

**DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS****Speaker: Honourable Danielle Barkhouse**

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First Session**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025**

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HALIFAX, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025

Sixty-fifth General Assembly

First Session

3:00 P.M.

SPEAKER

Hon. Danielle Barkhouse

DEPUTY SPEAKERS

John White, Marco MacLeod, Tom Taggart

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

The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, on Friday. I indicated a member was absent from the House in, I believe, answering a question during Question Period. I want to apologize to the whole House for breaking that rule.

PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

KRISTA GALLAGHER: Speaker, I beg leave to table a petition from concerned Nova Scotians, the operative clause being:

Whereas over one-quarter of those who are homeless for the first time are over the age of 60; and

Whereas nearly 6,000 people are on the wait-list for public housing, with an average wait time of two years;

Therefore be it resolved that the government ban evictions of seniors whose incomes would qualify them for public housing until there is a place in public housing for them to go.

There are approximately 35 signatures on the petition, and I have affixed my signature to the petition, as required by Rule 63(5).

THE SPEAKER: The petition is tabled.

PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, as Chair of the Committee on Law Amendments, I am directed to report that the committee has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 3 - House of Assembly Act (amended).

The committee recommends the bill to the favourable consideration of the House, without amendment.

THE SPEAKER: Ordered that the bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills.

TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I want to table another paper. This is a statement from our former Auditor General, Michael Pickup, also former Auditor General of British Columbia. He said:

The proposed changes to the Auditor General Act would irreparably affect the ability of the office to carry out its mandate by eroding the independence which makes its work possible.

The Auditor General is an independent officer of the legislature reporting directly to the House of Assembly. The Auditor General is not a political hire or attached to any political party.

THE SPEAKER: Order. It's not time to read the statement; it's just the time to table it. Can you please table the statement? The paper is tabled.

The honourable member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

KENDRA COOMBES: I am tabling a document that I should have tabled earlier, but it ended up in my bag instead. It is from the *Halifax Examiner*. and it's called "The erosion of democratic norms"

THE SPEAKER: The document is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 34 - An Act Respecting the Sale of Products Containing Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances. (Hon. Iain Rankin)

Bill No. 35 - An Act to Amend Chapter 32 of the Acts of 2014, the Health Authorities Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 15

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

Whereas the Auditor General helps Nova Scotians understand how their government is spending and managing tax dollars; and

Whereas Communications Nova Scotia helped Nova Scotians understand what their government was doing and why; and

Whereas the *Annual Accountability Report on Emergency Departments* helps Nova Scotians see what progress, if any, their government is making to ensure they have access to emergency care when they need it the most;

Therefore be it resolved that this House set aside a period of not less than 40 minutes on Wednesday, February 25, 2025, to consider reversing these decisions and others that will take impartial information sources away from Nova Scotians.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? I hear several Noes.

The notice is tabled.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

TEAM BLACK: TOURNAMENT MEDAL - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: I rise today to recognize Nova Scotia's Team Black, who won bronze this weekend at this year's Scotties Tournament of Hearts. Team Black represented Nova Scotia proudly while playing some incredible games last week, finishing the round robin with a standing of 6-2 and advancing to the playoffs, playing against some of the best teams, not just in Canada but in the world.

Team Black played well and left everything on the ice. Their last match was a close one, where the final point was determined by measuring rocks. I would like to congratulate Team Black, and specifically alternate Marlee Powers, lead Karlee Everest, second Jennifer Baxter, vice skip Jill Brothers, skip Christina Black, and coach Stuart MacLean. You all made Nova Scotia proud, and we can't wait to see what is in store for Team Black.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

SACK. LAKES PARKS & TRAILS ASSOC.: MAINTENANCE - RECOG.

PAUL WOZNEY: In Sackville, we are so fortunate to have ready access to the region's natural beauty through a variety of public spaces. Among Sackville's most prized features are our numerous lakes, which are circled by well-maintained and scenic trails stretching for kilometres. I rise today to recognize the efforts of the Sackville Lakes Park

and Trails Association on the continued maintenance and recent addition to Sackville's trails.

The Sackville Lakes Park and Trails Association is a volunteer non-profit that cares for the trails in Sackville Lakes Provincial Park, and the community was very pleased to be given access to a new path. The Beech Hill Trail officially opened in September, adding even more capacity to the impressive Trans Canada Trail system. The work of these volunteers deserves sincere commendation for providing our community with priceless amenities. I ask that all members join me in recognizing the volunteers of the Sackville Lakes Park and Trails Association.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

LAVIGNE, SHAWN: TRIVIA NIGHTS - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to recognize and commend the exceptional contributions of Shawn Lavigne to our community. Shawn has dedicated extensive time and effort to researching and crafting challenging and entertaining trivia questions for the Prospect Road Community Centre's trivia night. This engaging event that spans two hours has become a cherished tradition within our community, bringing together residents of all ages for an evening of fun and comradery. Thanks to Shawn's meticulous preparation and creativity, each trivia night is filled with laughter, learning, entertainment, and a spirit of friendly competition.

Shawn's commitment to ensuring a high-quality and enjoyable experience for all participants is truly commendable. His work not only enriches the event but also fosters a sense of unity and togetherness among our community members. I extend my deep gratitude to Shawn Lavigne for his invaluable contributions. I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Shawn's dedication and passion in exemplifying the spirit of community service. We are fortunate to have Shawn as part of our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

THE INSIDE STORY: GREENWOOD BOOKSTORE - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to recognize The Inside Story bookstore, a cherished independent bookstore in Greenwood that has been a cornerstone of the community since 1982. The Inside Story is more than just a bookstore; it's a gathering place for book lovers, a champion of literacy, and a strong supporter of local authors. With its welcoming atmosphere and knowledgeable staff, the store has fostered a love of reading among generations of residents in Kings West. The dedicated team at The Inside Story goes above and beyond to provide personalized recommendations and exceptional service.

I ask all members of this House to join me in celebrating The Inside Story bookstore and thanking owner and operator Lori Bradley for her continued contribution to the cultural and literary vibrancy of our region. May they continue to inspire generations of readers for many years to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member of Dartmouth North.

DARKU, STACY: ESINAM COUNSELLING - THANKS

SUSAN LEBLANC: Esinam Counselling is a Black- and women-run counselling clinic, which has opened a location in Dartmouth North. The clinic, with one location on Victoria Road and another in Lower Sackville, is owned by Stacy Darku. Darku employs a team of BIPOC registered counselling therapists and therapist candidates, who offer counselling services in English, Farsi, and Arabic.

Stacy started Esinam Counselling at her kitchen table in 2021, during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, Esinam Counselling has been selected to receive financial assistance from the RBC Centre for Women in Business through ACOA, East Coast Credit Union's Community Compass Grant, and Desjardins Group's GoodSpark Grant. Stacy herself has been recognized for her efforts to provide mental health support that focuses on racial injustice, sexualized trauma, complex trauma, and addiction.

I ask the House to join me in celebrating and expressing gratitude to Stacy Darku and the whole Esinam Counselling team.

AN HON. MEMBER: Thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

SYLLIBOY, ARNOLD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Our community lost a really great guy on the weekend, Arnold Sylliboy. Arnold was a young man who was a role model to many in the Mi'kmaq and beyond. Arnold worked for the local MP for years, and I saw first-hand the lives that he helped and saved over those years. To many people, he was known as "Big Chief" because he was such a mentor to so many, and he had a heart of gold. He was kind. I'll tell you, humanity was a better place because he was around. I send my love to his beautiful wife and his kids, and I rise to recognize a great guy, Arnold Sylliboy.

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

LEMMON HILL COM. CTR.: COM. SERV. - THANKS

HON. SCOTT ARMSTRONG: I rise today to recognize the Lemmon Hill Community Centre. The volunteers who look after this hall are an exceptional group who do an incredible job of bringing together our community.

[3:15 p.m.]

They hold weekly musical jam sessions on Tuesday evenings and one Sunday afternoon a month. Speaker, I invite you to come watch. These sessions bring together musicians of all ages and levels to share their love of music and their sense of strong community. During the jam sessions they have 50-50 draws and a kitchen filled with food and drinks to be enjoyed by everyone in attendance. The funds are used to keep the hall open and the lights on. The volunteers also hold a variety of other fundraisers throughout the year to enable the continued operation of the hall.

These hard-working volunteers are another example of Nova Scotians who are dedicated to keeping our rural communities alive and well.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing and thanking the Lemmon Hill Community Association volunteers for their dedication and commitment to our local community.

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

USHER, JUNE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise to recognize the passing of Silver Cross mother June Usher. June was a 48-year lifetime member of the Army Navy and Air Force Unit 270, 22 years Militia Reserve, a lifetime member of Navy League of Canada, and a volunteer for the Salvation Army, Legions, and Sea Cadets. She was awarded CD/CD1, Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee, Queen Elizabeth II's Gold, and Governor General's Volunteer Sovereign medals.

June spent her life committed to veterans. She lived a life of service; service to the community and service to veterans. June is loved by so many, including her loving and committed husband of 64 years, Nick Usher; two siblings; three children; eight grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. June always said that when you meet a military member, you should shake their hand or buy them a coffee. She will be missed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

WEXLER, JOANNA: INTERFAITH HARMONY WK. - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I rise to recognize Joanna Wexler for her leadership and dedication to organizing the celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week. Established

in 2010 by the UN, World Interfaith Harmony Week aims to foster harmony between people of all faiths, promoting a message of unity and mutual respect.

Joanna's efforts have brought together representatives from 10 distinct faith communities across HRM. The festivities included a diverse array of activities, providing opportunities for participants to connect and share their unique cultural expressions. Attendees are also treated to beautiful artistic and musical presentations along with spiritual readings from various traditions reflecting the rich tapestry of beliefs that make up our communities.

Joanna's leadership has not only ensured the success of this event but also created a welcoming space for all to come together and celebrate diversity. Her work exemplifies the spirit of the week, paving the way for deeper connections and a more harmonious society.

I recently had the pleasure of attending this meaningful celebration with my daughter Freya to enjoy the performances, engage with community, and participate in cultivating a kinder world.

I ask the members of the House to join me in recognizing Joanna for her outstanding contributions to fostering interfaith harmony, adding to the collective spirit of unity, and promoting a culture of peace and understanding in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

KILLEN, SHELLI: CAMPAIGN WORK - THANKS

HON. JILL BALSER: I rise today to give to extend my deepest gratitude to Shelli Killen for the invaluable contributions she made to my team both as an employee and volunteer.

In June, Shelli came aboard the team to fill in at the constituency office for the month of July, and then when the election was called in October, she graciously agreed to volunteer her time as my office manager. I was so fortunate to have had Shelli as part of the campaign team. She was always willing and available the entire month when I needed her - seven days a week.

Shelli's selflessness and passion to help people have not only assisted constituents in the community but have also inspired others around her. Volunteers like Shelli are the heart and soul of communities across Digby-Annapolis and their support enables us to continue making a positive impact in the entire communities. Thank you so much, Shelli.

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

UKRAINIAN CDN. CONGRESS: RALLIES - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise today to recognize the work of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress here in Nova Scotia and across Canada. Yesterday marked the third anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. This conflict has been costly, and even the estimated total is staggering. Approximately 12,000 Ukrainian civilians have died and at least 30,000 have been wounded. An estimated 43,000 Ukrainian soldiers and over 200,000 Russian soldiers have died, with many more wounded. The cost of the war thus far is over \$300 billion, without a plan for reconstruction.

Stand with Ukraine rallies were held across the country, including here in Halifax at Grand Parade Square yesterday. Dozens of people gathered to mark this terrible anniversary. We were honoured to hear first-hand from those who had survived under Russian occupation, as well as those who have family members directly involved in the conflict. Of course, everyone there has a story of how the conflict has affected them.

In Nova Scotia, we are honoured to be a safe haven and new home for Ukrainians who have fled the Russian invasion and with them work towards a peaceful and just end to the conflict. Slava Ukraini.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CUMB. REG. HEALTH CARE CTR.: I CARE AWDS. - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Speaker, today I rise to recognize the Cumberland Health Care Foundation's I Care Awards. I Care Awards are intended to recognize staff members of the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre for outstanding contributions to the delivery of care. Patients and families are encouraged to make a small donation to the Foundation when they want to show appreciation to a member of the team who has gone above and beyond.

The person they choose receives a certificate and an I Care pin. They can proudly wear it at work, and their name and the excellent work they do are shared on social media. Individuals from all areas of the hospital have been recognized - physicians, nurses, administration, environmental services, dietary, allied health professionals, and more.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking the Cumberland Health Care Foundation for creating this unique way to recognize the dedicated, caring members of the staff of Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

SYDNEY CURLING CLUB: NEW BLDG. - CONGRATS.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise in my place to recognize the Sydney Curling Club. It was an exciting week for them. They just received a significant boost toward a new facility for the entire CBRM from the federal government. A lot of work has gone into seeing this become a reality, and to see them get the money they received this week from the federal government is really amazing. To everyone involved with the board and the volunteers and everybody who make curling a big sport at home and have poured their hearts into the dream of a new building, I congratulate them on this big milestone, and hopefully more to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

GOYETCHE, ROBERT: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: I would like to recognize Robert Goyetche, who is an active volunteer in Richmond County.

Robert is the president of the Fleur de Lis Seniors Club, leading the planning and execution of all the club's events. He is also Chair of the Strait-Richmond Health Care Foundation board, a co-chair of the Seniors Take Action Coalition, and is a board member with the Louisdale Community Homes Association.

Robert is the treasurer for the Louisdale Lions Club, manages the rental of the Lions Hall, and helps with their monthly breakfasts. In his spare time - which he doesn't have a lot of - Robert enjoys spending time with his family and doing crossword puzzles.

I ask all members to join me in honoring Robert Goyetche for his continued dedication and commitment to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

HALIFAX TIDES: WOMEN'S SOCCER CLUB - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize Nova Scotia's first professional women's soccer club, the Halifax Tides. Since the unveiling of their team name and logo in June 2024, the club has been busy building their impressive roster of players, both local and international, and running their first training camps. Beyond competition, the Halifax Tides' mission statement is to create an environment locally where every player can flourish, every fan can find belonging, and every individual can realize their full potential.

By leading with authenticity and warmth, creating moments of joy through unforgettable experiences, and cultivating strong relationships, the Tides will be a thriving

professional soccer club that demands global and national attention - and attention from my family for sure.

As we approach the inaugural season this Spring, and the first match April 26th at the Wanderers Grounds, I ask this House to join me in celebration of CEO Courtney Sherlock, President Val Malone, and all those who have worked to bring this dream team into reality.

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

KYNOCK, VERNON: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

RICK BURNS: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Vernon Kynock for his continued dedication to our community. He is best known for Kynock Resources, which has operated in our community since 1976, and Vernon's Thunderbird Diner, which is in its 18th year of operation.

As if being a local pillar in the business community wasn't enough, Vern has turned his philanthropic efforts to providing a healthy and welcoming space with Vernon's Walking Trails, which provide many kilometres of open space for our community and an intermediate 18-hole disc golf course for the growing disc golf community.

I would like to ask the members of the Legislature to join me in thanking Vernon for the public use of his land and his contribution to community healthy living efforts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

NARENDRAN, ARO: OUTREACH WORK - RECOG.

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize Aro Narendran. Aro has been like a brother to me since 2021. Aro came about as a staff person on my election campaign and has since been a part of the hard work that has continued to happen in Halifax Needham. Aro leads my outreach team of volunteers and works alongside my EDA to organize events and canvases in my community. I'm also so grateful to have someone like Aro on my team. His presence is vital to our success.

I would like all members of this House to help me thank Aro Narendran for his effort and energy, and he knows what I mean by that. I truly appreciate your work and especially your outreach work in Halifax Needham.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

MALTBY-LEBLANC, MICHELE: NEW DIALYSIS UNIT - RECOG.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise today to speak to the perseverance and dedication of Michele Maltby-LeBlanc and her mother, Sharon LeBlanc, and other individuals in Cumberland County who have worked so hard to bring a new dialysis unit to the area.

For many years, the dialysis unit located at All Saints Springhill Hospital has been full to capacity, and people like Michele have been pressuring the government to add additional chairs so they wouldn't have to travel to Moncton. Over the past year, a temporary unit was opened at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre, and just recently conformation that the permanent unit will begin construction this Spring at Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre.

Michele and several of her family members have kidney disease, and for many years, they have been the driving force behind the local Kidney Foundation of Canada, while also speaking loudly and often to the need for more dialysis services. Please join me in thanking Michele Maltby-LeBlanc and her mother, Sharon, and her family and others for their unwavering commitment to the much-needed dialysis unit coming to Cumberland.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

SKI BEN EOIN: EARLY OPENING - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN COMER: Today I rise to congratulate Ski Ben Eoin on providing another season of fun-filled winter activities in the community. This year our local ski hill was able to open before New Year's Day, getting folks out on the slopes weeks ahead of schedule, compared to the past few years.

The early opening was in part thanks to investment for new snow-making equipment. This allowed them to make snow in warmer temperatures, which should help extend the skiing season. Soon the non-profit will embark on major lighting improvements with new LED lighting on additional runs, as well as more projects for expansion that are coming on the horizon. I congratulate the hard work of Ski Ben Eoin's board, volunteers and staff in their efforts to maintain this community asset.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE: DONATIONS - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: One of my favourite events of the year is the Halifax Professional Fire Fighters and Q104's holiday toy drive at the Highfield Park fire station, which supports Parker Street Food & Furniture Bank.

This year, folks from the Parkside Pub and Smokehouse, a much-loved eatery across from the fire station, really stepped up, stopping by the toy drive with a whopping \$11,000 donation, one of the biggest single financial donations the drive has ever received. The result of Parkside Pub and Smokehouse's own community fundraiser, this donation went a long way to help the overall toy drive raise a massive \$63,500-plus in cash, in addition to a mountain of toys for children and families in need.

Today, I rise to thank all the organizers of the toy drive, but especially Dan Latter and the staff at Parkside Pub and Smokehouse for this act of generosity that I'm sure went a long way in making the holiday season brighter for many families in our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

SANTOS, CHARLENE: CHARLENE'S KITCHEN - RECOG.

NICK HILTON: I rise today to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit and community impact of Charlene's Kitchen in Yarmouth. Charlene Santos moved to Yarmouth from the Philippines several years ago and saw a unique opportunity. Recognizing the need for familiar foods and products from home, Charlene opened a restaurant on Main Street that offers dishes from various countries, including her own, giving newcomers a taste of home.

But Charlene's vision didn't stop there. She also launched an import service and a retail outlet providing beauty and food products from various countries, to meet the diverse needs of the community. Charlene's keen understanding of her market has allowed her not only to meet the needs of newcomers but also to create a warm, welcoming space where they can feel at home. Her success in Yarmouth is a testament to her dedication and passion to our community. She is truly an inspiration to others.

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

HENRY, JOE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, I rise to recognize the passing of Joe Henry, a man we were lucky to have in our lives. Throughout his life, Joe was a pillar of support for his family, friends, and community. Joe was dedicated to service. He joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1976, initially serving with the militia before joining the regular force. His 27 years of dedicated service spoke volumes of his commitment to his country.

Joe's unwavering sense of duty mirrored how he lived his life outside his military career - always prepared to lend a helpful hand. Upon retiring from a career in the military, he met the love of his life, Carol. Carol and Joe were stuck at the hip and both complemented each other's actions. Their love was a testament to companionship and mutual admiration until Carol's untimely passing in 2024.

My love and support are with his family at this very difficult time, and he will always be remembered.

[3:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

BOUDREAU, PEGGY: RETIREMENT - CONGRATS.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Peggy Boudreau on her retirement as the senior safety coordinator for the Municipality of Argyle. Having worked for the Municipality of Argyle for nearly 48 years, Peggy spent the last 13 years as senior safety coordinator providing the seniors in our municipality with invaluable services. She was always available, either by phone or by in-home visits, assisting them wherever possible or connecting them to the proper services. Her devotion and compassion for the people she assisted was evident and admirable.

I ask all members of the House to join me in thanking and congratulating Peggy for her years of service, and wishing her all the best in the next chapter of her life.

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

INDIGENOUS LANGS. MO.: PROMOTION - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: Ullakut. Kwe'. Kuei. Tanshi.

Speaker, I rise today to call all members' attention to the fact that February is Indigenous Languages Month in Canada. Many Indigenous languages are spoken in Canada. There are about 90 languages and 12 language groups. Language was one of the major targets of Canada's colonization efforts, especially through residential schools. This was intentional. Language links us to stories, family, and community. Language brings to life our beliefs and morals. Restricting and destroying languages dislocated people from their communities.

The 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recognized language as a right, including Call to Action #15, which called on the federal government to appoint an Indigenous Languages Commissioner. Language is also recognized as a right in Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In Canada, all Indigenous languages are regarded as being in various states of endangerment and require support.

I look forward to working with all members to support Indigenous language revitalization in Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

MACKENZIE, TODD: TODD'S TAXI - CONGRATS.

DANNY MACGILLIVRAY: Speaker, it is my privilege to stand today and recognize Todd MacKenzie, owner and operator of Todd's Taxi. Todd's first job in his late teens was on a garbage truck where he worked for about a year when he was hit by a car while carrying out his duties. Todd sustained serious injuries to the point that doctors told him he would never be able to do physical labour again.

Todd pivoted to driving a taxi. He formed his own taxi business in 1990 while still a teenager and operated it for one year. He found that some aspects of running his own taxi service were overwhelming at that young age and went to work driving for another company. Todd never gave up on his dream of one day running his own service.

The taxi service Todd worked for was closing for two months and then reopening. Todd, with a baby on the way, could not afford the luxury of two months off of work. Todd once again acted on his goal, and in 2011 Todd's Taxi service was born. It operates today with 20 drivers, eight vehicles, and a taxi stand.

I ask that we all take this moment to recognize Todd MacKenzie's entrepreneurial spirit and congratulate him for the success of Todd's Taxi.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

VANDAL DOUGHNUTS: NEW LOCATION - CONGRATS.

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize a doughnut shop in Halifax Needham named Vandal. Vandal doughnuts are perfect for any occasion from weddings and baby showers to birthdays. Any special occasion you can think of, they can make a doughnut for you.

On top of the doughnuts being just plain delicious, they are aesthetically pleasing to look at. It's like they are a work of art - an art of deliciousness. I encourage everyone to go and visit and have a bite. Visit their shop to peruse their wares and grab a cup of coffee to go. You will not be disappointed.

I would like all members of this House to join me in thanking Vandal for their amazing service in Halifax Needham, and to congratulate them for opening their new location on Lower Water Street. As we know, when doughnuts are close by, doughnuts will be everywhere for each and every one of us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MAR. ODD FELLOWS HOME: CERTIFIC. - CONGRATS.

MARCO MACLEOD: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the staff at the Maritime Odd Fellows Home in Pictou for earning the Montessori Inspired Lifestyle Gold Level Credential.

The Maritime Odd Fellows Home is a 47-bed continuing care facility that focuses on enhancing independence, dignity, and meaningful engagement for residents. This credential reflects their commitment to promoting a person-centred approach that encourages individuals to lead fulfilling, empowered lives, no matter their age or stage of life.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the staff and owners of the Maritime Odd Fellows Home for being the only facility in Nova Scotia, and second in all of Canada, to be certified in the Montessori Lifestyle program, under the Centre for Applied Research in Dementia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

MABOU FRESHMART: COM. SERV. - THANKS

KYLE MACQUARRIE: Speaker, I would like to shine a light on an extraordinary, family-run grocery store, the Mabou Freshmart. This local grocery store is owned and operated by two dedicated and devoted residents of Mabou, Karen and Wayne Beaton.

The Freshmart's contributions to the community go beyond providing groceries. It embraces Cape Breton's strong culture of community support, always willing to donate to local organizations such as the Mabou and District Volunteer Fire Department, Mabou Celidh Days Festival, and Cape Breton West Islanders hockey team, to name just a few.

I witnessed first-hand how generous Karen and Wayne are, especially with their time and energy. Karen and Wayne support initiatives that help shape our proud and loving community.

Please join me in thanking the Mabou Freshmart for being a place where exceptional hospitality thrives and community connections flourish.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

SW HANTS FIRE SOC.: COM. SERV. - THANKS

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank the incredible members and volunteers of the Southwest Hants Fire Society and Auxiliary. From monthly jam sessions to auxiliary big breakfasts, their calendars are full of fun and

festive events. Hosting benefit concerts and fundraisers, and serving free community dinners are just a few ways they come together for the community they serve.

This Christmas, when Canada Post was on strike, they made sure that letters from Santa made their way into the hands of little ones, bringing joy to young and old alike. None of this would be possible if it weren't for the dedication, passion, and commitment of the volunteers who make each event a success. One of my favourite quotes is this: Volunteers do not necessarily have the time - they just have the heart. This rings true because this group has some of the biggest hearts I know.

I ask that all members join me in thanking the Southwest Hants Fire Society for all they do and for leading with their big hearts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

FIDELIS HOUSE: EXPANSION - CONGRATS.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Fidelis House of Kentville on the expansion opening of four new guest rooms at their facility. Fidelis House, located on the grounds of the Annapolis Valley Regional Hospital, is a home away from home and support house for out-of-town family members and patients during their stay at Valley Regional Hospital.

Fidelis House, which is operated by a team of 60 volunteers, has been a vital part of our medical care community since 1992, and hosts more than 4,000 overnight visitors each year.

Please join me today to congratulate Fidelis House on their much-needed expansion, and to recognize all the community volunteers who provide a comforting home away from home during stressful times in their guests lives.

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

MACLEAN, ANNAH-CLARE: LEGIT WESTERN WEAR - CONGRATS.

DIANNE TIMMINS: Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit that thrives in Victoria-The Lakes, embodied by 13-year-old Annah-Clare MacLean with her new business, LEGIT Western Wear.

Recognizing a need for Western-style clothing and accessories in our region, Annah-Clare took the initiative to create a business that serves local farmers and horse lovers alike. With a strong work ethic and a vision for the future, she is proving that entrepreneurship knows no age.

It is no surprise that Annah-Clare has the drive; she follows in the footsteps of her hard-working parents, Noelle and Bobby MacLean. Noelle is the founder of RISE Results Business Services, and Bobby owns Scotia Screw Piles and Fencing and Aggressive Metal Fabrication.

I ask all members of this House join me in congratulating Annah-Clare MacLean on her new business, and to recognize the contribution of the MacLean family in Victoria-The Lakes and beyond.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

VOLLEYBALL ATHLETES: NATIONALS COMPET. - BEST WISHES

DAMIAN STOILOV: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of young athletes in Bedford South. I am very proud to share that the Bedford Blizzard 17U girls and 15U girls volleyball teams are heading to Edmonton this year to compete in the Volleyball Canada Youth Nationals.

These young women have worked hard to get to this point, and I know they will be great ambassadors not only for Bedford but also for all of Nova Scotia while they are in Edmonton.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to help me in wishing these teams the best of luck at Nationals. Let's go, 17U and 15U girls.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

SMALL BUSINESSES: CONTRIBUTIONS - THANKS

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the many small businesses that bring vitality and charm to beautiful Lunenburg West, from cozy coffee shops and bakeries - like Weagles, the Ploughman's Lunch, and Fancy Pants Cafe - to longstanding family-owned shops.

These businesses are core economic and social elements of our community, and today I want to take the opportunity to feature two examples.

The Kitchen Witch, a beloved family-owned business in Bridgewater, offers unique, high-quality giftware. Remarkably, at age 88, owner Bill Davidson continues to keep the books and bring coffee to his daughter, Ann Jabalee, and their team every day at 2:00 p.m. sharp - a cherished tradition for 37 years.

Our community is also enriched by King Street Shoes and Darlene Rhodenizer - proud owner since 2013 - who brings knowledge and passion for the footwear industry.

From quality wool socks to sandals, shoes, boots, handbags, and more, King Street Shoes has it all. Darlene and her team go above and beyond to ensure customers find the perfect fit and leave the store with a smile.

I call on all those in the House to join me in thanking all our small business owners and their hard-working employees for their contributions to our communities.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

ROBB, DAVID: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize an outstanding south shore businessman, David Robb.

Former owner of both the Lunenburg and Chester Foodland stores, Dave retired recently after a decades-long career that extended far beyond the aisles of his grocery stores.

Dave is a tireless community champion. He has raised tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars for local charities. He made it his mission to provide a Christmas meal and presents to residents of the local veterans unit each year, he helped found the Nova Scotia Firefighters Benevolent Fund, and he remains an active volunteer firefighter of 30 years' experience and the current deputy chief at Lunenburg.

Dave's retirement marks the end of an era for shoppers in Lunenburg and Chester where he will be missed, but his legacy of generosity, service, and community spirit will endure. We certainly wish him well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

ORCAS HOCKEY TEAM: BOTTLE DRIVE - RECOG.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: I rise today to recognize the U11 Dartmouth Whalers minor hockey team, the Orcas, for their truly inspirational act of kindness. The team had a very successful bottle drive fundraiser, and once everything had been tallied up, they realized there was approximately \$125 extra. They used the money to purchase items for the Eastern Passage community food pantry. The team happily picked out some of their favorite foods and then stocked the shelves for those experiencing food insecurity. With so much success and lessons learned and taught, the Orcas plan to do it again. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in recognizing the Orcas minor hockey team for their kindness and for giving back to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

[3:45 p.m.]

FORGERON-COSGROVE, ANN: MEDAL RECIP. - CONGRATS

ADEGOKE FADARE: I rise today to congratulate Ann Forgeron-Cosgrove of Clayton Park West. Ann was selected by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association to receive the King Charles III Coronation Medal on February 28, 2025. This prestigious medal is given to Nova Scotians who make a significant contribution to our community. Ann is being recognized for her exceptional dedication to advancing hospice palliative care, which has resulted in positive impacts on individuals and their families in Nova Scotia and across Canada. I would like to ask that all members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Ann for her dedication and commitment to those who are facing challenging times, and for doing what she can to make their lives a little bit easier.

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

2 BOYS SMOKEHOUSE & DELI: COLE HBR. BUS. - RECOG.

BRAD MCGOWAN: Today I rise to recognize a small business in my community: the 2 Boys Smokehouse & Deli. A Cole Harbour landmark for decades, this business began with Chris Kielbratowski, who escaped Poland during World War II. He built the business into a well-known brand, Chris Brothers, which many residents still know well. Since then, the name has been sold, but the family continues to operate as 2 Boys, and Cole Harbour thanks them for it. The shop still uses its original wood smokehouse to make their renowned local pepperoni, and there are other delicious meat products in store as well. I ask all members of the House to please join me in recognizing 2 Boys as a wonderful family-owned business in Cole Harbour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Queens.

QUEENS PLACE EMERA CTR.: CURLING TRIALS HOST - CONGRATS.

HON. KIM MASLAND: This past December 30th through January 4th, Queens Place Emera Centre in Liverpool hosted the 2025 Canadian Mixed Doubles Curling Olympic Trials. I was fortunate to join the amazing team of volunteers and saw first-hand what is involved in staging such an event. Audiences were treated to elite and exciting competitive curling by our country's top talent in the sport, and visitors were welcomed and shown the warm hospitality that Queens County is known for.

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to the organizing committee and the awesome volunteers for their countless hours and ongoing efforts. It wasn't our first time hosting a world-class curling event, and I daresay it won't be our last. Congratulations to all involved on a very successful event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

GOODERHAM, BILLY: SAILING INJURY - RECOG.

TIM OUTHIT: I rise today regarding a recent injury sustained by Billy Gooderham, a Bedford Basin resident and a member of the SailGP Canada Team. Mr. Gooderham sustained an injury during a manoeuvre in pre-racing warm-up ahead of official racing in Auckland, New Zealand. I am happy to advise that he has been cleared of serious injury. If you haven't watched a SailGP race yet, you should. There is nothing like it, and even those knowing very little about sailing can enjoy the speed and necessary skill it requires. I look forward to seeing them back in Halifax.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Shore.

PETERS, ELLE: LG AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.

HON. KENT SMITH: I rise today to bring recognition to Elle Peters of East Lawrencetown. Last year, Elle received the 2024 Lieutenant Governor's Award of Excellence for l'Acadie and Francophonie of Nova Scotia. In addition, she won a 2024 HRM Volunteer of the Year Award.

Elle, a Grade 12 student at École secondaire Mosaïque, is an active participant in the student council and numerous committees, and is a member of the Conseil jeunesse provincial de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Her other interests include politics and social issues. She has represented Nova Scotia and Canada with her involvement in the Fédération de la jeunesse Canadienne-Française and the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

I ask that all members of the Legislative Assembly join me in congratulating Elle on her significant achievements as an outstanding Acadian. Félicitations, Elle.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Colchester North.

BARNHILL, ERIC & KATHY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.

TOM TAGGART: Speaker, I rise today to recognize a couple from Debert, Eric and Kathy Barnhill, who are excellent community volunteers. The Barnhills are concerned about keeping our community healthy, sustainable, and beautiful. Often, they can be seen going up and down the road gathering discarded coffee cups and garbage. Eric and Kathy are avid community advocates, always supporting fundraisers and sometimes having a bit of fun at the fire hall. I commend the Barnhills for their leadership and absolute commitment to their community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

BURTON'S FLOORING: COM. SERV. - THANKS

FRED TILLEY: Speaker, today I would like to recognize a business in our community, Burton's Flooring. Owned and operated by the Burton family, the business is not only well known for its quality products and workmanship, they are well known for their endless dedication and contributions to our community. Most recently Glenn, Edna, and family organized a raffle of a Drake Batherson signed jersey and raised \$10,380 for local food banks and Souls Harbour Rescue Mission. They are always there for the community participating in Main Street activities, children's events, and the many festivals and events in our small community. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking Glenn, Edna, and the staff at Burton's Flooring for making our community a better place to live.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

ROSCOE, JACOB: BLACKSMITH - RECOG.

HON. NOLAN YOUNG: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jacob Roscoe, a carpenter by trade who had always had a keen interest in the art of blacksmithing, so he decided to pay a visit to local blacksmith, Hayward Meisner. Upon visiting Hayward's shop, the flame was lit, and 10 years later Jake is a blacksmith artist in his own right creating a wide range of items from functional to sculpting beautiful decorative pieces.

His love of nature is often shown in some of his works that include hummingbirds, copper roses, lilies, and roses. When you see a stunningly designed gate, fence or railing proudly displayed on properties in our area, it is likely one of Jake's works. As one metal worker to another, Speaker, I respectfully ask all members to join me in thanking Jake for his interest in keeping the art of blacksmithing alive.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

OWNERS: INTO THE MYSTIC - THANKS

HON. LEAH MARTIN: Speaker, today I would like to recognize Cole Harbour community member Donna Niehaus and her husband, Greg Niehaus. They are the owners of Into the Mystic: Gifts, Crystals, and Readings, which has operated in our community for more than 16 years. Mr. and Mrs. Niehaus are enthusiastic individuals, passionate about working and living in Cole Harbour. This vibrant business adds character to our community and employs hard-working local residents with unique job opportunities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution to Cole Harbour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

TWO BEACHES TANNING: CONTRIB. TO ECONOMY - THANKS

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the opening of a fantastic new business in Elmsdale, Two Beaches Tanning. This exciting new tanning salon, owned and operated by Angela Zwicker-Burke and Lisa Harper Powell, brings a fresh and innovative service to our community. Two Beaches Tanning offers a variety of tanning beds, including options for UV tanning and red-light therapy, providing customers with choices to suit their needs. Angela and Lisa's dedication to creating a welcoming and professional space reflects their commitment to the well-being and satisfaction of their clients. Their entrepreneurial spirit contributes to the growth and vibrancy of our local economy. Thank you for opening your new business in Hants East.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

UHLMAN, ESTHER: FIGHTING VIOLENCE - RECOG.

DAVID BOWLBY: Speaker, I rise today to commend the inspiring advocacy of Esther Uhlman, who has taken a profound tragedy and turned it into a mission to create meaningful change. On August 31, 2024, Esther's aunt and namesake, Esther Jones, was tragically killed. Determined to prevent similar violence against women, Esther has acted. She met with CPC shadow ministers Raquel Dancho and Michelle Ferreri in Ottawa, and her testimony before the parliamentary Standing Committee for the Status of Women on November 20, 2024 was a powerful call for justice and protection. I ask this House to recognize Esther Uhlman's courage and commitment to protecting innocent women and ensuring a safer future for all Canadians.

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

CLARKE, CECIL: CBRM MAYOR RE-ELECTION - CONGRATS.

JOHN WHITE: In a municipal election that saw nine candidates run for the CBRM's office of the mayor, I would like to congratulate Cecil Clarke, who was returned to the office for the third time. In addition to his previous eight years' experience in the mayor's office, Mayor Clarke brings experience as a past provincial cabinet minister.

The CBRM election also saw five councillors acclaimed to their previous positions while the constituency of Glace Bay-Dominion realized three new councillors. Congratulations to all, but in particular: Steven MacNeil for District 8, Dave MacKeigan for District 9, and Paul Nickituk in District 10. I would like to thank the outgoing mayor and council for their work, and I also look forward to working with the new mayor and council as we strive to build a brighter more prosperous future for the CBRM.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

ED'S PLUMBING & HEATING LTD.: 40TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I rise today to recognize Ed's Plumbing & Heating Ltd. for celebrating 40 years in business this past December. Ed MacDonald opened his Antigonish business in 1984, and over the years he and his staff have provided our community with excellent customer service. They always go above and beyond for their customers.

In 2003, after Ed's passing, Steve Hayne - who had worked with Ed since soon after the business was opened - purchased it. Steve continues to provide quality services to customers and has continually demonstrated his commitment to our community by supporting numerous local fundraisers. I stopped by Ed's Plumbing & Heating on December 18th when they were celebrating their anniversary to offer my congratulations. Today, I ask all members of the House to join me in recognizing this fantastic Antigonish small business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

COMEAU, STEPHANE: ACADIAN REFRIGERATION - RECOG.

RYAN ROBICHEAU: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Stephane Comeau, the owner of Acadian Refrigeration from Comeauville. His company provides refrigeration services, heat pump sales, and installation in our area. Nearing his second year in business, Stephane is a perfect representative of a new generation of business owners. His dedicated work ethic, his knowledge, and ability to help are some of the reasons why Acadian Refrigeration and Stephane have become so well-known so quickly. We hope that young entrepreneurs like Stephane encourage more youth to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option. Congratulations on your success, Stephane, and we wish you many more years in business.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

PALMER, CHLOE: VOLLEYBALL ACHIEVEMENTS - RECOG.

CHRIS PALMER: I wasn't planning to rise anymore today but when my colleague from Bedford South talked about the Bedford Blizzard, I wanted to highlight an alum of Bedford Blizzard - my daughter, Chloe Palmer - who just finished her rookie season at Mount Allison, and the Mount Allison Mounties - just a big shout-out to them. Chloe Palmer and the Mount Allison Mounties went to Holland College this weekend in P.E.I. and won the Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association Women's Volleyball Championships. Chloe had a successful first year, and they're off to nationals.

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

WAGNER, MITCH: QMJHL CAREER - CONGRATS.

HON. BRIAN WONG: Today, I'd like to recognize an incredible young man who's just beginning his career in the Quebec Maritime Junior Hockey League. Mitch Wagner from Beaver Bank was picked up by the Saint John Sea Dogs last month. Last season, Wagner totalled 12 goals, 23 assists, and 51 games with the Timberwolves. He added five goals and 11 points in 15 playoff games. I hope everyone can help me congratulate Mitch Wagner.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time for Statements by Members has expired. We will now move on to Orders of the Day. Of course, some Mondays we do not - the honourable Premier.

[4:00 p.m.]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent of the House to deem Bill No. 1 to have been referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills following its introduction on February 18, 2025; to deem it to have been amended in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills on February 20, 2025 by deleting Clauses 1 through 7 inclusive - that's the entirety of Part I - and renumbering the subsequent clauses accordingly; and to deem the bill to have been reported back on that same day, and to have been ordered to be read a second time on a future day.

For greater certainty, the bill with the aforementioned sections removed will still proceed to the committee stage following second reading, to be followed by Committee of the Whole House on Bills for any further amendments, and finally to third reading.

Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for unanimous consent to deem Bill No. 1 to have been referred to the Committee of the Whole House on Bills following its introduction on February 18, 2025; to deem it to have been amended in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills on February 20, 2025 by deleting Clauses 1 through 7 and renumbering the subsequent clauses accordingly and to deem the bill to have been reported back on that same day, and to have been ordered to be read a second time on a future day.

There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? There was no unanimous consent. My apologies. I did not hear any Noes.

The motion is defeated.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, pursuant to Rule 5C, I move that hours for February 25th be not 1:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. but instead be 1:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: There has been a motion for the hours for February 25th to be from 1:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

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

LINA HAMID: Honourable members of the Legislature, today I stand before you in this historic Chamber, the oldest House of Assembly in Canada, a place where the very foundations of our democracy were laid. These walls have witnessed countless debates, passionate arguments, and pivotal decisions that have shaped the very course of Nova Scotia, and indeed Canada.

It is within this context, within this cradle of Canadian parliamentary tradition, that I address you today on a matter of paramount importance: the vital role of open debate in our Legislature, a role that, I believe, is directly challenged by the implications of the suggested overhaul of our systems of governance. I speak not only as a member of this Assembly, but as a Sudanese Canadian who, until coming to this province, had never experienced the privilege of participating in a true democracy.

I speak as someone who understands, perhaps more acutely than some, the fragility of our democratic institutions and the crucial importance of safeguarding the right to voice dissent. I speak as someone who has seen first-hand the devastating consequences of silencing opposition and suppressing free speech. I speak as someone who has learned

through hard experience that democracy is not a gift bestowed upon us - it is a right that must be constantly defended and nurtured.

For many years the concept of open debate, of freely expressing dissenting opinions without fear, was a distant dream; a concept I only read about in books or saw on flickering newsreels. In Sudan voices are silenced, dissent is crushed, and the very notion of a legislature where opposing viewpoints could be freely exchanged was completely foreign, almost utopian.

The reality was one of arbitrary arrests, political persecutions, and the constant fear of speaking out against the ruling regime. In Qatar, where I was born and raised, the regime is a monarchy. Being a Sudanese meant that I could not participate in any, I guess we'll call it civic engagement. While there was a monarchy, there were councils that people would go and speak at for any sort of changes. I could not participate as a non-Qatari - as a Sudanese - so I couldn't even speak up in those situations.

This has instilled in me a very deep appreciation for the hard-won freedoms that we as Canadians sometimes take for granted. Coming to Canada and having the honour of being elected to this Assembly has been a revelation to me. It has shown me the true power of a system where every voice, regardless of background or belief, has the right to be heard. These are freedoms that I know from personal experience are not universally available. These freedoms are essential for the healthy functioning of any democratic society.

We gather here not as individuals but as representatives of the people. We are entrusted with a sacred duty of voicing their concerns, championing their interests, and crafting laws that reflect their aspirations. Each one of us represents a unique constituency, a diverse cross-section of Nova Scotian society with its own specific needs, challenges, and perspectives. From the bustling streets of Halifax to the quiet fishing villages along our coast, from the descendants of the Acadians to the members of the Mi'kmaw nation, from the members and descendants of the historic African Nova Scotian community to recent immigrants seeking a better life to families who have called Nova Scotia home for generations, we are a mosaic of communities, each with a distinct identity and a vital contribution to our province.

Within this mosaic we must acknowledge the unique histories and the experiences of the Mi'kmaq, the historic African Nova Scotian and the Acadian communities, each of whom have faced distinct challenges and injustices. Their voices, their perspectives and their concerns must be given particular weight during our deliberations.

To stifle debate within these venerable walls is not just to silence individuals or the pesky Opposition. It is to silence the very communities that these people represent. It is to invalidate their experiences, to disregard their concerns, and to undermine their fundamental right to participate in the democratic process. It is to betray that trust and to erode the very essence of representative democracy. It is a disservice to the citizens who

have placed their faith in every single one of us and a grave insult to the legacy of those who have fought to establish this very institution.

I say this with particular emphasis, again having lived in a society where such rights were non-existent. I know what it means to have your voice suppressed, your opinions disregarded, and to feel powerless in the face of decisions being made that affect you directly.

I fear that this resolution in its current form threatens to erode the very freedoms I so cherish, freedoms that are essential for each one of us to effectively represent our constituencies. It threatens to create a system where some voices are amplified, while others are diminished; where the concerns of certain communities are prioritized while others are ignored. It threatens to undermine the very principle of equity, on which our democracy is built. It threatens to perpetuate the very inequalities that we as legislators have a responsibility to address and not diminish.

Consider the weight of the history that surrounds us. Think of the generations who have debated within these Chambers, wrestling with the challenges of their time. They understood that progress is not born of conformity, but of the clash of ideas - the rigorous examination of evidence and the willingness to challenge the most deeply held beliefs.

They understood that open debate is not an impediment to progress, but rather its engine. They understood what I now understand: that democracy without robust debate is democracy diminished, and that without robust debate, we cannot truly fulfill our obligations to represent the diverse interests of our constituencies. We cannot effectively advocate for the needs of our communities, and we cannot ensure that their voices are heard. And we cannot hold this government accountable for its actions.

This is especially true when, again, it comes to addressing the historic injustices that the Mi'kmaq, Acadian, and African Nova Scotian communities have faced in Nova Scotia. These communities have been marginalized for far too long, and their unique perspectives must be central to any discussion that affects our lives, and we know that these discussions do need to take extra time.

Some may argue that in our modern, fast, shiny and cool world, debate is a luxury that we can no longer afford. They claim that it slows down the legislative process, it creates a gridlock and prevents us from addressing pressing issues. They may even point to the perceived need for expediency that seemingly underpins this resolution. But I ask you, having witnessed the consequences of unchecked power and the suppression of dissent: Can we truly afford not to debate?

Can we afford to rush through legislation, especially legislation with potential far-reaching consequences, without thoroughly considering its implications on all Nova Scotians? Can we afford to ignore dissenting voices, or dismiss alternate perspectives -

perspectives that may be crucial to understanding the impact of legislation on specific communities, perspectives that may offer innovative solutions to the challenges that we face? The answer, unequivocally, is no.

A well-considered decision born of robust debate is far superior to a rushed decision that may have unintended and even disastrous consequences on the very people that we are here to serve. We are not simply legislators; we are stewards of public trust. That trust demands that we exercise due diligence, that we engage in thorough debate and that we carefully consider the potential impact of our decisions on all of those that we represent.

[4:15 p.m.]

It demands that we prioritize long-term well-being of our communities over short-term political gains. It demands that we listen and learn from the experiences of those who have been historically marginalized in this province. Open debate is not simply about airing grievances; it is about fostering transparency and accountability. When the public can witness the give-and-take of ideas, the scrutiny of evidence, and the rationale behind our decisions, they are more likely to trust the integrity of the process.

This trust is the bedrock of a healthy democracy. It is what binds citizens to their government and ensures the legitimacy of our institutions. Without it, democracy withers and dies. I wonder if the limitations on debate potentially imposed by this resolution will erode this vital trust - a trust that I, more than most, I believe, in this Chamber, understand is so fragile and so easily broken. Without that trust, how can we effectively represent the needs and concerns of the people who sent us here? How can we build a consensus necessary to address the complex challenges facing our province? How can we ensure that our decisions truly reflect the will of the people? How can we begin to heal the wounds of the past and build a more just and equitable future for all Nova Scotians?

Let us not shy away from difficult conversations. Let us not fear the expression of dissenting opinions. Let us embrace the opportunity to engage in respectful dialogue, to listen with open minds, and to seek common ground where possible.

It is in the conflicting viewpoints that we sharpen our own hearts, expand our understanding, and ultimately arrive at solutions that are more just, more equitable, and more effective. This is precisely what is at stake here.

Are we willing to sacrifice the robust exchange of ideas for the sake of perceived expediency? Are we willing to compromise the principles of democracy that I as a newcomer to this land have come to so deeply value, principles that are so essential to ensuring that every constituency, every community, and every voice has been heard and those concerns addressed? Are we willing to trade long-term stability and well-considered policy for short-term gains and potentially harmful consequences? Are we willing to silence the voices of those who disagree with us, even when those voices represent the

legitimate concerns of our constituents, especially when those voices are the voices of communities that have been historically excluded from the halls of power?

This is particularly true in this province, with its rich history of diverse perspectives and vibrant communities, from the Mi'kmaw nation, whose ancestral lands we occupy, to the Acadians, whose resilience and cultural contributions have enriched our society, to the historic African Nova Scotian communities, whose strength and perseverance in the face of adversity is an inspiration, and to the wave of immigrants who have made Nova Scotia their home. We are a tapestry of voices, each deserving to be heard.

Open debate allows us to weave these diverse threads together to create a stronger and more inclusive society. Of course, debate must be conducted with civility and respect. Personal attacks, inflammatory rhetoric, and suppression of dissenting voices have no place in this Chamber. We're all here to serve the greater good, even when we disagree on the means by which we achieve it.

Let us remember that we are not adversaries but colleagues, united in our commitment to serving the people of Nova Scotia. Let us also remember that respectful disagreement is not an obstruction. It is an essential component of good governance. It is, in fact, the very essence of democracy. It is the cornerstone of effective representation. It is the mechanism by which we ensure all perspectives are considered, that all voices are heard, and that all communities are represented.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

KRISTA GALLAGHER: Speaker, that is going to be a tough act to follow. As an elected official, it is my duty and my privilege to speak on behalf of the communities that we all cherish, the industries that sustain us, and the future that we strive to build together.

Today, I wish to speak about the cornerstone of our heritage, our economy, and our daily lives: agriculture and the food economy here in Nova Scotia. Our province is blessed with fertile land, abundant resources, and a rich history of farming. From the lush Annapolis Valley to the rugged landscapes of Cape Breton, agriculture has been a lifeblood of our communities for generations. It is the backbone that supports not only our economy but also our identity as Nova Scotians.

Yet despite this undeniable importance, this sector has not received the attention and the funding that I believe it truly deserves. Year after year, we have witnessed the same pattern: insufficient investment, limited support, and lack of comprehensive strategy to elevate our agriculture sector to its fullest potential.

I stand before you today to highlight the critical need for increased funding and renewed commitment to agriculture. I believe that by investing in our farmers, we are investing in the health, prosperity, and sustainability of our province.

Let us start with economic impact. Agriculture is not just about crops and livestock. It's about jobs, it's about growth, and it's about innovation. Our farmers are entrepreneurs, they're innovators, and they're stewards of the land. They contribute millions of dollars to our economy, create employment opportunities, and drive local businesses, yet they face numerous challenges of rising costs, unpredictable weather, and competition from global markets.

With adequate funding, we can empower our farmers to overcome these obstacles. We can invest in lab services and research and development to improve crop yields, support sustainable farming practices, and promote the adoption of cutting-edge technologies. By doing so, we can enhance productivity, reduce environmental impact, and ensure long-term viability of our agriculture sector.

Funding for greenhouses, providing bridge financing for farmland purchases, and other improvements with predictable funding could support our sector and attract new farmers to our province. Our province's immigration strategy needs to include attracting farming families to settle and to make our lands productive again. We need to provide more rights and a path to permanent residency for our seasonal farming workers.

Let's not forget the importance of food security and food sovereignty. The events of recent years have underscored the vulnerability of global food chains. It's imperative that we build resilient local food systems that can withstand disruptions. Food sovereignty is the right of people to define their own food systems. It emphasizes local and sustainable food production, ensuring that all members of our community have access to nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. Achieving food sovereignty requires an effort from all levels of government, industry, and communities.

By increasing funding for the sector, we can support local food initiatives, strengthen farm-to-table networks, and promote consumption of locally grown produce. We can reduce our dependence on imported foods and create a self-sufficient food economy that benefits both farmers and consumers. Investing in agriculture is also about preserving our rural communities and a way of life.

Our farmers are the heart and soul of our rural areas. They are custodians of landscapes and keepers of our traditions. They are the pillars of our communities. By providing them with the resources they need, we can ensure our rural areas remain vibrant, thriving, and sustainable. Furthermore, it is essential to address the barriers that hinder young and aspiring farmers from entering the industry.

We need to provide them with access to land, resources, and training opportunities to ensure sustainability of our agriculture sector. This vision requires a collaborative effort. We need to work together as government, industry, and communities to develop a comprehensive agricultural strategy that addresses the unique needs and challenges of our

province. We must listen to our farmers, understand their concerns, and provide them with timely support that they deserve.

In closing, I urge my colleagues and all Nova Scotians to recognize the critical role of agriculture in our province's future. Let us not overlook the contributions of our farmers. Let us not underestimate the potential of the agriculture sector. Let us not shortchange the sector any longer. Together we can build a resilient, sustainable, and adaptable Nova Scotia.

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

LISA LACHANCE: We have a few informal traditions in this House, and I'm always hoping that perhaps my rainbow budget might be included among those. For our new members, since I was elected in 2021 - and thus since the 2022 budget - I have taken the time during Estimates to have a look at what it would mean and what we could do to really invest in supporting our 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and I think this is an important part of speaking into Supply.

I know that we're often accused of being negative on the other side, but actually we have a lot of positive ideas to improve community well-being. I'd like to provide these examples, and I appreciate the support from the other side too. We'll all look at this budget through a number of lenses, from our critic areas to the concerns of our constituencies, and this is why I wanted to bring this forward.

The 2SLGBTQIA+ community is comprised of people in communities of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Estimates are that between 4 and 8 per cent of Canadians identify as a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, and that 2 to 4 per cent of Canadians identify as trans or gender-diverse. In fact, Halifax has the highest percentage of folks who identify as trans or gender-diverse per capita in the country. We can see that the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is a significant portion of our province but continue to face barriers due to homophobia and transphobia.

My challenge for all of you today is to start to imagine the range of ways we can better support this community. First, some background context. We have witnessed the expansion of formal rights in my lifetime. As I have said in the House before, in Nova Scotia sexual orientation was added to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act in 1991. Same-sex couples gained the right to adopt in 2001, and the right to marry in this province in 2004. To put this in perspective though, this wasn't that long ago. That means that when my partner and I finished our Master's in Public Administration degrees at Dalhousie University in 2000, we could not look forward to using the laws and programs of this province to start our family and start our lives here together in Nova Scotia.

We moved to Ottawa, where we started working for the federal government. We immediately had access to shared benefits, for instance, that weren't available in the

provincial government. We immediately had access to pension rights that, again, weren't available on a provincial level. We were able to adopt, and by 2003, we were legally married.

In Nova Scotia, of course, there was change being undertaken, and in 2013, the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act was further amended to include gender identity and gender expression, but I think it's really important to remember this was not a timeline of peaceful change. Government did not step forward proactively to support the community. Rather, these changes were made by a government in the face of mounting court cases and findings of human rights violations, both in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

The 2SLGBTQIA+ community has fought for our rights every step of the way, and with that, I daresay that our community has responded by flourishing. We're a young population. A third of folks who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ are under the age of 25 years old, yet our youth continue to face barriers to acceptance: acceptance in education and full access to gender-affirming care. Further, continued family violence and disruption create hardships for our young people, including homelessness.

Prior to the pandemic, Statistics Canada stated that 2SLGBTQIA+ Canadians - at 27 per cent - were twice as likely to have experienced some kind of homelessness or housing insecurity in their lifetime. The 2022 Halifax Point-in-Time Survey revealed a similar percentage of 2SLGBTQIA+ folks were homeless in Halifax. Also, not only the experience of homelessness but more broadly on the streets and in other community spaces, LGBT Canadians were more likely to report being violently victimized in their lifetime, and to have experienced inappropriate behaviours in public and online than other Canadians. Violent crimes accounted for more than half of hate crimes targeted sexual orientation. Not surprisingly, sexual minority Canadians were more likely than heterosexual Canadians to report that they consider their mental health to be poor or fair - 32 per cent versus 11 per cent - and they were also more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetimes.

We continue to lose folks who leave Nova Scotia for more inclusive jurisdictions - not for stronger communities, because we have a very strong community here, but for stronger governmental systems, better access to health care including gender-affirming care, and better supports overall for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. While the situation is far from perfect in Nova Scotia, I think we have a lot of ability to think about what could be done to support the community and where we could take things even in the next three to four years.

When I looked at the current Nova Scotia political framework, I was disappointed once again not to see any reference to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in the platform of the two other parties. We had it in our platform. The community was absent from the Speech from the Throne. We still don't have a minister responsible for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, which I think would be excellent. Because we don't have mandate letters, I

can't see anybody's mandate. In the government Business Plan, we do have a commitment to release this year the 2SLGBTQIA+ action plan. My little note to myself says, "Yay." I'll talk a bit more about that in a few minutes.

[4:30 p.m.]

What would an inclusive rainbow budget look like? First of all, there is actually limited data on 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences in Nova Scotia. We rely on information from an array of qualified researchers and the engagement process for the action plan was a starting point.

We need more on outcomes. An important first step would be to have the government commit to understanding the experience of the community. The government should undertake ongoing and accountable consultation with an established steering committee of 2SLGBTQIA+ community members.

In 2021, I wasn't aware of any positions in the Public Service that were specified as being 2SLGBTQIA+ advisors. I had seen that previously when I worked in the provincial government, but in 2021 they weren't there. I think that's changing and that's really important. We know that to effect structural change, we need cultural competence and having staff that provide professional leadership is key. This is not confusing folks who have access to an employee network and who are queer or trans and work in the Public Service. We need to have consistent capacity and 2SLGBTQIA+ issues that could also work across diverse identities and include an intersectional approach in all of our work.

We need to support the non-profit sector in Nova Scotia and build community capacity for 2SLGBTQIA+ community organizations. Right now, we lack a funded network, for instance, and the community actually doesn't have ways in which organizations from Sydney to Yarmouth can come together. For the new folks in the crowd, I'll just let you know that I do try to host a monthly Queer Forum that brings together organizations and individuals from across the province. Anybody is welcome to join, basically trying to talk about what's happening provincially. We'd love to have people from all political stripes and from across the province join me.

I know hopefully in the action plan we can see how communities and community organizations will be well supported; 2SLGBTQIA+ youth continue to face serious challenges. I'll turn to the Student Success Survey in a minute, but really what I think we're also seeing is that somehow trans youth have become a wedge issue in politics. It seems to be something that has drawn the focus of different politicians in different parts of the world.

I think things have been much different here and I think that's good for our young people, because we still really have a long way to go. An average of 24 per cent of students in the 2023-24 Student Success Survey reported feeling unsafe but 44 per cent of 2SLGBTQIA+ students reported feeling unsafe. They identified unsafety in the hallways

and in the washrooms at much higher levels than their peers. Fifty per cent of them reported experiencing homophobia and transphobia; 28 per cent experienced discrimination; 70 per cent witnessed homophobia and transphobia and 75 per cent of the 2SLGBTQIA+ students reported that transphobia and homophobia affect their mental health; 44 per cent says it affects their ability to learn; and at the highest rate, 30 per cent of 2SLGBTQIA+ students reported school absence simply because of not wanting to attend.

I think there's obviously a lot of work we need to do to support our young people so they can be the best they can be. These are actually based on the Student Success Survey registering as our most vulnerable young people in our school system. We want all young people in Nova Scotia to thrive and succeed, so there's a lot of work that needs to be done to support young people.

I would say we're continuing the discussion in education, but it's not clear to me if there is a continued intent to table revised guidelines for trans and gender-diverse students, as was previously committed. It would be really important for government to either release those guidelines or confirm their status. The ongoing uncertainty, especially in the larger political climate, does nothing to help queer and trans young people feel like this government has their back.

We definitely want to advocate for curriculum: everything from diverse types of families to talking about - whether it's history or athletes or social movements, there are possibilities for curriculum reform across the years and across the subjects. Genders & Sexualities Alliances should be provided adequate funding and not have to rely on volunteer teachers to support clubs, and when promoting the trades to students, ensuring that 2SLGBTQIA+ tradespeople and entrepreneurs are engaged in that marketing and mentoring effort.

In Labour, Skills and Immigration: really taking seriously the issue of violence and discrimination in the workplace that we know exists. I've tabled this report from the YWCA in Halifax a lot. I can re-table it. I don't actually have it here today. Things like looking at the age of the MOST program. When we look at the entry into professional work for queer and trans folks, it's usually a little bit later because of issues around coming out and other challenges. I think we can better support queer folks getting that start by extending the age of MOST.

We have a lot of small and medium-sized businesses in Nova Scotia. We also have a really good ecosystem that's developing. There's Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce, which now has a Nova Scotia presence. The Halifax Chamber of Commerce, the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce - so many organizations are doing a lot to support 2SLGBTQIA+ small businesses. I think also looking at that in our economic development plan will be really important.

I've spoken before about 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors. We have some great research that's happened in Nova Scotia, and I can table that now. These current seniors are the first generation of seniors; they lived through the social and political changes. When they were establishing themselves - if you think about your parents, people weren't able to access things. They couldn't access legal structures to form their families. They couldn't access the same spousal benefits. They often couldn't even put two names on the mortgage.

Their ability to build their lives was actually greatly curtailed, and now, there's still a need to really look at training for housing providers and landlords on the needs and rights of queer and trans residents, the need to collect information, and the need to address gaps in housing policies. There's lots of work to be done to support our seniors.

In health, the recently announced expansion of prideHealth is really important. I think we also need to continue to look at how we can support community health clinics and other services like the Halifax Sexual Health Centre and others to make sure that we have a strong environment for queer and trans health. We need to commit to the WPATH Standards of Care Version 8, and we need to commit to ongoing updates. We need to provide PrEP as a universal access.

I just wanted to highlight, too, that I also think about things like the creation of a child and youth commissioner. It's an important part of child welfare system reform that will support 2SLGBTQIA+ children, youth, and adults after they move out of care, and that sort of thing.

We're waiting for the action plan. There was a lot of community engagement that was undertaken - not without controversy - and I would say that folks were concerned that this was simply a technocratic exercise, that people were just paying lip service. They really want to see what the results are going to be. In fact, a large number of organizations actually chose not to participate in the engagement sessions and provided that feedback directly to government.

I still have great hope that an action plan will help us set an agenda for Nova Scotia that truly distinguishes our ability to support our 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

The motion is carried.

[4:51 p.m. The House resolved into the CWH on Supply with Deputy Speaker John White in the Chair.]

[9:10 p.m. CWH on Supply rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Danielle Barkhouse, 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 made some progress and begs leave to sit again.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

[GOVERNMENT MOTIONS]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 5.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid with 32 minutes left.

PAUL WOZNEY: Thank you, Speaker. Am I correct? I think I have 32 minutes left on the clock.

THE SPEAKER: That's correct.

PAUL WOZNEY: Speaker, we're debating Resolution No. 5. When I began speaking before we broke for the weekend, I proposed a series of questions through which we can examine the question of: Is a change necessary? Just a quick recap. We sat with the question of: We have this process; should we change it? I proposed that the first test is a question of: Does the process as it stands frustrate the greater good? I won't retread all the ground that I presented then, but we reasonably can answer that the answer to that question is no. The current process doesn't frustrate our ability as a House, collectively, to work towards the greater good.

I proposed the question: Is a simpler process necessarily a better one? When we look at what this process that we're proposing to change governs, what it supports, given the gravity of the work it involves, the answer is no. A simpler process in this case that's more streamlined or efficient is not superior to the process it aims to replace.

The third test I proposed is a question of whether the work of this Legislature, because of the current process, is truly onerous for members of this House. When we consider the number of days that this Legislature sits in reference to the number of days of similar Houses across the country, when we look at what we're able to accomplish in the limited days that we do sit, it seems reasonable to respond to that question: No, the work of this Legislature is not onerous.

When we look at that three-question test, it begs the question of whether or not a

change in process is warranted at this time. We've heard various members of the government speak very proudly of the mandate with which they've been entrusted by the people of Nova Scotia following the general election in November. We understand, as the Official Opposition, that the people of Nova Scotia have given that mandate. We respect it. We understand the enthusiasm of the government to deliver on the mandate that they've been handed by the people of Nova Scotia. That's legitimate.

From this side of the House, it feels a little bit like this government may be a little too enthusiastic, a little too intoxicated with the win, perhaps, to think as clearly as they might about whether or not these changes are necessary or desirable. I know it was Friday and some may not have been paying attention, but my history as an English teacher is going to come back here again.

[9:15 p.m.]

I teach *Romeo and Juliet*, and I think the character of Romeo offers us an interesting metaphor for the government. Those of you who are unfamiliar with the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* may not know that Romeo did not begin the tale in love with Juliet. As a matter of fact, he begins the play in the absolute doldrums because the object of his affection is Rosaline. In Romeo's words, there's no fairer on the face of planet Earth, no more precious, no more sweet, no more wonderful. He's absolutely head over heels for Rosaline - and this government during the election was gaga for a Rosaline of its own.

It was passionate about fixing health care. It was passionate about working on creating good-paying jobs for the people of Nova Scotia. It was passionate about housing and affordability for Nova Scotians. It had eyes for no other. It was head over heels, no doubt: The only one for me is the Rosaline of health care, good-paying jobs, housing, and affordability. Understandably, all those things are hot.

However, somehow, some way, this government seems to have lost its eye for Rosaline and happened upon Juliet. Suddenly, the passion and zeal for health care, good-paying jobs, housing, and affordability was a major shift in the throne speech. All of a sudden, we were all atwitter about resource extraction, about restricting oversight and accountability, about centralized control over any number of aspects of life in Nova Scotia - post-secondary education, research, and the list goes on. To those watching, it seems confusing how the zeal of the government for one set of priorities could suddenly be replaced with its zeal for a completely different set of priorities.

Thank you for your indulgence of my metaphor. Those of you who are unfamiliar with the tale may not know that Romeo has a confidant, a father figure who's not his father, but from whom he often seeks advice as a young man, given to deep and changing passions, and that leader's name in his life is Friar Laurence. Friar Laurence gives Romeo some interesting advice about his sudden change of passion - to go from loving Rosaline to pledging to be married in secret to his new love, Juliet. Friar Laurence says to Romeo:

These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
Which as they kiss consume: the sweetest honey
Is loathsome in his own deliciousness
And in the taste confounds the appetite:
Therefore love moderately; long love doth so;
Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.

For those of you who are no fans of Shakespeare, I'll paraphrase: Friar Laurence implores Romeo to slow his roll. He doesn't say, Don't be in love with Juliet.

If the government has had a change of heart about what's at the core of its mandate, we're not trying to tell the government not to have priorities - it sets those in and of itself - but how fast, how quickly, and how aggressively it pursues those priorities - that's another question. Sometimes making big change on a dime goes bad, and there are negative consequences. That's effectively what Friar Laurence urges Romeo to consider in pursuing his love for Juliet.

I am happy to tell you that this House continues to have the ability, at this point, to adjust its pursuit of these changes. I can tell you that Romeo sadly did not heed the advice given by Friar Laurence. Most people know Romeo and Juliet as a sappy romance, but it's a tragedy because Romeo and Juliet - despite their best of intentions, despite their passions - never find the thing that they set out to find, and it ends in absolute tragedy for them. But just as importantly, Speaker, it ends in tragedy for their families, and it ends in tragedy for the City of Verona, where they make their homes.

My metaphor is a bit tongue in cheek, and I thank the members of the government for their good-natured listening to this metaphor. I encourage them to consider this: The price for these changes are not merely borne by us who reside here in this House. The price paid for these changes will be paid for by the people of Nova Scotia. The price will be paid by the limited ability of the people to have their voices heard through elected representatives. It would be paid for by the people of Nova Scotia who have limited ability to offer input and propose amendments to legislation in the public interest.

It would be a shame to see a government with such a sacred trust, with 43 seats in this House, to rush ahead to make rash changes and deliver on recently made promises that the people of Nova Scotia did not give them this mandate to achieve. As we take time to ponder whether a changed process is warranted, and I think as fairly and respectfully as I can, I propose some things to think about to show that it's not. The process before us does not frustrate our collective ability to move quickly when called upon to do so.

It's not inefficient. It allows for us to weigh the complexity of issues and the potential impact of legislation on the people who will be imposed. It doesn't call on us to have unhealthy work-life balances as MLAs. We are able to do the work on behalf of the

people of Nova Scotia without undue burden.

I would invite the government to consider whether this is the right change at the right time. Maybe this is something you want to think about and work towards in the future. You have a number of newly elected people in caucus and because of the size of that caucus, you have nearly unchecked ability to move priorities forward with all due haste. Is it necessary to suppress debate, discussion and process to move your priorities forward? I would argue that it's not. Other speakers have echoed similar sentiments.

Time expired on Friday as I was sharing one of the most important lessons I've benefited from in my process of growing up. I've heard it from family; I've heard it from mentors. There's no question this government has been charged with a great responsibility. I won't use the Spider-Man quote because you've heard it before, but power is a great revealer. Power shows us who people really are once they hold it.

I ask the government to consider how they want to use this great power that they've been given by the people of Nova Scotia. You are already positioned to carry forward on priorities given to you by the people of Nova Scotia, but is it necessary? Do you need to use this power to limit the power of others who you share this House with?

I am a member of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I made the same affirmation, swore the same oath as anybody on the government side of this House: to be loyal to His Majesty and to the people of Nova Scotia in the discharge of my disagreement, my opposition, or my questions. It doesn't make me a special interest, it doesn't make me an enemy, and it doesn't make me an opponent. It makes me an essential part of the legislative process in this House. The same is true for anyone who's ever sat on this side of the aisle.

How does this government want to use its power? In this moment, sadly, it feels like this government is using its power in an aggressive way simply because it can. Forgive me, but it reminds me very much of a tacky 1990s comedy called *The Wedding Singer*. The character whose occupation is a wedding singer is ranting somewhat incoherently at a wedding he's been paid to sing at. The audience heckles him, and he says something to the effect of "I have a microphone, and you don't. You will listen to every word I say." Tongue in cheek, Speaker. The people of Nova Scotia did not hand this government a 43-seat majority to engage in wedding singer behaviour. Power is not a hammer, and not everything is a nail to be driven.

Another powerful lesson I've learned comes from my upbringing in a household where my dad was a minister. It's one of the most misunderstood scriptures and parts of the Beatitudes. It goes a little something like this: The meek shall inherit the earth. We misunderstand meekness in our culture. "Meek" sounds an awful lot like "weak" to too many people, but meekness speaks to the conviction of holding power with humility and exercising power with consideration to those who do not have it.

I don't know how many more ways it can be said. We recognize the power that you have. You are powerful, without question. How will you wield that power? Right now, the people in this House and the many Nova Scotians who are filling our inboxes and yours with concerns about the exercise of your power do not see the humility to wield power in ways that take into consideration the needs of those who do not have what you do.

I urge this House to consider whether or not that's the way you want to be perceived and whether the largest majority in the history of the Nova Scotia government will go down in history as brash, arrogant, self-absorbed, and only caring about getting it done at any cost or whether it will conduct itself with humility and with esteem for the entire legislative process and for the members of this House who have a sworn duty to provide a necessary counterpoint to the government, not only in debate but also in Law Amendments Committee and in collaboration.

[9:30 p.m.]

This government does not have to be known in the way that many people have concerns about at this point. It has the power to demonstrate restraint.

Earlier today, the amendments proposed to Bill No. 1 demonstrated that this government is capable of restraint and of pulling back when the course it has chosen turns out to be what's not best for Nova Scotia. As a member of the Official Opposition, I want to express my respect for that course of action.

We said plenty of pointed things about that course of action. We questioned it. We've criticized it, but the outcome of that is legislation that is better; legislation that is appropriate and effective for the people of Nova Scotia. Had these rules changed, our ability to push back on that legislation would have been constrained. Maybe some of the food for thought that came up as a result of this process would not have informed a positive, necessary change that this government took to heart and put on the floor that we soon hope to be able to vote in favour of when it comes before the House.

The process isn't broken. The process works and each of us has a role to play in it and so a government that has already demonstrated the character and the wisdom to step back from change that doesn't make sense and adopt something else instead - we are not asking the government to turn over its power or to resign or anything dramatic. We ask the government on this resolution to step back from this change that compromises in a way that would be very difficult to put right if enacted. We have the opportunity through debate to hear why we should, but also why we shouldn't.

I thank you for this time to speak on this and I invite my colleagues in this House to weigh very carefully whether or not this change is the one that should be made at this time. I've tried as best as I can to put across my thoughts about why it shouldn't, why we should maintain the practices that we currently have, because I believe this is not an idea

that needs to be sensationalized but it is one to be taken with great care.

I offer my remarks not only in a way that is respectful to you, Speaker, but in a way that is accessible to my colleagues. I invite you all to consider your support for this proposed resolution. The Official Opposition will not support it if it proceeds, but I hope that these words give pause to the government and perhaps prompt a moment of sober second reflection. Perhaps it will be withdrawn so that we can return to the practice as currently constituted and carry on with the important business that is before us as a House on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia and waste no further time on a change that compromises our ability to do so.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North. I am thinking you would like to speak because you've been standing for two minutes. Okay.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Yes, I would like to speak to the amendment proposed by the NDP caucus on Resolution No. 5. As a reminder to all of us, Resolution No. 5 was tabled by the Government House Leader last week and it is an amendment to the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly.

These amendments that have been proposed to the Rules and Forms of Procedure have one purpose, and that is to limit debate here in this Legislature. This tactic is known as time allocation and when I researched it, it was interesting because I read several articles from CPAC: some from the Liberals criticizing the Conservatives and some from the Conservatives criticizing the Liberals and the NDP, but certainly whenever one government uses time allocation to diminish the voices of Opposition, it is, many believe, an attack on our democracy.

Speaker, I stand to speak to this because I believe strongly in parliamentary democracy. I believe that it matters and that if we don't ensure that we uphold it, once it starts to erode, it will be continuous. We must do everything we can to stand and uphold parliamentary democracy here in this province and in this country.

In a parliamentary democracy, Opposition members have an important responsibility. That is to represent the voices of the people of this province. Our job is to speak up for the people, especially when the government is pushing laws that many Nova Scotians disagree with.

Limiting debate doesn't happen every day, but when it does, it matters deeply. Speaker, by silencing opposition voices, the government is silencing Nova Scotians. This is anti-democratic, and it should deeply concern all of us.

The German sociologist Robert Michels warned of this very kind of political manoeuvring in his 1911 book entitled *Political Parties*, where he described the "iron law of oligarchy." He argued that he "who says organization, says oligarchy," meaning that

over time, political structures tend to concentrate power in the hands of a few, often at the expense of true democratic representation.

What we are witnessing today is a clear example of this theory in action. When debate is restricted, when dissenting voices are stifled, democracy suffers. Governing should be about transparency, accountability, and genuine dialogue. Instead, the government is choosing control over conversation, power over participation. This is not just a procedural matter. It affects real people, real communities, and the future of our province.

Imagine if previous governments had shut down debate on key issues that shaped our history. What if elected representatives had been unable to speak up on issues regarding workers' rights, health care, or education? Imagine if the McNeil Liberal government had done this . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order, please. Believe it or not, that's unparliamentary. Oh, it should be taken from the book. It's only unparliamentary if he was still a member.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Imagine if the McNeil Liberal government had done this back in 2015 when the PCs were in Opposition. The now-Premier himself, who was a known strong debater, often filibustered on bills that were controversial, such as Bill No. 148, which took so much away from the teachers of this province.

I want to share an example with you, Speaker - an example where the member for Pictou East - and maybe some of the government MLAs could have the courage to ask him in private what has changed between then and now. I'll table this document once I'm done. I'm going to read this. Keep in mind these are the words of the member for Pictou East from 2015:

In this Chamber here, we all come here new at some point, and the rules are unknown to most of us when we first come. We try to learn the rules. From that side, they try to learn how to get what they want. From this side, we try to use the rules to make our points. But we're all trying to work within the rules.

Last night, it was very entertaining to hear some of the back and forth. The Government House Leader was so upset that the Opposition was using tactics of bell-ringing to send their message - very offended by the bell-ringing. I think there was a promise made at one point that it won't happen again, so we'll see. There will probably be a rule change. The irony of it is, why were the bells ringing? The bells were ringing because we were sitting in

this Chamber in the middle of the night. The Opposition was using a tool available to it to send a message to people of what was happening here, probably to extend proceedings to the daylight hours, when people could see, could turn on Leg TV and come down here.

Three nights in a row, Mr. Speaker, 12:01 a.m., but it's an abuse of the rules to ring the bells? The ringing of the bells is an abuse, but the 12:01 a.m. is fine. That's the way that this government sees the world. It just goes all the way through the things they do.

Then he goes on to say:

First, we had a gentleman - well documented - who wanted to appear before the committee, was in the Red Room with plenty of time to speak. The vice chair of the Law Amendments Committee had it on his mind, no way was that going to happen. I don't know why, but that's something that he had on his mind. He felt that was his right, that was his rule. He was going to make that rule that that person was not going to speak. As the committee business went along we tried to raise a motion there to let him speak. The chairman used his rule, his right to recognize one of his members to put forth a motion . . .

I'll carry on to the next page. Again, these are the words of the now-Premier:

It's not fine to me, it's not fine to the members on this side of the House. But it's politics and it's politics at its worst.

Now the sad reality is that the people with that mindset have the power to change the rules. They can use their majority to do whatever they want, and guess what? They are, and there will be a big price to pay for that because many of the things they are trying to work on, that they are trying to address, they don't know how. And what do they do when they don't know how? They try to break somebody else down, break something else up - distract, divide.

I will tell you, listen up because if you want to listen and pay attention, you might actually learn something because every idea doesn't reside within you 30 people.

Now there's one rule in negotiating and that rule is this . . . (interruption).

THE SPEAKER: Order. Did I just hear the y-o-u word? Did I just hear that? Okay. Sorry, we're having a conversation about unparliamentary language here. The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCROSSIN: Again, these are the words of the now-Premier talking about the government. He was in Opposition, and he's criticizing the government because they were trying to change the rules that Opposition had.

Now there's one rule in negotiating and that rule is, it's always better to negotiate with smart people because smart people can realize how you get a deal done. When you are not negotiating with somebody who is smart on the other side of the table, it's difficult to negotiate. I think that's what we're seeing here with legislation instead of negotiation.

I'll table this document. It goes on, but I think everyone gets my point. I think that the Premier is a good man, and I think that he's forgetting. I encourage the Premier to go back and remember. Read the words that I tabled and remember what it was like in Opposition. I sat with him right here in this row in Opposition, and I remember meeting in that back room, being so darn angry at the Liberals in government and how it felt in Opposition, that they wouldn't listen to anything we had to say in Opposition, even though we were only conveying the words of the people that we represent and all Nova Scotians.

There was zero acknowledgement. I'll never forget how that felt. I know the member for Pictou East must remember that. He must remember that. I want to also table another document. This is a Facebook post that the member for Pictou East made on May 7, 2015. It says:

Dear Diary: they figured it would be a 5 minute Law Amendments Committee meeting. In and out. It wasn't. This morning the CBC called it a one-man filibuster. It wasn't. It was a team filibuster. Done in support of thousands of people. Done in support of thousands of taxpayers. "But Tim, I still don't understand: why did you talk for over four hours?" The answer: Because I care. Because we care. I just wish it mattered to the people who should care.

I'll table this document, which is a copy of the member for Pictou East's Facebook post from 2015, when he was a member in Opposition, bringing forth the voices of the people of this province on an important matter, on Bill No. 148. And this province should never forget that time.

I was not an elected member at that time, but it's the first time that I ever heard of the Law Amendments Committee. I will never forget watching it on television for hours

and hours on end. I was amazed at what was happening here in this House. It was a real example of parliamentary democracy in power. You know what? I was proud of the member for Pictou East and his leadership in Opposition, standing up for the teachers and standing up for the people in this province.

[9:45 p.m.]

Opposition has an important job to do in this House. This Resolution No. 5 and the reason I support this amendment to the resolution is because the rules that the government are trying to do are doing nothing but trying to silence the voices in Opposition. No one knows better than the member for Pictou East the importance of opposition in a parliamentary democracy.

I have never sat in government, and I'm sure those members who are sitting in government will say, Well, you don't understand. We have an important responsibility, and you cannot understand what it's like. It's different now. It's different now that we're in government.

But it's not. We're all equal in this Chamber. Every seat matters. All 55.

I've sat in this Chamber now - this is my third term - first, as a member in Opposition, with the PC caucus; second, as an Independent member but with colleagues in the NDP and the Liberals in Opposition. I want to share an example that talks about the importance of the rules and why I'm speaking to this amendment to the resolution, Speaker.

It's a little emotional to talk about it because this woman was very important to me. When I first became an Independent, it was a little scary to come into this Chamber and not be part of a team. It's not normal. I was given the privilege of hiring a legislative assistant. The person who came to me was a young woman who used to work for the PC caucus. When I was a member of the PC caucus, I was a health critic, and she was the health researcher.

Now here we are, me as an Independent, no longer part of the PC caucus, and her, no longer part of the PC caucus team. Here are the two of us, here in this Legislature, working together as Independents, trying to bring forth the voices of the people of Cumberland North. I'll never forget the Liberals - it was the first time in I don't know many years the Liberals were in Opposition. They weren't used to being in Opposition, and they really didn't understand the tools that we have in Opposition.

We don't have many tools in our tool chest over here. We have the ability to stand and speak to bills and resolutions. We have the ability to ask for a recorded vote and ring the bells. Sometimes that's all we have to make a point.

In that first session, when I came here as an Independent and the Liberals were in

Opposition for the first time, the government were new, and they had a lot of ideas. One of the things that was done repeatedly was removing boards on many government organizations. There was a definite move of centralization of power. A lot of people in this province didn't agree with it.

I remember getting a text message from a good friend saying, Why aren't the Opposition members protesting? Why aren't they ringing the bells? Why aren't they filibustering? Part of it was because they hadn't been used to being in Opposition, and they didn't know the rules. But you know who knew the rules? My assistant, because she had worked with the caucus for so many years, and she would send me a text. She would write: "Hoist the bill. Hoist the bill." She knew all the tools that we had on our tool chest in Opposition.

The next session - the next time we were in the Legislature - sadly, she was gone. She had passed away from a brain aneurysm. I didn't have her with me anymore. The next session, the Liberals knew how to be a strong Opposition. I'll never forget.

There was a bad bill being brought forward, and when I say bad, I mean that it wasn't well thought through, and a lot of Nova Scotians didn't like it. All of a sudden, the Liberal members were filibustering - they were ringing the bells. I went out to the library, and I was met by one of the Liberal staff, Ray. He looked me in the eye, with tears in his eyes, and he said: "Elizabeth, I know what to tell my members to do now because of Kait." He said: "She taught me, and I want you to know. I want you to know that I'm doing this. I know my job, and I know the tools of the tool chest for Opposition members because of her."

I want to bring that up today to honour her, to honour her knowledge of this House. She loved the Legislature and loved the legislative process. The Opposition playing an important role in this democracy and knowing the rules, using the very few, limited tools that we have, and using them well, matters.

I also wanted to table a document, and I wanted to acknowledge the Government House Leader, who tabled this resolution. No one was better at filibustering in this Chamber than the member from Halifax Atlantic. I can't give a speech about this without saying that, because it's the truth. No one was harder in this Chamber on the member from Pictou East than the member from Halifax Atlantic. The irony that this is the member who tabled this resolution is hard to understand.

We know that the government has the power to do this, but I hope that some of the things that I share will maybe give people a chance to reflect and to have second thought - a sober second thought.

There's one other point I wanted to make because I believe it's important, especially for the newer MLAs here in the House. The way the work is done in this

Legislature is not the way the work has to be done. There are a lot of legislatures across this country that do collaborative legislative work. Prince Edward Island is one of those provinces.

Former Premier Dennis King - who just resigned last Friday - I'll never forget going to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting and meeting one of the Green Party MLAs from P.E.I. We got talking about our experience, and we got talking about bills and the process. She shared with me that Premier King and his team in government would share every government bill with the caucus of the two Opposition parties months before the government bill was tabled in the legislature. I know. I thought, That is how it should be done. Yes. The government would ask the Opposition party caucuses to look at the bills, provide feedback and suggestions on how the bills could be made better, with the overarching goal that legislation is for the people of P.E.I. and that all elected MLAs have valuable input from the people they represent.

I have always had so much respect for Premier Dennis King for his approach to the legislative process in P.E.I. I wanted to share that story because sometimes you only know what you know. I was talking to some of the newer members last week, and they just said: This is not what I expected. I feel bad for them because of their disappointment. Their disappointment is for the lack of respect and the lack of democratic process here in the Legislature and the demeaning of Opposition members here in this Chamber.

I said to them: Don't give up hope. I believe inherently that it does not have to be this way, that there is such a thing as good government, and that it can be done better. I will hold on to that hope that we can do better and value every member who's here in the Legislature.

I'll just finish off with a couple of last comments. Again, the reason I support this amendment to Resolution No. 5 is that I believe when debate is restricted and when dissenting voices are stifled, democracy suffers. Governing should be about transparency, accountability, and genuine dialogue. When the government is instead controlling conversation and having power over participation, it's not just a procedural matter; it affects real people and real communities and the future of our province.

Earlier I quoted Michels. I want to share another quote from him as we finish off. He also wrote that leaders always emerge, but they become the masters rather than the servants of the masses. Let me read that again: Leaders always emerge, but they become the masters rather than the servants of the masses.

We as citizens must hold our government accountable to ensure that they serve - that we serve - the people rather than suppress them. The ability to debate, discuss, and challenge authority is a cornerstone of democracy and it should be protected at all costs. Nova Scotians deserve better. We deserve a government that respects democratic principles, that values discussion, and that upholds the right of every elected representative

- every single one, all 55 of us - to speak freely on behalf of the people we serve.

This is not just about parliamentary rules. This is about the very essence of democracy. The question is not whether we agree or disagree with the laws being debated. It's about whether we believe in the fundamental right of elected officials to represent us without obstruction. If we allow this kind of political manoeuvring to become normal, what comes next?

We must all raise our voices, demand transparency, and insist on a government that respects democracy rather than manipulates it. The future of Nova Scotia's democracy depends upon it.

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

HON. SCOTT ARMSTRONG: I know I only have a couple minutes to get started. I'd like to first address not the previous speaker but the one before that. We heard some great quotes from Shakespeare. I'm sure he was a tremendous English teacher.

I have some quotes from Shakespeare myself. First up: "Thou doth protest too much." That's the first one. That's from a great play, my favourite. I know he likes *Romeo and Juliet*. By the way, how'd that end for the stars? Not so good. I like *Hamlet*. *Hamlet's* my favourite. I've always been impressed with *Hamlet*.

He talked in the first part of his speech on Friday about the NDP government in British Columbia, where they have time allocation. They have closure. He said, That's a new government. It hasn't been there that long. They've been there since 2017 and they haven't changed time allocation and they haven't changed that. They've been there for quite a while, and three months ago they used both time allocation and closure on a housing bill. It's a tool they use to get their agenda through because they have a government to push it. That's an NDP government.

I know we don't have much time left. I'm going to go on when we start the next time and talk about how it's used in the House of Commons, how it's used in other provinces, and how it's used in Westminster. It's a tool used by many governments in parliamentary democracies . . . (interruptions).

THE SPEAKER: Order. I pause for a couple of seconds because I'm starting to get very perturbed with the Official Opposition, with the scowling looks and the yelling out when somebody else is talking. Everybody is behaving for the most part. We can pick this up tomorrow, but I'm getting sick of it.

Order. We have reached the time of adjournment. We stand adjourned until Tuesday, February 25th from 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 10:00 p.m.]