look at it, it's not going to do what its intended purpose is by this government because there's nothing in it that says it's going to do that.

We heard from community councillors and constituents of HRM, all of whom feel like this is such an overreach. The minister already has ministerial power to fast-track housing by the previous Bill No. 225. I thought that was the intention when that bill came forward. Clearly, he needs to power up, which makes me wonder why this minister would need all power to possibly have HRM marked as a special planning area.

I just want to say that because it was mentioned earlier today. I know we go through the bill line by line, but that was something that stood out. It's really scary when you think that the minister will have all the power to be able to make all the decisions without consulting anyone. They could consult their own people, but not consulting anyone who has any say in the municipality, and as well assign all of HRM as a special planning area. That is very scary. I have said this before in our previous conversation, but I'll carry on with my notes.

There was no answer from the minister when questioned about these intentions, which also is very troublesome. Typically, when something is presented to us, we have to question it because that's our role here. It should be everybody's role to question why things are happening and maybe get some clarity. We still have no clarity on what the intention of this minister is to put forward a bill of this magnitude.

The data in the minister's own needs assessment report and the glossy *Our Homes, Action for Housing: The Five-Year Action Plan* tells us how horrible this housing crisis is, as if we didn't have an idea of what was happening on the ground, especially in our constituency offices. It was telling. It's telling by the community input why we need a strategy for housing. We got a lot of information, but typically in a report like that you get

recommendations. There were none - absolutely no recommendations to state exactly what we need to be doing to move forward to build and to have affordable housing in particular in this province.

The timeline was vague - five years, no start, additional information - so excuse me if my colleagues and I don't support this bill as we talk about the magnitude of this crisis. We can't just talk about this crisis as if it's on a wing and a prayer. We can just hope that this will happen - just believe in us, trust us. You tell us to trust you, but you don't speak to the people who are doing the work and who are on the ground, and you don't even give them a heads-up of a change in the legislation that can impact the work they do.

We can't go on that. There are no details, no plans, and no open conversation with the stakeholders. Timelines - there are none - work for not just us but for everyone. It's interesting that we've already established that there is no plan. In the booklet we received - amongst the information received - there was no plan to build housing, at least not one we can see. The minister hasn't explained it clearly enough to quite grasp why there is a need for absolute power, as it will not build more housing, let alone affordable housing for folks.

This takes me to my next point: transparency and listening, words this government use so interchangeably. On one note, they're the most transparent and open government, yet they don't disclose information that truly would make them open and transparent. They have no plans, no collaboration, and no communication, all of which are key to being leaders and ministers of this province.

I'm very concerned that, with no consultation with the municipality - not a call, a text, or even a coffee to prepare folks for this major change to the HRM Charter - this is an autocratic and undemocratic way to put forward a piece of legislation, without speaking to those whom it will affect the most.

A year ago, we were reminded in the Law Amendments Committee about a similar overreach without consultation, and once again, with not even a courtesy call. It was Bill No. 225. We were wondering: Why is this government repeating the acrimonious debacle of Bill No. 225, which was another example of poorly written legislation?

Giving the minister unusual power, again and the same, in the name of aiming to speed up housing builds in Halifax - I don't know about anyone else in here, but we hear this many times when we talk about housing. On one note we hear: We can't build it as fast because we don't have supply, we don't have the labour, and interest rates are high.

Yet for some strange reason, this government seems to believe they're able to build housing with all those factors still in play and build it faster. I don't understand how that works. Clarity would be welcome. To this day, we have no numbers of any new builds and no new housing - just announcements, words, and glossy documents.

I'm going to take you back to Bill No. 225, when the mayor was here in the Law Amendments Committee. These are probably the exact words that were said in the Law Amendments Committee this time around: "Bill No. 225 is a direct intrusion into municipal affairs ... it happened without any consultation with us." I think those of us who were sitting in the Law Amendments Committee are probably thinking, Wow, is that from this Law Amendments Committee?

Indeed, this bill was introduced without notice, in direct contravention of the provisions in the Charter that require notice. To call it concerning would be an understatement.

This was a year ago: "Developers and builders are doing their very best but are struggling to find trades and unskilled labour, they are faced with increased labour rates and have encountered costly supply-chain disruptions."

In short, the fundamentals have changed. This was a year ago, yet we heard in this sitting that these are the same exact things that are causing a slow build for our housing right now. We heard from the municipality that they have a ton of plans already in place, they have several things that have been passed, and they have several builds waiting to go but they all face that same problem.

I'm just going to go into another piece of Law Amendments, and this says - from municipal Councillor Pam Lovelace - she said, "I would have preferred if HRM council had the opportunity to work constructively with the provincial government in writing amendments to the Halifax Charter, rather than this voluntold approach, which is feeling old and tired. It wasn't that long ago I was sitting here in this chair, explaining to you all while Bill No. 225 was inappropriate and out of line." It also says, "As you know, HRM has over 11,000 units currently under construction, and another 200,000 units ready on developable land."

They're all being under the guidance of the Regional Plan, the Centre Plan, the Municipal Planning Strategy, the Integrated Mobile Plan - I think you get the gist of it, right? There are a lot of things, a lot of moving parts, a lot of people doing work to make sure that things are done right. I said this the last time: If you have someone doing your homework, you shouldn't fire the people who are doing your homework. You shouldn't make them mad. The homework might not be what you want when you want it later. When we think about people who are doing this work, we can't disregard the fact that they're doing this work, and we can't not include them, especially when it's in the charter that says so.

I'm also going to read a message from a constituent that said:

"I'm deeply concerned by HRM's reactions to the proposed housing bill tabled by your government, which I've been reading about in the news.

Fellow citizens like myself put time and effort into considering and giving feedback to the Centre Plan, and I'm upset about the concerns that mayor and council are raising about their ability to approve developments based on the democratic processes approved in the Centre Plan and in other planning processes. This bill may affect the municipality's ability to leverage funds for affordable housing. Please respect the hard work done by HRM, its planning staff, its elected officials, and its citizens envisioning how we want Halifax to grow now and into the future."

This is from a constituent who has put their time and effort into all of these plans that have been put forward, and here we go. We're going to give the minister carte blanche to do whatever it is that that might be.

I'm just going to go into another major point that has been bothering me. I know that we've talked about this in this House, and I actually asked the question to the minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs, who ensured me that there was going to be an equity framework put forward this week. My concern right now is that when we were putting forward this bill, there were no amendments, other than our amendment and the Liberal amendment that spoke to the African Nova Scotian communities and consulting with African Nova Scotian communities.

I'm concerned that here we have the bill as is, untouched - excuse me, there was an amendment, the minister did mention that earlier, that was accepted - but literally no talk, no discussion, no implementation of a few words to specify that African Nova Scotian communities would be consulted in any of the decision-making, any of the planning, any of the land situations that may be going on that this minister might be able to do, and that they would have a say over. I'm very concerned about that, because that is a really big issue when it comes down to making sure that our legislation is equitable and fair for all Nova Scotians.

It brings me to my next point. Not only will this bill cut out expertise in HRM from the development process, it also removes any possibility for the community involvement in this process. Two years ago, in consideration of the executive plan on the housing bill, one presenter warned, wisely, that people should have the right to shape the future of their community. The field of planning has an ugly history, and I talked about that before, about how systemic racism can rear its ugly head. It has an ugly history of wielding its power to disenfranchise traditionally marginalized groups - actions that this city is still healing from today.

Given this city's history, we have heard specific concerns from the African Nova Scotian community about the complete lack of community consultation that this bill - Bill No. 329 - is proposing. Last week, we raised this issue to government, urging them to slow down and consider the kinds of impacts this bill could have. I urged this government to

slow down at Law Amendments Committee. I actually said: "Take it back to the department, talk about it." Motion denied. We brought up some wonderful amendments here in this House, similarly on both sides, and guess what? Denied, denied.

[7:00 p.m.]

If we are talking about how we include everyone and how every community is going to be consulted and talked about but yet we're not going to let people know and be transparent about it, how do we know for a fact that it's going to be done? Guess what? Legislate it.

Last week, as I said, I raised this issue and urged this government to slow down because these impacts could have some detrimental ramifications to these communities. We introduced an amendment that would have required the minister to consult with marginalized communities, African Nova Scotian communities, and Mi'kmaw communities before exercising powers under this new bill.

It was discouraging and it was not surprising - because as we know you are the majority government, and typically you don't vote against - that not a single government member voted in support of this.

In the creation of this bill, the government hasn't even consulted with its own Department of African Nova Scotian Affairs. One of the key responsibilities of this department is to make sure government is aware of issues needed to support the lived experiences of African Nova Scotian communities. However, when asked about concerns with how this bill could impact an African Nova Scotian community, the minister of that department said it was the first that she had heard of this issue and that she wasn't sure that it's that big an issue.

I'm putting it out there. I'm letting it be known on the third time I've spoken about this, that it's a huge issue. It's an issue that has been approached by all of our constituencies and I'm pretty sure your own as well, that communities are worried that this nullifies and this will override the consultation that is supposed to be done by this government with African Nova Scotian communities and Mi'kmaw communities. To say it's troublesome is a small word - I just can't say those large words in here - but I want to say that I'm very scared because I can't hold this government to account if we don't have the legislation to show that it's in law.

The minister could be doing it and they could be building in - and I don't want to say the area - but they could be building in an African Nova Scotian area, overriding all those processes that need to happen, overriding the consultation because it says in the legislation that the minister doesn't need to consult with anyone or even talk to anyone. They can make their own decision, whatever they decide to do, and they start building

those communities and guess what happens? Once that land is taken over by a developer, it's out of the community's hands. That is very scary.

I know that each and every one of us, if not all of us, have an African Nova Scotian community near and dear to their constituency and if you haven't heard, their communities are getting smaller because land is being expropriated. They are getting smaller because there is gentrification. They are getting smaller because they are being pushed out of the community because they can't afford to live there because there's no affordable housing.

When I say that we need to be concerned, we need to be concerned and we need to listen to the experts who are saying, Hold up, let's take a minute, let's talk about this. I could talk about how at the end of the day this was a complete override. You didn't even talk to the municipality about this. Really, you should have at least consulted them.

The fact that you wouldn't consult the municipality - what makes me think that you're going to consult an African Nova Scotian community? It's really slim. So when the government says, Trust us and we're going to talk and we're going to communicate later and we'll have all these conversations later, this is the time to have the conversations. These are the times to make the changes. These are the times to put it in law so that all of us are assured that you are going to do the right thing. We can't just assume that you are going to do the right thing when you don't show us that you are going to do that.

I am speaking from my own experience but as well, from what I've heard from a number of communities. I think we need to stop with this shoving stuff down people's throats and making people swallow this information in one day or two days or three days or maybe a week, without any input, without any consideration of the impacts that this might have on municipalities, on communities, on people in Nova Scotia.

I just wanted to put that out there because we know this bill is going to pass. We know that this government is going to say yes to their wonderful, piecemeal bill. We all know - I mean it would be different if you had only one person opposed and like, oh, you know what, maybe they just don't really like that. But you have so many people who are saying, You know what, this is not a good idea, this isn't great.

We should be putting forward bills that are substantial, that are going to be doing the right things for all Nova Scotians, not, Oh, we'll do some for over here, and then we'll communicate it later, possibly, and then we'll get over here.

That's not how things work. If it's not for all Nova Scotians and it doesn't fit that, then it can't happen. We have to start thinking about what these bills are doing to affect these communities.

I spoke about the letter that DPAD wrote last year, but I also want to put forward another thing, because they're not my words, and I said this. They said that without

safeguards within the bill in place to protect the historic African Nova Scotian communities in HRM, this could be disastrous. If this bill passes as currently proposed, it will allow the further gentrification and possible erasure of our historic African Nova Scotian Black communities within HRM.

So they proposed safeguards: mandatory consultation within the African Nova Scotian communities; an advisory board of African Nova Scotian members; application for deeds for development proposed in all historical African Nova Scotian communities.

Guess what? None of these were in the bill. None of these. Not even one. You had this for a whole year, and again this year. Not one piece, which for me - I've been here for a minute, and I'm not quite surprised, but I'm actually disappointed. Here we are as a government that speaks about equity and equality and diversity and inclusion, and yet we hear once again - if I have to stand up, there's a reason why I'm standing up, right? Once again, we hear none of the above. Then when we hear a vote, crickets. I'm actually really concerned that we wouldn't even consider an amendment, or consider - even just saying, You know what, I'm going to take it back and take a look at it. Maybe we can kind of insert it here, maybe change the wording a bit.

Let's talk about that. Let's talk about that. Communication. Talk about it. Guess what? Nothing. Nothing.

I'm not going to go into my big thing about racism and all that stuff, because I told you enough. If you don't know it, go back to Hansard and re-listen. Listen to it over and over again, because I'm telling you, we have to break this cycle. This cycle in here is so stiff. I don't understand why people in these seats don't realize how important it is to recognize all cultures, to be embracing and accepting and inclusive. We can't say words and not act on that word. We can't say, This is what we're doing, and we appreciate you, and we're all about that, and in another vein, you say, We're going to override everything you say, because we're going to give you all powers so that you can be - anyway, all powers.

I have to say, in closing: the PC government's heavy-handed legislation provides omnipotent powers to the minister while leaving targeted communities with little discretion to act. This circumstance is all the more deleterious in communities that have been victims of historical discrimination. I could have thought that every Nova Scotian would have learned a valuable lesson from the disgraceful disenfranchisement of Africville, but I want to say - and I know that my caucus stands with me - that we stand with HRM Council's unequivocal denunciation of this hideous legislation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: Speaker, I do want to thank our colleague for Halifax Needham. That's an important voice we are hearing from here in this Chamber, and I would encourage the government to listen better.

I'd like to begin by saying that I think this piece of legislation will be a case study in academia on exactly what not to do. I think we have heard from my colleagues on this side of the House - we've heard from HRM - that this has to be one of the worst pieces of legislation that has passed through this House, through this Legislature, in its 204 years.

I want to talk, as I spoke last time, about process and accountability and the intent and the legal issues that I think are important to consider. What I haven't spoken on, and sometimes we get, I think, a bit lost in a large piece of legislation - we don't actually look at the elements of this.

As you look through the summaries of the clauses, it becomes extremely clear that this bill did not originate because of a housing crisis. It didn't originate from a housing strategy. I don't believe it even originated from a vision of a housing minister or any of his staff. When you look at the clauses in this bill, it is clear that it comes from the perspective of a handful of developers. I think it becomes even clearer when you try to match the bill to the words of the minister - and my colleague from Bedford South pointed this out, he stole my show - but there is a complete disconnect between the words of the minister and what this bill actually says.

The minister has justified this bill - that we have a housing crisis and I will only rarely use the tools in this bill, and after it has gone through municipal planning - we are not trying to up-hand them the Land Use By-law - it will be rarely used. That's not what the bill says. Clause 15 allows the minister to amend or repeal Land Use By-laws, Subdivision By-laws, and municipal planning strategies in special planning areas without the recommendation of the Executive Panel on Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Clause 14 allows the minister to make an order designating any or all of the municipality as a special planning area. Doing that would contradict the Halifax Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use By-law. The minister may exercise the minister's power without any consultation or recommendation or request. That is what the law says. That is not what the minister is saying. When we are writing laws, we are not writing laws for one minister. A cabinet shuffle could remove a minister tomorrow. Any verbal assurances by the minister are inconsequential. It's what is in the law.

There are a couple of other clauses in here that are troubling and point to, clearly, the perspective of what developers would like to see and how they would like to get around the laws of the land. Clause 11 requires the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board to award costs against the municipality when a decision of a development officer to refuse a variance in respect of a setback or street wall is overturned by appeal. Is that what we need to create more housing? Awarding costs to a developer?

[7:15 p.m.]

Clause 7 removes the ability of council to require a larger notification distance for the site plan approvals. Similar to that, Clause 9, which I spoke of during Committee of the Whole House on Bills, allows a decision to reject a variance to be appealed by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. Sorry, Clause 9 removes the ability to designate distances of greater than 30 metres where a notice of variance is requested.

These two clauses have nothing to do with housing, have nothing to do with LUBs. What these clauses are doing is removing the right for a council to say, gee, we've got a building, it's 12 storeys high, maybe we should let more than the neighbouring two properties on either side that are within 100 feet - maybe we should let the whole neighbourhood know that this is happening, that this building may cast shade on your solar panels. This bill is taking away councillors' ability to do their job as democratically elected officials. Why is that clause in there? It's got nothing to do with housing.

I'll leave it at that but there's another kernel in here that we've missed through this whole debate. We have not heard the minister talk about this and why it is necessary. It leaves one to wonder what is going on. "Clause 3 allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to exclude healthcare facilities from the Parts of the Act related to planning and development and subdivision and from municipal planning strategies, land-use by-laws, development agreements, policies and subdivision by-laws."

That's a very specific clause to do with health care facilities. If you add Clause 22 - again, just an odd thing that no one has talked about. The minister has not shared any of this through the debate. "Clause 22 provides the amendments respecting healthcare facilities have retroactive effect to January 1, 2023." What is that about?

What health care facility? Again, it's easy to speculate. We've had a . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I'll just remind the member that you're speaking through the Chair.

The honourable member for Kings South.

KEITH IRVING: Thank you, Speaker. You're a good-looking gentleman.

What's going on with health care facilities? What we do know is that for two and a half years, nothing has happened. The minister will not reveal any kind of timeline. Yet we've got this, curiously, in the legislation. Have they run out of room for the building that they've suddenly decided to redesign and now want to unilaterally take over adjoining properties - perhaps public land, perhaps park land? I hope not, but that's where my mind goes when I read two very obscure and odd clauses in a bill about housing. We're talking about hospitals now, so something's up. I hope the minister can share it with us.

It's bills like this that are so open-ended - and I spoke about this at an earlier reading of the bill. People are concerned in the heritage community about this omnipotent power of the minister to tear down heritage properties. They're no longer protected. The minister can destroy the character of a neighbourhood and, as my colleague said, can impact negatively African Nova Scotian communities.

The fingerprints are on a few developers creating this, and something is going on in health care, which we're only left to speculate about. It's amazing that we are here in third reading and haven't heard a word about this.

I want to just review, and I'll try to be more concise than last time. Clearly, this process is an utter failure. We heard it from our elected officials in HRM. There is absolutely no excuse that the municipality did not talk with the mayor of the HRM, no excuse.

This is a housing crisis so does that mean we can't talk to anybody, to our colleagues at the municipal level? There is absolutely no excuse, it's a dereliction of duty. As I suggested and as I will come to later, I believe it is not legal, with respect to the HRM Charter.

It has been spoken about, other municipalities are concerned, are they next? Is the MGA the next one, in which the minister can then ignore agricultural land preservation in the minister's own riding where Kings County has worked since the 1970s to protect agricultural land, so there has been a complete undermining of trust.

What happens to the citizens, to our communities, to our neighbourhoods that have spent hours of passionate discussion about what they want their community to be? The minister can snuff that out with one stroke of the pen.

Accountability and corruption, my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, I think has outlined that argument very clearly. We are creating an uneven playing field, which I am sure every developer who is not involved in the creation of this legislation is concerned about.

Developers want certainty. As I said before, they don't want back doors for a few. Putting the minister in a position where there can be suspicions of corruption is not fair to the minister. As he expressed publicly, he has met with only a few developers. It's no longer an even playing field out there; it's only those developers who got their foot in the door with the minister.

If the minister wants to be fair with this legislation with these powers, he has to now meet with every developer and I don't think that's going to happen.

Again, and it has been stated in this House, there is nothing in this bill, there is nothing in the words of the minister that point to how this is going to address the issues - nothing, zilch. How many housing units are created by this bill? No evidence, no numbers, it's not part of a plan - we're going to create this over here, units there, we're going to get this barrier out of the way so we can create these many units here. There's no plan. There's a crude piece of legislation that gives the minister omnipotent power over half a million people, over every square inch of the HRM.

The barriers are financing. Why didn't this government come out with a financing plan? They did come out - I'll give them credit - they came out and followed the federal government - we'll talk about the FMA shortly - to remove the HST. That is something that can make financing easier for developers. That's how we are going to address the housing issues.

I'm just going to finish up with legal. When you read Clause 21, which says: "excludes this Act from the requirement to consult with the Municipality before making amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter." As I stated before, this one troubled me. I've been operating in the municipal and provincial level with respect to the MGA and the Halifax Charter, and government was always respectful of that clause, and in fact took the other clause that requires a year's notice in changing anything that impacts finances of a municipality. In the HRM Charter, Clause 382, requires the government to consult with HRM before making any changes.

It has been respected for years. I believe - my suspicions are that is not legal. As I shared with the House during one of the readings, because I didn't have a lawyer at the time, I consulted ChatGPT and asked them this question: If an Act of a provincial legislator creating a municipality has a clause that any changes by the Province to the Act must first have consultation with the municipality, can changes happen without consultation? That is in fact what Clause 21 is doing.

I shared with the House. However, in many legal systems, there are constitutional and legal principles that protect the rights and interests of municipalities. These may include provisions that require consultation or consent from the affected municipality before making significant changes to the municipality's governing Act. The intention behind such clauses is to ensure that municipalities have a say in the decisions that directly affect them. If the act of a provincial Legislature contains a clause stating that any changes to the act must first involve consultation with the municipality - that's our Clause 382 - then there is typically a legal obligation to adhere to that consultation requirement. Failure to consult with the municipality as specified in the Act could lead to legal challenges or other consequences.

I did end up getting in touch with a lawyer friend of mine and bounced off the thinking, and he agreed in the context of not having all of the information or all the arguments - we obviously weren't pleading a case in the courts yet - but he agreed with the

basic premise. You've written into an act that you can't change it without consulting, and then you go and do it. It would be another thing if you went back, consulted, and said: We're going to remove this clause, and then we're going to do whatever we want - but the minister failed to do that.

[7:30 p.m.]

My legal friend talked about this concept of retroactivity and suggested I read up and look up on that: Can you retroactively remove obligations of a bill? ChatGPT helped me out again. In Canada, the concept of retroactive legislation is generally disfavoured, as it goes against fundamental principles of fairness and the rule of law. Retroactive legislation has the potential to undermine individuals' rights, municipalities' rights, and expectations by imposing new obligations or removing existing ones with retrospective effect.

The principle against retroactivity is rooted in the idea that the individuals, I'm going to say municipalities, should be able to rely on the law as it exists at the time they engage in activities or transactions.

Changing the law after the fact can create uncertainty and unfairness. Courts in Canada will generally strive to interpret legislation in a manner consistent with the rule of law, which includes avoiding retroactive application unless the legislation clearly and unequivocally states otherwise.

Again, this is not a legal opinion, but a very logical opinion based on laws, constitutional rights, and fundamental principles of fairness. This bill fails that test. I'll conclude with that. This is one of the worst pieces of legislation, I would contend, to ever be presented in the 204 years of this Legislature.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I wasn't going to stand up and speak, but since I'm here on my wife's birthday, I figured I'd channel some of that anger. Let's have some conversation.

I'm not going to speak long, but I've been a little frustrated with some of this stuff, and about the debate and conversation around this bill, and around what's happening and what's not going to happen.

Some of the things I've heard on this have been things like: We need to consult; we need to listen; we need to pause; we need to stop - all these different things. I would argue that the people who are saying that have never been homeless. The people who are saying that have never been without a house. The people who say these things have a roof over their heads.

Every morning that I come in and drive to work, I go up Quinpool Road and through the Rotary, I see three or four tent encampments. Every day, we're inundated with people who are looking for housing. It's been going on for quite some time. To stop and say we have to pause, we have to think about things, and we have to go through it - well that's complete BS, because people are tired of having people say we need to pause, we need to have another design, we need to have these other things . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I'd ask the member to retract the term BS.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry, I retract that BS - big sandwich. I just know we've got to figure this out. We've got to stop pointing fingers. Yes, we must work together. I just use my own community as examples, where the layout of some of the housing in the area is a complete and utter disaster. There's no affordable housing being built.

Thousands of homes are being built in my community at \$750,000 a pop. Who can afford that? It's frustrating to hear people who claim to be experts - just because a couple thousand people voted for them - say that we have to stop, we have to listen, and we have to do these things. The truth is that we've got to build. If HRM, the province, and the feds can't get in a room to build, and can't get this stuff together and do it right, then somebody's got to step up and do it.

I will say it again and again. I don't know who is listening or not listening, who likes to hear it or not. The people who are homeless, the people who are without, don't care about your political stripe. How many in this Chamber have actually gone out to the Sackville ball field and talked to those people? One? Two? How many people have gone to the tent encampment off of Quinpool Road? How many people have gone through some of the precarious housing that people are living in? Very few people in this Chamber have. They can say they have and say they haven't, but the truth is that when you go and talk to those people, when you go and ask those people what they need, they say "housing." They don't say "Liberal housing." They don't say "Conservative housing." They don't say "NDP housing." They don't say "HRM housing." They don't say "federal housing." They say "housing." That's what they say.

We're in here at 7:30 at night debating this when it's going to be below zero tonight. If you've ever lived without, it doesn't go away.

You know, I stood in this Chamber the other day, and thanked my wife for everything she does and says for me, but one of the things she always tries to do for me is centre me. I have this because sometimes, as you know, Speaker, the way you grow up and the things you've gone through in your life impact you. I think if things didn't come easy for some people, or if people had to fight to find a safe place, if people had to sleep in an apartment lobby once in a while or in a large industrial garbage can - if people had to experience those things, then maybe they'd be a little more apt to say, "Let's get this stuff done."

Taxing empty lots is one of the suggestions we've heard here. That's not going to work. It's not going to work because when you talk to developers, what do they say? Tax away. Who's going to pay for the tax? Who's going to pay the extra money? It's going to be transferred down to the people who are purchasing and renting. That's what's going to happen.

Yes, we have to work with our non-profits, and yes, we have to work with the different levels of government on this stuff. Everybody has a buy-in on this, and everybody should have a buy-in on this. Speaker, you have a great advantage over everybody in this Chamber because you get to sit there and listen to the debate. You're paying attention. You have to pay attention - unfortunately, sometimes. I've had that position, and I've had to listen to it. Sometimes it just feels like Groundhog Day, right? It seems like when you have people say: We need to slow down but we need to build, we need to consult but we don't need to consult, we need to do this but we don't need to do that.

I was just informed by another member that B.C. just passed a whole bunch of legislation that essentially got rid of public consultation on housing. I don't know if that's a Progressive Conservative government or a Liberal government or an NDP government. I've been an MLA for 10 years. I've had the privilege to hold this position for 10 years. I've been to multiple consultations. I've been to multiple planning. I've been to multiple everything under the sun on housing. I would like to see the percentage of those plans, and that consultation that was actually implemented. It sounds good when you're in the meeting, but the same thing always comes up: Not in my backyard. You're not building above four floors in my backyard. You're not building tiny homes in my backyard.

I know the question has been thrown at the minister - I don't know if he was the Minister of Community Services or the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing - time and time again about the Pallet homes about where they're going to be built. The one thing that no one is talking about is - I guarantee you - there is going to be pushback, no matter where you build them.

A lot of the same people who push back will be the same people who will run online and say, We need to do something about housing, we need to do it now. Don't build a Pallet house in my - Listen, I don't have a big backyard, but if you want to slap two or three of them in my backyard, go ahead because I would rather see people housed than not housed.

Here we are debating something that should be a basic human right. We're debating on who's responsible. We're debating on how to get it done. There's an easy way to get this stuff done, and it's to build. I've talked to many people who, over the years, depending on what level of government they were dealing with, have had developments stopped or frozen for years at a time.

We like to throw the word “crisis” around a lot. We’re in an education crisis. We’re in a health care crisis. We’re in an environmental crisis. We’re in a road building crisis. We’re in all these different crises. Some of it’s real, some of it’s not, right? We throw that word around a lot, but we are in a housing crisis.

I would argue with you, Speaker, that it doesn’t matter any more whose fault it is. We are in it, we need to fix it, and we need to get it done now. I think the adults have to get into a room and figure this out. Homelessness has exploded. Affordability - people want to move to Nova Scotia now. The cost of housing has exploded. Now, I live in a beautiful community with literally walking access to an elementary school and to a junior high school. I have an ocean within walking distance, a lake within walking distance. I am very privileged to live where I live. I am.

When we first started looking at homes in that community of Herring Cove - \$150,000, \$160,000, \$170,000 for a family home. I’m not talking about a small home. We’re talking about family homes. I don’t even know if you could build - I don’t think you could even buy a small mobile trailer at this point for that much money.

I will wrap up by saying part of the solution to this is tiny homes. Part of the solution to this is Pallet homes. Part of the solution to this is public housing. Part of the solution to this is allowing developers to develop. It’s this thing where we talk about how “development” is a bad word. I don’t know any developers, okay? I might know one in passing or whatever, but I always use the example of government versus non-government building. This is the example I use, and I used it tonight with another MLA. I talked about a left-turning lane that was going into a park, that needed to be built to give access to this park. The individual who was building had gotten permits to build this park for the community - a wonderful thing he did for the community, but they needed a left-turning lane on that highway.

He came to me and said, Hey, I’ll build it so the people can have safe access to this park. I said fine, let’s see what we can do. He went to the private sector - he owned his own business - and he went out to his contractors, and he was quoted something like \$70,000 at the time. That shows you how long ago it was. Then he went to the government department and said, Okay, I’m going to do this. They said, Yes, sure, we’ll send you a bill when we build it. He said, How much is the bill? They said \$300,000. He said, Holy smokes, how is it \$230,000 more expensive? They said, Well, you’re probably not using the same people that we are, and we have to use them. It has to be up to code. You have to do this.

He brought his proposal in - the exact same companies, exact same proposal, exact same everything. That’s part of the reason we need to have developers as part of this. They know how to spend, and they know where to spend.

In closing, we must stop acting like this isn’t about people. People are cold right now. People are hungry right now. People are unsafe right now. People are living in tents

right now. If we continue to sit here and debate - let's look at another plan, let's look at this, let's slow it down - some of those people are going to die. Some of those people are going to be assaulted. Some of those people are going to end up in our correctional facilities and in our hospitals. Enough of the debate about making sure it's done like this and not like this. We have been doing it that way forever and look where we're at.

[7:45 p.m.]

Now's the time. I hope we can get back to the table as we're continuing down this road. I do think our municipal partners are extremely important. I do think our federal partners are extremely important. We're going to need their resources. We're going to need access to all kinds of different things they provide. At this point, I challenge each of you; When you leave this Chamber tonight, follow me to the tents off Quinpool Road by the Roundabout and ask them if they care what level of government you are or what political stripe you are.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Everyone has spoken so well on this bill, so strongly, and the last member for Halifax Atlantic - the MLA is right. This is about people. This is about people's lives, and there is an urgency to develop more housing and to get housing built. I have heard the minister responsible for this bill say that.

I do agree with the government's desire to build more housing faster. However, I do share some of the concerns with this bill that other people have shared.

As the member for Halifax Atlantic has said, this is about people. I think it's being felt all over the province. In Cumberland North, we have a great blessing of incredibly caring community-minded people who came together last year and made sure there was a shelter available for people who were homeless. That is continuing this year, but not everyone is comfortable going to a shelter.

Just last weekend - it was probably the highlight of the last few months - I met with a couple of people who were able to convince someone who has been homeless - very visibly in our community and unwilling to go to the shelter because of trust - they were able to convince him to go to their home. They're taking care of him. It just inspired me. It's so encouraging to know there are still people who care so deeply. Ultimately, this person needs a home, and they met with me Saturday night at Tim Hortons to say, What now? What next? What steps will be next?

Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of housing available in the Town of Amherst. I just wanted to bring that up.

Also, I recently attended my daughter's graduation in CBRM and spoke to a nurse there - a new nurse - and said, Tell me what it's like for you.

She said, Well, most of my patients on the medical-surgical ward are homeless. They need housing. The reason they're coming to the hospital is because of infections, and they're sick because they're out in the cold.

I will speak to the bill. I just wanted to share those stories - real stories about real people who do need to get in housing.

I do support the government's desire to build more housing faster. However, I do believe it can be done better, and in collaboration with our municipal leaders.

When I spoke to this bill in Committee of the Whole House on Bills, I did share some of the concerns that were shared by Mayor Savage. He is a man whom I respect, and I believe many people do. He's led this city well, and to see him feel so disrespected was disheartening.

I guess I have a unique position here in this House as an Independent, but I really get to see how people treat individuals when they don't really have to be treated well. I think that's how I see the HRM municipal government feeling right now, is that, yes, this government has the majority. They have the ability to do exactly what they're doing, but should they? But they're doing it because they can. It's not necessarily the right thing.

Hearing my colleague from Halifax Needham speak about the concerns of the communities, the African Nova Scotian communities specifically - very real concerns. These are people who have been promised to be consulted and to be listened to, and we've made that effort here in this House over the last few years, even more so. But we don't see that being respected in this bill, and I'm so proud of my colleague for being - making sure that their voices are heard in this House.

I support the idea of building more housing faster. However, I don't support the bill and the content of the bill, Speaker, because it is - the content of the bill is being very disrespectful. It's not working collaboratively with municipal colleagues, with municipal partners.

Ultimately, when people are treated poorly and disrespectfully, it really - it takes a long time to build relationships back once they've been damaged. A better approach is to listen, learn from each other, talk, and even if you disagree, have those conversations and try to work together and build relationships.

I appreciate what the member from Halifax Atlantic said, but I believe we can have both. I believe we can make sure that the people - especially people who are living unsheltered in HRM, in CBRM, in the Town of Amherst - all the people who are living

unsheltered - they can be put first. It's kind of like as a nurse, you always make sure your patient and the family are at the centre of all your decisions. Or at least they should be.

That is what we can be thinking about here. Is this putting the people first? Especially those who are most vulnerable, those who are in need. If the answer is yes, then what is the best methodology? What is the best way to accomplish what we're trying to achieve? And I do believe the best way is to do it through consultation, to listen to the partners, and to work in collaboration with our municipal leaders.

I know that that may sound idealistic, and certainly it's probably easier to just railroad things through. I don't know if I can use the word "bully," or "intimidate," or "lead from a place of fear." Like if you don't listen and do what we want . . . (Interruption)

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. I'd ask the member to retract the word "bully," please. It's unparliamentary.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Thank you, Speaker, and certainly I will retract the word "bully." Maybe I can replace that with "tactics that maybe are unbecoming." Tactics that are not helpful in building strong, healthy relationships, and that often lead people to do what you want them to out of fear, versus because you had a trusting relationship with that person.

I do believe that we can build more housing faster, and I believe it can be done in collaboration with willing municipal partners. My last couple of comments I will say is that I would love to see more from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing specific to our youth. We have so many young people, both here in HRM but also throughout all of Nova Scotia, who are living with their parents and grandparents because they simply cannot afford to buy their own home. I encourage the minister to look at innovative ways to maybe offer low-interest down payment loans that would really help people to be able to buy a home and also look at other measures, things like helping people to afford to be able to Winterize cottages so that they may be available.

Certainly in my area of the province, we have thousands of cottages along the Northumberland Shore, but most are not Winterized and therefore cannot be used to house people 12 months of the year. If there were some incentives to help people - and I know there was the granny suite, there was some funding there - but we have a huge opportunity with the opportunity of cottages that could be Winterized. Anyway, I have a lot of constituents and my advisory team - housing comes up a lot and they share a lot of ideas with me. Has the government thought of these different ideas? Certainly, I will be sharing some of those more in writing with the minister. With those few comments, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HON. STEVE CRAIG: I thank the members for all their thoughtful comments during this debate, whether it be in Law Amendments, whether it be the Committee of the Whole House on Bills, and now in third reading.

I want to thank the people, too, who are looking at this and the member for Halifax Atlantic touched on, and I agree with, those who are challenged in finding housing, those who find themselves homeless, those in economic situations or domestic situations who are having difficulty, the low vacancy rates that we are experiencing, and the high cost of affordable housing.

It was mentioned about the Cobequid ball field. It is heartening to see the way the community has come to support that group. There is a Facebook group called The Gated Community - Cobequid Ballfield - close to 5,000 people. This group of citizens is doing a lot of work to support those who are there to try to get them into housing. I just wanted to mention that before I get into my remarks because we are all concerned about housing. We are all concerned about homelessness and my involvement has been for well over a decade in this particular area.

I just want to mention a few things in the less than four hours I have to speak on the topic. It is no secret that rapidly increasing the supply of housing available to Nova Scotians is a priority of this government. These changes in this Bill No. 329 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended) and Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act (amended) - these changes will increase density, speed up development approval processes, and ensure that housing remains a priority for HRM, which it always has been. For as long as I've been around, housing has been one of the key tenets of HRM, its council, and its bureaucracy. We have an unprecedented housing problem and some of the provisions in these Acts are, indeed, outdated. It is incumbent on all to do whatever we can to address the housing crisis and make it easier to build homes faster - to provide homes and housing for people faster.

There is also an urgent need for long-term care beds. Land use bylaws set out what can be built on a particular parcel of land. Amending the way that land can be used requires decisions of council and zoning changes that can increase the amount of time - and I will speak to that later - that it will take to get these facilities built. Providing thoughtful, reasoned exemptions for these facilities will get shovels in the ground faster. Providing stability and fees associated with development will allow developers to plan more effectively while still requiring them to make necessary contributions to critical infrastructure. There is no removal of fees in this legislation.

We have an unprecedented housing problem in Nova Scotia, and we need to take bold actions to address it. The changes will give HRM council the ability to approve a development agreement in principle, meaning that they can agree with the overarching

principles of a proposed development but allow the technical aspects of that to be carried out by the CAO and the CAO's staff.

[8:00 p.m.]

These changes are intended to help expedite the development process and provide additional stability. Communities will continue to have an opportunity to provide input into development plans and the municipal planning process. Right now, there's a regional plan renewal going on, looking for an update to feed into that plan.

The trusted partner program for qualified developers, but what are the qualifications? Who decides if a developer is qualified? Those decisions will be determined through bylaws by HRM. They're working on this now. Work will continue in regulations and consultations with partners at all levels of government.

There are many different frames of reference. Many things have been discussed. Depending on your frame of reference, the bill is either unnecessary, overreaching, or needed. From my frame of reference, and I've heard many, many members in this Chamber talk about their frames of reference over the last number of weeks, so let me tell you mine, as a resident of Lower Sackville.

Lower Sackville was the fastest-growing community in all of Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was through the Sackville Land Assembly Act by the province for affordable housing, similar to what the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth mentioned in Cole Harbour. This was all before the creation of the Halifax Regional Municipality in 1996.

I am a former Halifax Regional Municipality councillor and deputy mayor. I was chair of the Northwest Community Council, a member of the Audit and Finance Standing Committee, and a member of the Community Planning and Economic Development Committee. I chaired the Police Commission. Since 2019, I have been a member of this Legislature, and in 2021 I was a member and am a member of this government, this Progressive Conservative government. I have served as a minister and I understand the responsibilities that come with being a minister and being a member of the Executive Council of Nova Scotia, the Cabinet.

When I was the housing and community services critic, while a member of the PC Official Opposition, my portfolio allowed me to explore more of my interests that had developed before being on regional council and since. What I can tell you is this: In my opinion, all elected officials are concerned about housing - all housing, the complete spectrum, from those who are not housed - the homeless - to those in shelters, to those who are in co-operatives, to those who are in public housing, home ownership, condo ownership, rentals, through all of it. If we were to do a recorded vote in this Chamber, I can guarantee you that every person would say yes to that statement.

I believe this legislation is necessary to provide role clarity, responsibility, and authorities to address the serious issue of housing. In 2019, as Housing and Community Services critic, I met with the former leader of the Official Opposition - now Premier. We talked about housing. In the end, the direction was clear: Nova Scotia needs more housing, more affordable housing. That is what is happening across the whole spectrum and across all of Nova Scotia. This government is taking action to work with all orders of government.

I've known Mayor Savage a long time, served with him a long time. For as long as I've known him, he's said - he continues to say this to this day - and I'll paraphrase: The feds have the money, the Province has the jurisdiction, and the cities have the problem. That's as true as when he first said it and I first heard as it is today.

When it comes to housing and homelessness, this is very evident. We all need to be at the table, very often at the same time. We need to understand each other's roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities, and how from time to time that needs to evolve and change to meet the current circumstances in the current environment.

HRM is a child of the Province. When HRM came into being on April 1, 1996, there were 24 councillors. In 2012, the number was reduced to 16. I was one of those 16, along with the member for Sackville-Uniacke and the member for Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. I don't know if you know this or not, but Council has only two employees: the CAO and the Auditor General. There is no minister of a department. There is no secretary of a department. They have more of a governance role. In fact, the mayor only has one vote, the same as the other Council members. No special authority. Elected at large - writ large - by all of the municipality, he really has one vote - the same vote, rights, and privileges as the other 16 members of Council. Imagine governing and getting things done in that environment.

Provincially, we do have an Executive Council with ministers over various departments. We have, at this order of government, direct control, arguably, over the departments and the bureaucracy. Council does not have that. There is a minister responsible for housing, and in this government's mandate, they also have responsibility for the municipalities.

Under the Premier, this minister has the mandate to work with the Housing Commission - you now know it as the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency - to implement recommendations of the 2021 Affordable Housing Report, develop a full inventory of lands owned and identify areas that could be used for housing, immediately determine best uses of those lands, and consider where land is available and where there is need for housing stock, both affordable and for general residential purchases.

In two years as critic, housing, was not a provincial priority, in my opinion. In a short two years under a Liberal government, housing was moved to a couple departments, and there were three different ministers. Under this administration, housing and

homelessness certainly are priorities and have a home and a stable organization under this minister. There is now delegation but not abdication. We are taking responsibility and working with many complexities including intergovernmental co-operation, collaboration, and yes, communication concerning housing.

Some people embrace change, and others find it tough when they know they're doing the best they can and they feel that they are not being understood or supported. I understand and accept that. As a councillor, I certainly felt that the provincial government wasn't supportive. They weren't reactive, they were slow, they were lethargic, and just simply didn't pay attention. I've got to tell you this government is paying attention.

This bill is just one of many actions necessary to address housing and homelessness in HRM through clear roles and responsibilities across many situations that may occur. The decision-making process and decision-makers are being known and are not shirking the responsibility to the people of Nova Scotia.

Yes, the province has the jurisdiction. It has the authority, which is delegated in certain areas to the HRM through - you may not know this, Speaker - provincial statements of interest.

Statements of provincial interest are adopted by the Province to identify the government's interest in the use and development of land. They cover areas such as drinking water, flood risk areas, agricultural land, infrastructure - infrastructure was talked about. Infrastructure does not get provided in isolation of housing. A plan has to support efficient use of municipal infrastructure by enabling the densification of areas where municipal water, sewer, and transit services exist - that's for the urban area - and accommodate up to 90 per cent of regional growth, urban and suburban areas, is what the regional plan for HRM says.

There are two more. One is housing, and the other is what we now know as the Nova Centre.

Under housing, the goal is to provide housing opportunities to meet the needs of all Nova Scotians. Provide adequate shelter - it's a fundamental requirement for all Nova Scotians. We need to do that.

The direction to all municipalities - in this particular case, the Charter - planning documents must include housing policies addressing affordable housing, special needs housing, and rental accommodation. This includes assessing the need of supply for these housing types and developing solutions appropriate to planning areas. The definition of the terms "affordable housing," "special needs housing," and "rental housing" is to be left to the individual municipality to define in the context of individual situations. There are more.

Planning documents - there's nothing at all in this legislation - in fact, you've got to take the bill in the context of the full Charter. There's nothing that says get rid of planning. There's nothing that says you don't have a planning strategy. There's nothing that says land-use bylaws are not required. There's nothing that says development agreements and subdivision bylaws are not necessary. In fact, more has to be done.

[8:15 p.m.]

The HRM is 27 years old, and I can tell you, as I'm sure the member for Sackville-Uniacke would say, 27 years - we've talked about putting together the land-use bylaws, updating them. As far as I know, that's still happening - 27 years. You have all kinds of by-laws out there that do not permit development of housing in a way suitable for today's needs.

Also, the decision-making process for non-as-of-right process was too long. Often, the secondary planning strategies were out of date. Land use bylaws were too many and out of date, and the focus was on the urban core. It was on the Centre Plan, which has been talked about.

What about Bedford? What about Sackville? What about Musquodoboit Harbour? What about these other areas when you don't have the people to do the work, and yet you have a Council who can't direct the work to be done? If you can speed up some of those things, that is a good thing that will ultimately result in good decisions.

Speaker, I'm not going to go to midnight. I know you won't allow me. I have all kinds of things I could say. I'd talk with anybody anytime about this. It's a passion of mine. We need to do it. I can tell you, the fact of the matter is that this government is taking action to get more homes built faster. We're cutting red tape and speeding up permits. We're building new public housing for the first time in 30 years. We're accelerating the growth in skilled trades. We're cutting the GST on new rental builds, and we're doing much, much more.

I would just like to conclude by saying that I do support this plan. I think it's the right thing to do. It is not a silver bullet, and you cannot have one silver bullet in the complexity of providing housing - not in HRM, nor the province, nor the region of Atlantic Canada, nor in Canada.

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

The honourable Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: First of all, I would like to thank my colleague the member for Sackville-Cobequid, who brings to this debate vast experience and institutional memory of many things with regard to HRM. I truly do appreciate his comments.

We are driven by an extraordinary time in Nova Scotia - a time of unparalleled growth, which we probably haven't seen in any of our lifetimes, really. We saw last year, for the first time in 102 years, our median age actually drop, which is incredibly important. We know that having more young people in the province means that we need more housing.

When we look at the Housing Needs Assessment that we had done for us, one of the things that told us was that if you divide the province up into different categories - like HRM, Western, Northern, Eastern and Central Zones - the reality is that each year we need 6,000-plus new homes in HRM, and approximately 600 new homes in each of those four regions I just mentioned. The need is 10 times greater in HRM. This is one of the things that drives us.

As a person who lives in the Western Zone, I realize that many of my neighbours, including myself, drive into Halifax to work every day. The Annapolis Valley has its own economy, that's for sure, but there are a lot of people who drive in. We know that's true coming out of the Truro area. We know that's true coming out of the South Shore and the Eastern Shore.

We know, in my opinion, that if we can solve the housing crisis in Halifax, we made a difference in Eastern Kings County, we made a difference in the Truro area, and we made a difference in the South Shore and the Eastern Shore. This drives us to action.

This knowledge that we're living in - and I believe we're all extraordinarily privileged to be living in a time of true growth in our province, and to be actually in government in a time of true growth in our province. But growth is hard. It means that everything has to happen at the same time. We need more roads. We need more sewers. We need more water. We need more health care. We need more homes. We need them all at the same time.

This is an immense challenge for us in government, but it's so much better to have that challenge than to have the challenge of decline, which we saw government after government deal with. We have a moment in time of true growth. This spurs us on to take these many actions in the HRM. We're aware that this true growth does not last forever. We're very aware - very conscious of the fact that there's a crisis of affordability for our young people. As the member for Halifax Needham so eloquently said, it is also about her communities, where young people can't even afford to buy homes in their own communities. We see that not only in our African Nova Scotian communities but right across the HRM. That concerns us. That's a huge concern.

I heard her comments, and I just want to make a couple of points. We have been a government of action on that front. In case you missed it, just two or three days ago we announced \$2 million for a community housing growth fund to support Black-led

community housing initiatives, which I hope will address some of these issues the member has raised.

Last year, we invested \$3.5 million in the Preston Area Association Housing for Cherrybrook, Lake Loon, North Preston, and East Preston. In the last year, we also - I think it is really a historic move for that community, which was one of the few communities without a long-term care facility. Through Akoma, we are investing in a long-term care facility in that area that will be culturally responsive to the African Nova Scotian community.

Furthermore, we are also funding an Akoma study on African Nova Scotian housing needs. So we are responding. In terms of this bill, we've said we'd put that into the regulations. As the member knows, last year we did make a special amendment in the bill to recognize these communities.

We want to be responsive. I believe actions speak louder than words. We're acting as a community, and really a credit to our member for North Preston - an MLA who has a big influence on us. We really appreciate him. I know people's names but not their communities. My apologies.

Let me just speak about health care facilities for a minute. Really this is focused on long-term care facilities. We in government have been absolutely committed to solving the health care crisis. I don't know if we have, but judging by the number of questions the Health Minister got this session, I think we've gotten a long way, but we are working hard on it.

One of the things we know about our health care crisis is that there are people in our hospitals who are waiting for the transition to a seniors' or a long-term care bed. I think our Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care will get national recognition for her build program some day. It's absolutely astonishing how many new places we're building, and we need them.

I will say the previous Liberal government did announce a couple at the end of their mandate. I will give you credit for that. We're building them. Prior to that, the last new facilities announced were done by the Rodney MacDonald government, which the NDP government opened. At the same time, we were aging as a population, so we see that historic build starting to address some of this crisis. Yet, even with everything we're building, we realize it can't be held up.

We must get those facilities built, because you never know when you might be that person waiting in the ER for a bed in the hospital. Any one of us can be in that at a moment's notice. That's the reality, and we need those spaces. This is an urgent need. That's the reason for that. I know the member was asking questions about that.

There's a lot more I could say about the bill, and I really appreciate the member for Sackville-Cobequid unpacking a bit of it for us too. I mean, this is the reality. We'll be judged by history.

I was asked on the Todd Battis show about our conflict with the HRM, and here's the reality - here's what I'll say to the mayor and council. We may disagree about tactics, but we all have the same goal, our party and HRM. We want to see this city grow. We want to see this province grow. We want to see every opportunity to grow achieved. We want affordability, true affordability, for not only the African Nova Scotian community but for our own communities, for our own children, for the young people who will come here from Ukraine or the Middle East or the Philippines. We see all these communities coming now. We just want to enable that.

We see Nova Scotia changing - changing for the better in so many ways. If we can capture that growth, if we can achieve the growth that's possible, we will have done so much good for the Province of Nova Scotia. That's really what lies at the heart of this. That's why I believe in this legislation. I believe that it's the right direction to go. We're going forward as a government.

I know it's not comfortable. Change is not comfortable. We see that need for change, and we're going forward.

With that, I move to close debate on Bill No. 329, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter and the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 329.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[8:28 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: The Clerk will now conduct a recorded vote.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

YEAS

Hon. Brad Johns
Hon. Tory Rushton

NAYS

Hon. Keith Irving
Hon. Derek Mombourquette

Hon. Barbara Adams	Hon. Zach Churchill
Hon. Kim Masland	Hon. Kelly Regan
Hon. Tim Houston	Susan Leblanc
Hon. Allan MacMaster	Claudia Chender
Hon. Twila Grosse	Kendra Coombes
Hon. Michelle Thompson	Suzy Hansen
Hon. John Lohr	Gary Burrill
Hon. Trevor Boudreau	Lisa Lachance
Hon. Timothy Halman	Braedon Clark
Hon. Kent Smith	Ali Duale
Hon. Brian Wong	
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek	
Hon. Colton LeBlanc	
Hon. Jill Balser	
Hon. Pat Dunn	
Hon. Greg Morrow	
Hon. Becky Druhan	
Larry Harrison	
John White	
John A. MacDonald	
Hon. Keith Bain	
Chris Palmer	
Nolan Young	
Hon. Steve Craig	

THE CLERK: For, 26. Against, 12.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 320.

Bill No. 320 - Tourist Accommodations Registration Act (amended).

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

HON. JOHN LOHR: I move that Bill No. 320 now be read for a third time. I may have a few comments after I hear my colleagues speak.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

[8:30 p.m.]

HON. ZACH CHURCHILL: I spoke extensively on this bill in second reading and in Committee of the Whole House on Bills. I do just want to put myself on the record in third reading. I think this bill is ill-conceived. I do not think it's going to have an impact on the long-term rental market, and it could have an unintended consequence for those doing short-term rentals, individuals who have invested in that, that are purpose-built, and that we also need for our tourism accommodations.

I will table for the House an email I received from short-term rental owners who invested their life savings in their purpose-built facilities. These units will not go back onto the market. They have registered concerns about the government's approach to this and share my concern that this won't have an impact on the long-term rental market and could negatively impact the short-term rental market, particularly in rural Nova Scotia, where our short-term rentals are actually needed. I'll table this email, which I read from extensively during Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

Again, I think this bill is, as many that the government put forward, more about optics than outcomes, and I think time shall prove that theory to be correct.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm glad to rise to speak to Bill No. 320. This bill will require host and platform operators to pay an annual registration tax depending on the class of the house, to be defined in regulations. Regulations will define annual fees for platforms and hosts, definitions of short-term rentals, fines, and penalties for breaking registration rules.

The bill removes the previous ceiling of \$1,000 fines, which is what we feel is a good thing. The government has said that fees for units that are not located in someone's home will range from \$240 in the most rural communities to \$3,600 in the centre of Halifax Regional Municipality. The bill will also allow the minister to appoint inspectors to enforce the Act, and we really do appreciate the need to have an inspector and enforcing those types of things, because we also want to check our boxes off, cross our t's and dot our i's. We agree with this point.

This is a good thing, but we hope that the power is used effectively. We have seen the tragic consequences of this in other jurisdictions where there are restrictions on short-term rentals, but without effective enforcement, hosts continue to break the rules. I would welcome the minister to provide all those details on when inspection capacity will be stood up and what those details will be.

This government as well has been silent on what fees or fines will be required of big operators like Airbnb or Vrbo. These corporations are benefiting handsomely by operating to date without penalties in our province and should be expected to contribute to our

province. We are not sure what fines large platforms will have to pay if they continue to allow unregistered or improperly registered properties to be listed on their sites. We just don't know. We also don't know what fines will be charged to operators who refuse to follow the rules. These will be written into regulations. Let's be clear. Short-term rentals outside of someone's primary residence are commercial ventures and they should be taxed and regulated as such. This would mean that we need a regime of fees and fines that promote compliance and help us reach our goals for housing and community planning.

It's not clear that the government is creating a framework that will do these things because we have been given so few details about how this will work. I am open to hearing from the minister what that will look like. The existing registration system has flaws. For example, a member of the public isn't able to check against the registry to see if a property is listed or not.

Many other jurisdictions have developed approaches to regulating short-term rentals. B.C. is one such jurisdiction that has implemented strict rules. They have increased the fines for hosts breaking municipal bylaws to \$3,000 per day. Platforms will also be required to share data with municipalities to improve local enforcement. B.C. will require online, short-term rental platforms to share their data with the province so the province can provide that information to local governments for enforcement and support of provincial and federal tax auditing.

B.C. will give regional districts the ability to use business licences so they can move effectively regulating short-term rentals in rural areas. All listings will have to include business licences and registration numbers and a number of other restrictions designed to return more units to the long-term market requiring short-term rentals in B.C. to be offered only in the principal residence of a host in municipalities with a population of 10,000 people or more. Principal residence means plus one secondary suite or laneway home garden suite on the property is allowed.

Forthcoming regulations will specify areas exempt from the principal residence requirement, including 14 resort regions, mountain resort areas, municipalities under 10,000 population except those within 15 kilometres to larger municipalities, and regional district electoral areas, and removing legal, non-conforming use protections for short-term rentals being taken advantage of by investors to support local government's efforts to set rules about where these units can operate in communities.

Together, these create a minimum regulatory standard for housing available for rent for fewer than 90 days. This is a holistic approach that will work to rein in short-term rentals and their impact on the housing market. This something that we need to examine and adopt in ways that work for Nova Scotians.

As we all know, there is a housing crisis. Every bill we have talked about specifically talks to that and we have a housing crisis in this province. Vacancy rates are

historically low and since this government was elected only two years ago, the number of chronically homeless people in Halifax has more than doubled. Now there are over 1,000 people actively homeless in Halifax.

This is a direct result of the government's housing policies, renovictions, fixed-term leaseholds, under investment in affordable housing, and rent-geared-to-income units. Allowing short-term rentals to proliferate under both Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments has had a negative impact on the availability of housing stock, especially in Halifax and in my constituency of Halifax Needham. Some estimates pegged as many as 2 per cent of units on the Halifax peninsula being taken up in the long-term market by short-term rentals.

Action from governments on this issue has been too slow. Short-term rental operators are already expected to register with and pay a fee to the Province. Since those rules came into effect three years ago, no one has been penalized for breaking the rules making registration essentially voluntary, according to this minister.

Finally, municipalities have been able to act as of recently and HRM has moved to limit short-term rentals in residential areas. This will have a big impact on returning units to the long-term rental market. It is not clear that the changes the government says are coming in and regulations from this bill will have much of an additional impact. In fact, the minister was not able to say how much or how many units these new actions will return to the market, and I don't want to minimize this because I think it is a good step.

The government claims that this move is intended to improve the shortage of housing availability, but they just don't know how exactly. I want to say that I don't want us to mistake this bill for a housing solution. This bill was a long time coming. Thank you to the community, thank you to the municipal pressure because we have now seen some movement. Our caucus moved to amend the bill to require that revenue from fees and fines be spent on truly affordable rent-geared-to-income housing. This would have been a way to ensure the legislation has an impact on the housing crisis.

As the minister has said, every unit counts. We believe every dollar counts. The government's recently released housing plan is a lot of smoke and mirrors with very little investment in permanently affordable housing. One-third of the funding is earmarked for a tax cut for developers. Another third is for long-term care beds - very important, not diminishing it, but not what most Nova Scotians think is action on a housing crisis. There is no investment in public housing beyond the 222 units announced recently, despite the nearly 6,000 people on the wait-list for public housing. There are right now three units available on Happipad - if anybody wants to know - in HRM that are below \$1,000 a month. It's not a lot. The majority of new units in the plan depend on special planning areas which so far include zero permanent rent-geared-to-income units. The lack of affordable and available housing is something being felt by Nova Scotians across this province and is certainly playing no small part in this homelessness crisis.

The recent Nova Scotia's Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report released reports that 9 per cent of post-secondary students reported being unhoused, and despite this, there's no sign of the long-promised student housing strategy and little mention of student needs in the recent housing plan. There's a lot of work to do on the housing file, and our amendment would have made this a more logical step.

In closing, I'm glad that the government is introducing stiffer fines and fees for short-term rentals, but it feels a little bit too little, too late and is clearly not going to have much impact at all. Imagine if the government planned to aggressively build the non-market housing sector up and reinvest in publicly owned co-operative and non-profit housing, retaining public land, retrofitting non-market housing, and building new public housing. Imagine if this were a part of a plan to build and preserve the levels of truly affordable housing that we need. Imagine if this were part of a plan that protected tenants from rent hikes and unfair evictions. Imagine if the two-plus years of this government, that they were in this House, actually built houses for folks to live in today. Imagine. Instead of the smoke-and-mirrors plan that provides almost nothing new in true affordable housing, imagine if these announcements and money spent made by this government over the past two and a half years were actually builds that folks could move in yesterday. Imagine that. We will keep fighting for that future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ALI DUALE: I stand tonight to take my role. I don't speak very often the length of one hour, but I spoke last time rightly so. First of all, I don't support this bill, Bill No. 320, for three simple reasons.

Number 1, I don't support the idea of more taxation for Nova Scotians. I see this as a tax grab that has no purpose, that has no vision. Because of that reason, I don't support this bill.

Second, as a member of the Opposition party, and having the role of the critic of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, this bill will harm our tourist industry. We live in a beautiful province that is welcoming. People enjoy to come here. We have great people here, great hospitality, and this will harm the industry because we will not have enough space to accommodate those who love to come to Nova Scotia. This is my second reason that I do believe this bill will harm our tourism industry.

Third, Speaker, I don't support this bill because it has no vision. You can tell it was a last-minute rush. The previous time that I spoke to this bill, I asked the minister many unanswered questions. It's worthwhile that we're here tonight for the third reading of this bill. I would like to hear the minister have some clarification and some questions being answered for Nova Scotians. Why is this bill important?

[8:45 p.m.]

It's my belief that it was rushed, this bill. And I really believe, within this discussion for this House, the member of the Opposition has put forward a solution that I believe might actually create more long-term housing. I know for a fact we're in a housing crisis, and I really believe that when we are in these kind of conditions, the best way that we can have a solution is to have unified elected officials, because these issues will affect all of us, no matter what constituency or what part of Nova Scotia you live in. And I really believe that if the government is serious to have a solution for Nova Scotians, we need to have all party committees look at these issues with no partisan purpose, but what is in the best interests of Nova Scotians.

I really believe that we are in a housing crisis, and I'd like to see in the future, when we have issues that will affect all of us, to have a unified perspective. I take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize The honourable Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing, it will be to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 329, Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended) and the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act (amended).

The honourable Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing.

HON. JOHN LOHR: I just want to make a couple of brief comments. This will put real teeth in the requirement to be registered, this bill, from two perspectives. Both from the perspective that the individual operator who doesn't register a facility could face fines, but also from the perspective of the platform operator - of which there are four or five in the province right now - who will face a significant fine if they advertise a short-term rental that isn't registered. They will be facing a very large fine if that's the case.

What I can say about this is that having a true grasp of the number of Airbnbs in the province - with what was essentially a voluntary registry, to one that is really mandatory and has teeth in it - will tell us some of the information that the Opposition has said we don't know. We don't know how many there are because the registration has been essentially voluntary.

The reality is, if we look across the Western world, Airbnbs are regulated by municipalities, essentially, because municipalities know their own circumstances the best. I'll give you an example: I have a niece in Holland who lives in the most desirable city in Holland. That city has dealt with Airbnbs or short-term rentals by saying that any unit can be rented, but only 60 days a year. The rest of the time it can't be on the market. Which effectively makes it a toss-up between long-term and short-term, but it still allows someone who owns a home to say, Well, I'm going to go on a two-month trip, and I'll just put my house on Airbnb.

That's one solution. It's not the only solution. There are others. We see this, and we are enabling this in the previous legislation and this legislation, for this to be municipally regulated. The demand to do that really goes - I was questioned this morning by a councillor from Digby Neck, Brier Island, Long Island, and this is a problem in their community, where they see people from away coming in and buying four, five, six houses and making them Airbnbs. Because even though, from our point of view as Nova Scotians, these houses went way up in price, from their point of view, coming from Ontario maybe, or western Canada, they're still a very good buy, and they can make money on them.

We see ourselves enabling the municipalities to deal with the problem in terms of their own circumstances. And that varies in every jurisdiction in the province - including, as the member for Halifax Needham mentioned, here in HRM and on the peninsula, where we know there is the highest density of Airbnbs in the province.

This legislation will allow us to make the registration fees reflective of the market in each area. This is something that - doing this in regulations, this is the purpose.

With that, I move to close third reading on Bill No. 320.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 320, the Tourist Accommodations Registration Act (amended).

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 339, the Financial Measures (Fall 2023) Act.

Bill No. 339 - Financial Measures (Fall 2023) Act.

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

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, I rise to move third reading of Bill No. 339, the Fall 2023 Financial Measures Act, and I would like to open the floor to my colleagues for their comments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

HON. KEITH IRVING: I thought I had an hour to prepare, but I'll be fairly brief here, if not as brief as the minister.

This bill simply does four items. Three of them are fairly straightforward, and the fourth is quite important. Moving the term for the Gas Distribution System Municipal Taxation Act to extend that another five years - we can fully support that. The ability for new sectors to qualify for the Capital Investment Tax Credit - we can fully support that. The ability for private employers and employees to transfer their pension plans into the Public Service Superannuation Plan - we're certainly fine with that.

I think some of the issues raised by the union with respect to the issues around indexation flag that concern, that we are having problems with our pensions in terms of the ability to index those under the rules. The minister has spoken on the importance of them being fiscally sound, and I certainly agree with that, but it does raise the question of how attractive our Public Service Superannuation Plan may be to the private sector if we are not able to continue with indexing.

Anyway - certainly worth supporting. We are aware that pension plans from outside of the province are looking at activity in our province and getting the private sector to contribute to their plans that are out of province. We can fully support what is the intent here.

Then the real meat and potatoes of the bill, obviously, is the rebate on the HST for rental housing. I want to applaud the government for following the lead of the federal Liberal government. It is a meaningful bill with respect to dealing with the real issues of the challenge of building housing and the underlying thing that's preventing developers from building as many houses as they hoped to in the current conditions with interest rates. This change to the tax on the HST should help with making projects more financially viable. With those few words, I will take my seat. We will be supporting the bill.

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

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I wanted to rise and say a few words on this bill. I think there are just a few things that have changed - my colleague covered those - but it is important to note that, once again, we are opening up the Financial Measures Act in the middle of the year. The Financial Measures Act operates to enact the budget, of course, but now this government is in the habit of opening up the Act to tinker mid-year. I think that's a precedent that we should watch because, along with the outstanding appropriations that we've seen with no oversight, this is another way the government enacts pieces of legislation with massive financial consequences without going through that process. It's another sidestep. If we are opening up the Financial Measures Act, why don't we figure out a way to get legislative oversight on appropriations? We would like to see that.

To the merits of the bill - in terms of the pension plan - I would share my colleague's comments. Generally, this seems to be welcomed. However, in addition to the issues around how attractive that plan will be, if we can't index and keep it in a place where it can provide appropriate benefits for the members of that plan - I want to quote, and this has been tabled in Committee of the Whole, the submission from the public sector unions. They said: "We understand Minister MacMaster stated the Public Service Superannuation Plan Trustee Inc. is supportive of the PSPPTA overall. We are aware the PSSPPTI has supported this idea generally, as have our unions. However, our support was a high-level principle and did not pertain to the specific proposals in the bill. The details of these transfers are incredibly complex, and the legislation enabling them requires serious and thoughtful study. This section of the FMA should not move forward until all stakeholders are able to conduct a proper review of the legislation and an opportunity to provide comments."

Here we see a pattern. We have not given the core stakeholders an opportunity for thoughtful study and to provide comments. Surely that could have been done. This was a conversation that was happening.

The other thing I wanted to mention is the removal of a provision for referenda that would be necessary to add provincial HST onto several goods from which it is exempted now. Those would include diapers, children's clothing, accessibility aids, et cetera. That does concern us. I think it's a tiny provision but an important one, especially given the cost of living challenges that people are experiencing.

We understand part of that clause operates to remove, which is why that change has been made. We would have liked to have seen - or at a future date would like to see - it reinstated. There needs to be a referendum to add the provincial HST back, because those are things people can't afford to pay that tax on often.

As for the removal of the HST - to follow the lead of the federal Liberals, as my colleague in the Liberal party mentioned - I think it is likely they will make construction somewhat more attractive from a financial perspective. I don't know that it will - in fact I doubt it will create more affordable housing. Developers are experiencing financial pressure, so it will make it easier to go, but I don't know it will make it more affordable. I don't think it will. I am also not sure it is going to create new units. As with the other bills we've been talking about, we would actually have loved to hear a description of how that's going to work. I think I heard the Premier say when this decision was made, Well, we'll see. We're willing to try things.

That's okay. We support that, but we want to see more than willing to try things. We'd love to see a plan for how we're actually going to get the units we need. In conclusion, we support the bill. We have the questions that I've put forward, and I'll end where I began, which is to say we need better oversight of legislative spending, and we need to use the FMA for the purpose that it was intended, when it was intended. We need

oversight on appropriations. I suspect we're back in the billions already, and it makes a mockery of our budget process and of a lot of the work we do here.

[9:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, it will be to close third reading of Bill No. 339. The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. ALLAN MACMASTER: Speaker, I move to close debate on Bill No. 339, the Financial Measures (Fall 2023) Act.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 339.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The Clerk.

THE CLERK: Speaker, I rise to quickly address and correct a small error that occurred earlier. After third reading of Bill No. 329, I read out the title of the bill; however, that bill was amended, and its title was amended at Committee of the Whole House on Bills. I would like to correctly state the title of the bill, which is relevant, because, Speaker, you, of course, ordered that the bill be titled as read by the Clerk. The title of Bill No. 329 is An Act to Amend Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, and Chapter 21 of the Acts of 2021, the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act, Respecting Housing.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much for that correction and clarification.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 332.

Bill No. 332 - Workers' Compensation Act (amended).

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

HON. JILL BALSER: I move that Bill No. 332 now be read a third time and do pass.

We have brought forward a bill that will allow gradual onset stress to become a compensable injury. I just want to thank my colleagues across the aisle for comments and for their general support for this bill. I look forward to hearing some closing remarks from my colleagues as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

BRAEDON CLARK: I thank the minister for her comments. As the minister mentioned, this is a good piece of legislation that we support. I'm really happy to see that gradual onset stress will now be covered through workers' compensation. As the minister knows and as we've talked about, I've spent a good deal of time working with the Workers' Compensation Board in various past professions, and it's an important organization that does really important work for the workers of our province.

Two points I just want to make quickly: It's wonderful that gradual onset stress is being covered, of course. People who are affected by that will in many cases need mental health support, and I know that's something that the government is interested in expanding as well, so having those two things move in tandem would be really important over the next few years as claims start to come in.

The second point I will make as well is we know that as a province we are still far behind most other provinces when it comes to level of coverage for workers. Most other provinces are very close to 100 per cent coverage. We are still in the 70 per cent to 80 per cent range, and our rates and benefits are still not where they need to be. That's because workers' compensation was heavily underfunded for a long period of time. They have worked really hard to get back close to a 100 per cent coverage level, which is wonderful to see. I hope that over time, we will see that coverage rate in our province move closer and closer to the national standard, which is close to 100 per cent.

I know we all agree that when Nova Scotians go to work, we want them to be safe when they come home. This piece of legislation is a big step forward in that regard. I'm happy that the minister has introduced it, and we support it.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I'm happy to stand and make some comments on Bill No. 332. This bill has been a long time coming. We were initially optimistic upon seeing that this government would move forward on the file. Not only was our legislation lagging behind other provinces, it was also in direct violation of Nova Scotians' Charter rights.

Our optimism turned to some disappointment when we read the language of this bill. We heard from various stakeholders at Law Amendments Committee and then again when this government failed to meaningfully listen or respond to the input by fixing the

errors in this bill. There remain significant flaws in the wording of this bill, which according to the president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour fails entirely to address the fundamental issues of discrimination. We have shared these concerns as marked by the amendments we put forward on this bill at Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

For one, the language of “wholly or predominantly” creates a more stringent test to prove an injury than there is for physical injuries. Simply put, this bill will make it more difficult to make successful claim for psychological injury than for other types of physical injuries.

Not only will this “wholly or predominantly caused” test apply to gradual onset stress claims, it would also now apply to traumatic stress claims, which isn’t currently the case. For people with a claim for traumatic stress, this bill will make it more challenging to meet the threshold than it is currently. This is a discriminatory practice, and it’s not in the spirit of the 2019 decision or in line with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As we heard at Law Amendments Committee, this language will perpetuate the very stigma and discrimination this bill was created to address.

The other significant issue that was raised in Law Amendments Committee surrounds the effective date of this legislation. Under this bill, claims that are submitted before September 1, 2024, and were denied or not appealed will not be able to be re-filed. We understand that some time may be needed to prepare the processes for this change. However, it is concerning that the legislation makes no effort to account for this delay.

The appeal decision was released in 2019. Since 2019, it has been clear that the exclusion of gradual onset stress claims violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It makes no sense to penalize workers who filed claims and were denied under the former legislation. That was given to us by the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour. There should be some mechanisms built into the legislation that would allow claims made after this date to be re-filed and re-adjudicated regardless of whether or not they were appealed. We brought forward an amendment that would have done this. Unfortunately, the government members voted it down.

The Workers’ Compensation Board should work for injured workers. There are too many cases, Speaker, where it does not. We hear from many people who have been injured at work and then do not receive the support they deserve. People fall through the cracks, and they get really stuck. It is not fair, and it must be addressed.

Also, there are too many people who face psychological injury at work with no support. Nova Scotia is the only province without psychological protections in occupational health and safety law. This means that the employer is not responsible for mental health hazards at work. Neither government, the Liberals nor the Progressive Conservatives, have actually been interested in addressing these issues with the WCB.

This is why we have spoken about the need for a worker-centred review of the WCB system. I understand that that is under way, and I hope it is full. I hope it actually includes as many workers as possible who have been through the system, because it is much-needed.

This is also why we have urged for years that our occupational health and safety legislation be updated to clarify that employers have the responsibility to protect employees' mental health in the workplace. This is a significant gap, and I'm grateful that the minister has signalled openness to address this, but action needs to be taken, and it needed to be taken yesterday. It needed to be taken a year ago. We're quite behind in that.

I don't want to diminish the fact that this legislation may very well help people who have suffered stress injuries in the workplace. We support this. It is great news that we'll have legislation that will have legislative recognition of these injuries, but it is problematic that, at the same time, these claims will become more challenging for many people.

We are glad to see the changes come forward, but these parts of this bill are flawed and unfair. This government has yet to consider the legislation and how they would approach it. It makes no sense how, after all this time, they brought forward a piece of legislation that has these flaws.

The trend of the government suddenly refusing to listen to the stakeholders at Law Amendments Committee, and refusing to entertain any of these amendments, is predictable. It's happened before.

With that, we are going to support this bill, because it is a great step forward from our Charter-violating position previously, but with great regret that the government included these flaws and these oversights.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise to speak in support of Bill No. 332, An Act to Amend Chapter 10 of the Acts of 1994-95, the Workers' Compensation Act.

In preparation for each session of this Legislature, I keep a list of people who contact me, share their stories, and ask for changes that will make improvements for them and others who come after them who share similar experiences.

Some changes require legislation, but not all. In the case of the Workers' Compensation Board's definition of trauma and stress, legislative changes were needed. I thank the minister and her department today for bringing these changes forward.

Many people in their work experience stressful situations that can bring lasting trauma. The trauma can take years, too, or it can be visible upon sudden onset. The science

and research on the topic of trauma is becoming more robust, and health care professionals especially are becoming more educated on trauma.

[9:15 p.m.]

Treatments are also being developed, and more victims of trauma are finding the help that they need, thankfully. Nurses, paramedics, police officers, doctors, first responders, and corrections officers are just some of the people who experience trauma on a regular basis. It can manifest very differently in each person.

Once again, I thank the minister for bringing this forward. I support the bill.

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

The honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. JILL BALSER: Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues across the aisle, of course, for their comments again. This is important work, and we want to make sure that we're identifying psychological injuries in the same way that we identify physical injuries, and this is the first step.

We're also doing consultation, as the member had mentioned, on the WCB system - the whole entire system - because Nova Scotians deserve the best workers' compensation system, and that's what we want to strive for. I encourage all Nova Scotians to make sure that they're sharing their stories. We know many people who've been impacted by an injury, or a loved one who's had that experience, but we also have to listen to businesses as well. I would encourage folks to pay attention to those consultations, be a part of them, and know that this is the first step to improve the system for everyone.

With that, I move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 332.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 332.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. KIM MASLAND: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to call Bill No. 323.

Bill No. 323 - The Regulated Health Professions Act.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, I move that Bill No. 323, the Regulated Health Professions Act, now be read a third time and do pass.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I've prepared several hours of remarks. No, I'm just kidding. We made our views clear on this. We did feel that there should have been more consultation. We heard that in the Law Amendments Committee. It's clear that's not going to happen before the bill is passed, but we are counting on the minister to ensure there will be consultation as the regulations are prepared. That's it. Thanks.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: What she said. No, just kidding. But yes, what she said. Yes, I'm happy to speak to this bill for a moment. I was very concerned about the lack of consultation with the regulators, but given that we've been in the Legislature for four weeks instead of two weeks, it feels like there has been a little bit of time for the regulators to have their views known. We hope that the minister will consult well, and that this bill will help with getting better health care faster.

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

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to speak in favour of Bill No. 323, the Regulated Health Professions Act. As a physiotherapist and one of the regulated health professionals for more than 40 years, I am very excited to be part of government that is bringing the changes and improvements that will benefit all 21 health professions in the Province of Nova Scotia.

The way we are delivering health care in our world and our province is changing. The Regulated Health Professions Act will allow for faster expanded scopes of practice, quicker decision-making, and more consistency and collaboration among all health professionals.

This Act, like the Access to Health Care Act that we passed last session, puts Nova Scotians first by helping health professionals get the tools that they need to do their jobs. If there needs to be an adjustment for health care professionals to use new technology, training, or new care models, it will help faster, and it will help under this government. I'm proud to be part of a government that's bringing this forward. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Similarly, what she said, I agree. I just want to assure the members that consultation has informed the bill. It informed the adoption of the amendments, and it absolutely will inform our regulations moving forward.

I move to close third reading on Bill No. 323.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to close third reading of Bill No. 323.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

KIM MASLAND: Speaker, would you please call Address in Reply. I'm joking. (Laughter)

Speaker, that concludes government business. We'll just take a short recess. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: There will be a short recess.

[9:22 p.m. The House recessed.]

[9:41 p.m. The House reconvened.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is without.

THE SPEAKER: Let His Honour the Lieutenant Governor be admitted.

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.]

The Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, preceded by his Private Secretary and by Mr. David Fraser, Sergeant-at-Arms, bearing the Mace, entered the House of Assembly Chamber. The Lieutenant Governor then took his seat on the Throne.

The Sergeant-at-Arms then departed and re-entered the Chamber, followed by the Speaker, the Honourable Karla MacFarlane; the Chief Clerk of the House, James Charlton; and Assistant Clerk David Hastings.

The Speaker, with the Clerk on her left and the Sergeant-at-Arms and Assistant Clerk on her right, took up her position at the foot of the Table of the House.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that everyone present be seated.

THE SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the General Assembly of the Province has, in its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the General Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's Assent.

Bill No. 119 - Endometriosis Awareness Month Act.

Bill No. 319 - First Responders Day Act.

Bill No. 320 - Tourist Accommodations Registration Act (amended).

Bill No. 321 - Conseil scolaire acadien provincial Act - Loi sur le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

Bill No. 322 - Opioid Damages and Health-care Costs Recovery Act.

Bill No. 323 - Regulated Health Professions Act.

Bill No. 327 - Motor Vehicle Act.

Bill No. 329 - Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (amended) and Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act (amended).

Bill No. 332 - Workers' Compensation Act (amended).

Bill No. 334 - Health Services and Insurance Act (amended).

Bill No. 337 - Electricity Act (amended).

Bill No. 339 - Financial Measures (Fall 2023) Act.

Bill No. 340 - Municipal Reform (2023) Act.

Bill No. 348 - Lunenburg Common Lands Act (amended).

Bill No. 351 - Bethyl Presbyterian Church, Sydney Act.

Bill No. 369 - Riverport Electric Light Act for Polling District No. 2, in the County of Lunenburg (amended).

Bill No. 396 - Sickle Cell Awareness Day Act.

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR: In His Majesty's name, I Assent to these bills.

[The Speaker and the Clerks left the Chamber.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Please rise.

[The Lieutenant Governor left the Chamber.]

THE SPEAKER: Since you are all standing, I would ask that you remain standing and join me in the national anthem. Certainly, those of you who have lovely voices, please sing as loud as you can.

[The national anthem was sung by the members.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: Speaker, before I move to adjourn, I'll ask that we all take a moment to pause and reflect on what will ring as a historic session for all time. It was historic in many ways.

The first Black female Cabinet minister in Nova Scotia took her seat. (Applause) The first female Speaker of this House of Assembly. (Applause) I would say a fine job by both.

I'd also like to take a moment to thank a number of people who are in the House who made sure this session moved along smoothly. Speaker, on behalf of all members of this House I'd like to acknowledge the Pages for their incredible work, some of whom told me that they were doing their homework at lunchtime so they could be here in the evenings. (Applause)

Thank you to the fine folks at Legislative Television. The Clerks of our House. I think that James and David are going to miss seeing us in the evenings, I'm sure of it. The Legislative Counsel Office, who drafts the bills that we debate on the floor of this House. The team in the Legislative Library - I want to thank the library team. The team at Hansard who transcribe. Thank you to Hansard. (Applause)

House Operations staff, of course. Our Sergeant-at-Arms, David, thank you. Smile, Dave, she said. (Laughter) The Commissionaires, thank you. (Applause)

Of course, for the members, our constituency assistants back at our constituency offices who work so hard to respond to the needs of our constituents while we're here. I thank our constituency assistants. (Applause)

The entire Public Service. The men and women who are in the Public Service are some of the most dedicated professionals in our province. I just want to thank our Public Service. (Applause)

Our families, of course, for supporting us while we're in the House and when we're not in the House. You can't do this job without that supportive network, so thank you to our families. (Applause)

I want to wish all of the members and everyone here tonight a safe and happy holiday season. It'll be fast upon us, for sure.

With those few words, Speaker, I move that this General Assembly be adjourned to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House now adjourn to meet again at the call of the Speaker.

All those in favour? Contrary minded. Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House now stands adjourned.

[The House rose at 9:55 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 828**

By: Claudia Chender (Dartmouth South)

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

Whereas Connor Fitzpatrick travelled from Halifax-Dartmouth to Concepción, Chile to represent Canada at the Pan American Games in Canoe/Kayak Sprint; and

Whereas of the 18 paddlers representing Canada in 10 Canoe-Kayak events, an impressive six athletes came from the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Connor Fitzpatrick won the Bronze Medal in the Men's C1 1000m;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Connor Fitzpatrick on his incredible athletic achievements and recognize the concentration of talent in this Province.

RESOLUTION NO. 829

By: Claudia Chender (Dartmouth South)

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

Whereas Craig Spence travelled from Halifax-Dartmouth to Concepción, Chile to represent Canada at the Pan American Games in Canoe/Kayak Sprint; and

Whereas of the 18 paddlers representing Canada in 10 Canoe-Kayak events, an impressive six athletes came from the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Craig Spence won the Gold Medal in the Men's C2 500m and is a recognized Pan American Champion;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Craig Spence on his incredible athletic achievements and recognize the concentration of talent in this Province.

RESOLUTION NO. 830

By: Claudia Chender (Dartmouth South)

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

Whereas Michelle Russell travelled from Halifax-Dartmouth to Concepción, Chile to represent Canada at the Pan American Games in Canoe/Kayak Sprint; and

Whereas of the 18 paddlers representing Canada in 10 Canoe-Kayak events, an impressive six athletes came from the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Michelle Russell won the Gold Medal in the Women's K1 500m and is a recognized Pan American Champion;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Michelle Russell on her incredible athletic achievements and recognize the concentration of talent in this Province.

RESOLUTION NO. 831

By: Claudia Chender (Dartmouth South)

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

Whereas Riley Melanson travelled from Halifax-Dartmouth to Concepción, Chile to represent Canada at the Pan American Games in Canoe/Kayak Sprint; and

Whereas of the 18 paddlers representing Canada in 10 Canoe-Kayak events, an impressive six athletes came from the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Riley Melanson won the Silver Medal in the Women's K4 500m;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Riley Melanson on his incredible athletic achievements and recognize the concentration of talent in this Province.

RESOLUTION NO. 832

By: Claudia Chender (Dartmouth South)

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

Whereas Sloan MacKenzie travelled from Halifax-Dartmouth to Concepción, Chile to represent Canada at the Pan American Games in Canoe/Kayak Sprint; and

Whereas of the 18 paddlers representing Canada in 10 Canoe-Kayak events, an impressive six athletes came from the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Sloan MacKenzie won the Gold Medal in the Women's C2 500m and is a recognized Pan American Champion;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sloan MacKenzie on her incredible athletic achievements and recognize the concentration of talent in this Province.

RESOLUTION NO. 833

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas the Special Olympics National Winter Games will be held in February 2024 in Calgary Alberta; and

Whereas several athletes on Team Nova Scotia will be from Yarmouth; and

Whereas Sheldon Parker, Emily Demings, Michael Hagen, Lisa Fitzgerald, and Walter Muise will all make the exciting trip from Yarmouth to Calgary along with Coach Lynn Doucette and Assistant Coach Gary Hudson;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly wish these athletes and coaches from Yarmouth the best of luck and safe travels for this exciting experience. They are all making their community proud.

RESOLUTION NO. 834

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Adam Baldwin won the 2023 SOCAN Songwriter of the Year Award, highlighting his incredible talent and songwriting abilities;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Adam Baldwin for winning the award for SOCAN Songwriter of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 835

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Andrew Jackson won the 2023 award for Media Arts Awards, highlighting his incredible talents;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Andrew Jackson for winning the award for Media Arts at the Nova Scotia Music Week.

RESOLUTION NO. 836

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Classified's recording *Retrospected* won the 2023 award for Hip Hop/Rap Recording of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of hip hop and rap artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Classified for winning the award for Hip Hop/Rap recording of the year.

RESOLUTION NO. 837

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas DeeDee Austin won the 2023 award for Indigenous Artist of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of Indigenous artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating DeeDee Austin for winning the award for Indigenous Artist of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 838

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Elyse Aeryn's song "Joy State of Mind" won the award for Country Recording of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of country artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Elyse Aeryn for winning the award for Country Recording of the Year for her song "Joy State of Mind."

RESOLUTION NO. 839

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas the group arrival's song "Good Dear Good" won the award for Pop Recording of the Year, highlighting the best talent in pop music from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the group Arrival for winning the award for Pop Recording of the Year for

their song “Good Dear Good.”

RESOLUTION NO. 840

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year’s annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas India Gailey's recording “to you through” has won Classical Recording of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of classical musicians from across Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating India Gailey's recording “to you through” on winning the award for Classical Recording of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 841

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year’s annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Jackson Wilson Duo's recording *New Doors* won the 2023 award for Jazz Recording of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of jazz artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jackson Wilson Duo's recording *New Doors* for winning the award for Jazz Recording of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 842

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Jah'Mila won two awards this year, including African Nova Scotian Artist of the Year and New Artist Recording of the Year for her song "Roots Girl," and these awards highlight the incredible talent of African Nova Scotian artists across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jah'Mila for winning the award for African Nova Scotian Artist of the Year and New Artist Recording of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 843

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas John Mullane won the 2023 award for Sound, Tech and Production, this award highlights the incredible talent of music producers from across Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating John Mullane for winning the award for Sound, Tech, and Production.

RESOLUTION NO. 844

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Jon Hines won the 2023 award for Blues Recording of the Year for his recording *A Pale Blue Dot*, highlighting the incredible talent of blues artists across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Jon Hines for winning the award for Blues Recording of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 845

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Kayo won the 2023 award for DJ of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of DJs from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Kayo for winning the award for DJ of the Year at Nova Scotia Music Week.

RESOLUTION NO. 846

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Kilmore's song "From the Inside" has won Loud Recording of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of Nova Scotian artists;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Kilmore on this well-deserved award.

RESOLUTION NO. 847

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Micah Smith won the 2023 award for Artistic Development Award, highlighting the incredible talent of artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Micah Smith for winning the Artistic Development Award at Nova Scotia Music Week.

RESOLUTION NO. 848

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Nik MacDonald won the 2023 award for Emerging Industry Professional of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of industry professionals from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Nik MacDonald on winning the award for Emerging Industry Professional of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 849

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety

of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Peanut Butter Sunday has won the Prix de l'Acadie Award at Nova Scotia Music Week, highlighting the many Acadian music talents from across Nova Scotia;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Peanut Butter Sunday on winning the Prix de l'Acadie at Nova Scotia Music Week.

RESOLUTION NO. 850

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Phil Demille has won the Volunteer of the Year Award at Nova Scotia Music Week, Phil is dedicated to locally produced talent from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Phil Demille for winning the award for Volunteer of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 851

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the riding in which I'm proud to represent, the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas 21 awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Rankin MacInnis has won two awards, the Live Sector Award for Rankin's Winter Warmers, and another for Entertainer of the Year;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Rankin MacInnis for winning the Live Sector Award and the award for Entertainer of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 852

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the constituency I'm proud to represent, and the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas twenty-one awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported, and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Rich Aucoin won the 2023 award for Electronic Artist of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of electronic artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Rich Aucoin on winning the award for Electronic Artist of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 853

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the constituency I'm proud to represent, and the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas twenty-one awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported, and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Steel Cut Oats won the Rock Recording of the Year with their song At the Eleventh Hour, highlighting the work of rock talent from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the group Steel Cut Oats on their award for Rock Recording of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 854

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the constituency I'm proud to represent, and the weekend was filled with talented musical artists from various genres; and

Whereas twenty-one awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported, and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas Terra Spencer and Ben Caplan's song Old News won Folk/Roots Recording of the Year, highlighting the incredible talent of folk artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Terra Spencer and Ben Caplan on winning Folk/Roots Recording of the Year.

RESOLUTION NO. 855

By: Hon. Zach Churchill (Yarmouth)

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

Whereas this year's annual Nova Scotia Music Week was hosted in Yarmouth, the constituency I'm proud to represent, and the weekend was filled with talented musical

artists from various genres; and

Whereas twenty-one awards were presented across seven industry categories, with a variety of programming supported, and put a spotlight on the Acadian and francophone music community; and

Whereas The Bombadils won the Americana/Bluegrass Recording Award for their recording Dear Friend, highlighting the incredible talent of bluegrass artists from across the province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating The Bombadils on winning the Bluegrass Recording of the Year for their album Dear Friend.

RESOLUTION NO. 856

By: Hon. Brian Comer (Cape Breton East)

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

Whereas today the poppy is a symbol of remembrance that honours the sacrifices of those who fought for our freedom; and

Whereas Lynn Billard, president of the Port Morien Legion, and community member Yvonne Kennedy came up with the idea to bring incredible displays of crocheted poppies to the village, similar to displays in Europe; and

Whereas dozens of talented crafters from the community and even as far away as Ontario came together and crocheted 3,010 beautiful poppies now on display at various locations in the village;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate all involved in making this idea a reality and continue in honouring our veterans by wearing the symbol of remembrance, the poppy.

RESOLUTION NO. 857

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Ashley Jollimore, owner of The Ultimate Party & Rental Store in Lower Sackville, along with her team, celebrated their 10th year anniversary on June 3, 2023; and

Whereas the celebration was held at their location on Sackville Drive and included a barbecue and free games and activities for kids, such as face painting, cake cutting, et cetera, and the proceeds were donated to Bryony House and the Red Cross to help with the wildfires; and

Whereas local vendors who were in attendance were able to introduce themselves and their products to the community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Ashley and her team for providing a one-stop-shopping venue for party supplies, along with wedding and event rentals.

RESOLUTION NO. 858

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Krista Long Dormiedy is the owner of Fledglings & Folk in Lower Sackville, a child-centered play space that focuses on independence, curiosity, and a love for learning; and

Whereas they specialized the environment's design to encourage children to explore and discover through hands-on activities and self-directed play; and

Whereas owner Krista Long Dormiedy wanted to find a space that would allow children to take the lead in their own imaginative journey, promote socialization and co-operation, as well as respecting individuality;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Krista and her staff at Fledglings & Folk for fostering a sense of community that encourages social interaction between children, parents, and grandparents.

RESOLUTION NO. 859

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

resolution:

Whereas during this year's International Museums Day, the Association of Nova Scotia Museums granted Fultz House Museum the designation of Accredited Museum; and

Whereas this designation demonstrates a museum's commitment to community service, public accountability, and professional standards; and

Whereas Fultz House Museum first opened in 1982 and the volunteers have done a remarkable job of collecting, preserving, and presenting the history and interests of Sackville, Lucasville, Beaver Bank/Kinsac and the surrounding area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating the dedicated volunteers and board members, who continue to work diligently to preserve all of the artifacts, photographs, and historical records at Fultz House Museum.

RESOLUTION NO. 860

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Janey Hughes of Lower Sackville was awarded this year's Provincial Volunteer Award for her dedication and commitment as a member and director of the Friends of First Lake and Sackville Lakes and Trails Association; and

Whereas Janey was instrumental in bringing together the Friends of First Lake's Water Stewardship Committee, including very dedicated volunteers who so graciously give of their time and resources to monitor the water quality of our lakes; and

Whereas providing this very valuable information helps to protect and preserve the health of our lakes and watersheds, not only for today, but for future generations to enjoy;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Janey Hughes for being honoured as a recipient of this year's Provincial Volunteer Award and thank her for all she does to protect First and Second Lake and their watersheds.

RESOLUTION NO. 861

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Lyle Mailman organized a free family concert on August 27, 2023, at Acadia Park in Lower Sackville in support of the Woodbine Community Non-Profit Society of Nova Scotia; and

Whereas Jon Cyr, a local musician, was the headliner, while Michelle Calder, accompanied by Lyle Mailman, opened the show, followed by Jackson Weldon who came all the way from Alabama; and

Whereas a big thank you goes out to the Acadia Recreation Club for providing the venue at no cost, to Pat Leonard for donating his time, equipment and skills providing an excellent sound experience, and to local organizations for their support;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Lyle Mailman for organizing this event, along with those who donated their time and talents.

RESOLUTION NO. 862

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas the Rotary Club of Sackville and Area, Sportwheels Sports Excellence, the Salvation Army, and JunkWorks, with the help of community and community leaders, held the "Recycle Your Cycle" project again this year; and

Whereas this event provides ride ready cycles to families-in-need within the community and, during this year's event, 170 ride-ready cycles and 76 new helmets were handed out; and

Whereas without the support of the dedicated volunteers and those who donated cycles, this event would not be possible;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the organizing team who helped to make the "Recycle Your Cycle" project a

success again this year.

RESOLUTION NO. 863

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Ron Mayhew, former owner of Sportwheels Sports Excellence in Lower Sackville, and Larry White, a local bicycle enthusiast, volunteer their time and talent to fix up bicycles that have been traded in or donated to Sportwheels; and

Whereas Ron & Larry work diligently to get these bicycles road ready, giving them a second chance; and

Whereas these bicycles are then donated to someone who may not be able to afford a brand new one;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding Ron, Larry, and the staff at Sportwheels for their continued dedication to provide over 120 bicycles every year to families in need across Nova Scotia, through their Giving Forward Mission.

RESOLUTION NO. 864

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas on August 19, 2023, the 3rd Annual Royal LePage Anchor Realty School Supply Drive took place in Lower Sackville, as well as at other locations across HRM; and

Whereas with the help of local businesses, elected officials, RCMP, firefighters, military personnel, and members of sports teams, this year's school supply drive was another great success; and

Whereas a big thank you goes out to those who were able to volunteer their time to ensure that students returned to school with a full backpack of school supplies;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in

applauding the realtors of Royal LePage Anchor Realty and the community for coming together to raise \$15,000 in cash and school supplies.

RESOLUTION NO. 865

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas the staff of the Sackville Business Association work very hard to find ways to bring the community together throughout the year; and

Whereas last month, they hosted the Sackville Sunset Market at Acadia Park, an ideal venue to bring people together; and

Whereas the market consisted of local vendors showcasing their unique products, dynamic performances on the main stage, an accessible playground, and lots of activities for children;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in applauding the staff of the Sackville Business Association for their hard work and dedication in hosting events that not only bring the community together but provide opportunities for lasting memories to be made.

RESOLUTION NO. 866

By: Steve Craig (Sackville-Cobequid)

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

Whereas Souls Harbour Rescue Mission recently opened a drop-in centre at Rock Church in Lower Sackville, where they serve free meals and provide other basic needs to over 70 people from Monday to Friday every week; and

Whereas Souls Harbour aims to rescue those experiencing poverty, addiction, and despair, by offering emergency help with food, clothing, and life-changing programs; and

Whereas their mission is to be hope for the hopeless, food for the stomach and the soul, and friendship for the lonely;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking the volunteers at the Souls Harbour Rescue Mission as they continue their efforts to bring comfort to those who are going through stressful times.

RESOLUTION NO. 867

By: Hon. Becky Druhan (Lunenburg West)

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

Whereas Baraket "Barry" Mohammed Rofihe, a beloved member and leader of Bridgewater's community, who was raised in a Lebanese-Canadian family, passed away on Monday, October 30, 2023, and;

Whereas Barry ran the thriving family business, Rofihe's Men's Wear, for 20 years and was immersed in his community as a dedicated volunteer serving as a hockey coach and manager, in addition to being involved with the Bridgewater Development Commission, the board of the Bridgewater Exhibition, the Bridgewater Kinsman K/40 Club, Acadia No. 39 Lodge, and as an honorary member of the Bridgewater Fire Department; and

Whereas Barry, who loved boating, served two terms as Commodore of the LaHave River Yacht Club, was a founding member of the Nova Scotia Schooner Association and the Harbour Master of the Port of Bridgewater and was proud of his involvement in the Tall Ships visit to Halifax in 1984 and 2000;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly honour and commemorate the life of Barry Rofihe, a gentleman who knew everyone by name, who always had a story to tell, and who lived a wonderful life, surrounded by the people and the things he loved.

RESOLUTION NO. 868

By: Hon. Becky Druhan (Lunenburg West)

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

Whereas Gloria Barrett, an inspirational artist and beloved daughter, sister, and friend, accomplished artist, and proclaimed Queen of LaHave, passed peacefully in Bridgewater on October 5, 2023; and

Whereas Gloria graduated from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in 1966 and continued her studies at Wolfrun College in England before she went on to teach in the U.K., France, and Alberta and have major art exhibits in Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and France; and

Whereas Gloria's passion for travel and culture not only led to the inspiration of her art but allowed her to create long-lasting friendships and connections with people, and her kind-hearted generosity and warm personality led her to be loved by many;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly therefore, be it resolved that the House of Assembly join me in celebrating the life of Gloria Barrett, an intelligent, cultured, bright body of light that traveled the world but always found her way back home to Atlantic Canada.

RESOLUTION NO. 869

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Evan Hale is an incredible asset to our local community; and

Whereas during the cleanup of Hurricane Fiona he showed up time and time again, always willing to do anything he could to help, no matter how big or small; and

Whereas Evan was also ready when he got a request from East Hants during their devastating flooding, helping organize a team, which included himself;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Evan Hale for his outstanding service to Nova Scotians during emergencies.

RESOLUTION NO. 870

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Dan MacDonald, retired from the RCMP office and EMO for Pictou County local, worked tirelessly during Fiona at the EMO base to ensure support was sent

where it was needed; and

Whereas Dan also helped with tree removal to help NSP and homeowners access their properties; and

Whereas during the wildfires and floods, Dan was an integral part of setting up local teams to send where the need was, giving hours of travel time and putting in grueling hours;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Dan MacDonald for his outstanding service to Nova Scotians during emergencies.

RESOLUTION NO. 871

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Jason LeGreca is an active firefighter for Alma and works for the Municipality of Pictou County Emergency Services as a Municipal Fire Inspector; and

Whereas Jason completed an in-home inspection on a vulnerable senior after he gained her trust and allowed him into her home; and

Whereas the trust he built with the senior allowed him to help her understand that how she was living was unsafe and that there are many supports that are available to help, which she used to make drastic and positive life changes;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Jason LeGreca for his dedication to the safety and dignity of the seniors even when it is hard and there are various roadblocks.

RESOLUTION NO. 872

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas John Davison worked tirelessly during Fiona at the EMO base to ensure support was sent where it was needed; and

Whereas this included tree removal to help NSP and homeowners access their properties; and

Whereas during the wildfires and floods, John was an integral part of setting up local teams to send where the need was and was a part of that, giving hours of travel time and putting in grueling hours;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank John Davison for his outstanding service to Nova Scotians during emergencies.

RESOLUTION NO. 873

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Kenny Dunn is an active firefighter for many years with Plymouth Fire Department; and

Whereas it is in times of tragedy that we look to the people in our community, our volunteers like Kenny Dunn who all use their own time to ensure their neighbors get the support when they need it; and

Whereas Kenny Dunn continued to check on vulnerable seniors, cut trees for those who were blocked, and do whatever his community members needed during those dark days following Hurricane Fiona;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Kenny Dunn for his dedication to the safety of the residents during this difficult year.

RESOLUTION NO. 874

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas volunteer and DNRR firefighter Megan Kenny is committed to her local fire station; and

Whereas Shelburne is hours from Megan's home but when she was asked to be part

of the team to fight wildfires she was happy to put her skills to use as part of the command team; and

Whereas she is always smiling as she serves at fundraisers, giving her time again and again;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Megan Kenny for her outstanding service to Nova Scotians during emergencies.

RESOLUTION NO. 875

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Merigomish Fire Chief and DNRR firefighter Paul Sneer was brought to the Halifax fires as one of the main people on the ground, his leadership helping tremendously to get those fires under control; and

Whereas he also works locally in Pictou County to ensure our local DNRR firefighters have the proper training prior to forest fire season;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Paul Sneer for his outstanding service to Nova Scotians during emergencies.

RESOLUTION NO. 876

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Rod Livingston is the new Chief for the Plymouth Fire Department and has been an active firefighter for many years; and

Whereas following Hurricane Fiona Rod spent every day at the fire hall or in the community and using his power saw to cut trees to help some residents who were unable to get out have a clear path; and

Whereas he brought water to some of our vulnerable seniors and really did whatever residents who continued to have no power needed, even working to assist the

Ladies Auxiliary while they ran a comfort station;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Rod Livingston and his firefighters for their dedication to the safety of the residents during this difficult year.

RESOLUTION NO. 877

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Seymore Dewtie is a great community member whom I would like to thank for all his hard work and dedication to getting residents of Pictou County back up with power following Hurricane Fiona; and

Whereas Seymore is an arborist, so when he was not on call with NSP, he could be found with chainsaw in hand and his own chipper to help neighbours and friends remove trees; and

Whereas after disasters like Fiona, we often look to our first responders and yet our heroes like Seymore are often forgotten but our community saw the dedication and hours that Seymore put in on the weeks following Fiona;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Seymore Dewtie for his dedication and hard work. We are so lucky to have such dedicated community members like you.

RESOLUTION NO. 878

By: Hon. Tim Houston (Pictou East)

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

Whereas Wayne van Ween is an active firefighter for many years with Plymouth Fire Department; and

Whereas it is in times of tragedy that we look to the people in our community, our volunteers like Wayne who all use their own time to ensure their neighbours get the support when they need it; and

Whereas Wayne continued to check on vulnerable seniors, cut trees for those who were blocked, and do whatever his community members needed during those dark days following Hurricane Fiona;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Wayne van Ween for his dedication to the safety of the residents during this difficult year.

RESOLUTION NO. 879

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Adele MacDonald was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Adele MacDonald had a tremendous positive impact on her community during the COVID-19 pandemic through her Facebook group Caremongering-AC: Annapolis County Community Response to COVID-19 which provided factual COVID-19 information and promoted caring and compassion at that difficult time;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Adele MacDonald on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank her for her many contributions to her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 880

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Anne Crowell was nominated by the Annapolis Active Kids Healthy Kids Society to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition

ceremony; and

Whereas Anne Crowell has generously given of her time and talents to a number of organizations including the Annapolis Health Board, Annapolis County Active Kids Healthy Kids, Soldiers Memorial Hospital Foundation, and the Mid Valley Region Physician Recruitment & Retention Committee;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Anne Crowell on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank her for all that she does to make her community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 881

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Dave Rennie was nominated by the Tupperville School Museum Society to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas Dave Rennie is an active and dedicated volunteer with the Tupperville School Museum Society;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Dave Rennie on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank him for all that he does to make his community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 882

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions

and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Donna Boyd was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Donna Boyd is a very dedicated member of Royal Canadian Legion Br. 033 in Bridgetown, having served as Secretary, Treasurer, and Membership Chair;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Donna Boyd on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank her for her many contributions to her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 883

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Douglas Moore was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Douglas Moore is a Canadian Forces veteran and has been an active community volunteer since the early 1970s, including with Scouts Canada, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Cornwallis Sea Cadets, and the Cornwallis Military Museum;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Douglas Moore on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank him for his many contributions to his community.

RESOLUTION NO. 884

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions

and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Durline Melanson was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Durline Melanson promotes Annapolis Royal worldwide through the *Explorer Visitors Guide* which she has written, edited, designed, and published since 1995 and is also an active community volunteer with several community organizations and initiatives;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Durline Melanson on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank her for her many contributions to her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 885

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Fred Boyd was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Fred Boyd is a Veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces and is a dedicated volunteer with the Royal Canadian Legion Br.033 in Bridgetown where he has served as Branch Manager, 1st Vice President, President, and Maintenance Officer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Fred Boyd on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank him for his many contributions to his community.

RESOLUTION NO. 886

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Harry Jost was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas for decades, Harry Jost worked tirelessly for the betterment of Annapolis Royal, including frequently contributing his knowledge and skills on a volunteer basis through involvement with groups such as the Waterfront Development Committee and the Planning and Heritage Advisory Committee;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Harry Jost on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank him for his many contributions to his community.

RESOLUTION NO. 887

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Heather McCormick was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Heather McCormick has chaired projects at Middleton Regional High School, Annapolis County Community Arts Council, and the Academy Condos in Annapolis and served as the program coordinator at CORAH, a community hub for older adults, which opened at NSCC in 2020;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Heather McCormick on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank her for her many contributions to her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 888

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Jeff Hafting was nominated by the Town of Annapolis Royal to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and as Town of Annapolis Royal Provincial Volunteer Representative; and

Whereas Jeff Hafting has given of his time and talents to a number of groups including the Annapolis Innovation Lab Society, soccer and track and field teams, the Royal Robots robotics team, and the Annapolis Space Agency;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeff Hafting on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and for being selected as Town of Annapolis Royal Provincial Volunteer Representative and thank him for all that he does to make his community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 889

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 James "Jim" Medill was nominated by Alan Dill to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas Jim Medill has generously given of his time and talent to many organizations including the Annapolis Health Centre, Valley Hospice Association, Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens, the Champlain Garden Club, and the Atalanta Hospice Society;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jim Medill on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank him for all that he does to make his community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 890

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Jo-Ann Hightower was nominated by the Town of Middleton to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and as their Provincial Volunteer Representative; and

Whereas Jo-Ann Hightower has generously given of her time and talents to a number of groups including the Macdonald Museum and the Annapolis Valley Historical Society;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jo-Ann Hightower on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and selected as the Town of Middleton Provincial Volunteer Representative, and thank her for all that she does to make her community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 891

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 John Smith was nominated by Soldiers Memorial Hospital Foundation to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and subsequently selected as Annapolis County Provincial Volunteer Representative; and

Whereas John Smith has generously given of his time and talents to a number of groups including the Bridgetown Regional Community School Advisory Committee, Soldiers Memorial Hospital Foundation, Annapolis County Accessibility Advisory Committee, Mid Valley Region Physician Recruitment & Retention Committee, Annapolis Community Health Board, and the Annapolis County Municipal Housing

Corporation;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate John Smith on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and being selected as Annapolis County Provincial Volunteer Representative and thank him for all that he does to make his community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 892

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Julie Morley was nominated by the Annapolis Valley Exhibition to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas for years, Julie Morley was an integral part of the Annapolis Valley Exhibition team ensuring that everything related to the main ring went smoothly;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Julie Morley on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank her for all that she does to make her community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 893

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Monica Williams was nominated by the Annapolis Valley Frugal Mom's Society to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas Monica Williams has been an active and dedicated volunteer with the Annapolis Valley Frugal Mom's Society for over four years, including serving as secretary and running the Torbrook location for pop-ups in Annapolis County;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Monica Williams on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank her for all that she does to make her community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 894

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Nancy Price was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Nancy Price has been a passionate community volunteer since the 1970s, including coaching hurdles and figure skating, helping develop the James House Museum, and being part of the steering committees for a new school and the Bridgetown Sports Hub;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nancy Price on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank her for her many contributions to her community.

RESOLUTION NO. 895

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Niko Steenken was nominated by Black Ram Media Inc., St.

George and St. Andrew United Church, and Sophia Oldford to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas Niko Steenken has generously given of his time and talents to a number of organizations, events, and initiatives, especially those relating to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Niko Steenken on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank him for all that he does to make his community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 896

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Noel Young was nominated by the Port Royal Legion, Branch #21 to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas Noel Young has been an active and dedicated volunteer with the Port Royal Legion Branch No. 21 for 12 years, including serving as Public Relations Officer;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Noel Young on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank him for all that he does to make his community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 897

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Sheila Duggan was nominated by the King's Theatre Society to be honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas Sheila Duggan served as an invaluable member of the King's Theatre Board since 2016, including terms as Chair of the Board and Chair of the Marketing and Programming Committee;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Sheila Duggan on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank her for all that she does to make her community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 898

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal was a tangible way for the Province to honour The Queen's service while also honouring significant contributions and achievements made by residents; and

Whereas Annapolis County resident Stuart Lenthall-Ascott was selected to receive the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal; and

Whereas Stuart Lenthall-Ascott has been and continues to be a very active community member and volunteer, including 30 years as member of the Bridgetown Legion (10 of which he served as President) and 20 years volunteering with the Bridgetown Lions Club;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Stuart Lenthall-Ascott on receiving the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee Medal and thank him for his many contributions to his community.

RESOLUTION NO. 899

By: Carman Kerr (Annapolis)

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

Whereas each year the County of Annapolis celebrates exceptional volunteers at a volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas in 2023 Wayne Disney was honoured at the Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony; and

Whereas Wayne Disney is an active and dedicated member of the Annapolis Royal Volunteer Fire Department;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Wayne Disney on being honoured at the 2023 Annapolis County volunteer recognition ceremony and thank him for all that he does to make his community an even better place to live, work, and play.

RESOLUTION NO. 900

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Linda Smith, along with Shirley Smith, opened Memories Café & Eatery in Liverpool in 2012; and

Whereas core team members Jeffrey Whynot, Megan West, and Amanda Whynot have made the café a warm and welcoming place to visit for locals and tourists; and

Whereas for over 11 years Memories has won numerous awards, participated in local events, made charitable donations, and of course has provided delectable baked goods and fresh cooking, has been a wonderful community asset, providing an affordable, relaxed and friendly location for folks to meet and eat;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in giving best wishes to Linda in her future endeavours, and wish new owner Melanie Inglis all the best in this new exciting role.

RESOLUTION NO. 901

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas 11-year-old entrepreneur Noah Hobson of Greenfield has started a 3D printing company that produces fidgets and fidget accessories; and

Whereas these useful tools act as coping mechanisms aimed at helping both young and older people who suffer with anxiety, autism, and dementia; and

Whereas Noah's innovative idea provides a focus to assist in distraction from sensory overload and neurodiversity;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Noah on this significant accomplishment, and wish Noah all the best in his future endeavours.

RESOLUTION NO. 902

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas in September Sandra Woodford retired from Manager of Resident Care at Queens Manor after 15 influential and highly dedicated years; and

Whereas during Sandra's 15 years at Queens Manor, she has made many friends and admirers both within the Manor and the community; and

Whereas she has been loved and respected by her colleagues, the residents, and their families alike, her hard work, knowledge and enthusiasm will be sadly missed by many;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in thanking Sandra for her caring service, and wish her all the best on her well-deserved retirement.

RESOLUTION NO. 903

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Queens County athlete Sarah Mitton from Brooklyn is a world-class shot

putter and currently holds the Canadian women's record of 20.33 metres; and

Whereas Sarah's accomplishments have been highlighted on several occasions, but 2023 has proved to be a stellar season even by her exceedingly high standards; and

Whereas Sarah has achieved numerous top-two finishes in meets all over the world, including winning the silver medal at the prestigious Diamond League final, silver medal performance at the World Athletics Championships, and most recently winning the gold medal at the Pan American Games in Santiago, Chile;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in congratulating Sarah Mitton for a consistent and outstanding season, I am so proud of you Sarah!

RESOLUTION NO. 904

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas Tim and Gloria Rudderham, and their entire team at Stonehaven Lodge, sadly closed its doors for the final time this past Summer; and

Whereas for 18 years, Stonehaven overlooked beautiful Port Mouton Bay, it was a wonderful retirement and assisted living facility, providing room and board to active seniors not only from Queens but from across Canada and even overseas; and

Whereas during those years nearly 70 residents called Stonehaven home, receiving the absolute highest level of compassionate care filled with love, smiles, and appreciation of each other;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Tim and Gloria the very best in their retirement and thank them sincerely for all they have done for our Queens' seniors, and congratulations on their recent wedding celebration!

RESOLUTION NO. 905

By: Hon. Kim Masland (Queens)

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

Whereas local author Vernon Oickle recently published his latest novel, *Seven Crows: A Secret Yet to be Told*; and

Whereas this is the seventh in Vernon's Crow series of crime novels, all with a distinctive and recognizable Maritime flavour, which have become bestsellers; and

Whereas this is Vernon's 34th book and many of these proudly showcase Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada, both from factual and fictional viewpoints, preserving the areas rich culture and heritage;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in wishing Vernon the best with this latest offering and thank him for continuing to highlight Queens and Nova Scotia in such a creative manner.

RESOLUTION NO. 906

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas the Atlantic Book Awards were awarded on June 7, 2023; and

Whereas Elaine McCluskey won the Alistair MacLeod Prize for Short Fiction for *Rafael Has Pretty Eyes* (Goose Lane Editions); and

Whereas *Rafael Has Pretty Eyes* is Elaine's sixth book of fiction;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Elaine McCluskey for winning the Alistair MacLeod Prize for Short Fiction for *Rafael Has Pretty Eyes* (Goose Lane Editions).

RESOLUTION NO. 907

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas Ian Gaudet travelled from Dartmouth to Concepción, Chile, to represent Canada at the Pan American Games in Canoe/Kayak Sprint; and

Whereas of the 18 paddlers representing Canada in 10 Canoe-Kayak events, an impressive six athletes came from the Halifax Regional Municipality; and

Whereas Ian Gaudet of Banook Canoe Club won a Gold Medal and was named Pan American Champion in the Men's K2 500m;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Ian Gaudet on his incredible athletic achievements and recognize the concentration of talent in this province.

RESOLUTION NO. 908

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas on March 6, 2023, volunteers for the Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia cooked a delicious meal for those in attendance at The North Grove's weekly family supper; and

Whereas the yummy, hot food included a halal curried beef dish called beef rezela with rice, with chicken, and vegetarian option as well; and

Whereas that night the family supper was packed with folks who have been attending for years and many Bangladeshi newcomers who live in Dartmouth North;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Ismat Jarin for volunteering with the Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia and helping with the March 6th family supper at The North Grove in Dartmouth North.

RESOLUTION NO. 909

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas on March 6, 2023, volunteers for the Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia cooked a delicious meal for those in attendance at The North Grove's weekly family supper; and

Whereas the yummy, hot food included a halal curried beef dish called beef rezela

with rice, with chicken, and vegetarian option as well; and

Whereas that night the family supper was packed with folks who have been attending for years and many Bangladeshi newcomers who live in Dartmouth North;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Md Ahsanul Hoque for volunteering with the Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia and helping with the March 6th family supper at The North Grove in Dartmouth North.

RESOLUTION NO. 910

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas the Atlantic Book Awards were awarded on June 7, 2023; and

Whereas Dartmouth North resident Nicola Davison was the winner of the Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian YA Literature for *Decoding Dot Grey* (Nimbus Publishing); and

Whereas the Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian Children's Literature celebrates outstanding contributions to writing for Atlantic Canadian young people;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Nicola Davison for winning the 2023 Ann Connor Brimer Award for Atlantic Canadian YA Literature for *Decoding Dot Grey*.

RESOLUTION NO. 911

By: Susan Leblanc (Dartmouth North)

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

Whereas on March 6, 2023, volunteers for the Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia cooked a delicious meal for those in attendance at The North Grove's weekly family supper; and

Whereas the yummy, hot food included a halal curried beef dish called beef rezela

with rice, with chicken, and vegetarian option as well; and

Whereas that night the family supper was packed with folks who have been attending for years and many Bangladeshi newcomers who live in Dartmouth North;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Suriya Rahman for volunteering with the Bangladesh Community Association of Nova Scotia and helping with the March 6th family supper at The North Grove in Dartmouth North.

FILED PETITIONS**(Tabled Nov. 9, 2023)****Petition for the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Re Bridgewater Watershed Protection Alliance**

As you may have heard, with support from the community, we have been successful in having the proposed logging in the watershed put on hold. Our next goal is to permanently protect these lands through a creation of a Wilderness Area for all Crown land in the Petite River Watershed (which includes the Bridgewater Watershed). This area is the habitat of the Critically Endangered Whitefish and hosts a variety of rare and unique species. Wilderness areas protect nature and provide opportunities for education, research, wilderness recreation, nature tourism, camping, sport fishing, hunting, and community stewardship. We ask that the government protect this area by designating the Crown land a Wilderness Area.

Petition for the Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Re Bridgewater Watershed Protection Alliance

There is an active logging proposal for three lots of Crown land (LU099961B - 28.45 Ha, LU099960c - 49.85 Ha, and LU068578 A - 25.4 HA) that are located within the Bridgewater Watershed area. This area is also the habitat of the Critically Endangered Whitefish. We ask that the government stop the proposed harvest on the three parcels of Crown land around Minamkeak Lake and that they designate all Crown lands in the Petite watershed as a wilderness area.