



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Danielle Barkhouse

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First Session

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025

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HALIFAX, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Sixty-fifth General Assembly

First Session

9:00 A.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Danielle Barkhouse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

John White, Marco MacLeod, Tom Taggart

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

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise on a point of order. Yesterday, during proceedings and at the start at Estimates, while there was some discussion happening in this main Chamber about the plan for the day, the honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care, the Deputy Premier, brought out her phone and filmed me in those Chambers while proceedings were under way. I was alerted to this by someone watching Legislative Television, so that action is recorded. I would ask for an apology from the Deputy Premier, and I would ask that that video be removed from her phone.

THE SPEAKER: I'm going to ask if the honourable member for Eastern Passage would please - oh, you've got to stand.

The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you to the member for that point of order. Speaker, I did do that. Although that is not the policy of the House, when the member crossed the aisle in such an aggressive way, I was concerned, and I did do that. It is deleted from my phone.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I just want to clarify that actually it's a rule of the House. Yesterday's proceedings were quite hectic, and I appreciate the descriptive word "impressive." I would also say that we should be deferring to the Chair or Speaker to maintain order in the House. If the member had had a concern, they should have alerted somebody like that, or even the Sergeant-at-Arms. I did not hear an apology. I request an apology.

BARBARA ADAMS: The next time, I will alert the Sergeant-at-Arms, but I do apologize for the action.

THE SPEAKER: Consider the matter settled.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

RESOLUTION NO. 14

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

Whereas human trafficking and sexual exploitation has a devastating impact not only on victims but their families and communities as well; and

Whereas in Nova Scotia, we are guided by the advice of experts through the Trafficking and Exploitation Services System, also known as TESS, and provide funding to organizations like YWCA Halifax's Safer Spaces program that supports victims and survivors directly; and

Whereas National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, February 22nd, serves as an opportunity to raise awareness, educate, and promote resources and supports available to those experiencing or at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly join me in recognizing February 22nd as National Human Trafficking Awareness Day and committing to continuing our work with community organizations to prevent this violence.

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

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 28 - An Act to Provide for the Development of a Charter for Cape Breton Regional Municipality. (Hon. Derek Mombourquette)

Bill No. 29 - An Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code, to Stimulate the Economy and Reduce Income Inequality. (Paul Wozney)

Bill No. 30 - An Act to Authorize the Windsor Curling Club to Convert to a Society Under the Societies Act. (Melissa Sheehy-Richard)

Bill No. 31 - An Act to Amend Chapter 246 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Labour Standards Code, Respecting Sick Leave. (Paul Wozney)

Bill No. 32 - An Act to Amend Chapter 8 of the Acts of 1990, the Emergency Management Act, Respecting Emergency Alerts. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 33 - An Act to Amend Chapter 4 of the Acts of 1992, the Emergency “911” Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

HOCKEY GAME: TEAM CANADA WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. LEAH MARTIN: The 2025 4 Nations Face-Off Tournament ended in thrilling style last night with Team Canada's overtime win versus the United States. What makes it even more special is that Cole Harbour's Nathan MacKinnon was named tournament MVP. MacKinnon scored a tournament-leading four goals in four games, including the opening goal last night to capture the title. MacKinnon wasn't the only Nova Scotian or Cole Harbour kid suited up for the 4 Nations Face-Off. Sidney Crosby and Brad Marchand were also valuable members of the team, with Sidney Crosby serving as team captain.

It was an exciting round robin with Team Canada defeating Sweden in their first game before a loss to the U.S. team. They reached the finals after a 5-3 win over Finland. In the final - played in Boston - it was a chance for Team Canada to avenge their earlier loss, this time with a much different result. Their overtime victory kept Canadians riveted in their seats until late in the night. Congratulations to Team Canada, with a special thank you to Nathan MacKinnon, Sidney Crosby, and Brad Marchand for securing the title. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: You've got to love it. A room full of proud leaders and proud Canadians and Nova Scotians.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction relative to my member statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LISA LACHANCE: Joining us in the gallery today - and I'll ask them to give a wave or stand up as I say their name - are Janet Fraser Ross, Susanna Burns, and Brendan Coyne. They're here to listen to my member statement about their dear one. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House of the people. We hope you enjoy your time and the member statement.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

[9:15 a.m.]

BURNS, STEVEN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA LACHANCE: I rise to honour the passing of a long-time resident of Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, Steven Burns. Steven was a philosopher, a vocalist, and an adventurer. He was a professor at Dalhousie since 1969 and taught courses on the philosophy of art, Marxist theory, Plato, Wagner, and others. Over time he was the department chair and graduate coordinator. He supported several scholarly organizations and published over 90 articles.

He and his partner, Janet, met in 1970. They started singing together and didn't stop. A runner in his youth, Steven remained a jogger, but was also proud of having taken up downhill skiing in his 40s and ice hockey in his 60s. He was a dedicated Nova Scotia NDP supporter and organizer.

Speaker, I invite all members to honour the passing of Steven Burns.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HOCKEY GAME: TEAM CANADA WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I want to rise on my feet too and echo the words of my colleague from the PC caucus about the great win last night for Canada.

There are lots of great memories we all have of Canada winning gold in various tournaments and various games, but this one meant a little bit more, especially considering that over the last number of weeks, Canadians have continuously heard their sovereignty questioned. How proud we are as a country, and how proud we are as a people. Time and time again, our great game has united us, and that was no different last night.

I rise in my place to recognize not only Team Canada for winning the game and making us all proud, but also to remember that when the game was over, those two teams shook hands. The United States is still our neighbour. Let's not let one man divide us. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

FELLOW MLA - BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, I just want to take a moment to wish maybe the tallest MLA to ever grace this building - a farmer, a hard-working individual - a happy 63rd birthday. (Applause)

I can't sing, so I'm wondering if the member for Halifax Needham and the member for . . . (interruption).

THE SPEAKER: We can sing "Happy Birthday" with unanimous consent.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

["Happy Birthday" was sung.]

THE SPEAKER: I'm sure everyone here agrees with me that we wish you many more.

The honourable member for Preston.

HON. TWILA GROSSE: Before I begin my statement, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

TWILA GROSSE: In the gallery, I am pleased to welcome Glen and Kerrie-lynn Johnston, the owners of Johnston & Johnston Commercial Cleaning. By the way, in the past, they have cleaned this Province House.

Glen and Kerrie-lynn, please stand and receive the warm welcome from the members of the Legislature. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House. We hope you enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Preston.

JOHNSTON, G. & KERRIE-LYNN: CLEANING SERV. - RECOG.

HON. TWILA GROSSE: I rise today to recognize Glen and Kerrie-Lynn Johnston, proud owners of Johnston & Johnston Commercial Cleaning.

Glen and Kerrie-Lynn take pride in the work they do, and they are driven by a commitment to customer satisfaction and excellence. With more than 20 years of experience, they built a business focused on hard work, dedication, and providing top quality cleaning services. They also strive to offer eco-friendly solutions, from green cleaning and extractions to specialized services like construction and boat cleaning. Their focus is on exceeding the expectations of both businesses and homeowners in HRM.

Beyond providing exceptional service, they are passionate about creating opportunities for people of colour and contributing to the growth and well-being of our community.

I ask all members of the Legislature to please join me in recognizing Glenn and Kerri-Lynn Johnston and congratulate them on being in business for 20 years.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: I beg leave to make an introduction

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

KENDRA COOMBES: In the gallery opposite, Speaker, is the president of NSGEU Local 1, one of the largest locals. In my house, I call her Mom. She's the one who raised me, and I have the absolute privilege to have her here today.

THE SPEAKER: Welcome. I hope you enjoy your time here.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

DOUGLAS, KENDRICK: MILLER AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

KENDRA COOMBES: The Tom Miller Human Rights Award honours individuals who have made a meaningful impact in their communities by promoting, supporting, initiating, or advancing human rights. This year, Kendrick Douglas has been named the recipient of this esteemed award, recognizing his unwavering dedication to human rights advocacy.

A passionate champion for equity and justice, Kendrick is a distinguished community leader, legal professional, and advocate committed to advancing human rights and creating opportunities for marginalized individuals. Kendrick's dedication is rooted in a legacy of resilience and trail-blazing leadership. He is the son of Dr. Clotilda Adessa Douglas-Yakimchuk, who made history as the first African Canadian graduate of the Nova Scotia Hospital School of Nursing. Kendrick comes from a legacy of breaking barriers; however, his accomplishments stand proudly on their own. This award holds special significance, as he shares it with his late mother.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction before I read my member statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

BRAD JOHNS: In the East Gallery today is a long-time personal friend, Sackville resident Gary Clark. With him today is his furry friend Jersey. They both got up bright and early to come in here today. I would ask all members of the House to make them feel welcome. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Thank you for coming. We hope you enjoy your time. Your furry friend is absolutely adorable.

The honourable member for Sackville-Uniacke.

DAUGHTER, MARIA - BIRTHDAY WISHES

HON. BRAD JOHNS: Speaker, 17 years ago today, on Thursday, February 21, 2008, Nova Scotians witnessed a total lunar eclipse, which started at about 12:30 a.m. Although eclipses are not that rare, that particular eclipse is one that I will always remember. At 12:45 a.m., my former wife and I left the house to drive to the IWK hospital for the birth of our second daughter, Maria Elizabeth Johns.

I want to take an opportunity to wish Maria a very happy 17th birthday today, tell her I love her very much, and hope she has a wonderful day. Happy birthday, Sunshine.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HOCKEY GAME: TEAM CANADA WIN - CONGRATS.

PAUL WOZNEY: Whatever our divisions and differences may be in this House, two things I know we can stand united about are support for our country in the face of the callous threats to our national sovereignty and for the athletes who represent Canada in international competition. Last night, Team Canada struck a mighty blow to the designs of the former host of *The Apprentice* when it defeated the U.S. national hockey team 3-2 in overtime to claim the 4 Nations Face-Off. Nova Scotia has particular reason to be proud of this achievement. Two colleagues have already recognized three Nova Scotians who competed in the championship game: Sidney Crosby and Nathan MacKinnon of Cole Harbour and Brad Marchand of Tantallon.

I draw to the attention of the House that Nova Scotia was represented by a fourth Nova Scotian on the ice. We have cause to celebrate the work done by linesman Gord Dwyer. Born and raised in Lower Sackville, he got his start as an official with the Sackville Minor Hockey Association. Last night, Gord helped make this game possible at the highest level of competition in the world.

This isn't the first time that international hockey has meant much more than a win in the record books. I invite all members of the House to rise and applaud the leadership of

these Nova Scotians and their symbolic opposition to threats to our national sovereignty. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Just to make it clear, we started off with one of the member statements going a little over. Some of them just keep on going over, which is fine. It's Friday, and let's all be patriotic, but let's not creep too far past.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DOWNIE, JOSIE: CARE BAGS - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I want to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary efforts of Josie Downie. Five years ago, at age 13, Josie had an idea to create care bags for members of the first tent encampment at the Peace and Friendship Park downtown, when the camp was being dismantled.

For the past five years, this remarkable young lady has devoted herself to collecting items and creating care bags for the less fortunate in our community. Each year, as the festive season approaches, Josie has been reaching out to local businesses for donations. With unwavering dedication, she has managed to gather enough items to prepare and distribute over 200 care bags. These bags, filled with essential items and a touch of holiday cheer, are delivered to those in need around Christmas.

Josie has been recognized for her outstanding contributions. In her senior year in high school, she was honoured with the prestigious Unsung Hero Award. This accolade was a testament to her behind-the-scenes work and her steadfast commitment to serving the community. I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in acknowledging Josie for her dedication and applaud her ongoing contributions to our community.

THE SPEAKER: Just for new members: we rotate.

The honourable member for Victoria-The Lakes.

CAPE SMOKEY SKI CLUB: REVIVAL - RECOG.

DIANNE TIMMINS: I rise today to celebrate the incredible revival of Cape Smokey Ski Club in Ingonish. After years without the club, Cape Smokey is back in action, with the guidance of racing coach Trina Doucette. The club is growing, from just a handful of young athletes in 2021 to 24 enthusiastic skiers this season.

A special congratulations to Trevor Williams, who was named a Volunteer of the Year at the Ski Nova Scotia AGM last fall. His leadership, along with his commitment of newly trained race officials and coaches, is ensuring a bright future for the club.

Cape Smokey also hosted a successful end-of-season camp in 2024 and is preparing for the first annual Nadine Arsenault Memorial Race this March. Thank you for the support from the Mary Parker Foundation.

I ask all members to join me in applauding Cape Smokey and wishing its young athletes continued success on the slopes.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

ARMVIEW RESTAURANT: FOOD SERVICE - CONGRATS.

KRISTA GALLAGHER: I rise to recognize the Armview Restaurant & Lounge for being a staple in Halifax Chebucto Riding and a Gallagher family favourite.

The Armview Restaurant is one of Halifax's oldest eating establishments and has been committed to the community of Halifax since 1951. The Armview took home the 2024 bronze medal for Best Breakfast in Halifax's The Coast Awards, a tribute to their dedication to preserving the classics while delivering a contemporary twist. While the original beach view from the outdoor patio no longer exists, comfort can still be found in this cozy diner.

For their commitment to serving the community and their perseverance as a timeless local favourite, I congratulate the Armview Restaurant & Lounge on their evolution and their continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DAUGHTER: LEARNING GERMAN - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I always have the chance to recognize the girls when I'm in here. It's an honour to do it. I do want to rise because my 10-year-old just finished one year straight of Duolingo, learning German, and we'll celebrate. Now she's moved on to music. It's always great to get up and recognize the girls, and I'm pretty proud of her.

She did - see her every day to make sure that she does that, so she doesn't lose her streak. She's beyond the year now, but she'll love this Member Statement when I get home. I just want to congratulate my daughter Emily on being so committed to learning new languages around the world.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

[9:30 a.m.]

SERAPHINA'S MUSIC & ART SCHOOL: OPENING - CONGRATS.

DAMIAN STOILOV: I rise today to celebrate the grand opening of the Kearney Lake location of Seraphina's Music & Art School this month.

Seraphina Kim is both an entrepreneur and an educator, offering a wide array of lessons and programs to young people in Bedford South. I am sure that as her business continues to grow in their new location, she will be able to help many talented young Nova Scotians develop their skills and foster a lifelong love of music and visual arts.

Speaker, I ask the members of this House to help me in congratulating Seraphina Kim and wishing her and her students all the success in their educational journeys.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

VOLUNTEERS: CAMPAIGN WORK - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize the amazing volunteers and community members who came out in droves to support me during my election campaign. My campaign office every day was busy, vibrant, filled with laughter and love along with hard work by many members of my community and my friends.

I would like to personally thank my family, my friends, my neighbours, my EDA members, and visitors who just wanted to chat or pop in, and especially my manager Michael MacDonald, and Aisha Hum and Arrow for their belief in me and the work that I do. The win at Halifax Needham was not mine alone. The support I received from all these folks keeps me going, and I am humbled and honoured to be in this seat for a second term.

Speaker, I would like all members to help me thank all the folks mentioned above, and I wouldn't be here representing all of you without your support, so thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

ORGAN, MEGHAN: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I rise to recognize Meghan Organ who resides in Timberlea and is a Grade 12 student at Halifax West High School. At just 17 years old, Meghan has already demonstrated a commendable passion for civic engagement and a profound dedication to her community.

Meghan's enthusiasm for politics and her active participation in the recent provincial elections stands as an inspiring example of youth involvement in our democratic

process. Her efforts have not only provided her with invaluable experience, but have also served to motivate her peers to take an active interest in politics.

As Meghan prepares to embark on her university journey aspiring to study international relations or political science, her story reminds us of the critical importance of fostering youth engagement in civic activities. It is through the involvement of young people like Meghan that we can ensure a vibrant future for our society.

Meghan represents the future of our community and our country. Let us celebrate her achievements and continue to encourage our youth to participate in the democratic process, for they are the leaders of tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

STEELE, DARRELL: MELVIN JONES AWD. - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Darrell Steele of Scots Bay, who received the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award from Lions Club International in December 2024. The Melvin Jones Fellowship Award is the most prestigious and highest award offered by the International Loins Club.

Darrell is a long-time member of the Canning Lions Club and a past King Lion. His many years of service to the Canning Lions Club exemplifies the motto “We care. We serve. We accomplish.”

I ask all members of this Legislature to join me in thanking Darrell Steele for his community service and congratulating him for receiving this prestigious award.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

LEFRENSE, ALPHONSE: HOLY TRINITY CHURCH - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, at the beginning of this year, Alphonse Lefrense, a long-standing member of the Dartmouth North community, celebrated 40 years serving as a licensed lay minister.

For the past 26 years, Alphonse has applied his trade at the Holy Trinity Emmanuel Anglican Church in the heart of Dartmouth North. Alphonse is responsible for welcoming churchgoers every week and leading them in song. He has also been a huge part of creating the warm, caring community atmosphere at Trinity Emmanuel.

Trinity Emmanuel commemorated this milestone at a service in January with Alphonse’s all-time favourite cake, vanilla with sprinkles - a classic. Upon receiving the

cake he immediately declared he would share it with everyone - a testament to the kindness and generosity he has shown the people of Dartmouth North for over a quarter century.

I ask that this House join me in congratulating Alphonse on this milestone and thank him specifically for his service to Holy Trinity Emmanuel Anglican Church and the community of Dartmouth North.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

NEILY, MARILYN: CURLING TOUR PARTICIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Marilyn Neily of Pleasantville, who is a member of the Bridgewater Curling Club. Marilyn was one of 22 Canadian women curlers selected from across the country to participate in the 2024 Curling Friendship Tour held in Scotland last Fall. She was the sole representative of our beautiful province.

The Curling Friendship Tour, established in 1955, aims to strengthen the bonds between two great curling nations of Canada and Scotland. Team Canada competed in 18 games over 21 days and was declared the overall tour winner, bringing home the Muriel Fage trophy, in memory of a well-known Nova Scotian curler.

Curling is a sport that showcases skill and strategy but also fosters friendship and camaraderie. During the tour, Marilyn had the opportunity to experience Scotland's rich history and vibrant culture. She says the outstanding Scottish hospitality was a highlight of the tour.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating Marilyn for this exceptional achievement, and for representing Nova Scotia with pride and dedication to the sport she loves.

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

SHAKESPEARE BY THE SEA: PRODNS. - CONGRATS.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise today in congratulations to Shakespeare by the Sea Halifax on their Summer 2024 productions of *Alice in Wonderland: The Musical* and *Twelfth Night*. These enchanting performances were, as always, a vibrant addition to Halifax's art scene.

We are grateful that Shakespeare by the Sea continues to inspire creativity, promote social cohesion, and contribute to the economic and artistic vitality of our city. They've long been a cornerstone of our community, bringing the magic of theatre to audiences

young and old. Their commitment to accessible, high-quality performances enriches our cultural landscape.

We are fortunate to have such a dedicated theatre company in Halifax, one that consistently delivers captivating performances in stunning outdoor settings.

Speaker, congratulations to Shakespeare by the Sea for their Summer 2024 season. We look forward to Summer 2025.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

LUN. CO. LUTHERANS: NEW PASTORS - CONGRATS.

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Today I rise to congratulate Lunenburg County Lutherans in forging a new path for rural ministries. Last weekend, 10 churches joined together to welcome two new shared regional pastors, Reverend Victoria Featherston and Reverend Annette Smith, in a joy-filled service at historic Zion Evangelical in Lunenburg.

Bishop Carla Blakley told worshipers that she believes this model will inspire congregations across the country. My congratulations to the leadership of: All Saints, Necombville; Grace First South; Mount Calvary, Upper Northfield; Mount Olivet, Upper LaHave; St. Andrews, West Northfield; St. James, Branch LaHave; St. John's, Mahone Bay, St. Luke's, Rhodes Corner; St. Paul's, Bridgewater and Zion Evangelical in Lunenburg.

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

REID, FRANCIS: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I rise to recognize an unsung hero, a person who sacrifices himself for the good of others without recognition: Francis Reid. The New Waterford Rotary honoured Francis Reid for his many years of service, volunteering countless hours helping out whenever, wherever he could, both at home and away.

Francis began volunteering in 1975 at Loaves and Fishes, and from there began his many years of service. Francis has been involved in the New Waterford Fish and Game Derby, numerous basketball tournaments including the Coal Bowl, the Vince Ryan tournament for over 20 years, security for the New Waterford Coal Bowl, as I mentioned, New Waterford Coal Dust Days, and the school breakfast program where he truly shined.

It is at the school where Francis's love for children shone through, and he has become a loved member of the Greenfield family. We, as a community, are very fortunate to have people like Francis.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

E. PASSAGE PIRATES: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Eastern Passage Pirates baseball team on their gold medal win in the Under 13 Tier 2 Division. They proudly won each of their last four games for the championship. Coach Bruce Johnston led the team, consisting of Akira Robb, Cohen Elliott, Caleb Malaidack, Evan Gray, Brayden MacNeill, Keelee MacDonald, Parker Judge, Bennet Ngassa, Kendra Vallee, Seneca Day, Kloe Judge and Noah Humphreys, all the way through the championships.

It takes a lot of hard work, dedication and team camaraderie to have successful outcomes like these Pirates have. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating the Pirates, coaches and players for building such a strong team, and on their divisional gold medal win.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PINK PIANO CAFÉ: 1ST ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

PAUL WOZNEY: Communities can offer their residents few services more important than safe and diverse places to congregate. No matter the form they take, these spaces are the beating heart of connecting neighbourhoods, towns, and cities. It's my pleasure to recognize a newcomer to Sackville that provides this very service: The Pink Piano Café & Lounge, which is celebrating its first year of operation.

Though its young tenure in Sackville has been short, the Pink Piano Café & Lounge has made a notable mark in the community by creating a safe and colourful space for everyone. Events at the café include everything from crafting and song circles to drag queen bingo. It's my sincere wish that the Pink Piano Café & Lounge, and others like it, continue to brighten our community for years to come. I invite all those present to join me in congratulating the Pink Piano Café & Lounge on its one-year anniversary.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

ROSS, ELVERA: EBONY HAIR SALON - CONGRATS.

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: I rise today to recognize Elvera Ross, the owner of Ebony Hair Salon, a local business located in Dartmouth East. Elvera celebrated 21 years of business with Ebony Hair Salon, a full-service salon and barbershop. They have two barbers and stylists, including Kelly Simmonds, who has been with Ebony Hair Salon for 19 of those years.

After more than two decades, you can imagine they have many loyal customers, but now they also have the adult children of those customers who are going to the salon as well. Speaker, I ask that all members join me to congratulate Elvera Ross on this incredible achievement and wish her all the best in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

BUS DRIVERS: CARE - THANKS

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to thank all of the bus drivers on our roads today and every day. Whether it is public transit or the school buses, with our wild weather, the roads lately haven't been the greatest, and I just want to say thank you for taking the care to make sure our passengers arrive safely to their destination, especially my kiddos.

All of my children take transit to and from school every day. Three go on public transit to two different schools, and two children get the school bus to and from school each day. As a parent, I worry daily about a lot of things for my young Black children in this world that we live in, but I'm so glad that their travel is a safe one - all thanks to our bus drivers. I'd like all members to join me in thanking our bus drivers across this province, in our communities, and on our workday for all the work that they do continuing to keep all of us passengers safe - especially our children.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

VOLUNTEERS: BIRDLAND COM. GARDEN - RECOG.

ADEGOKE FADARE: I rise today to applaud the volunteers of the Birdland Community Garden in Clayton Park West. The concept of a community garden came from the desire to provide a place to allow residents of all abilities to build friendships as well as promote health and relaxation. It also creates an opportunity to have a hands-on means of action on global climate issues in relation to access to fresh and nutritious food.

To raise funds for the Birdland Community Garden, rain barrels are being sold, which include a leaf and a mosquito filter basket, an overflow adaptor, a faucet, and an overflow hose. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the House of Assembly to join me in applauding the volunteers for their efforts in bringing the community garden together with this initiative.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

***NORTH DARTMOUTH ECHO*: 20TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the *North Dartmouth Echo* on 20 years of publication. Born from a vision to spread good news throughout the

community of Dartmouth North, the *Echo* has demonstrated a longevity and resiliency that is representative of the community it serves. The *Echo* is nearly an entirely volunteer-led endeavour. Even before it hits the stands, it brings community members together as a team of photographers, writers, editors, and even advertisement reps.

The *Echo* publishes five times a year, over the course of which 3,000 copies are delivered to schools, churches, businesses, and locations throughout the community. My office is incredibly proud to be included in that list. With its commitment to highlighting local perspectives and sharing resources, the *North Dartmouth Echo* is an integral part of the connective tissue of our community. I ask the House to join me in congratulating the *North Dartmouth Echo* on this 20-year milestone.

[9:45 a.m.]

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

BAKER, BYRON: CAMPAIGN WORK - THANKS

BRAD MCGOWAN: Today I rise in recognition of Byron Baker, a longtime Tory volunteer who was instrumental in the success of my recent campaign. Byron has spent a lifetime as an active volunteer of the Nova Scotia PC Party, and even now into his golden years, he was absolutely key to me winning the seat.

If I wanted to list out everything he has done for me, we could be here all day. He started by introducing me to notable members of the community, then organized volunteers and spent the rest of his time building and fixing signs deep into the night. I truly cannot thank Byron enough. I ask my fellow members to please join me in thanking one of the most committed, hard-working individuals I have ever had the pleasure to meet: Byron Baker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

DWYER, JOHN: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Today I stand to recognize the life and energy of a dear friend of mine who passed away: John “Cookie” Dwyer. For those who grew up in our community, to know Cookie was to love Cookie. He was always the centre of attention; he was always the energy in the party.

His celebration of life may have possibly been the largest celebration of life I’ve ever attended in my life, with hundreds of people. We shared the same birthday, so every year he would text me on my birthday and try to get me in trouble with him. I would always tell him I have three kids and a wife, You go have fun. I’m good. John was a great guy. He

is missed by many. It was a terrible tragedy to the community. We love him, we respect him, and he will be missed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

SPARTANS VOLLEYBALL TEAM: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I rise today to congratulate the North Queens Community School boys' volleyball team on winning the School Sport Nova Scotia 2024-2025 provincial banner and their division for the second year in a row. It took the Spartans just two games to defeat their opponents in the gold medal round in front of their hometown crowd on December 7th. These back-to-back banners are all the more impressive because the team was formed just four years ago. The dedication, hard work, and commitment shown by these players is both evident and admirable. Please join me in applauding the players and coaching staff of this talented and competitive Spartan volleyball team and in expressing gratitude for their incredibly supportive hometown fans, of whom I am one, who ensured that this provincial tournament was successful and enjoyable for all. Go, Spartans, Go.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

HIPPERN, ELIZABETH: 100TH BIRTHDAY - CONGRATS.

TIM OUTHIT: I rise today to wish Bedford's Elizabeth Hippern a belated 100th birthday. Mrs. Hippern celebrated her birthday with her family and friends in December 2024 at the Bedford Lions Club, a wonderful woman and a family whom I know well. Rather than gifts, Mrs. Hippern asked attendees to bring donations of non-perishables for the Bedford Lions Community Food Pantry. This resulted in 248 items. It was a wonderful contribution to the community. I ask all members to join me in wishing Elizabeth Hippern a belated happy birthday and thanking her for her thoughtful contribution to the Lions Pantry.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

SMILEY, JUDITH: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. KENT SMITH: I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Judith Ann Smiley, a dedicated community member who passed away peacefully on November 23, 2024, at Harbourview Lodge in Sheet Harbour.

Judy began her career at the Bank of Nova Scotia in Sheet Harbour and later become postmaster in Port Dufferin, followed by several other admirable positions. In 1988, Judy was elected as county councillor for District 11, which she called one of her

finest accomplishments. She later worked in Central Nova Member of Parliament Peter MacKay's satellite office in Sheet Harbour for many years.

Among her numerous achievements, Judy also arranged the first Terry Fox Run in Sheet Harbour in 1981. She was the first president of Caregivers Nova Scotia. She was a member of the Sheet Harbour Lioness Club, the Catholic Women's League of Canada, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Gerald Hardy Memorial Society, and the list goes on.

I ask all members of the House to join me in extending sincere condolences to Judy's family, especially her devoted husband of 64 years, Bernie.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

SNOWPLOW OPERATORS: WORK ETHIC - RECOG.

TOM TAGGART: I'd like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for all the snowplow operators in Nova Scotia. While I acknowledge that snow removal is their job, it is no easy task. They are out in the very worst weather conditions while the rest of us stay safely in our homes. These provincial employees work night and day, leaving their families during these stormy conditions. Sometimes, snowplow operators must endure comments from folks who say they are not working quickly enough. Their job is no easy task. I just want folks to understand that they have a preassigned route and they follow that very strictly. I wish to commend snowplow operators on their work and willingness to keep Nova Scotians safely on the road.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

DUKE'S PLACE PUB & GRILL: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. FRED TILLEY: Speaker, today I would like to recognize a small business in our community: Duke's Place Pub & Grill. Not only is Duke's a great place to socialize but the food is also fantastic. Duke and Stacey go above and beyond to be involved in our community. Whether it's hosting a benefit dance for someone in need or bringing the bouncy castle to an event for all children to enjoy, they can be counted on to help. Duke and Stacey are always there to help at the community Christmas party, the Halloween party, and back-to-school and end-of-year celebrations - anything for the kids. I would ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking Duke and Stacey for everything they do in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

JENNING, MEI: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. NOLAN YOUNG: Speaker, I happily rise today to recognize Mei Jennings, a 16-year-old honour student at Shelburne Regional High School. Mei, who is preparing to go into nursing upon graduation, still finds time to do a great job volunteering in our community. In addition to her studies, Mei volunteers weekly at the local nursing home, Roseway Manor. She plays piano at the Christ Church and for the Shelburne Chorus. She also supports international student events at SRHS, is a board member and volunteer at the Osprey Arts Centre, volunteers at the Miracle on Dock St. breakfast with Santa, and is a Royal Canadian Sea Cadet. In 2024, Mei brought home the gold medal for the Skills Canada National Job Search Competition in the category of Employment. At 16, Mei truly exemplifies and sets a very high standard for what it means to be a volunteer. I respectfully ask all members to join me in thanking and congratulating Mei.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

MILFORD & DIST. LIONS CLUB: 50TH ANNIV. - CONGRATS.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Milford & District Lions Club as they celebrate their 50th anniversary. Since the inception in 1975, this incredible organization has been a pillar of generosity and community service in our region. Through countless initiatives and fundraisers, the Lions Club has consistently demonstrated its commitment to improving the lives of those in need. From supporting local families and youth programming to hosting community events, their dedication and hard work have had an immeasurable impact on Milford and the surrounding areas. I'd like to thank the past and present members of the Milford & District Lions Club for their unwavering service and contributions to our community. Reaching this milestone is a testament to the club's enduring values and the strength of its members. Please join me in congratulating the Milford & District Lions Club on their 50th anniversary and wishing them continued success in future endeavours.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

VEINOTE, LEO: 95TH BIRTHDAY - CONGRATS.

DAVID BOWLBY: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Leo Veinote, a dedicated veteran who recently celebrated his 95th birthday on January 31, 2025. Leo served our country with distinction for 22 years in the Canadian Army, from 1955 to 1977, working at military bases all across our country. After his service, he chose to retire to our beautiful community in Annapolis, where he continues to be a valued and respected resident. I met Leo during the election campaign, and his girlfriend said, If you want to meet him on his birthday, he'll be at the pub in Greenwood. Sure enough, he was. I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Leo Veinote on his milestone birthday and in thanking him for his years of service and commitment to our country.

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

MCCARTHY, JOHN JOHN: BOXING COACHING - RECOG.

JOHN WHITE: Speaker, John John McCarthy is a dedicated boxing coach at RING 73 Amateur Boxing Society in Glace Bay, as well as a valued teacher at Glace Bay High School. He is a pillar of strength and inspiration in our community. A boxer since age 15, John John has travelled the world through the boxing sport, bringing a wealth of experience and passion back to our hometown. His commitment to keeping RING 73 active over the years, despite countless challenges, is a testament to his love for the sport and for the kids he coaches. John John's tireless dedication to his students, both in the ring and in the classroom, is admirable. He not only teaches the art of boxing but also instills the values of discipline, resilience, and hard work. Our community is incredibly fortunate to have someone like John John McCarthy, whose impact on the lives of the young people he coaches goes far beyond the boxing club.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

TEDDIE & SONS: ARTISAN MARKET - RECOG.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I rise today to highlight an Antigonish business, Teddie & Sons, owned and operated by the DeCoste family. Kaitlin and Graham are proud parents to Paxton, Bodhi, Riggs, and Teddie. Tragically, Teddie died before her second birthday due to a rare heart condition. Before Teddie passed away, Kaitlin was running Little Boho Apparel and had plans for a retail space. Her plans for her business changed as she navigated through grief and focused on art to help her heal.

Teddie & Sons is an artisan market, where local products are available to purchase but also where you can go to create your own projects at their art bar. Kaitlin says, Whether you are creating to heal, celebrate, or just be happy, we have the supplies and the space for you to do that.

I ask all members of this House to recognize the DeCoste family and encourage everyone to stop by when you are in Antigonish.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie

SQUARE ROOTS: FOOD SECURITY PGM. - CONGRATS.

HON. GREG MORROW: I rise today to recognize the Square Roots food security program in Guysborough. This group of volunteers, led by community manager Rhonda Procure, started their group in December by holding bi-weekly produce markets. These markets offer fruit and vegetables that otherwise would have been wasted at the low cost of \$1 or less per pound. The mandate of this group, which has several branches across the

province, is to partner with local farmers to bring fresh produce to their communities at affordable prices. They are supporting local, eating fresh, and helping close the food insecurity gap.

Square Roots was developed and is run by students from Enactus Saint Mary's and is supported by the Province of Nova Scotia. Mid-January, Square Roots Guysborough sold 1,727 pounds of produce, making it the largest order of all 13 locations in the province. On December 21st they distributed 230 free bags of fruit and vegetables in the Guysborough community, a much-needed gift for many families just before the holidays. Speaker, I want to congratulate Rhonda Procure and her Square Roots volunteers for their commitment to this important program.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

COMEAU'S FARM MARKET: EXPANSION - CONGRATS.

RYAN ROBICHEAU: Since 1985, the family-owned business of Comeau's Farm Market in Meteghan has been offering a variety of fresh fruit, vegetables, and their home-made baked goods and bread. Earlier this year, they started working on an expansion to keep up with demand. Comeau's Farm Market is a great example of a local, family-owned business in our area.

This multi-generational, family-owned business is a testament to our Acadian values and dedicated work ethic. They've built a reputation for quality goods and friendly service. I ask all members to join me in acknowledging and applauding the owners and staff of Clare's own Comeau's Farm Market for their recent expansion and continued success.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

LYLE, BARBARA: COM. SERV. - THANKS

CHRIS PALMER: Today I rise to recognize an extraordinary community volunteer, Barb Lyle, whose decades of selfless service has profoundly impacted the lives of many in Kings West and beyond. Barb has dedicated her life to serving others. From her early years teaching figure skating to her longstanding involvement with the Lions Club, Barb has exemplified the true spirit of volunteerism. Since joining the Kingston Lions Club in 1995, she has remained a tireless advocate for numerous community initiatives, including fundraising for diabetes research, organizing youth programs, organizing food hampers for Christmas Mommies & Daddies Telethon, and supporting local events like the Port George Country Jamboree and the Kingston Steer BBQ.

Her leadership has extended to serving as village commissioner in Kingston, where recreational initiatives were brought forward for children and seniors. Barb's unwavering

dedication has been recognized with numerous awards, including Volunteer of the Year in Kingston and the prestigious Melvin Jones Fellowship for humanitarian service in the Kingston Lions Club. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in expressing our deepest gratitude to my friend Barb Lyle. Thank you, Barb, for everything you do for our community.

[10:00 a.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. The time is now 10 o'clock. We will finish Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers at 10:50 a.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: AUDITOR GENERAL PROPOSAL - RESCIND

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, the Auditor General has unearthed missing contracts, raised the alarm about violence in Nova Scotia schools, brought to light the backroom deals and millions of dollars wasted on the Hogan Court boondoggle, and flagged the need for better cybersecurity to protect the health data of Nova Scotians. Yesterday she was clear: She cannot do her job if this government has the power to fire her.

I want to ask the Premier: Will this government back off on their ludicrous proposal to change the rules for the Auditor General?

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I am happy to report that we have received 24 consecutive clean audits from the Auditor General. The Auditor General herself said that of over 200 recommendations in the last couple of years, our government, our senior civil staff, our departments have worked very diligently to meet all those requirements. We respect the work of the Auditor General.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: She has made it clear: If you respect her work, then this government will pull back this bill.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Wait a second. You can start over. The clock never finished - so I just want to make sure that you have your full 45 seconds.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Instead of attaching people to primary care, protecting renters, building homes that people can afford, this Premier has decided that his top priority

is hiding information and keeping Nova Scotians in the dark about what their government is doing. Silencing dissent and reducing access to information hurts our democracy. Over the past number of days, my colleagues and I have been inundated with messages from Nova Scotians from one end of this province to the other who are deeply troubled . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. “Hiding” is an unparliamentary word. I ask that you rephrase that.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I’ve made my point.

THE SPEAKER: Order. I have asked you to rephrase it. It was an unparliamentary word. Let’s all get along here. It’s Friday.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: By firing the Auditor General, by having the capacity to fire the Auditor General without cause, there is information Nova Scotians will not have access to that they should. Will the Premier admit he has made a mistake and leave the Auditor General’s Office alone?

JOHN LOHR: Speaker, our government’s priority is meeting the needs of Nova Scotians, in this budget in numerous ways, including ramping up and increasing the school food lunch program. I hope the Leader of the Official Opposition will support the budget for the fact of the school lunch program increase alone. I hope the Leader of the Official Opposition will support our historic tax relief to Nova Scotians. I hope the Leader of the Official Opposition will speak to her colleagues in Ottawa on the carbon tax, which will make life very unaffordable for Nova Scotians. On April 1st, when gasoline goes up by 20 cents-plus a litre . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: You know they’re grasping, Speaker, when the answer to why we have only focused on increasing the secrecy and lack of accountability of this government is the Ottawa carbon tax. That’s yesterday’s news. Nova Scotians deserve to know how their money is being spent and if the government’s policies are effective. The AG must be able to do her work without fear of retribution, and no government should be able to block, bury, or hide reports that make them look bad. That is what is about to happen. It is not too late for this government to acknowledge that they have overreached and made a mistake. I will ask again...

THE SPEAKER: Order. "Hide" is unparliamentary language as well. That's fine. I ask you to rephrase it with three seconds left on the clock.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Will they stop burying the work? Will the Premier change his mind?

JOHN LOHR: I just want to assure all Nova Scotians that we respect the work of the Auditor General. In fact, when we're talking about this year's budget, we've increased this year's budget by almost 8 per cent, to the Auditor General, to allow her to continue to do her important function in our province. To allow her staff to have the money they need. In fact, we asked the Auditor General ourselves to do audits on specific subjects recently as well. We certainly respect the Auditor General. We're not hiding anything. This is all transparent.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

DPW: PROSPECT ROAD PLAN - IMPLEMENT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: One of the most important transportation routes in the province is the Prospect Road, for our tourism industry and for our industrial activity in HRM, and my constituents, of course. A multi-departmental report I pushed for, and the previous minister supported, is ongoing, with Public Works being the lead. CBCL, who conducted the review, said that they would be releasing the final version shortly, at the end of January. I'll table that. Public Works Traffic Authority said they'd be making the final decision on making it public around mid-February. I'd like to ask the Minister of Public Works for some assurance that if it is recommended in this study that substantial investments take place, that he will support it being added to the Province's five-year Capital Plan.

HON. FRED TILLEY: We definitely recognize that this area has seen substantial growth, future projects, and substantial congestion, and that's why the traffic study was commissioned - and public support for that study as well. The study is expected to be received in the next month or so. We'll have more to say at that point.

IAIN RANKIN: Over the last number of years, there have been some short-term enhancements to intersections, but with more growth, the member mentions, we are at a juncture where we need more short-term investment right away, and also a long-term capital plan to link communities for safety reasons, for the numerous times that the road shuts down for fires, for motor vehicle accidents.

I've referenced a new development, also, that is proposed for multiple thousand units, the size of a whole constituency. I'd like to ask the minister: Will he commit to ensuring significant upgrades take place based on the expert opinion available before any new development is permitted, whether that is commercial, industrial, or residential?

FRED TILLEY: The idea of the study will provide that information for us. We'll review that study, and we'll work, certainly with the member and the community group, PROBE, as we go forward in that area.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Unless you two flipped a coin this morning and you changed leaders, you only get two questions. Yes, that's fair. I'm not making up the rules here.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: CHALLENGES FACING PROVINCE - TACKLE

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Nova Scotians are worried about the Trump tariffs and the threat of what they may bring. Thousands of people in this province are unattached to primary care, and emergency services are often closed to those who need them. Young people are leaving our province because owning a home of their own feels impossible. Does the Premier believe that the best way to tackle the challenges facing Nova Scotians is to campaign with other Conservative premiers?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I do want to recognize the issue of the tariffs. This is a major concern to us. That's why we've built a \$200 million contingency fund. The Premier is in Washington right now working on the tariff issue, and I want express my appreciation for how hard the Premier has worked on that issue and, I think, the appreciation of all Nova Scotians for our quick response when the tariff issue arose. We thank the Premier for that. We know he is working very hard on that subject.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We're simply trying to understand this government's priorities. First, we learned of their plan to remove bans on uranium mining and fracking, with no warning and no consultation. Earlier this week, there was a rally where survivors and the loved ones of murdered women demanded real action on intimate partner violence in the wake of a number of deaths. Yesterday, there was a press conference from the Auditor General, who expressed grave concerns about the independence of her office. Why is this government more interested in listening to other Conservative premiers than the Nova Scotians who elected them?

THE SPEAKER: Before I recognize the honourable minister, I just want to do a warning to everybody: asking, answering. Can we talk about the subject more generally but not directly on the bill?

The honourable Finance and Treasury Board Minister.

JOHN LOHR: Again, I think this question was originally about the tariffs. What I want to say is that all Nova Scotians, all premiers across Canada, realize that we need to do more to encourage trade with ourselves between our own provinces. The Premier made

an announcement on interprovincial trade barriers, which there will be more to say about in the coming days. I can't tell you how important that is. I can't tell you how the history of our continent is north-south trade. We have to focus on east-west trade with ourselves.

If every Nova Scotian spends just a little bit more money on Canadian-made products, it will make a massive difference to our own economy. I would encourage every Nova Scotian to buy Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Loyal, to buy Canadian. We thank the Premier for his work on this important target.

THE SPEAKER: The honorable member for Halifax Armdale.

DHW: HOGAN COURT USE - JUSTIFY

ROD WILSON: My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. This government purchased an incomplete hotel at Hogan Court on the premise that it was ready to be a health facility. It turns out that a hotel is not a hospital, as several architects had suggested. Stuck with millions of renovation cost overruns, the government announced last year they would sell the building to Shannex. Then, from . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. There's a member eating in the Chamber. I ask that they not eat. They are not allowed to eat in the Chamber.

The honorable member for Halifax Armdale.

ROD WILSON: Then money allocated from housing - this government lent Shannex the money in order to purchase the building. I'm not sure of the interest rate but it doesn't really matter. Today, we learned that not only will they be able to charge back the mortgage costs, essentially giving a private for-profit building free, they stand to make over \$11 billion over the life of this contract. My question to the minister is: How can the government possibly justify this gross misuse?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Certainly, West Bedford has been an incredible opportunity for Nova Scotia to create a new environment where people who need restorative care can actually be reconditioned and transferred home. As I've said, the value in this project is yet to be realized. In 10 weeks - since December 10th, whatever that is - since it has opened, it has saved 2,166 beds; 80.6 per cent of the individuals who have been transferred to that facility have actually gone home to community in order to live the remainder of their time. It is the first in Atlantic Canada. We are very proud of what's happening, the value not only to the people . . .

ROD WILSON: My supplemental is simple. Including the purchase price, the easement costs for access to the building, the renovation costs, and the costs of the sole-source Shannex contract, what is the total cost for Hogan Court to taxpayers? Will this government make it public?

[10:15 a.m.]

MICHELLE THOMPSON: The value of this project is not only to support the people who get care in that facility, but the difference that it's going to make in our emergency rooms, in our EHS response times, in our ability to perform more surgeries, in our ability to care for people with the right time in the right place with the right provider is actually priceless.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DOJ: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RALLY SNUB - EXPLAIN

SUSAN LEBLANC: On Wednesday, several members of the NDP caucus were honoured to attend a rally calling for an end to gender-based violence in Nova Scotia. Our team felt it was important to visibly demonstrate our unwavering support for survivors and honour the memories of those who haven't survived. Organizers and survivors have said the Premier was invited to the event, yet he was conspicuously absent. If this government is committed to ending the epidemic of gender-based violence, then why didn't the Premier - or anyone from his caucus - find the time to attend the event?

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Thank you to the member opposite for the question on this incredibly important issue. We understand very well that gender-based violence remains a deeply entrenched issue in society, and that calls for significant investment and, most notably, a cross-government and society-wide response. We recognize this, and we were so very pleased to see the advocates and the representatives, not only at the rally but also here in the House. I and other ministers had the opportunity to speak with many of those folks here in the House when they visited. But that wasn't the first time we had spoken to them, because we know that in doing this work, we have to connect with community and connect with our partners. We have met with and engaged with them on many occasions, and we look forward to doing that work together.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Several people who attended the rally to end gender-based violence found it upsetting that a man in such a powerful position like the Premier did not show up, despite being invited. This government loves to point out how big its caucus is, yet not one of its 43 members managed to attend the rally. We appreciate that there's a lot happening behind the scenes, but it's also important for all of us to publicly show our support for ending gender-based violence. This will not be the last rally or event of this kind, so will the Premier commit to attending public events to show his support for survivors of gender-based violence?

BECKY DRUHAN: I can say, unequivocally, that the Premier and every single member of this caucus is highly, highly devoted to addressing this issue. We have female ministers in lead roles in key departments that address this issue - here in Justice and in the Status of Women. We also have male ministers who are responsible in key roles, such as

Opportunities and Social Development. The idea that a man has to speak to this issue to demonstrate our collective commitment is offensive to me, quite frankly. The Premier speaks volumes in his appointment of these ministers in these roles, and we are fully committed to getting this work done.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW: NURSE SHORTAGE - ADDRESS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. I'm very concerned for our nurses and for patient safety. Daily, our hospitals are over capacity. Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre is consistently at around 130 per cent capacity. As well, the vacancy rate for registered nursing staff is around 22 per cent. So imagine: Over 30 per cent in number of patient capacity and minus 22 per cent in registered nursing staff. You can imagine the situation that our frontline staff are working in. Can the minister share with us today what she and her department are doing to try to address this critical situation, both at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre and province-wide?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Speaker, overcapacity is definitely an issue that we're experiencing in all the hospitals, particularly regional hospitals, across the province. At times, we do have to use non-traditional spaces in order to care for patients and we know that's not ideal. It is a system-wide response.

The member for Cumberland North and I have had opportunity to speak about the health care issues in that area. She keeps me very well informed about what's happening. We are working very closely with the Nova Scotia Health Authority to address the overcapacity issues, as well as looking at the nursing workforce there.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I actually experienced it as a daughter. My father had a heart attack last month. He was a patient put in a non-patient area three days post-MI with no Code Blue bell in his room, no oxygen, no suction. It was so upsetting. I hear about this from patients, from nurses, and from families almost every day as an MLA, but to actually experience it as a daughter worried about my father's wellness was quite alarming.

I wanted to bring back attention, and ask the minister, to the issue around nurses: Why has the department stopped the bridging program for internationally trained nurses to help alleviate the nursing shortage in this province?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: The RN Bridging/Re-Entry Program has not been stopped.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

DAE: UNIVERSITY ISSUES - ADDRESS

PAUL WOZNEY: Speaker, universities across this province were neither consulted nor warned that changes to their relationship with the Minister of Advanced Education were coming. Is the Minister of Advanced Education, with his proposed increased authority, planning to make a habit of making sweeping decisions without consulting with universities?

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank our universities, everybody working at the universities, the presidents, and all the youth who attend the universities for all their great work and the incredible things that they do right across this province.

One of the first things I did as the Minister of Advanced Education was meet with all of the university presidents. The second thing I did, to my staff's dismay, was give every single university president my personal cell number. The university presidents and I have been texting and calling non-stop. I will continue to have open dialogue with them, and we will continue to meet with them as much as we possibly can.

PAUL WOZNEY: Nova Scotia's universities are struggling right now and it's not because their leaders need more direction from government. Peter Halpin of the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents explained that the biggest issues facing universities right now are continuing and chronic underfunding, limited capital investment, and the loss of more than 2,000 international students in 2024, and what's expected to be an even greater number in 2025. I'll table that. Can the minister outline what steps this government is taking to work with universities to address these critical issues?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: We are going to continue to work with our universities. We're working on the MOU. We're talking with them. We want them to be sustainable in the long term. We want them to continue to be a beacon for Nova Scotia, and an attraction for people all over the world to come to Nova Scotia. I will personally continue to work with every single president, every single official in the universities, to make sure that they have long-term, sustainable funding and goals.

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

DHW: AUDITOR GENERAL POWER REMOVAL - RESCIND

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, the current Auditor General has done incredible work over the last few years to hold this government to account and ensure that Nova Scotians' money is being spent responsibly. Sadly, through their professional public accounting processes, OAG reports have showed us over and over again that it is not. In the last fiscal year, almost \$1.4 billion were spent outside the budget process - 8.2 per cent of the total budget. We are on track again to reach at least a billion dollars in additional appropriations

for this fiscal year. Will this government admit that their bill to limit the Auditor General's power is an attempt to punish her for highlighting irresponsible spending?

THE SPEAKER: It was pretty overt that that was a question about the bill, so that question is out of order.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Nova Scotians want to know that their money is being spent well, and I would say that when it comes to the public purse, actually, "nothing is priceless" is an irresponsible statement. We're not referring to vacations. Every dollar of the public purse that's allocated to priority, for a good reason, is a dollar that doesn't go to another priority, unless one plans to overspend \$1 billion a year outside of legislative purview without justification or many contracts. My question is: Why won't the government admit that they want to take away the Auditor General's power because they're embarrassed that she holds them to account?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I actually think that being able to take your loved one home and have them live with you in a very functional way is actually priceless. We were elected the first time on a promise to fix health care, and every free penny we had of the taxpayers' money went to do just that. There are 840,000 more appointments in this province to get access to primary care (Interruptions) There are a number of acute care beds. There are better response times. There are more ambulances. There are more staff. There is more infrastructure investment, and I'm telling you, resoundingly, Nova Scotians told us to do it again.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SNS: HOME HEATING HELP - INCREASE

SUSAN LEBLANC: My question is for the Minister of Service Nova Scotia. Families across the province are struggling with the cost of home heating. The heat program helps families from falling behind during the cold Winter months, but there's a catch: The Child Tax Benefit is counted as income, which is pushing families in need of support over the program's income thresholds. My question to the minister is simple: Why is this program counting the Child Tax Benefit as income?

HON. JILL BALSER: As a new minister responsible for this program, I know how important it is to Nova Scotians. I have volunteers - and I know that many members in this House probably do the same thing - who are dedicated to making sure that every constituent in Digby-Annapolis knows that these programs are available. We know and appreciate how valuable they are. I do appreciate the member's comment, and this is something that I will absolutely look into.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I really appreciate the minister's response to that. I do have a second question, so this will add to the information that she can use when she's looking into this issue. Both the Nova Scotia Child Benefit and the Canada Child Benefit are non-taxable. By the books, they are not considered to be income. They are there to help parents cover the costs of things like meals and extracurricular activities for their children. Counting these benefits as income in the heat fund's eligibility is implying that funds can be taken away from what would otherwise be spent on a child's development to pay for heating costs. The question again is: Why is the government forcing parents to take money away from their children to cover their heating costs?

JILL BALSER: I will make the commitment to look into this. We know how important these programs are for Nova Scotians, and we made changes as a government to increase the threshold of HARP when we knew that the cost of living was very high, and that Nova Scotians were feeling the pinch.

[10:30 a.m.]

Nobody should have to make that decision of whether it's paying for child care, paying for food, or paying for rent. Everyone deserves an opportunity in this province to thrive, so we want to make sure these programs are doing exactly that: supporting Nova Scotians in the best possible way.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Liberal Party.

SLTC: NEW LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES - PROVIDE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: My question is for the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care. Back in 2021, I was proud to stand next to my colleague as we announced a number of long-term care homes that were going to be constructed - new buildings within the CBRM. Some of them are now under construction - which is great to see - but one of them in particular that was announced was the MacGillivray Guest Home in Sydney. That is in the core of Sydney, and I know that the board has been working diligently over the years to see that under construction. Now we're into 2025, and it was announced by the government that there would be a delay in the project. The explanation given at the time was that there was too much construction. My question to the minister: Can she provide a new timeline for the MacGillivray Guest Home?

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: We've talked about this a number of times. I want to start out by reassuring all the member's constituents that we are 100 per cent committed to this nursing home in particular. As the member would know, when you're building 50 . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Just stop the clock for a second. There are a couple of members using cellphones for Question Period. I ask that they stop.

The honourable Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care.

BARBARA ADAMS: A new, modern facility is going to happen in that community. Because there was only one tender that was received, which was so significantly over budget, we're taking the time now to work with them. The member would know this as well. We have a responsibility to all Nova Scotians to make sure we're using taxpayers' money wisely, but we are absolutely committed to making sure that nursing home gets built.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I appreciate the response from the minister, and I appreciate the conversations that we have both had on this. This is important for Sydney - the facility itself. The reports that came out - there are 22 different deficiencies within that building when it comes to the size of the doors, the size of the rooms, and with the bathrooms. The staff is aware of that. The one thing that came up with the board, ultimately, is that they just want stronger communication with the department. I know the department is doing that now. My question to the minister is: Can she commit to a schedule to work with the board to ensure that, as construction lightens up, ideally, we get some new tenders out the door?

BARBARA ADAMS: Absolutely. We are 100 per cent committed to that. As a matter of fact, the year before we won the election in 2021, we announced 2,500 nursing homes before you announced that nursing home. We have 18 nursing homes under construction right now, which is fantastic, but this nursing home is a high priority for our government. Our department staff - because they're working on so many nursing homes at the same time - have regular communication with the facility, as the member knows as well. Certainly, we are as eager as they are to get this project moving forward. We'll continue to work with them, and hopefully we'll get that project moving very quickly.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I do appreciate the conversation. Staff has reached out to me to talk about the MacGillivray Guest Home. I know it's really a timeline on when the government will look to put a new tender out for the MacGillivray Guest Home. Through you, Speaker, to the minister: Can she provide a timeline within the next six months of whether the government is going to actually look to put a new tender out for the building?

BARBARA ADAMS: While I cannot give the member an exact month, I do know that they're working with the facility to ensure that there will be competitive bids so that we can move the project forward very soon.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

DHW: ER CLOSURES - EXPLAIN

ROD WILSON: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. The latest annual accountability report on emergency departments showed that nine emergency rooms were closed for more hours than the year before. In 2024, Eastern Memorial Hospital, Queens General Hospital, and Digby General Hospital were each closed for 4,000 hours. My question is: What does the minister have to say about the lack of emergency room services? “Do it again” doesn’t seem to be cutting it.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: We recognize that emergency care is so important, particularly in our rural hospitals across the province. As you know, we are struggling with recruitment of emergency physicians who are trained appropriately to work in those spots. Through the PACE clinic and through some of the other work that’s happening, we are looking specifically into markets like Australia, like South Africa, working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, where we know that there is capacity within the workforce and also that the skills and qualifications really quickly match ours. That work is ongoing. We do know that there are also some locums who cover those areas, and we’re certainly grateful for that. The work continues, and we continue to look at different markets in order to attract and train new physicians.

ROD WILSON: Nova Scotians deserve timely access to care, and it’s disappointing that this government has been unable to improve emergency room services, particularly in rural Nova Scotia. Despite this government being elected to fix health care, the best solution for health care seems to be scrapping an annual accountability report. Why is this government refusing to be accountable for their failure to fix emergency care again in rural Nova Scotia?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: An outdated report is not overly helpful in the day-to-day management of the system. It’s at least nine months old, and I know it was a very important report at the time. I just want to draw the members’ attention to the ways in which people can understand what’s happening in the emergency rooms. Action for Health and the progress update dashboard - there are a number of places you can look at the ED visits. You can look at ambulance response times, wait times, and the percentage of offloads within 30 minutes.

In the Action for Health dashboard, you can also look at the number of visits, where the services are interrupted. The Nova Scotia Health website - I have about 15 data points here, places where people can go and find out how the system is functioning and where they get care. We are working very hard. The unplanned closures are the issue that we’re struggling the most with. We will continue to work.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

GAD: AFFORDABLE HOMES - BUILD

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, when this government says it is spending more and more on rent supplements, what they are really saying is that they are spending more and more on a band-aid solution. Rent supplements only exist because tenants cannot afford their homes. My question for the minister responsible for housing is: What is the minister doing to ensure that actual physical homes that Nova Scotians can afford are being built?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: What our unprecedented investment in rent supplements acknowledges is that there is a problem: that we need to ensure that Nova Scotians can afford a place to live. The issue was on the table when we formed government. That's why we have increased our budget seven times. We are supporting now 8,900 households; when we formed government, 3,000 households. We know that the solution to the housing crisis is more housing. We are creating the conditions to build more housing. We're at 125% of our target, and we'll continue that important work.

SUZY HANSEN: Yet with all that wonderful investment, the numbers continue to rise. For me, something that would be priceless is homes that people could afford. The demand for truly affordable homes is far outpacing the supply that this government is delivering, like I said. Across this province, there are over 1,000 people experiencing homelessness, 7,700 households on the public housing wait-list, and 54,000 households in core housing need. My question to the minister responsible for housing: Why is this government failing to deliver the scale of affordable homes that our province needs?

COLTON LEBLANC: This problem that we're seeing in our province is long-standing. It did not start when we formed government, it started many years ago. The fact is that we're taking action. Action in writing; we have a plan, a five-year plan over \$1 billion - I think it's \$1.7 billion, Speaker.

We acknowledge that we need to increase supply. There's a role for the private sector; there's a role for our community housing partners. We're supporting them with an unprecedented investment. We, as a government, are making unprecedented investments in public housing for the first time in 30 years: 515 new units. These are generational investments in the province, and I hope the NDP can stand behind this budget too.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

GAD: RENT CAP - LOWER

SUZY HANSEN: I just want to say that along with the things I just spoke about, we have the highest-set rent cap in the country at 5 per cent. Nova Scotia renters are desperate for some relief. They need rent control set at a predictable rate that is tied to the unit. Yet this government continues to refuse to take meaningful action on this issue. They have tons of plans - no details, no clarification. I want to ask the Minister of Municipal

Affairs and Housing: What does this minister have to say to renters who are struggling to keep up with their increasing costs?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC : There have been a couple of reports tabled or presented in the last few days and I'll table it on a future day. They are actually confirming that our action plan is working, that our supply is increasing, that the projection for housing starts is going to continue not this year, not just next year, but the year after that; that a vacancy rate is going to continue to increase, that housing prices are starting to stabilize, that rent prices are starting to stabilize. A rent cap is not going to fix the housing crisis in this province; increasing supply is. Our action plan is working. We will continue to work with people. We want to be problem-solvers, not problem-stretchers.

SUZY HANSEN: This government loves big words. We're going to bring it down so that we know what we're talking about here. Killam Apartments - I'm just saying let's bring the tone down - Nova Scotia's largest landlord raised rents on average by 19.8 per cent when tenants moved out last year. This is up from 16.4 per cent the year before. With the prevalence of fixed-term leases, many tenants are faced with these astronomical rent increases year after year. Can the minister tell us how young families are supposed to save up to purchase homes with this information?

[10:45 a.m.]

COLTON LEBLANC: Don't take my words; take those of Statistics Canada. From January 2024 to January 2025, housing starts across Nova Scotia increased 38 per cent. We have supported almost 670 households in this province with a Down Payment Assistance Program. We will continue to invest in Nova Scotians. One of our campaign platforms was for a loan program. We're evaluating that and we'll have more to say on that to support more Nova Scotians as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW: NURSES BRIDGING PROGRAM STOPPED - EXPLAIN

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. In follow-up from my last question to the minister, I have been contacted by internationally trained nurses who do have their Nova Scotia nursing license but have been told by Nova Scotia Health that the Bridging Program has been stopped and is paused right now. I brought that to the attention of the minister because we do have such a high vacancy rate of registered nurses here in the province. Nova Scotia Health does have a lot of staff hired for new grads and for new hires to help support them in their workplace. Hopefully, that's something the minister can look into.

I do want to draw attention to - as well, to the minister - the increased use of non-traditional care spaces. I'm wondering if the minister can address - what is her plan to ensure patient safety when non-traditional care spaces are used?

THE SPEAKER: Order. You ran out of time.
The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: The overcapacity that we're experiencing in hospitals is a genuine concern. We recognize that it's happening across the province. The ways in which we can address that overcrowding is to create spaces in community like the long-term care beds that the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care is building, like transition-to-care facilities in Bedford. We know it is not ideal. We have the C3, which is a provincial resource - a Care Coordination Centre that has saved 29,000 bed days in the system.

I know when you're in a hallway it doesn't feel like we're working hard on it, but I can assure Nova Scotians that we have shoulders to the wheel, looking at every lever we can pull in order to make sure that there is capacity in hospitals.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I think this is very important for us to be talking about in the House, because our nurses - not just at Cumberland Regional but across the province - are demoralized. They are burned out and they are so discouraged, especially when they are continuously being asked to take care of patients in non-traditional care areas. Just this last week, I had several nurses contact me from Colchester and Cumberland to share with me a new document that they just received that is basically telling them they have to receive patients in non-traditional care spaces. I'll table this document.

Speaker, they are worried about their patients' safety. Trying to take care of patients where there's no electrical outlets, no Code Blue bells, no oxygen - can the minister say: What is the plan to ensure . . .

MICHELLE THOMPSON: We know that there is strain in the system. We depend on those clinical teams to make sure that the appropriate patients have - the acuity level is assessed when people are cared for. We depend on those clinical evaluations. We trust our clinicians. Wherever possible, we make sure that we can move people into community as quickly as possible.

We are continuing to build. We are continuing to look at capacity options. We are looking at a redevelopment at the site in order to expand the emergency department there. There's nothing being left on the table.

This should have been looked after 10 or 12 years ago, but unfortunately, we're in the position we're in because it has been ignored. We are doing our very best, and we will continue to work very hard.

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

ECC: SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS - CLARIFY

LISA LACHANCE: This government has spoken a lot in recent weeks about “special interests” who are allegedly responsible for all of our province’s economic woes. The problem is that this government won’t say who exactly these special interests are. We are therefore forced to speculate that these special interests may be those who are concerned with this government’s lax approach to protecting our environment. Can the minister clarify who exactly these special interests are and how exactly they are preventing this majority government from doing what they want?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: This government is going to move Nova Scotia forward in a very positive and responsible way. As a government, we are committed to responsible resource development. I want to assure all Nova Scotians that we have the tools at our disposal to ensure the safe, responsible development of our resources.

LISA LACHANCE: Last Spring, hundreds of protesters were outside this Legislature calling on this government to revive the abandoned Coastal Protection Act. These include coastal landowners, environmental organizations, families, seniors, and students. Are these the special interests? The Warden for the Municipality of Pictou County, who was also there, said that we can’t have a patchwork system when it comes to protecting our coast and we need a uniform set of rules. Can the minister clarify if the Warden is a special interest?

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allowed for Oral Questions Put By Members to Ministers has expired.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise on a point of order. Earlier in an answer in Question Period, the Minister of Finance referred to the fact that the Premier has been in Ontario and Washington, but you’re not allowed to refer to people’s presence or absence in the House. I would ask that that rule be reminded to the Minister.

THE SPEAKER: I would like to take it under advisement, because I don’t know if - just because the honourable member said that - it could be three weeks ago, it could have been five weeks ago. Look, it’s more so the looks that I’m getting from your leader, a couple of seconds ago. I’m taking it under advisement.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Pursuant to Rule 5(c), I move that the hours for February 21st be not 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. but instead be 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request to change the hours from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Government Motions.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, I move that you do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House on Supply.

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

Agreed. Order, please. Someone is about to speak. Let's give that honourable member their respect and try to keep it down.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: It is now time for one of my annual speeches into Supply. It's on one of my also annual topics: youth. It has been well over four years now since the Conservative government appointed a Minister Responsible for Youth. I have tried to remain positive and optimistic that we would actually see what those responsibilities were. I waited every budget year to flesh out the minister's role. I waited for the mandate letters outlining his responsibilities.

Unfortunately, this year, no ministerial letter came. Four years later, and I think that the Office Responsible for Youth has become like the Department of Seniors under the Liberals: out in the wilderness. Cape Breton has one of the country's highest child and family poverty rates. Food bank usage continues to be at an all-time high. The cost of living crisis has diminished the purchasing power of many families, creating more financial instabilities for families. To top it off, we are in a housing crisis. All these issues have an impact on children and youth.

I have frequently met with youth organizations eager for leadership and advocacy. It is disappointing that no mandate letter has been released, outlining the goals of the

Minister Responsible for Youth. Let's imagine there was such a letter. The letter in my imagination would discuss the need to help the programs and organizations that foster the skills youth need to succeed. That would include core funding to youth centres and organizations. One-time grants that government pats themselves on the back for are not enough.

These organizations need core funding they can rely on. It would emphasize preventive measures for youth. That's what youth centres do: They provide preventive measures that keep youth out of the criminal justice system, and they break the cycle of poverty. However, to do this work, they need trained youth workers. That is why a ministerial letter and a budget should include funding for youth development programs at NSCC, including Cape Breton, that would train our youth workers.

Speaker, as you would know, we are in a trained youth worker deficit. More training programs would benefit many communities such as mine, such as yours, to provide quality youth programs. They need to be able to pay people a competitive salary rate. This can only happen if the government invests more money into youth centres across the province.

I recently just received, ironically, a text from such a youth organization that said they're preparing their operational budget for next year. They go on - I'm paraphrasing here - to say that the increasing costs, like minimum wage, food, utilities, and operating costs, are taking a giant hit on their budget, and that core funding, funding that they can rely on, is truly needed. Yet we don't see that reflected. We haven't seen it reflected in years, if ever.

The government spends more money on the criminal justice system than funding after school programs and youth centres. Imagine if we invested more in proactive cycle-breakers such as youth after-school programs and the centres. The cost of our criminal justice system, with regard to youth and adults, would rapidly decrease. Imagine a budget that's brought forward, and in it, we didn't talk about youth as if they were just cogs in the machine for the workforce. One that didn't just emphasize that their only use in our country, in our province, is to get into the workforce, but we actually told them they can have a childhood and their teen years in centres where they learn the skills they're going to need to succeed in life. A place where they can feel safe. A place where they don't end up in the criminal justice system. One wrong move can often end somebody's ability to go on to a bright and happy future. We could do that if we provided this kind of funding.

Our young people are struggling with so many issues: poverty; isolation; disengagement from school and community; family violence; and family and youth substance abuse and addiction. From many studies over the years, it has become well known that youth are more likely to get in trouble and become isolated and disengaged during the after-school hours. Youth centres run during after-school hours, and they play a vital role in combatting many youth issues and creating positive experiences. These centres provide a safe place for youth and allow them to learn things, make friends, improve their

academics, and have fun. Youth centres help youth develop essential life skills such as teamwork, communication, and critical thinking.

What we've learned from many of the studies is that better grades and test scores for the children who are involved in youth centres occurs because they participate in homework programs at those youth centres. Many of those youth centres have these programs. After school, you go and you get help for whatever you need, whether it's math or English or social studies, what have you. It provides that other learning experience and makes sure that the homework is done.

[11:00 a.m.]

The after-school programs provide safe and nurturing environments for children to learn and grow. They also give children, again, a chance to really socialize and make strong connections that are friendships everlasting. All in all, when these youth are together and they're learning and they're improving their academics, that also allows for the school system to see an improvement in academic performance, reduced behavioural problems, and increased graduation rates.

In my community we have the BGC Cape Breton club. It used to be the Whitney Pier Boys and Girls Club, and their director would tell me all the time: If one of my Club kids acts up, the school will call over and say so-and-so has been acting up. They're working together to help these kids, to keep them in check, as some would say. When the kids go out into the community, they're reminded that they represent the Club and they represent the values of the Club. They feel that and they feel very prideful of that. That is an important connection that these youth centres create.

We've also seen improvement in school attendance. Many children who are involved in youth centres actually go to school. They are not skipping classes. They're actually attending the classes they need to attend. These youth centres are also important in keeping children and youth safe. There was a study done that found that kids who participate in after-school programs were less likely to be involved in crime or risky behaviour, and kids get a chance to be part of a community and develop positive relationships with adults.

It is also a place where people can recognize if there is something going on in the family and work to improve the conditions of that family. I know many youth organizations that actually reach out when they know that a family needs support. Speaker, there are so many other things. Children get to experience diverse interests, whether it's activities of organized sports, fitness, arts, handicrafts, to STEAM - which is science, technology, engineering, art, and math. I'm a big supporter of STEAM because of the art aspect. They learn coding. These are such amazing things and yet we don't invest properly in our youth centres.

With all these benefits that are connected to the programs run by youth centres, this government continues to fail to provide core funding to youth centres or organizations. Instead, it will be another year of youth centres fundraising, writing grants, and looking for money wherever they can find it. All these youth centres are just trying to keep the lights on. They continuously try to keep the lights on and by doing that, they don't get to do the work they truly want to do with our youth.

When youth centres have met with government - and I've been in their presence as they've met - the first thing they'll say is, We want core funding. We need core funding. Money for these programs, that's great, but then we have to find someone to run the program. We need core funding to help our youth, to be there for our youth. There's a quote from BGC Cape Breton - "The Club," as I call it: Kids don't care what you know until they know you care. How are the youth of Nova Scotia supposed to know that this government cares if this government does not invest in them?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PAUL WOZNEY: Speaker, I want to speak for a couple of moments about the budget through the lens of post-secondary education in this province. Universities and the Nova Scotia Community College are vital economic anchors in our province. Lots of people understand or think about our universities as places of learning, of workforce development, and drivers of innovation through research. However, it's also no less true of these institutions that they are economic anchors in many communities across our province, like Antigonish, Wolfville, Pointe-de-l'Église, Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Port Hawkesbury, Amherst, Yarmouth, Springhill, Digby, Kentville, Pictou, Stellarton, Shelburne, and Truro. The same is no less true of the impact economically of these institutions in HRM, where we have many such institutions.

Some characterize government spending to support and fund post-secondary education as spending - as a cost to government. I would say that does a disservice to both the government and these institutions. In my mind, cost is money spent that you never see anything for again. When you buy that cup of coffee at Tim Hortons and you drink it, that money is gone, the benefit has been realized and that's over. It's expended.

However, public funds in a budget that are divested to public institutions like universities and NSCC are actually investments. The money that we spend, or that we deploy, in universities and in the Nova Scotia Community College aren't just spent and gone. They actually generate economic revenue and spinoff activity in the communities where those institutions operate. That spinoff activity benefits many small businesses and entrepreneurs and local business owners that without the presence of those institutions would not be able to operate and sustain their operations.

As we look at this budget and the impact of the government's plans to spend the people's money in Nova Scotia, I think it's worth spending some time looking at the

economics involved in terms of how universities make a difference for our province economically. I want to turn our attention to some of the issues with students. Universities and the Nova Scotia Community College are able to operate because students enroll and pay tuition to be able to attend and pursue learning at these institutions.

Most often, students who attend these institutions - some are able to live at home while they attend but many have to relocate from their homes in order to be able to be close to the institutions while they'll attend class. This reality means that students, in seeking housing, are 30 per cent more likely to rent than the average Canadian.

I raise this statistic because when we think of students as renters, they are unique in that many of them do not yet have the financial base to afford the rising cost of rent that working Canadians - and many working Canadians struggle at this time - to afford the cost of their rent. Students are particularly vulnerable to changes in the cost of rent.

Unfortunately, in Nova Scotia, we know that students are struggling because of the astronomical rise in the cost of rent in Nova Scotia. We know that a lack of access to safe and affordable housing is associated with a decrease in the likelihood that students will (a) enroll in a program, or (b) be able to successfully complete it. That number ranges between 8 per cent to 12 per cent.

That's a massive opportunity cost for Nova Scotia. We look at the exploding cost of rent in this province. It's costing universities and colleges students who might otherwise attend and sustain their enrolment and complete their training. That's a lot of money not being spent by students that enters the local economy and supports local business and the prosperity of our province.

Nova Scotia post-secondary students are increasingly forced to trade off quality in finding housing while they attend school and instead turn to precarious living conditions. The 2023 *Nova Scotia's Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* showed that 9 per cent of Nova Scotian students are unhoused at this time. Another 17 per cent live in overcrowded housing that doesn't have enough bedrooms for the residents of the households. Half of students in Nova Scotia live in units that need repairs, and 95 per cent of students report a lack of alternatives if they needed to move on short notice. That is an issue because students in Nova Scotia are, more often than not, subject to fixed-term leases.

One of the pressing issues of housing in Nova Scotia is the use of fixed-term leases by landlords. The government will say we have a 5 per cent rent cap, but that rent cap is tied to the renter and not to the unit. The apartment that cost \$1,500 this year, at the end of that lease - there's no obligation for the landlord to continue that arrangement with the renter. Instead, what we're seeing widely is that lease is not renewed, and when a new tenant comes to rent that unit, that price is raised significantly with the stroke of a pen.

When we look at the cost of rent, it's not going up by 5 per cent a year. It's going up by double digits per year, on many, many units, particularly units in environments that students need access to.

One of the things I urge the government to consider is a change in the way that the rent cap is implemented. Instead of tying the rent cap to the renter, we urge the government to make all haste to tie the rent cap to the unit instead. This would alleviate enormous pressure on Nova Scotia's students and help make their education instantly more sustainable and more affordable.

[11:15 a.m.]

The other thing that I would point to, Speaker, that the government could do as part of this budget that is not currently contained - but a change that could be made is students oftentimes are forced to move out of on-campus housing because it is more costly than off-campus housing. The average cost of on-campus units is generally 25 per cent more expensive than off-campus housing. That's before students have to take on mandatory meal plans when they live in on-campus housing. While residences on campus are often full at the beginning of the Fall semester, high costs often cause many of these students to vacate those residences and move off-campus partway through the semester. This means that there are unused units on campus that are inaccessible to students on the basis of cost.

We want to join our voices with Students Nova Scotia for the creation of a \$1,500 grant to support students who are living off-campus to be able to move on-campus during the semester to take advantage of on-campus housing vacancies when they occur. These are tangible things the government could do to bring immediate, much-needed relief to students who are feeling the squeeze of rapidly escalating rents that are ultimately driving many of our students - one in 10 - to leave programs of study.

I want to talk about that for a minute. The failure to act on this piece means that many students are looking at a lifelong earning potential that's compromised because the cost of post-secondary education means they simply can't afford to complete it and obtain credentials and degrees that enable them to be higher-wage earners in our economy and contribute to our province in a way that generates economic prosperity.

As we look at this budget, this is one aspect that I would urge the government to take into consideration and consider amending before moving it for approval. Students in Nova Scotia matter. They are not only our future, Speaker; students in Nova Scotia are our present. Through their learning, through their participation in research, they expand our capacity, our knowledge and our expertise. They form an important fabric that makes Nova Scotia an attractive place for business to relocate.

I would urge the government not to underestimate or diminish the importance of students in the present and the economic impact and value they have to the province.

Taking these measures to support them enhances the prosperity of our province. I thank the Speaker for the opportunity to share these thoughts and remarks on the budget and how it could improve our province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Thank you for the opportunity to stand up and speak again today. My discussion is going to be a call to action because the eyes of the world are on Nova Scotia. With the launch of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent on January 1, 2025, the United Nations has renewed its focus on recognition, justice and development for Black communities worldwide.

As home to one of the oldest Black populations in Canada, Nova Scotia holds a unique and historic place in this global conversation. The world is watching to see how our province addresses systemic inequities and delivers meaningful action to advance justice and equity for African Nova Scotians.

As members in this House know, I have spoken in this House to a large extent about our African Nova Scotian communities. My concern has been the same since way before I was elected. As a mom of seven Black children, my main priority is them, always. In everything they do, I am always concerned about how things will turn out, reactions, where they go. I am always concerned about them because that's my job. In the work I do, I have that concern as well. Through my entire life, even up until now, I am still concerned about the trajectory this world is going in.

I grew up fortunate to have a strong Black support system in my life. Growing up and even today, facing racism and discrimination is never an easy task. As an advocate for youth and parents in the education system - many of you may not know, but I was also part of the school board before they became disbanded, which is why I'm so passionate about young people and education.

As an advocate, I have come against multiple barriers and challenges, yet never gave up on those issues that folks are facing to fight those challenges and always spoke up about them. When I was elected, I spoke on many occasions about systemic racism and the effects of generational trauma. As a descendant of Africville, I know all too well the effects of displacement. I have watched my mom feel affected by the system, feel defeated and not heard. She never wanted to rock the boat.

I take after my dad, if you don't already know. I enjoy that. Folks from Africville, at times, have felt like no one is listening, which is why one of my first questions earlier in my time here was to the Premier about reaching out to Africville descendants and having conversations with those folks.

Let's fast-forward to today. Just recently, I was in Upper Hammonds Plains and there was a discussion about water pressure and fire hydrants and safety when a fire happens or if a fire happens in that community. When you enter Pockwock Road, the road runs through both the predominantly white residential area and the historic African Nova Scotian community of Upper Hammonds Plains.

The community hosts the Pockwock Watershed. Decades ago, the government expropriated their land to supply water to other communities throughout the HRM. However, the Black community of Upper Hammonds Plains was denied access to that water. That has happened in the Preston area as well. In 1999, the Hammonds Plains folks took legal action to fight for access to drinkable water and critical infrastructure, and guess what? They won. It was an atrocity. They fought for it, and they won. Yet last year, folks in Upper Hammonds Plains uncovered that the government had deliberately installed smaller pipes in the Black section of Pockwock Road, along with only three insufficient fire hydrants for the entire community. Shame.

In contrast, the white section of Pockwock Road has fire hydrants spaced every 400 to 500 feet. Worse still, the hydrants placed in the historic Black community - because there are hydrants in the community - are incapable of being used to fight fires. Can you imagine how devastated these residents were when they found out about that? At a meeting that I went to, Halifax Water and Halifax Regional Municipality informed them that they were going to be working with all levels of government to address these concerns, upgrade the pipes, and restore proper water pressure. However, they also stated it would take three years before any digging could begin - three years again for this community to be without any services, without any access.

I haven't heard anybody on the government side talk about how it is a priority for all our communities - but I am speaking about a Black community in particular. Instead, I am hearing priorities to ram things through so that we can get out of here. This lack of urgency is unacceptable. Even though the officials claim that it is a three-year wait, in reality they have been waiting since 1999 when they were misled into a false sense of security. Upper Hammonds Plains is the only community that had to take legal action just to access drinkable water.

The money that they secured for infrastructure in the community was secretly redirected by the Halifax Water, HRM, and the Nova Scotia government. In a closed-door meeting, they decided to use those funds to provide adequate fire protection for the white residents, and at the other end of Pockwock Road, leaving their community underserved and vulnerable.

I speak this because I was in this meeting and I heard the plans, and I listened. I was really actually disheartened to not see anyone from government stand up. I was the only one from government and I did stand up a couple of times. But I will say that from the government side, who talk about priorities and how it's important for us to move things

through quickly, these folks have been waiting since 1999 to actually have the access and the needs.

I know that we've all talked about the fires that were here. I know the member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville who was here previously talked to an extent about his community - talked an enormous amount about the care of their community and how important it was for them to make sure that the people in their community were taken care of. Yet we hear of a Black community in this same area, and I don't hear any mention of what is being done as a priority by this government. As you have heard, this is an inequity. Black communities should always be a priority for access.

I mentioned that I am an Africville descendant. If anybody wants to do some history and learn all about it, the Black Cultural Centre and the Black Loyalist Centre have amazing information. You can actually see how harmful and hurtful - and the challenges and the barriers that folks from the African-Nova Scotian community have endured, and continue to endure, as you hear just now. This was just a recent meeting. Black communities should always be our priority for access and in this instance, water - which is a basic necessity - to this government is not a priority, because they are still waiting. They're still waiting to be able to put out a fire. Actually, there was a fire there the other day. I got a photo that showed that they couldn't put the fire out with the fire hydrants on the street because there's no pressure to be able to put that fire out.

There's a process. Absolutely. Those firefighters and fire services are doing amazing jobs with what they have, but it should never be an inequity for this community and for the communities in Nova Scotia who have built this province.

We have heard from folks throughout the years about inequities, racism, and discrimination, yet we see no action from government to eradicate this. You know what? We heard from members last evening about how sometimes change is hard. Change is very hard, especially when the system is not designed for folks who look like me.

That is why I find it so strange that we would be sitting here and talking about pieces of legislation and resolutions that have no positive impact on the African Nova Scotian communities today. None. For me to see what we're doing in this House, why we talk, and why we get up and speak these things is extremely important, not just for us but for the work that we do for all Nova Scotians.

We can look at the justice system. I'm going to bring that up because of the long-standing street check discussions and the apologies that were being made by police services. We still face these challenges, yet government is continually slow to respond. We know even though we have all these things in place that are words, the actions of this government show otherwise.

Priorities are important. Nova Scotians deserve our undivided attention to the challenges that African Nova Scotians face daily. We have a bill on dismantling hate and racism, yet I still hear, after three years - it's been four, but I say three years from the bill - what has changed? I said this yesterday. What has changed? Things have gotten worse, which is why it's so important for us to speak this in existence. There is no other way possible to do that unless we speak it on the floor of this House. Clearly, we don't get to talk to media the way we need to. We don't get to have these opportunities to be in the House for long periods of time and have robust conversations. This is our opportunity right now to speak it into existence, to hear, to listen, and to understand.

African Nova Scotians have been here for over 400 years. We been here. The extension of the decades shows that we have a lot of work to be done. As someone in community mentioned in a community meeting, we have to stop the blatant disregard for Black lives. The lack of these services is disrespectful. As well, the lack of examining our legislation through the lens of African Nova Scotians, through the lens of our Indigenous folks, and through the lens of all the other folks who are included in our communities is disrespectful.

[11:30 a.m.]

This is a pivotal moment. The Nova Scotia government must act decisively to address long-standing injustices and demonstrate - which means we have to do more than talk. We have to demonstrate in our actions, in our day-to-day, and in the things that we do for our communities and for the people in our communities, not just others and not just some, but all.

We need to demonstrate a commitment to real change for everyone. Recognition without justice is hollow. Development without action is an empty promise. I'm going to say that again, because I think this needs to be in a piece of legislation, a resolution, or something. Recognition without justice is hollow, and development without action is an empty promise.

This is the time to lead. Now is our time. The eyes of the world are on us right now. Let us make African Nova Scotian safety a priority. Let us make Indigenous safety a priority. Let us make all Nova Scotians a priority. When we do it for one, it helps everyone.

As Black folks - I've said this before - we made our home here in Nova Scotia. As we say: "We been here." I want to thank Miss Cyndi Cain for that. Our origin story in Nova Scotia is one of hardship and heartache - my ancestors were stolen from their families and their country - but we have made Nova Scotia our home. We have built Nova Scotia. You can read in the history books about how Citadel Hill came about. You can read about how we have our Black farmers, how we have our Black landowners, and how we have a number of amazing Black legacies in Nova Scotia.

It's not just for February that these are the things that are highlighted. Every single day of the year, we should be a priority, as African Nova Scotians in this province, to the Province of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: Seeing no more speakers, the motion is carried. We will have a short recess while the committee sets up.

[11:42 a.m. The House resolved into the CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker Tom Taggart in the Chair.]

[4:03 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

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

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Supply has met and has made some progress and begs leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Pursuant to Rule 5C, I move that the House sit on Monday, February 24, 2025, between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a motion for the House to sit on Monday, February 24th, from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Government Motions.

[GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Would you please call Resolution No. 5.

Res. 5, House of Assembly Rules: Amend - Recog. (Hon. B. Maguire) - notice given on Feb. 18, 2025.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: As I recall, I was regaling the Legislature with my comments on Resolution No. 5, and I had mentioned while I was making my comments that I was going to move an amendment. So, without further ado, I would like to move that amendment.

We do have change sheets for the benefit of the members. I am wondering if, while I read the amendment, perhaps the change sheets could be passed around. This is Change Sheet NDP-1, and it reads as follows: Amendment to Resolution No. 5, amending the *Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*. Section 5 of the resolution is amended by deleting proposed Rule 27A and renumbering 27B as 27A.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, to this amendment here, it is amending by deleting proposed Rule 27A and renumbering 27B as 27A. It is essentially crossing out what was being said initially.

I wanted to bring the members' attention to just a few things when we think about what this means. The member spoke so well last evening. The member from Dartmouth North spoke extremely well last evening about changing the rules and why we change the rules and why this is something that we need to make sure we uphold here in the House, making sure that that rule isn't changed. Amendments are really important: being able to put forward amendments to help with ideas and thoughts, to give recommendations, to be able to put forward information that might have been missed because none of us in this room is perfect, to be able to speak to some of the things that Nova Scotians may be asking or saying that they want to put forward as an amendment. When we take away these things - these opportunities - it takes away the voices of Nova Scotians. That was something that we heard ringing true last evening, how we are here to represent Nova Scotians, and our role is to be their voice here in this House because this is the People's House.

I believe that the amendment speaks for itself. It just crosses out exactly what the proposed resolution is saying because, first and foremost, we don't have any explanation or clarity on the reason this resolution is put forward. We have no idea or understanding of the reason why this resolution is put forward, which is why it is so important for us to revert back to the original clause.

In saying this, I have a number of things that we could be putting forward that would make so much more sense if we were thinking about changing the rules because, you know, this is also a part of what this amendment is saying. Why would we need to do

that? Why would we need to change the rules so that we are not able to put forward information, speak as those voices in the House and, as well, have a robust debate on the things that are important to Nova Scotians?

The member for Dartmouth North mentioned last evening: Imagine, imagine what we could be putting forward. Imagine what types of things could be in a resolution. Imagine what we could be talking about here in this House that is a priority for Nova Scotians. Positive questions like, How about this? What if? Yes, and. That's our favourite actually - yes, and. This is an opportunity for us to propose our ideas to make things better without limiting our abilities.

As Opposition - all that I know is being Opposition - which I am super grateful for, and I absolutely love my job - as Opposition, we have so many tools in the tool belt, and this is one of those tools. Think about this. Would you send a carpenter to a job site without their tool belt? Would you ask them to fix something without the necessary tools to do that work? How could they do that work? How would they be able to build? How would they be able to hammer a nail into a piece of board if they don't have the tools in their toolbox?

I'm asking members in this House to really think about what it is we're asking for. I mean we haven't learned anything about why these changes are coming forward. No one has said what this is for.

I'm just speaking to all members in this House because some of us are new to this position and I was once new, in my last election, and I had lots of questions. I am fortunate to have an amazing team that actually answers questions and informs me and keeps me in the know.

Some folks may not know that you have a majority. I mean, it has been talked about multiple times in this House but I don't know if you know what that means. I've said this before when there was a majority last time, that when voting time comes, guess who wins? Guess who passes the bills? Guess who actually can move things forward?

It's really kind of interesting to see a resolution like this being put forward without any clarity and with an actual majority to do this without putting it to the floor.

As I said, these things are really important. Amongst these things, a part of this resolution is that we would just cross out the fact that - there wouldn't be a time allotment. There wouldn't be the debate silence. There wouldn't be these other pieces to that. It would nix out that part.

When we think about what our role here is in this House, it's to speak for the people of our constituency but, more importantly, for all Nova Scotians. That is not what we're seeing here in this House. The resolution - and this particular resolution, doesn't speak to anything that can help Nova Scotians. It doesn't speak to the priorities of any of the Nova

Scotians in our province.

We could be putting forward a resolution to basically talk about eradicating poverty. I don't see that. We could put a resolution forward talking about affordable housing and housing as a human right. We don't see that. What we see is a resolution put forward about changing rules that you don't need to change because you have a supermajority and your vote will make you win, regardless.

It's actually like the member for Dartmouth North was saying last night: It's really strange to see a resolution put forward that would change rules when you already are going to win. What do you gain from this?

Then, too - I'm going to get back to - it takes away our opportunity to participate in the bill-making process, which is a privilege, which is why we're here. As members of this House, we all have a privilege. I take my privilege very seriously, because if you don't already know, I don't always have these privileges and I understand what this looks like to be able to be in a position like this.

We have a privilege and an honour and actually a duty to Nova Scotians to do the right thing for them. When we change rules without any clarity, without any information, without any consultation, without any of these things that could be done collaboratively, it just doesn't make a lot of sense.

Just like everything that comes forward, we're seeing no consultation, no access, no preview, no recommendations, no reasoning, because I don't see a reasoning behind this. I say this because I just want folks to think about this.

How come this is just not coming forward? What is the reasoning? I mentioned that earlier. What's the logic? Think about it. If we were at a hockey game or, better yet, a basketball game because I love basketball, what do you think would happen if partway into the game the referee changes the rules, doesn't tell anyone, doesn't tell the players, doesn't tell the coaches, definitely doesn't tell the fans - and you have to tell the fans things at a basketball game because if you don't then things can happen - I've seen it first-hand - and expects folks to just play the game as usual?

Actually, I don't know about you - just imagine that, imagine what would happen because I know there are a lot of athletes in this room. If we were playing something and doing something and all of a sudden the rules changed for no apparent reason and it's actually really unclear, how do you think that would end up? Tell me all about it. It would be something where we would have robust discussion about it - absolute discussion - and very firm reasoning why things would be not appropriate, and we would probably have a chaotic situation.

I only say this because I respect the democratic rules, I respect democracy, and I

respect the role that I have as a legislative member. I hold it high because it's not every day someone like me sits in these seats. I understand that this is something that's very serious, and we need to start taking our role and our job here in this House very seriously. Some people may laugh and think it's not a big deal, but when you change rules without clarity, context, reasoning - anything like that - you're going to get questions. You're going to have criticism. People are going to ask questions about what's happening. Why do we need to do this? Yet we haven't heard any reasoning why things need to be changed, which is really important and why we want to change it back.

[4:15 p.m.]

We think what has been put forward in the resolution is not necessary to be done. As we know, like everything else in this resolution, the government already has the power to vote against everything that is put forward. The government has the power. I don't know if anybody knows this. This is just a spark in my head right now. There's a flash saying, Guess what? You have 43 members. There will be a vote. Each of you will get to have a say about that. Everyone in this House will vote.

I don't know if you know this by now because I just said it, but I have to repeat myself, because it blows my mind to think that we would change the rules midway when you are already going to win. This is just us going through the motions and using our democratic process - which is our right as members - to speak for the people of Nova Scotia, specifically the constituents whom we represent.

When I say that clarity is necessary, things that we need to think about are: Why are we doing this? What is the purpose? Why are we going to vote on this? At the end of the day, it's not necessary.

I want to say this one last piece before I move on to other things. As elected officials, we should take our jobs very seriously. I mentioned that earlier, but I can't stress it enough. There are a lot of new members in here who are not going to get the opportunity to do the right thing and do the work that's necessary. This is not how government is supposed to run. We're not supposed to change the rules midway. We're not supposed to be ramming through legislation as if we're in a race when you're going to win.

We have a duty to protect democracy. We are in Province House. We are in the first - as my colleague said - responsible government place, which is in Nova Scotia, the birthplace of democracy in Canada, yet we are changing rules that don't make sense to do. Yet we want to be upheld and looked to? I think it's really very disheartening to see this again. It's strange that we want to dismantle the Rules of Order in this House to fit their needs, not the needs of Nova Scotians, yet the government can't put forward a resolution to help Nova Scotians. The government can't put forward things that are actually going to be priorities for Nova Scotians.

We come here all the time, and we talk about how it's so important for us to be in this House to debate bills that matter the most for Nova Scotians, yet we haven't seen anything come forward that makes Nova Scotians' lives better. I know the House Leader in their previous role. I'm very surprised to see this put forward by the House Leader, because the House Leader was the master of debate. No one in this House can say that they aren't. I'll tell you right now . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Just a gentle reminder to speak about the amendment, please and thank you.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: The amendment is about debate and I want to say that removing this brings back that opportunity for us to have these conversations here in this House. The member was the one who showed us a lot about what this looks like and how important it is for us to speak for our constituencies. As a new member, I was in awe to watch this person stand up and talk about so many amazing things about their constituency that never get talked about any other time in this House.

I say this because I found it a shock to see that Resolution No. 5 would come forward, which is why it's so important for us to go through this amendment. Section 5 of the resolution is amended by deleting it - proposed Rule 27A - and renumbering 27B as 27A, which brings it back to the original state.

I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I want to rise and say a few words to this amendment. I think it's important to bring us back to what this amendment does. As my colleagues have said, these rules - these sweeping changes of the rules - I know one of the new members said that things change. Things don't change that often or that dramatically in the way we do business in this House and the way we have done business in this House for a couple of hundred years. These are dramatic - draconian, I would say - changes to the way we do business in this House.

For the new members, whether they believe that is the case, I am telling them that that is the case. If you are not hearing that from your staff, they are not telling you the truth.

What this amendment does is it limits debate. It means that the Government House Leader can stand up on a contentious bill - like Bill No. 1. I have never in my political lifetime received as much correspondence on a piece of legislation from every corner of this province as I have about this bill. If this resolution passes before Bill No. 1 is introduced, it's well within the purview of the Government House Leader to say, I move

that we allot one hour of debate on second reading of Bill No. 1.

That's what this provision does: I move that we allot one hour of debate in Committee of the Whole House on Bills where amendments could be brought.

So not only have we seen a slew of legislation this session consolidating power in the hands of an already powerful government - limiting debate, limiting dissent - but the very rules will ensure that that passes without debate. This is a real question: What is this government afraid of?

I sat in this Chamber through the last Liberal government, and they were just as proud of themselves as this government is proud of themselves. They clapped, they stomped, and they were just as happy. In their first term, they . . . (interruption). You really did. (Laughter)

In their first term, they did something similar to this. Their House Leader decided to make big changes to the rules - decided they could change the sitting hours without any consultation. I don't want to give anyone any ideas about sitting hours. In their second term, after the acrimony and protest and challenge and vitriol and toxicity that were present in this Chamber, they decided to do things differently. They appointed a new House Leader.

You know what the House Leaders would do? I was one of them. They would sit down on a Monday morning and talk about how business was going to come through the week. It wasn't a legislative calendar - which is what we need. It wasn't certainty in the way that we should have it in this House for Nova Scotians. It wasn't a functional committee structure, but it provided certainty to the members and their constituents about the business that would move through this House and it allowed for those voices to be heard.

We would have conversations like: "This bill seems pretty easy, we can probably get through it in an afternoon, right?" "Right." "You guys are going to be really mad about this bill, we'd better leave a few days, right?" "Right." "We're probably going to call extended hours." "Fair enough. We get it."

We can do that. We're grown-ups. You won.

With great power comes great responsibility, as someone in this Chamber likes to say. So be responsible. Run this government like it's a parliamentary democracy, not like it's your own rubber-stamp factory. The last week has seen the most contentious slate of legislation that this government did not campaign on, that Nova Scotians were not made aware of, that consultation was not done on, in generations. That's okay. You're allowed to do that, because you have a majority government, and this government can bring whatever legislation they want. That's how democracy works. You know what? This government will be able to pass that legislation if, at the end of the day, they decide that

that's the best thing to do.

None of this is necessary. What these rule changes are designed to do is to stifle debate on controversial legislation that this government wants to bring. My message to this government is: If you stand behind your platform, if you're putting the "Yes" in Nova Scotia, or whatever your smear campaigns that you're sending out to your constituents say - I retract that.

If you are just trying to get things done for the best possible future for this province, and I really believe we're all here to do that - I believe that every single person who got elected in this Chamber is here to make a difference for their community, I do. I really disagree with the way that we want to get that done, but I believe that's what you're all here to do.

If that's true, then stand behind your policies. Stand behind your legislation. Get up and tell us why it's the best thing for Nova Scotians. If it takes an extra week to do that, that's okay. Use that time to educate Nova Scotians, to educate us. We get a bill briefing 30 minutes before a bill is dropped on the floor of this House, if we're lucky. We don't have the staff that government has. We don't have the resources that government has. We have to read hundreds of pages of legislation and then be able to talk about it two hours later. Then five days later, it's the law of the land. That in itself is outlandish, and this bill makes it worse. Why? I want someone from this government to stand up and tell us why they need to limit debate in this House when they have the majority and can pass any legislation that they want.

I want to remind the members that this is not a change that only impacts this sitting. These changes last until someone can undo them. These changes fundamentally alter our democracy. I know many of you feel like that's hyperbole. It isn't. We can't debate legislation if the Government House Leader decides we shouldn't. Tell me how that's democratic.

I support this amendment. The resolution is going to pass. I am fairly certain that the government members are going to vote for it, but here's an opportunity to make it a little bit better. Here's an opportunity to stand up and say, My constituents deserve to know what we're doing in this House, and they deserve a government that stands behind the legislation they put forward.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

HON. KENT SMITH: I'm happy to rise and speak a little bit about this amendment, and right off the hop say that we are not going to be supporting this amendment - that's for sure. I'll respond a little bit to some comments from the Opposition when I say the reason that we're doing these amendments is to mainly bring us back in line with other jurisdictions in Canada. If you listened only to what the Opposition was saying, you would

think that we're power-hungry monsters and all we want to do is have control of everything.

[4:30 p.m.]

The members opposite and the members adjacent might be interested to learn that this is a standard form of parliamentary process called time allocation. It is currently employed in the House of Commons. It is also used in the jurisdictions of Ontario, Alberta, Quebec, and even more interestingly, it's also employed in Manitoba and in the Province of British Columbia. It's curious that the draconian measures we're accused of employing here in this House are used in multiple jurisdictions across the country. In fact, I have copies of the B.C. Rules and Forms, and I can compare that to the entire resolution that we're putting forward. I will table that for the benefit of the other members who might not be versed in B.C.'s rules.

Another rule is closure. It's also contained in the standing orders in B.C., as I said. I really just want to say that this is not groundbreaking. This is not revolutionary. We didn't sit in a corner and make these things up. We are looking at this through a lens of continuous improvement and streamlining the process. We are aligned with other jurisdictions in Canada, and that's all I have to say on this for now. I may speak later on the main aspect of the resolution.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PAUL WOZNEY: I rise to speak in support of the amendment. Questions have been posed by previous speakers in support of the amendment wondering why. This is the first we've heard of a rationale, and being fair to the previous speaker, it sounds like the rationale is: We want to be like some other places. What's lacking from that argument is what positive impact has derived from the adoption of these measures in other places. There are 10 provinces in Canada and three territories, each of which operates a legislature. We're talking about less than half of those. I'd be interested in perusing the origin story of these changes and procedures in other provinces.

At face value, legislatures in Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta are governed by parties that have been excoriated by political scientists, journalists, and their own citizenry for being autocratic, non-democratic, non-transparent, and heavy-handed in their doings. B.C. and Manitoba may presently be represented by governments of a New Democratic Party stripe, but I don't think I have to tell too many members of this House that those governments are very new and were preceded by extended terms by governments who bore the same criticisms of the governments of Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta that I've just outlined. Could we potentially take instruction from other jurisdictions and their practices, where those practices demonstrably result in enhancement to the democratic process? Sure. That's a conversation worth having, but we're talking about adopting measures in five provinces where democracy has been compromised by changes like this and the leaders who enacted them.

Why would we follow the lead of jurisdictions whose democracies have been diminished by these changes founded on criticisms and rationales - similar to the ones that have been put forward by members of the Opposition - supporting this amendment? It strains all reason to consider that we should do something that doesn't work for the people and doesn't work for democracy because other people did it elsewhere. I have lots of friends who do things in their intimate relationships that aggravate their partners. I am slow to adopt those habits in my intimate relationship for the long-term health, longevity, and harmony of my own relationship.

If we were to take this resolution at face value, we weren't provided with notice. No one approached our caucus to say: Here's what we're thinking, this is why we're putting it forward. Nothing precluded the Government House Leader from relaying a rationale through conversation outside of the Chamber to let us know: We're thinking about this. Here's why we're thinking that. We'd appreciate your support. That didn't happen here. This was dropped in the House out of the blue without warning. That leaves this caucus and the Opposition in a position of having to read some tea leaves. What could this possibly mean?

If we look at this purely on face value, this is: We want to consider a change to process. If we want to take the emotion out of it, this is merely a change to process. Let's sit with that question for a minute. There are some questions really worth asking there. We have a process. Should we change it? What are some of the qualifying questions we should all weigh in consideration of such a change? It seems the first one that's reasonable to entertain goes a little something like: Does the process as it stands frustrate the greater good? If the answer to the question is resoundingly yes, it seems to me it would be reasonable impetus to consider such a change.

Why would we continue to operate as a House in a manner that frustrates the collective ability of the House to put forward legislation that does good for all of the people we represent in every constituency across party lines? It would make no sense for any party to support an approach that frustrates the ability of the House to achieve the common good.

Supplemental to that question: What examples do we have that demonstrate in an overt way that the greater good is frustrated by the current process? Do any exist? I have a hard time finding one. As a matter of fact, when I ponder this question, I look to our recent history as instructive on this question. Bear with me for a moment; I didn't have an opportunity to print this.

In March 2022, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation arose when Nova Scotia's doctor of Public Health, the much-beloved Dr. Strang - because of the tension over vaccination and a number of other public health measures, Dr. Strang became the target of protests that pushed the boundaries of reasonable freedom of expression. I'll go so far as to say that protest smashed through the barrier of reasonable and entered the territory of near-insanity. It ceased to be civil. It ceased to be respectful, and it posed an imminent

threat to the safety and life of Dr. Strang and his family in their home. He was a critical leader for our province at a critical time. We would have been in a very bad way had anything happened to him - if the individuals who had designs on protesting at his home actually injured or harmed him and precluded him from fulfilling his duties to the people of Nova Scotia.

We have a legislative process. We have to introduce a bill. If we want to amend legislation, we have to introduce it on first reading. It has to come back for second reading. Thereafter, it should go to the Law Amendments Committee. Then it should come back to third reading. Oh my God, we've got to go through all these steps, and we need this done right now. This law needs to change because it's good for the people of Nova Scotia.

The then-Minister of Justice, who sits in the back row across the way, approached the leaders of the then-Official Opposition and the NDP caucus and said, We would like you to work with us to get this through with all due haste. We recognize that normally there would be First Reading, Second Reading, Law Amendments, Committee of the Whole, Third Reading, and then a vote. We need to move faster than that because this matter is right here, right now, for all the people of Nova Scotia.

Guess what happened? The Opposition didn't filibuster, it didn't stand on principle, it didn't use arcane rules in our little green book to frustrate the passage of legislation that demonstrated an immediate public good. As a matter of fact, both House Leaders for the Opposition and the NDP caucus agreed at the time that the passage of this legislation warranted mutual bypassing, or speeding through steps that normally we would take more deliberately, in the public interest.

That amendment to that legislation created safety bubbles, not only for Dr. Strang but for any health care worker doing essential work to protect the people of Nova Scotia.

I ask again: Does the process, as currently constituted, frustrate the greater good? The answer, Speaker, so far as I can tell, is no. This does not meet the test that tells us that we should change the rule.

There are other questions that we move on to. We hear words like "efficiency" and "streamlining," as if this were a manufacturing process that frustrates the production of high-quality widgets that are of essential interest to the people of Nova Scotia. This is not that.

Follow-up question: Is a simpler process a truly better one? Speaker, it will come as no surprise to members in this House, based on comments made by government side members, that I am formerly the head of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. My background as a unionist is a matter of record. It's actually in Hansard a few times, as I recall.

I'm going to borrow from that sphere for a moment. Workers who are not

represented by a union enter into contract with an employer when they agree to go to work. Can you work out an agreement directly with the employer as an individual employee? Sure, you can. In Nova Scotia that's legal.

However, that simple process of, Hey, I want a job; hey, I have one; hey, how much do you want to pay me? Shake, and get on with the work. It's not always a fair proposition. An employer has power that a worker does not. There is an inherent power imbalance in that relationship. It's one of the reasons why in Canada one of our Charter freedoms, which are sacrosanct, no different from freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom of movement within a country, is the freedom of association for workers to unionize.

[4:45 p.m.]

Unionized workers negotiate their salaries and working conditions in a far less simple way for a very good reason. Collective bargaining is a constitutionally protected process in this province. We have witnessed on multiple occasions former governments - in this House - pass illegal, unconstitutional, mean-spirited, and vindictive legislation to erode the ability of Nova Scotian workers to negotiate a fair deal.

Collective bargaining is not a simple process. That's by design. This House has passed legislation that empowers workers and the employer to be able to enter into a multi-step, multi-faceted process designed to give both sides pause and opportunity to interject, draw attention to inadequacies in the position of the other side, and arrive at mutually beneficial terms in reaching an agreement.

I ask the question: Is a simpler process necessarily a better one? In certain circumstances, sure, but in this case, this is the People's House. The business that we do here has profound impact on people in every corner of this province. This work cannot and should not be taken lightly, done quickly, or rushed to judgment on. Simplifying a process that cuts out debate and that cuts out opportunity to hear a plurality of perspective robs even a government as powerful as this one, with its 43 seats - hey - of the opportunity to hear input necessary to put forth legislation that makes it happen for the people of Nova Scotia in ways that are good for the people of Nova Scotia.

This legislation doesn't just infringe on the ability of the Opposition to do its work; it robs the government of important perspective necessary to do a responsible job as a majority.

I put forward two questions as a test for the question of whether we should change this rule: Does the process as it stands frustrate the greater good? The answer is no. Is a simpler process necessarily a better one? In this case, the answer is also no.

The final test I would pose is this: Is the work of the Legislature truly onerous for the members of this House? Does the process as currently constituted result in ridiculous

numbers of days of sitting and administrivia in frustration? It's a fair question.

When we look, I'm glad to hear a previous speaker for the government allude to the practices of legislatures elsewhere in Canada. Interestingly, the legislatures of B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta all sit a significant number of days more than we do. Interestingly, many of those provinces have mandated sittings. Interestingly, this supermajority isn't proposing those measures. Interestingly, this supermajority is not proposing measures to bring us in line with leading practices and legislatures in other jurisdictions.

It strains all reason to sit here and consider the question of whether or not the process, as currently constituted, imposes an onerous workload on the members of this House in their service to the people of Nova Scotia.

Each of us went through a process where we sought a nomination to put our name on a ballot and hopefully to come here and represent our constituents in this House. Are any of us surprised at the burden we take on, having been successfully elected? I'd suggest any member who's shocked by the workload of this role needs to take less sleeping medication. This House sits the fewest days of any legislature in the country. We do less business than any other legislature in the country.

I'm going to go in a completely different direction and use the same statistic through a different lens. This government operates a legislature that sits the fewest number of days a year, and I'm sure that we've heard them talk about all the things they've done, their incredible record, and how everything is wonderful. Based on their own words and based on their own comments, this is arguably the most efficient House in the entire country. We achieve the greatest things in the fewest number of days. How can this House and these rules be so ridiculously overbearing that they need to be trimmed so drastically?

It will also come as no surprise to members of this House that my background is as a classroom teacher. I spent most of my adult life teaching high school English. I realize not everybody loves this subject matter, but it's my passion, and I've loved the opportunity to teach students about literature, about novels, about poetry, and about critical analysis.

That means part of my job is to teach students who are on the cusp of adulthood. How do we think critically? How do we do complex things like literary analysis and write essays? A big part of what I teach my students is: Let's take this big intimidating process, and let's break it into pieces we can wrap our heads around, so we understand the relationship of these smaller pieces on the journey to a final destination.

This resolution seeks to constrain or limit the steps involved in the legislative process and to speed and rush through or skip over with limited consultation by the House Leader. Let's look at what's involved here.

First reading: Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill entitled . . .

That's not a whole lot of time. What is the purpose of this? The purpose is to make sure that the other parties in the House get a copy, can have a look at it, and prepare their remarks for debate.

Second reading: This is our opportunity to do things like question intent, identify the problem that the legislation seeks to resolve, and pose questions about the potential impact of the legislation or the intended impact of the legislation, and to reasonably project what outcomes of this legislation might be, not only for this House but for the people of Nova Scotia and the sectors and the people that the legislation concerns. It's an opportunity for us to process initial impressions in debate.

That doesn't sound very threatening to me. It sounds healthy, and it sets the table for a legislation where it's warranted to be referred for further input by the Law Amendments Committee process, after which legislation comes back here for Third Reading when we move into Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

Having input from a variety of sources and perspectives through debate, having access to input, often expert, from stakeholders in community through Law Amendments Committee, we get to come back and look at whether or not this law needs to be written this way to achieve this goal. Through sober second thought, we have the opportunity to make changes that are necessary so that we don't pass legislation with the best of intentions that creates potholes for the people of Nova Scotia to live with.

These are not steps to be skirted past quickly for the sake of convenience. They exist for good reason. They exist so that all of us together - majority and Opposition - can make good legislation. They exist so that we don't make mistakes that are impossible to fix unless we call this House back and we do the whole song and dance again. It's better to do the job right the first time than to fix it three times because you rushed through it and got it wrong.

As sincerely as I can put it, the concern I have about this amendment - or about this resolution without the amendment - is that it exposes us to that very risk, that we will move with far too great haste, far too fast, and we're going to fall off a cliff, and we'll create problems that we'll have to fix later on. Sometimes the problem with laws is that the impact of the laws we make isn't small. It has life-changing, life-altering impacts for Nova Scotians. Sometimes the problems with legislation that are unintended, as they come to light, are shocking for us and give us cause to come back to this House and make changes to remedy our oversight or our lack of perspective.

I urge the members of the government to consider whether this resolution is necessary to achieve its legislative agenda. It has the capacity to set the legislative agenda, to set the hours that we sit. It controls committees, chairs the vast majority of them, and it

has the numbers to pass legislation as it sees fit, as is its right according to the wishes of the people of Nova Scotia. But I caution this government.

One of the most important lessons my family has passed down to me is this: Certain things in life show you who people really are. Somebody drinks too much, it accents their innate personality, but the most powerful revealer of character is power. There's no question that this government has been given an awesome responsibility by the people of Nova Scotia. That's not in dispute. I respect that, as does the Official Opposition, but it begs the question: How do you want to use your power? Is this it?

THE SPEAKER: Order. We have reached the time of adjournment. We stand adjourned until Monday, February 24th, from the hours of 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 5:00 p.m.]